

EXAM

ST-201: Media and political communication

Spring 2010

TIME: May 26th

TIME: 5 HOURS

Aids: English language Dictionary, or English to native language.

Instruction: Hand in this sheet with your exam papers.

Check out which language pack you have read: Norwegian _____ English ✓

A: Short answer questions, 40% of the grade

Use about one third of your time.

Write approximately one half to one page for each answer

Answer three of the five alternatives

1. Define the term *news frame*
2. Define the term *media effect*
3. What is *agenda-setting*?
4. What is *mediatization, or medialization*?
5. Define the term *propaganda*

B: Essay answers: 60% of the grade

Use approximately two thirds of your time for this part. Write between five and ten pages.

Answer only one question

1. It is often noted that the study of political communication ought to pay more attention to *political culture*. Present and discuss that argument, based on your course readings. Use examples of your own choosing to illustrate your discussion.
2. Journalists tend to look at public relations consultants with skepticism: Why is that so? Answer that question with a particular emphasis on the idea of a "socially constructed reality".
3. Why is freedom of speech such a key issue in democratic society – and how would you say that processes of globalization strengthen or weaken established freedoms of speech?

THANK YOU

ENGLISH
LANGUAGE
PACK

Short Answer #1: Define news frame

A news frame is essentially how a story is told, what the angle is, where the emphasis is placed. This can have extremely large implications due to the fact that the message can be different depending on where one focusses. Therefore, very often, the media is granted the power to define meaning for its audience which is significantly dependent on it for its views of the world.

News frames can be intentional (or strategic) or coincidental (institutional). The first refers to the direct framing of a story according to the interests of the stakeholder's or elites. The second explains that the media industry (structure) does not accommodate lengthy stories with background and rounding out information. Because of this, journalists are pressured to fit their stories into brief, dramatic templates which must be extremely filtered in order to fit the mandate.

Furthermore, 3 types of frames are episodic, thematic, and strategic news frames. Episodic frames report in a story format and typically infer responsibility of actions to individuals. Thematic news frames report in an issue-based discussion that usually infers responsibility to contextual, situational, or societal ~~events~~ factors. Strategic frames typically focus on the motivations of the person depicted and carry a negative, cynical tone.

The implications of frames are large and the effects can be extreme as people are shown exactly how others want them to see events.



Emnekode : ST-201

Kandidatnr. : 1008

Dato : 26.05.2010

Ark nr. : 2 av 10

Short Answer #2 : Define media effect

A media effect is how media influences its audience. Media effects can be divided into two main categories: short term and long term. Short term effects are the direct attempts of the media and politicians to influence views and behavior. Two examples of this can be framing and political advertising. Both have a reason and are designed to effect citizens. Long term effects are gradual and can be referred to in societal terms. One example is the all-encompassing media/news culture of today (Jones). Media has become "the air we breath" that we rely on to inform us and teach us about the world.

One typical objective of media (desired effect) is to have the audience see the story as they wish them to see it. This has large implications concerning power and the ability to "manufacture consent". This has large hegemonic qualities and is often intensified by concentrated global media ownership and close connections to those with power.

Media effects are extremely important for those with power and the "resource poor" to understand. In order to get ones desired effect, they must court the media and present their case in a "news-worthy" way. One thing is clear, the media most definitely affects the public both in the short term and especially in the long term.



Emnekode : ST-201
Kandidatnr. : 1008
Dato : 26.05.2010
Ark nr. : 3 av 10

Short Answer #3: What is agenda-setting?

Agenda-setting is how the media decides what will be covered and what will be not, what is important and what is not. Through the power of agenda-setting, the media can determine which information is included, excluded, emphasized, and elaborated on. More simply simply, according to Maxwell McCombs, agenda-setting can't tell us what to think, but it can tell us what to think about. This is not all-together a bad thing, however. One would have to be incredibly naive to believe that of all the myriad reports and events in the world, one could sift through them and determine what is important. This is impossible, and highlights the dependence of the public on the media's discretion (agenda-setting). But, it would be equally naive to neglect to understand that this power can be misused or abused. In many ways we are at the media's mercy. However, there are alternative, non-mainstream news sources where one can get a different account or agenda.

The abuse of agenda-setting is one of the main methods of hegemony. However it is not such a matter of ~~to~~ right or wrong as much as a "war of words" competing for social dominance (Gans). Those with the most media access are the primary definers, the recognized authority. Secondary definers must become knowledgeable in news values and frame their positions in a "news-worthy" manner - is they are to gain access. According to Gudmund Hernes, those who know the rules of the game best have the best chance of winning.



Emnekode : ST-201
Kandidatnr. : 1008
Dato : 26.05.2010
Ark nr. : 4 av 10

Essay Answer #3: Freedom of Speech in democratized society and globalization

Freedom of speech is such a key issue in democratic society because it is completely necessary if any democracy wishes to be effective and survive. As presented by Brian McNair, liberal democratic theory hopes to grant the individual rights and freedoms against the incursions of the state. However, he also explains that in order for this to work, one needs an informed, rational, and participating citizenry. Without this, democracy loses its legitimacy and ability to function healthily.

In an Ideal Democracy, this responsibility is hefted solely or primarily by the media. In theory, they should inform, contextualize, enable, make news known, make ~~to~~ news available, and be playful (entertain). However, in many ways the media has failed in this regard. This will be elaborated on ~~more seen~~ later.

Another primary responsibility of media is the formidable duty of the "4th Estate." This refers to Media as the 4th branch of government in a way. Their job is to act as watchdogs over the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches and maintain adequate checks and balances on their power (McNair).

Furthermore, the media serves as a "buffer zone" between ^(government) public and ^(citizens) private spheres. This is what McNair and Habermas refer to in their discussion of the "Public Sphere." The term "mediation" can also be drawn into this discussion.



Emnekode : ST-201
Kandidatnr. : 1008
Dato : 26.05.2010
Ark nr. : 5 av 10

Mediation refers to media acting as a middle-man between society and the elites/government/power brokers. The can facilitate the exchange of questions, the communication of interests, and demands. One good example of this in a pure form are political interviews and debates in which the media is the middle ground which encourages the exchange of ideas and communication.

All of these functions of media are enacted in order to preserve freedom of speech and ward off corruption and abuses of power. A strong and independent media translates into a great source of Transparency and Accountability to check the powerful. But what if the media are the powerful people that should be presented against? This is the dilemma of hegemony and manufacturing consent. When this is the case, the legitimacy of the democratic system begins to be compromised. As ^{McNair} Jones puts it, when policy makers and those with power can manufacture consent from the public, it "diminishes the integrity" of the democratic system.

This is one large and important criticism of the media. Over the years, the ownership of media companies has gone to fewer and fewer corporations. In other words less and less people are gaining more and more power and ownership of global media institutions (Gamson). This increases the discretion of the giant media conglomerates as to what they want to show the public. In other words, there is much more opportunity to control frames and agenda-setting now than there was



Emnekode : ST-201
Kandidatnr. : 1008
Dato : 26.05.2010
Ark nr. : 6 av 10

before. Furthermore, it is a common fact that the media are inseparably tied to politics. They have a relationship of mutual dependence in which they utilize each other to fulfil their own interests.

One typical interest of media is profit. As media ownership has become increasingly concentrated commercialization has followed suit. Advertising has become a central theme/factor of news and sometimes takes precedence over the news quality itself. ^{Media} Companies are extremely careful not to alienate themselves from their financial backers. This is just one more filter in which news gets framed.

One typical interest of politicians is gaining support for their policies. This brings us back to the theme of "manufactured consent." In a democracy, a government must get majority approval in order to implement important policies. In order to ~~get~~ reach a majority, they need the voters to approve as well. As politicians and media are linked, politicians use the media to achieve this goal through the methods of framing and agenda-setting. In a way, this is not far from Propaganda. Noam Chomsky is one of the greatest researchers and intellectuals in this field and he outlines 5 filters that contribute to his Propaganda Model, which attempts to explain hegemony and the production of consent. The filters are first the interests of the ownership, ~~and~~ second, the interest of the financial backers, thirdly, the sources, fourthly flak (^{primary and secondary} censorship) and lastly, anti-enemy ideology.



Emnekode : ST-201
Kandidatnr. : 1008
Dato : 26.05.2010
Ark nr. : 7 av 10

Another large criticism of media has been its failure to inform the public of important problems facing our communities. A great, current example of this was the media's failure of their watchdog role concerning the financial sector. Though the media could see the unhealthy business practices in the United States and other countries, they failed to bring it to the societies attention and consequently we walked right into a huge financial crisis spanning multiple years.

Connected to this theme is the media's contagious attitude of cynicism. Many viewers become pessimistic, and worse apathetic as a result of media exposure. This is clearly not beneficial for a democratic society.

Globalization is another contemporary phenomenon that has increased dramatically over the recent years. A few very important reasons for this is modernization, the explosion of new technology, and network societies. It has large implications for politics and freedom of speech.

From a historical perspective, modernization came into being from the industrial revolution, the creation of a large and liberty-demanding middle class, ^{and} the expansion of suffrage and democracy. Coupled with these advances in rights and the freedom of political representation was the proliferation of new technology; and "new media" being of particular importance. After newspaper came radio, then television, then Internet. And internet has revolutionized the



Emnekode : ST-201
Kandidatnr. : 1008
Dato : 26.05.2010
Ark nr. : 8 av 10

Media landscape. Within the Internet category are videos, television, print news, etc. Essentially it combined all of the previous mediums and introduced new ones as well like blogs and social networking. All of these mediums are utilized for political communication and at the same time they connect people. The Internet has greatly reduced the distance factor. Now, anyone with Web access can look up stories about any part of the world and receive information in real time. Moreover, the internet facilitates easy and efficient communication across country lines.

This communication and international connections of families, businesses, media, and governments has led to "network societies" in which everyone is connected in some way and foreign affairs acquire some shade of domestic color. Public approval is no longer only important for politicians to raise in their own country, but also on a global scale. Suddenly, everyone has a stake in almost anything. It has ~~fea~~ raised interest in other countries and cultures and in many cases increased media attention.

A great example of politicians needs to get support globally for their prospective policies is in consideration of wars. Contemporary armed conflicts are as much about communication as about military strategy, insists McNair. Without the support of a country's people, a ~~country~~ democracy will not go to war to fight and risk their lives. Without the support of the people



Emnekode : ST-201
Kandidatnr. : 1008
Dato : 26.05.2010
Ark nr. : 9 av 10

of other countries, other countries will not join the cause and rally to the sides of the battling countries. An example of this was the Iraqi Invasion in where the USA had to act almost unilaterally due to a failure of gaining support for the "War on Terror" and "Weapons of Mass Destruction" in other countries.

So, does globalization strengthen or weaken freedoms of speech? The answer to this question is a two-sided coin. There are many more channels and mediums for the powerful to use to gain access to society. Because abuses of the media exist, it is for sure that many will use propaganda to exercise hegemony over subordinates by means of framing and agenda-setting. This access to nearly every individual on a daily basis is unprecedented.

We currently live in a medialized news culture where we view multiple mediums of media a day whether it be TV, radio, Internet, blogs, or social media networking sights. According to Jones, these are all aspects of political engagement and it is extremely easy for politicians and media to get our attention. In view of this, it is not always a bad thing.

On the contrary, globalization and new media can strengthen freedoms of speech by increasing the channels and mediums available to the "counter-hegemony" (Banitz and Schobel). The internet is conducive to organizing grassroots movements and giving a voice to secondary definers that have trouble gaining mainstream media access due to



Emnekode : ST-201
Kandidatnr. : 1008
Dato : 26.05.2010
Ark nr. : 10 av 10

the mainstream media's institutional dependence on recognized authority, therefore, the primary definers. Moreover, new media and globalization can be utilized for social revolutions as they have been in Mexico and the Philippines (Wallis)

In conclusion, freedom of speech is extremely important because of its centrality to maintaining democracy. In regards to globalization, freedoms of speech can be weakened due to the increasing number of mediums in which hegemony can be utilized in framing news for society. Although this is true, the proliferation of media channels also lends accessibility to the previously excluded interest groups. They can combat the hegemony and organize under the umbrella of new media. Because the more channels are invented for political communication, the more opportunities there will be for the opposition, and we can hope that Media can help ~~facilitate~~ safeguard freedom of speech and democracy as the globalization process continues.