

MODULE: **MEDIA RESEARCH & CULTURAL STUDIES**

CODE **BAJH-3-2-10**
Number of credits **4 semester credits / 6 quarter units**
Stage: **III**
Theme : **Media Theory**
Assessment weighting: **Assignment: 60%; Exam 40%**

Overview and aims

The aim of this module is to familiarise students with cultural theories and theorists including contemporary cultural debates on modernity and post-modernity. On course completion the student will have an understanding of traditional theories of culture and students will also have an understanding of contemporary cultural theories and will be able to apply these theories to any cultural issue, including film and television.

On completion students will:

- Have gained an understanding of the history of cultural studies and knowledge of the key concepts and theories involved.
- Be able to apply the theories learnt to contemporary cultural issues of the day.
- Be in a position to use academic research and own original ideas to analyse contemporary cultural issues.
- Understand, discuss and research independently media and sociological theories such as news framing and hegemony.
- Comment critically on aspects of modern communication such as the social and political impacts that images and visual media products have on audiences and society as a whole.
- Discuss and comment on current media trends such as the changing role of cartoonists and comic journalists, while being able use the theoretical approaches in the module to identify and characterise appropriately other media and communication trends.
- Undertake independent media research

Module content

(1) What is Culture?

The first topic examines the idea of culture and what it means. This introductory session will therefore:

- explore the idea of ideology as a key concept in cultural studies
- examine definitions of culture and popular culture

(2) Social Capital

This topic examines the positive and negative side to social capital, a concept popularised

recently by Robert Putnam. A number of issues will be explored in this topic including the concepts of civic engagement and what a 'healthy' democracy means and also an examination of voting trends both in Ireland and abroad.

(3) Identity

Who Am I? How do I define myself? How do others define me?

This topic looks at the concept of ideology and how it impacts on identity. It will examine the complex nature of identity and explore the use of the media to construct identities, including the role of advertising and television.

(4) Lifelong Learning

This topic examines the role that education plays in society and introduces the concept of

life long learning. The Lisbon Agenda, set out by the European Council in March 2000, aimed to create by 2010 an EU that would be the most competitive knowledge based economy in the world. Access to life-long learning was to play an important role in this process. This section of the module looks at why life long learning has become such a buzzword and examines the reasons why adults learn and stop learning. It also looks at Ireland's performance in the International Adult Literacy Survey of 1995 and the subsequent Prison Literacy Survey.

(5) The Culture of Punishment

This topic reflects on the culture of punishment (including the use of the body as spectacle) from an historical and also Irish perspective. We will examine how the

punishment of prisoners has changed and how theory has been used/not used to underpin

those changes. This topic examines the profile of prisoners in Ireland and the policies now in place and examines what they say, if anything, about our society.

(6) Postmodernism

In this section we will look the concept of postmodernism as a way of understanding the changes that have taken place in society.

- Examining definitions of postmodernism and modernism and exploring the work of theorists such as Lyotard and Jameson
- Outlining characteristics of postmodernism including time-space compression
- Applying the concept of post-modernism to visual communication including film and television

(7) The Politics of the Image

In first year students looked at different theories of the image in the Ways of Seeing, History of Art and Photography modules and possibly in Media Studies

In this module we return to this subject matter principally to study the politics of the image using examples from paintings by Caravaggio to posters of Che Guevara.

We want to explore the links between supposed high culture of art and the world of politics, media and advertisement.

We will focus on a variety of images but in particular compare and contrast the work of artists like Pollock, Picasso, Kandinsky and more contemporary artists like Banksy.

(8) Ideology and hegemony in the media

It can be established that the creators of media products often construct products with predetermined ideologies.

Sometimes audiences and commentators can perceive ideological output in media products that might not have been the intention of the product creators.

It is also clear that in the 21st century world of multimedia, where there has also been a huge growth in the amount of media products being generated, that there are competing

ideological views in the media we consume.

In this topic we examine the processes of how ideology can be ingrained in media

output

and the factors driving ideology in the media

We examine Gramsci's concept of hegemony and other writers interpretations of his work.

For examples we will look at US Film and TV output as well as an examination of Irish film and TV media products.

(9) Cartoon and comic cultures

The role of cartoons and comics in modern culture has changed significantly in recent years. While still being a staple of children's media experience the comic has also developed in the 1960s and 1970s into an underground medium driven by political and social comment while at the same time period we see the emergence of syndicated strips

offering social, political and cultural comment.

Graphic novels emerged in the 1980s giving a new dimension to the cartoon genre while most recently it has been the emergence of cartoon journalists who especially in the US post 911 media environment have provided at times the cutting edge of journalism and a

new dimension to the medium.

In this topic we examine and analyse the development of comic cultures asking is it possible to have graphic or comic journalists.

(10) The Politics of Illusion: How Politicians and News Media originate news

In this topic we look at Lance Bennetts's seminal text *News: The Politics of Illusion* as well as the theories of Druckman and others on news framing and bias and using the recent US presidential and Irish Leinster House elections as examples we examine the methods used to originate news across old and new media in the 21st century.