

Media and Society

MODULE CODE: FFME017S5 ACB

CREDITS/LEVEL: 30 CATS/Level 5

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS: Passed one of: *Introduction to Cinema*; or *Television: History and Future*; or *The Press in Britain*

CLASS TIME: 6.30pm – 8.30pm

CLASS DATES: Term 1 Term 2

First meeting 29/09/2010 12/01/2011

Last meeting 08/12/2010 23/03/2011

VENUE: Room H206, London School of Economics and Political Science,
Houghton Street, London, WC2A 2AE
<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/mapsAndDirections/findingYourWayAroundLSE.aspx>

MODULE TAUGHT BY

Dr Scott Rodgers

Scott is Lecturer in Media Theory within the Department of Media and Cultural Studies at Birkbeck. His own research is located at the intersection of media studies and urban studies, but he is interested more broadly in journalism, medium theory, new media, media history, urban politics and cultural geography. Scott is currently working on a book that explores the evolving relationship of the newspaper and the city.

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AIMS

The relationship between 'media' and 'society' has been the subject of both hopes and anxieties, whether historically, in the present day, or in projections about the future. Organised into three blocks, this module asks students consider this relationship by taking a detailed and expansive look at how we might understand what media are and why we worry about them.

The first block of the module explores the idea of media as mediums of communication and experience; in other words, media as technologies or artefacts of communication. This approach to media will be considered especially in terms of the debates it provokes around the effects of new technologies versus the influence of social and political forces. The module then turns its

attention to the common notion of media as the media; in other words media as the complex interactions of media producers, audiences, texts and industries. A particular focus will be placed on the relative power of media producers and audiences, and attempts at governing how the media works. Finally, the module takes a fresh look at how media are very often said to embody the new. Here, various understandings about what counts as 'new media' will be explored, with critical attention given to the longer historical developments in which so-called new media are situated.

In the course of exploring various approaches to media, students will also be encouraged to critically question the notion of a fixed or natural society, and conversely, to consider how and why media have been so important in helping naturalise the idea of a 'society'.

OUTCOMES

On successful completion of this module a student will be expected to be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of and engagement with the relations and tensions between distinct theoretical perspectives on media
- Articulate theories at an abstract level, while also connecting such theories with practical, relevant and creative applications and case examples
- Effectively research, evaluate and employ academic literature in coursework and class discussions
- Write and communicate to a scholarly standard, especially in coursework essays
- Critically observe and reflect upon the role of media in her/his everyday experience, as well as in relation to broader social and political issues

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

This module is based around a series of seminars, consisting of short lectures and class exercises, augmented by frequent student use of online resources and communication tools on Blackboard. Students can expect class exercises to vary from meeting to meeting (e.g. working in pairs and groups, screenings, discussions and set activities). Throughout the duration of the module students will be expected to undertake independent reading and observation outside of class meetings. Independent reading will form a crucial aspect of preparing for focused discussions in class and online, as well as in developing an awareness of the various academic literature students will be expected to draw upon in all coursework. The module also involves students making ongoing observations and reflecting on their use of and relation to media, which will be regularly drawn upon in class/online discussions, and help form the foundation of the assessed collage and commentary on the theme of 'media and me'.

Individual tutorials will also be offered, upon request, to provide students with an opportunity to resolve any difficulties, and discuss solutions to problems, particularly around coursework. In addition, time in some class meetings will be dedicated to developing study skills such as finding academic materials, using online resources effectively, writing essays, and media observation and analysis.

COURSEWORK AND ASSESSMENT

<i>Assessed Component</i>	<i>Basic Requirements</i>	<i>Weighting</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
Collage and commentary	Collage (A3 approximately) on the theme of 'media and me'; along with theoretically-	20%	17 th November 2010

	informed 1000 words commentary		
Essay 1	1500 words	25%	2 nd February 2011
Essay 2	2500 words	45%	23 rd March 2011
Reading summary	Verbal commentary (approximately 5 minutes) on one assigned reading during a class seminar discussion	5%	N/A
Class/online participation	Participation in class discussions and activities, as well as set online discussions on Blackboard	5%	N/A

All assignments must be submitted by the above deadlines: (1) online through this module's Blackboard web site (click 'Submit Assignment' on the menu); and (2) in hardcopy with a coversheet to the module tutor.

Note that to qualify for module credit, you must submit a coursework portfolio to Birkbeck at the end of the module, containing your marked assignments and the tutor's comments.

MODULE EVALUATION

At the end of the module, students will be asked to complete an evaluation form, which gives an opportunity to feedback on all aspects of their learning experience.

MODULE CONTENT

Session 1: 29th September 2010 – Module overview

This class is an introduction to the aims, learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods, assessment and content of this module. It is also an opportunity for students to meet one another and engage in some preliminary discussion around a key question: what are media?

Session 2: 6th October 2010 – Approaching 'media and me': the medium, the media and the new

In this class, we will introduce and discuss the three main lenses of the module (mirrored by its three thematic blocks) for approaching media: 'the medium', 'the media' and 'the new'. The intention is not only to look ahead to the main blocks of the course, however, but also to think about different ways in which Assignment 1 – a collage and theoretically-informed commentary on 'media and me' – might be practically approached.

Block 1: THE MEDIUM

Session 3: 13th October 2010 – Media beyond content: the medium as message

This block begins with an exploration of the idea of media as technological mediums. An apt starting place for this topic is perhaps one of the most-quoted catch phrases to come out of

media studies: 'the medium is the message'. This was the famous dictum of Canadian thinker Marshall McLuhan, who worried that too much media research was fixated on the content found in media. McLuhan thought that the primary focus of media studies ought to be studying how the distinctive characteristics of different mediums (i.e. media technologies such as TV, radio, print) deeply affect how we feel, perceive and experience media.

Required reading:

McLuhan, M. (1964) *Understanding media: the extensions of man*, Abingdon: Routledge – Chapter 1

Scannell, P. (2007) *Media and communication*, London: Sage – Chapter 5

Further reading:

Barlow, D. and Mills, B. (2008) *Reading media theory: thinkers, approaches, contexts*, London: Longman – Chapter 13

Federman, M. (2004) 'What is the meaning of the medium is the message?'

<http://individual.utoronto.ca/markfederman/MeaningTheMediumistheMessage.pdf>

[accessed 28/08/2010]

McLuhan, M. (1964) *Understanding media: the extensions of man*, Abingdon: Routledge – Chapter 2

Meyrowitz, J. (2002) 'Canonic anti-text: Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding media*' in *Canonic texts in media research: Are there any? Should there be? How about these?* ed. by Katz, E., Peters, J.D., Liebes, T. and Orloff, A., Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 191-212.

Session 4: 20th October 2010 – Media and the problem of technological determinism

Despite his popularity, McLuhan was also a highly controversial and divisive figure. The main critique of McLuhan is that he is a technological determinist – in other words that he is focused far too much on how new technologies effect what humans can do, and too little on the social and political uses of media technologies. In this class we consider reactions to McLuhan which emphasised the role of societal factors in relation to the use and development of media technologies.

Required reading:

Silverstone, R. (1999) *Why study the media?*, London: Sage – Chapter 3

Williams, R. (1974) *Television: technology and cultural form*, London: Routledge – Chapter 5

Further reading:

Winston, B (1998) *Media technology and society: a history from the printing press to the superhighway*, London: Routledge – Introduction

Session 5: 27th October 2010 – Old new media I: print and telegraph

In this class we begin to explore various types of 'old new media'. That is, media we today consider to be 'old', but which, when introduced, shared many similarities with today's new media. Our emphasis will be how these media illustrate the tension (discussed in prior classes) between the effects of new technologies on the one hand, and the influence of social and political forces on the other. We begin with the examples of print and the telegraph.

Required reading:

Carey, J. (1989) *Communication as culture: essays on media and society*, London: Routledge – Chapter 8

Cook, S.D.N. (2006) 'Technological revolutions and the Gutenberg myth' in *The new media theory reader*, ed. By Hassan, R. and Thomas, J., Maidenhead: Open University Press – Chapter 1.2

Further reading:

Barnhurst, K.G. and Nerone, J. (2002) *The form of news: a history*, New York: Guilford Press – Chapter 1

Briggs, A. and Burke, P. (2002) *A social history of the media: from Gutenberg to the Internet*, Cambridge: Polity Press – Chapter 2

Lax, S. (2008) *Media and communication technologies: a critical introduction*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan – Chapter 1

Winston, B (1998) *Media technology and society: a history from the printing press to the superhighway*, London: Routledge – Chapter 1

Session 6: 3rd November 2010 – Old new media II: phonography and cinematography

We continue our exploration of old new media by considering phonography and cinematography, focusing in particular on the ways the phonograph ended up being used for rather different purposes (playing music) than envisioned by its inventors, and some of the implicit cultural biases that drove the development of early cinema technology.

Required reading:

Gitelman, L. (2006) *Always already new: media, history, and the data of culture*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press – Chapter 2

Wilson, B. (1996) *Technologies of seeing: photography, cinematography and television*, London: Macmillan – Chapter 1

Session 7: 10th November 2010 – Old new media III: radio and television

We end our exploration of old new media by looking at the emergence of radio and television, and the crucial part family practices, structures and places (such as the home) played in the early popularity and use of these media. We will also contrast how these mediums were used and understood in their early days as compared to today.

Required reading:

Corner, J. (1995) *Television form and public address*, London: Hodder Arnold – Chapter 2

Moore, S. (2000) *Media and everyday life in modern society*, London: Sage – Chapter 3

Further reading:

Lax, S. (2008) *Media and communication technologies: a critical introduction*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan – Chapters 2 and 3

Block 2: THE MEDIA

Session 8: 17th November 2010 – The rise of 'the media' I: mass culture and media publics

Having explored some of the debates around media as 'mediums', what then, do we mean when we talk about 'the media'? There is no single or simple answer to this question. We might begin by assuming that speaking of 'the media' refers to a slightly bigger picture than media technologies – in other words referring to all of the complex relationships between media producers, audiences, texts and industries. But where does the idea of this 'bigger picture' come from? In this class we consider an answer to this question: that the idea of 'the media' is

connected to a relatively recent historical phenomenon (only ~180 years old!) – the rise of a ‘mass public’ distinct and separate from other aspects of society such as religion, government and the market.

Required reading:

Briggs, A. and Burke, P. (2002) *A social history of the media: from Gutenberg to the Internet*, Cambridge: Polity Press – Chapter 3

Thompson, J.B. (1995) *The media and modernity: a social theory of the media*, Stanford: Stanford University Press – Chapter 2

Further reading:

Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London: Verso – Chapter 2

Barlow, D. and Mills, B. (2008) *Reading media theory: thinkers, approaches, contexts*, London: Longman – Chapter 16

Carey, J. (1989) *Communication as culture: essays on media and society*, London: Routledge – Chapter 1

Peters, J.D. (2004) ‘Media as Conversation, conversation as media’ in *Media and cultural theory: interdisciplinary perspectives*, ed. by Curran, J. and Morley, D., London: Routledge, pp. 115-126

Scannell, P. (2007) *Media and communication*, London: Sage – Chapter 9

Session 9: 24th November 2010 – The rise of ‘the media’ II: commercialisation, advertising and media markets

Going hand-in-hand with the rise of a mass public, however, was a growing commercialisation of the media, leading ultimately to the advertising-saturated world we live in today. In this class we explore the extent to which a significant portion of the media relies on treating audiences as markets to sell to advertisers. We will also consider some recent trends in advertising of which most of us will be familiar.

Required reading:

Dyer, Gillian (1982): *Advertising as communication*, London: Taylor and Francis – Chapter 2

Scannell, Paddy (2006) ‘Benjamin contextualised: on ‘The work of art in an age of mechanical reproduction’ in *Canonic texts in media research: Are there any? Should there be? How about these?* ed. by Katz, E., Peters, J.D., Liebes, T. and Orloff, A., Cambridge: Polity Press – Chapter 4

Session 10: 1st December 2010 – The rise of ‘the media’ III: organisations, professions and media power

One reason there are so many concerns about ‘the media’ is that, at least historically, media production has been highly concentrated amongst certain organisations (e.g. television networks, film companies, newspaper chains) and professions (e.g. journalists, screenwriters, television producers, newsreaders). In this class, we will discuss how this fact of media production has prompted debates about the extent to which media institutions define much of our social world on our behalf.

Required reading:

Couldry, Nick (1999) ‘Media organisations and non-media people’ In *Media organisations in society* ed. by Curran, J., London: Bloomsbury Academic – Chapter 12

Williams, K. (2003) *Understanding media theory*, London: Hodder Arnold – Chapter 4

Session 11: 8th December 2010 – A study skills interlude: writing and researching media

In this class we take a brief interlude from the module content and work through some key issues around writing and research in media studies. An emphasis will be placed on the feedback students received for their 1st Assignment, and how students are planning and researching for their 2nd Assignment, an academic essay responding to a set question.

--- HOLIDAY BREAK ---

Session 12: 12th January 2011 – Media effects and the audience

Studies of the media have often been critiqued for their understanding of media audiences. Can media audiences be assumed to be dupes, as simply taking on the messages the established media throw their way? While some approaches to media seem to implicitly assume this to be the case, another strong tradition of research into audiences has answered this question with a very strong 'no'. In this class, we explore how we might understand the relation of media and audiences, paying particular attention to debates around 'media effects'.

Required reading:

Hall, S. (1980) 'Encoding/decoding' in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, ed. by Hall, S., London: Hutchinson, pp. 128-138

Morley, D 1992: *Television, audiences and cultural studies*, London: Routledge – Chapter 1

Further reading:

Abercrombie, N. and Longhurst, B. (1998) *Audiences: a sociological theory of performance and imagination*, London: Sage – Chapter 1

Gauntlett, D (2004) 'Ten things wrong with the media 'effects' model' in *Theory.org.uk: media/identity/resources and projects*, <http://www.theory.org.uk/tenthings.htm>
[accessed 05/08/2010]

Ruddock, A (2001) *Understanding Audiences: theory and method*. London: Sage – Chapter 2

Williams, K. (2003) *Understanding media theory*, London: Hodder Arnold – Chapter 7

Session 13: 19th January 2011 – The secret lives of audiences

Early audience research was often lodged in reaction to the so-called 'media effects' model. More recently, however, researching audiences in their own right has become a much more developed area of media research. Indeed, some have gone as far as to observe that, since we encounter so much media in our everyday life, and are almost always audiences in one form or another, perhaps specific media texts have much less of an effect than previously thought. In other words, that for us audiences media are noise – and we aren't always paying that much attention. In this class we will explore the implications this idea of the audience might have for understanding media.

Required reading:

Abercrombie, N. and Longhurst, B. (1998) *Audiences: a sociological theory of performance and imagination*, London: Sage – Chapter 2

Silverstone, R. (1994) *Television and everyday life*, London: Routledge – Chapter 6

Further reading:

Williams, K. (2003) *Understanding media theory*, London: Hodder Arnold – Chapter 8

Session 14: 26th January 2011 – Governing the media I: public service broadcasting

The growth of ‘the media’ has engendered serious debates about how media institutions and content should be subjected to some form of government accountability. One response to these debates has been to publicly fund media, exemplified in Britain by public service broadcaster the BBC. In this class we discuss the merits and drawbacks of public service broadcasting, and whether in today’s digital age these media can fulfil their mission as agents of social progress and development.

Required reading:

Bailey, M. (2007) ‘Rethinking public service broadcasting: the historical limits to publicness’ in *Media and public spheres*, ed. by Butsch, R., London: Palgrave-Macmillan – Chapter 8

Born, G. (2004) *Uncertain vision: Birt, Dyke and the reinvention of the BBC*, London: Vintage – Prologue

Further reading:

Ang, I. (1991) *Desperately seeking the audience*, London: Routledge – Chapter 2

McDonnell, J (1991) *Public service broadcasting: a reader*, London: Routledge

Tracey, M. (1998) *The decline and fall of public service broadcasting*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Session 15: 2nd February 2011 – Governing the media II: media regulation

An alternate response to the question of governing the media is subjecting media organisations and/or content to various forms of regulation. In the UK, Ofcom is the independent body charged with regulating most communication industries. There are also various international agreements related to media, not to mention the application of media-related law such as libel. In this class we will discuss how these forms of regulation have worked (and not worked).

Required reading:

Livingstone, S. (2007) ‘Citizens, consumers and the citizen-consumer: articulating the citizen interest in media and communications regulation’ *Discourse and Communication*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 63-89

Madger, T. (2004) ‘International agreements and the regulation of world communication’ in *Media and cultural theory: interdisciplinary perspectives*, ed. by Curran, J. and Morley, D., London: Routledge – Chapter 11

Further reading:

Fientuck, M. (1999) *Media regulation, public interest and the law*, London: Edinburgh University Press

Frost, C (2007) *Journalism ethics and regulation (2nd edition)*, Harlow: Pearson Education

Block 3: THE NEW

Session 16: 9th February 2011 – When and why is media new?

As will be evident from the preceding classes, societal worries about media have often been related to the 'newness' of media – i.e. how emerging media forms in some way (good or bad) alter previously existing practices. Yet recent debates about new media tend to assume that media emerging today are especially novel or groundbreaking. In this class we take a critical look at what we might mean by 'new media', before exploring more topical understandings of the idea in subsequent classes.

Required reading:

Bolter, J.D. and Grusin, R. (2000) *Remediation: understanding new media*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press – Introduction

Lister, M, Dover, J, Giddings, S, Grant, I and Kelly, K (2003) *New media: a critical introduction*. London: Routledge – Chapter 1

Further reading:

Gitelman, L. (2006) *Always already new: media, history, and the data of culture*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press – Introduction

Session 17: 16th February 2011 – New media as the Internet

If there is one recent phenomenon that might lay claim to the idea of new media as it emerges in popular discourse, it is the rapid growth of the Internet. In this class we'll explore how we might understand the Internet, focusing on its historical evolution and how it has enabled new ways of creating, accessing and sharing media content.

Required reading:

Castells, M. (2001) *The Internet galaxy: reflections on the Internet, business, and society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press – Chapter 1

Murphy, B. (2002) 'A critical history of the internet' In *Critical perspectives on the Internet*, ed. by Elmer, G., Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 49-62

Further reading:

Freedman, D. (2004) 'Internet transformations: 'old' media resilience in the 'new media' revolution.' in *Media and cultural theory: interdisciplinary perspectives*, ed. by Curran, J. and Morley, D., London: Routledge, pp. 275-290

Gitelman, L. (2006) *Always already new: media, history, and the data of culture*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press – Chapter 4

Burnett, R and Marshall, P.D. (2003) *Web theory: an introduction*. Oxon: Routledge

Bolter, J.D. and Grusin, R. (2000) *Remediation: understanding new media*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press – Chapter 12

Session 18: 23rd February 2011 – New media as digital

Some authors who have attempted to be more precise and rigorous about the distinctive 'newness' of today's media, arguing that new media are not merely those media distributed through the Internet. Instead, they argue today's new media are distinguished by their more basic quality of 'being digital' – in other words, being related to the rise of digital computation.

Required reading:

Manovich, L. (2001) *The language of new media*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press – Chapter 1

Negroponte, N. (1995) *Being digital*, New York: Knopf – Chapter 1

Further reading:

Kittler, F.A. (1999) *Gramophone, film, typewriter*. Stanford: Stanford University Press – Chapter 1

Gitelman, L. (2006) *Always already new: media, history, and the data of culture*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press – Chapter 3

Lax, S. (2008) *Media and communication technologies: a critical introduction*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan – Chapter 6

Session 19: 2nd March 2011 – New media as mobile

Another way of understanding today's new media is that it is highly mobile, on a scale that is historically unprecedented. Various mobile devices (e.g. smart phones, notebook computers), wirelessly connected to the Internet (e.g. through WiFi or cellular networks), have deeply transformed when, where and how we engage media. They have also increasingly blurred the distinction between 'mass' media such as newspapers and 'personal' media such as telephones.

Required reading:

May, H. and Hearn, G. (2005) 'The mobile phone as media' *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 195-211

Lax, S. (2008) *Media and communication technologies: a critical introduction*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan – Chapter 7

Further reading:

Lüders, M. (2008) 'Conceptualizing personal media' *New Media and Society*, Vol. 10, No. 5, pp. 683-702

Session 20: 9th March 2011 – New media as global

Many debates about media and society assume the existence of a national society. Yet at the same time it is utterly common to define our world as increasingly 'globalised' – in no small part resulting from the creation and distribution of media on a global (or at least transnational) scale. As Rantanen rightly argues, there wouldn't even be processes of globalisation without media. But this leaves open the question of whether the most recent forms of new media have greatly accelerated these globalising processes.

Required reading:

Rantanen, T. (2005) *The media and globalization*, London: Sage – Chapter 1

Further reading:

Thompson, J.B. (1995) *The media and modernity: a social theory of the media*, Stanford: Stanford University Press – Chapter 5

Session 21: 16th March 2011 – New media as convergence

One term that seeks to encapsulate various understandings of new media (including those we have discussed – as the Internet, as digital, as mobile, as global) is 'media convergence'. While this term is often loosely used to refer to technological convergence (e.g. the ability to watch a snippet of the television show *Family Guy* on your mobile phone via access to YouTube), many

authors have argued that the implications of media convergence run much deeper. In this class, we explore the idea that not only are media technologies converging, but so too are other aspects of media including businesses, producers, genres, and audiences.

Required reading:

Dwyer, T. (2010) *Media convergence*, Maidenhead: Open University Press – Chapter 1

Jenkins, H. (2006) *Convergence culture: where old and new media collide*, New York: New York University Press – Introduction

Further reading:

Lax, S. (2008) *Media and communication technologies: a critical introduction*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan – Chapter 6

Bolter, J.D. and Grusin, R. (2000) *Remediation: understanding new media*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press – Chapter 14

Session 22: 23rd March 2011 – Module reflection: does ‘the media’ have a future?

Although we continue to commonly refer to ‘the media’ when we speak about the broad subject of media studies, recent transformations of media technology seem to put into question both traditional, centralised media institutions as well as mass media audiences. In reflecting on this module as a whole, we will explore one specific question: does ‘the media’ have a future?

Required reading:

Couldry, Nick (2009) ‘Does ‘the media’ have a future?’ *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 437-449

FURTHER RESOURCES

The module content above takes in most of the key readings that will be covered in class. However, students are expected to conduct their own additional research of readings and resources beyond the above – in particular in preparation for the module assignments. This module’s Blackboard site contains plenty of links to research and learning resources that will be helpful in this regard.