

# Chapter 1

September 15, 2015 9:37 PM

## **Media in an Ever-Changing Communications Universe**

- Media and communication systems are central to our understanding of the world and how we coordinate our actions within it
  - Twitter to Google, newspapers to TV, etc.
- In 2009, Canadians spent 38 hours per week watching TV or online, 8.9 hours listening to the radio, 2.9 hours reading the newspaper, and 1.4 hours reading magazines, a total of 50 hours of media consumption per week
- Canada is 1st place in the world in internet consumption
  - Canadians spend an average of 43.5 hours, almost double the global average of 23.1
- Government is the single largest advertiser, and use various forms of media to reach out to the citizens
- Primary way for businesses to communicate with their customers
- Key agent to globalization
  - Central vehicle for controlling the world economy and the movement of goods and services around the world (coordinating centres of production in China with markets in Canada)
- Although the internet is a large industry now, it is still not replacing traditional forms of media, but rather incorporating it
  - Instead, traditional forms of media like music, film, news and more actually make a large portion of the internet's traffic
  - Other forms of media are adapting to the presence of the internet (When Napster and ThePirateBay were the most popular ways to download music, people thought that the industry of buying music would be dead. Instead, we have markets like iTunes that have adapted to the internet)
  - When blogging became popular, it seemed like it was going to be the new form of newspapers. Instead, newspapers went online as well and also a lot of bloggers use information from newspapers to blog
  - Although online video content has become very large, TV stations have found a way to distribute around the web and also attract people to continue to watch TV

# Lecture 2

September 16, 2015 5:02 PM

## MEDIA AND SOCIETY

- Why study communication?
- Why study mass communication?
  - Communication has been very vital in the development of humankind
- Gasher and Co. promote "critical perspective" on communication
  - Not necessarily negative
  - Comprehensive approach
- **Communication:** the exchange of information
  - Gasher: "A 'social' action that involves two or more people in a process of creating or sending and receiving or interpreting a message or idea"
- What do we call those various means of which we communicate?
  - Media (plural of medium)
    - Any vehicle or technology that conveys information
    - A means by which something is communicated or expressed
    - Ex. Languages, pictures, photographs, and musical instruments
- What are the mass media?
  - When we speak of "the media", we're speaking of the mass media
    - Newspapers, magazines, TV, etc.
- What is mass communication? (p. 13-14)
  - Traditionally, its study has focused on the major mass media
- What are the new media (p. 16)
  - First became a phrase used in the 70s and 80s, but used the most during the 90s
  - "Technologies, practices and institutions designed to facilitate broad participation..."
- Shannon and Weaver, 1949
- Harold Lasswell, 1948
- Communication has been vital to Canada due to the large country and small population
  - Canada has long been a leader in communication studies

# Lecture 3

September 23, 2015 4:50 PM

## Print Revolution

- Gutenberg didn't invent printing in 1454
  - He invented the movable type printing press
    - Letters are little blocks that can be put together, and then ink is rolled onto the letters and put on a page
  - Able to put this technology together as he was a metal smith
- Helped bring the church's stronghold on knowledge
- More encouragement to learn how to read
  - With actual content to read, it gives the public a reason to learn how to read
- Encouraged people to codify language
  - With so many different dialects, having one codified language allowed the rise of a modernized language, and allowed one language to take over
- \*Reformation
- Freedom of the Press: belief that the press should be able to operate separate from the church and state
  - Staple law in western democratic countries

## Citizen Kane

- Newspapers were a large part of communication
- Kane is a young rich man who got his fortune from his mother's mine
  - Money takes him away from his family to New York
- He chose to run newspapers
  - Thought it would be fun
  - Recognizes that running a newspaper can help grow your influence and power
  - Looking to become an important figure in American culture
- Kane is based off of William Randolph Hearst

# Lecture 4

September 30, 2015 4:59 PM

## Media: Economics and Ownership

- Mass media form a crucial part of the economy
- They make up a large sector of the economy
  - Employ vast number of people
- Also serve as an engine of the larger economy
  - Promoting consumerism, investment, etc.
  - Providing business world with communication tools
  
- Allocation of resources
  - Labour
    - Human resources required
      - Some types of media require hundreds, even thousands of workers (the amount of people that it took to make a large budget film)
      - Some types require small numbers of people (blogs)
        - ◆ The video game "No Man Sky", backed by Sony, is a virtual universe with 18 quintillion planets, but they only had 4 people at the beginning of the project's life
  - Technology
    - Some types of media requires a great deal of technology (big-budget film, internet startup, etc.)
    - Other relatively low tech and DIY methods (Harry Potter written on napkins)
  - Capital
    - Money, of course
    - Also, inv
  - Material resources
    - Media makes use of material resources to reach audiences (paper, ink, fuel, etc.)
    - Digital media have made possible lower costs for newspapers
  
- Two major competing models of media ownership
  - Private ownership
  - Public ownership
- An example that straddles both is a public-private ownership
- The development of modern media and development of modern capitalism are closely tied
  - These printing operations were often fiercely independent
  - Tried to operate free of interference from church and government

## Private Ownership

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# Lecture 5

October 7, 2015 4:57 PM

## **Theoretical Perspectives on Media Content**

- The process of taking ideas and putting it into a mediumk
- Although a photograph is taken, it is not the physical object (Niagara Falls)
  - Painting of the falls is the artists rendition of the falls
  - The medium doesn't represent the idea fully (a photo of the falls doesn't have the mist, etc.)
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# Chapter 2 - Communication: Social and Cultural Forms

November 16, 2015 7:55 PM

## INTRODUCTION

- Considers the nature of the relationships between communication, society and culture

## SOCIETY, CULTURE AND MEDIA

- The media are vital elements of both **society** and **culture**

# Chapter 4 - Theoretical Perspectives on Media Content

November 16, 2015 8:05 PM

## REPRESENTATION AND SIGNIFICATION

- When we study communication (specifically communication content), we are generally studying practises or processes of **representation**
  - **Representation:** the act of putting ideas into words, paintings, sculpture, film, plays, television programs or any other medium of communication.
    - A picture of a plane crash is not the plane crash itself, but a re-representation of the event
    - A map is a re-representation of the place it seeks to describe
    - Even a live television broadcast of a sporting event is not the actual event, but rather a series of carefully chosen and constructed images, camera angles, and commentary that represent the event
  - Representations are, to a large part, simplifications and interpretations of objects and events as a person describes
- When a person puts their idea into any medium of communication, a person selects certain elements of reality to describe the object, event, person or situation they wish to represent
- The person receiving that communication then uses what he or she knows of what is described and what he or she knows of the system of representation - most often language - to come to an understanding of what was encoded by the sender
- A more rigorous way of thinking about representation is as a process of signification
  - **Signification:** using signs to make a meaning
  - **Sign:** anything with a meaning, a word, an image, a sound, a painting, even things themselves like dark clouds on the horizon
- Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure-sometimes considered the founder of **semiotics** or the science of signs posited that signs are composed of 2 components: the signifier and signified
  - **Signifier:** the thing that we see, hear or feel: the image on the screen, sounds or small bumps on paper
  - **Signified:** idea or mental concept we draw from those signifiers: the ideas in a blog, music, or word written in Braille
- The **process of signification** is the **process of making meaning**
- C.S Peirce categorized signs into three different types: icon, index and symbol
  - Maps and photographs are both **icons**
  - An **index** is related to the object it represents (smoke is an index of fire, sneeze is an index of a cold or allergy or irritant)
  - A **symbol** is a sign that bears no direct resemblance of what it represents (words are symbols, as is the image of an apple when it is used to represent something other than the fruit)

## Intertextuality, Polysemy, and the Indeterminacy of Representation

- **Indeterminacy of Representation:** idea that a sign can represent or signify more than one thing
  - The image of a sporty SUV might represent luxury, adventure or sex appeal and to others, environmental disaster
  - The sound of falling rain might signify a soothing summer evening or an impending flood
- The meaning of any sign is not guaranteed but is dependent on the context
- Signs do not exist in isolation, but are explicitly or implicitly part of larger texts or sets of signs and symbols
  - Often, images of SUV advertisements sees SUVs portrayed as a part of mountain adventures or happy family outings
- The meaning of these signs is itself given from by its relation to other signs in the context of a larger symbolic system
- When confronted with such images and sounds without such grounding, to make a meaning out of them we will often supply our own context, drawn from memory and imagination
- The idea that meaning is made in the context of larger symbolic systems draws our attention to two other important elements of the process of signification
  - **Intertextuality:** refers to the meaning we make of one text depending on the meaning we have

- drawn from other sets of signs we have encountered
  - Meaning is grounded in the relationships we find between different texts
  - Our understanding of the ad for the SUV as a family vehicle is dependent on our combining knowledge of the SUV as a mode of transportation and the representation of the people in the image as a family
    - Folding both signifiers together (SUV and happy family) creates the signified "family vehicle"
    - Also, folding SUVs and vehicle exhaust can lead to the signified that SUVs are a factor of global warming
  - Second, making meaning is an active process
    - Making the connection between the signifier and signified, joining past and present experiences requires active even though sometimes the meaning seems very obvious and natural, requires active work
    - We make or create meaning
- Signs are polysemic because they can have many different interpretations
  - **Polysemic:** many meanings
  - Different types or levels of meanings drawn may be denotative and connotative
    - **Denotative:** meaning refers to the literal or most obvious interpretation of the sign
    - **Connotative:** meaning refers to the range of other, less obvious or more subjective meanings that may be drawn
- Advertisements exemplify the purposive use of signs to create different levels of meaning
  - By using seemingly "ordinary" women in their ads instead of models that generally represent the standards of beauty in soap and cosmetic advertising, the Dove Real Beauty Campaign apparently attempts to re-signify the usual advertising meaning of beauty
- Signs being polysemic highlights the importance of context for the creation and interpretation of meaning
  - Illustrates **the indeterminacy of representation**
    - On one hand, the meaning of the signs and the messages of which they are a part is indeterminate because there is an indeterminable number of ways of representing an object, etc. as another representation can always be made
    - On the other hand, they are indeterminate because there is no necessary correspondence between the meaning and the encoded in a particular message by the sender and that decoded by the receiver
    - Either way, each representation is grounded in a specific context as the person and/or medium doing the representing works to guide the audience or receiver of the message towards a specific or preferred meaning
- Many factors determining polysemy, or the grounded indeterminacy of representation
  - Different media provide different systems for making meaning
  - One system of representation cannot encompass the full spectrum of the meaning of another
    - A painting cannot be fully translated into a prose essay or even poetry
  - A multiplicity of meanings can be generated within one medium, and meaning can be generated within the multiplicity of media
- Polysemy and indeterminacy of representation focus more on rhetoric and hermeneutics
  - **Rhetoric:** how things are said
  - **Hermeneutics:** how things are interpreted

### Communication Theory as Social Theory

- What is social theory?
  - A representative of the social world; a set of ideas about how the world is organized and functions
  - While we have ideas of how the world works, our assumptions are fragmentary and contradictory



# Lecture 5: Theoretical Perspectives on Audiences

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## Theoretical Perspectives on Audiences

- Early media study started just after WW1
  - Many believed that the media were capable of having direct effects of human behaviour/attitudes
  - This is the beginning of media effects research
- Ivan Pavlov: Russian physiologist
  - Dogs can be trained to salivate when an action is associated with feeding time (Pavlov called this a conditioned reflex)

## Media Effects

- Early media theorists believed effect of media on audiences was comparable to a hypodermic needle
  - Audience was considered passive
  - The media would inject ideas into the audience, and the audience was thought to be incapable of resistance
  - The media owner/producer is seen as the doctor, the needle is the medium and the media content is the stimulus
  - Model has not been used for decades

## After Media Effects

- **Agenda Setting Model** (Bernard Cohen)
  - The media does not tell the audience what to think, but rather what to think about when thinking about a subject, which can lead audiences to the media's preferred meaning
- **Cultivation Analysis Model** (George Gerbner)
  - Media has the ability to cultivate certain attitudes in audiences towards specific topics
  - Model usually applied to US television
- **Uses and Gratification Model**
  - Asks "what does the audience do with the media?"
  - Audience is active, not passive
  - How do audiences put media to use? And what are the forms of gratification that audiences get from the media?

## British Cultural Studies

- Early Marxist approaches to media viewed media as a negative force
- From the 1950s, the Marxist approach to media changed
  - Didn't condemn all media as negative
  - Called this new field Cultural Studies
- 50s and 60s focused mostly on the working class, with the 70s focusing more on working class women and race
- Working class weren't necessarily manipulated by mass media, and were often taking popular culture and manipulating it themselves
- Subculture studies
  - Working class had developed their own specific rites & rituals in response to popular music (mods & rockers in the '50s and '60s & punk rockers in the '70s)
  - Masses were not seen as massive dupes, but rather as people that can form their own culture including true alternatives to the dominant culture

- What is Ideology?
  - A system of ideas and ideals, especially one that forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy (e.g., fascism, neo-liberalism, socialism, monarchism, etc.)
  - The ideas, beliefs, values, and manner of thinking characteristic of a group, social class, or individual (e.g., monotheism, bourgeois ideology, etc.)
  - Ideology generally seems natural when you're a part of that culture, when in fact these ideas, beliefs, values, and attitudes are historical
- \*Nuclear Family\* and its progression through the decades

# Lecture 6: Policy

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## Communications Policy

- What is communications policy?
  - rules & regulations that guide and control realm of mass communication
    - Ensure fairness & competition
    - Ensure system runs effectively
    - Maintain responsibility to the public
- In Canada, communications policy decisions are generally the product of government reports that involve public consultation
- Canadian Radio-Television & Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is the agency most responsible for creating and enforcing communication policies in Canada
- Communications policy was originally handled on country-by-country basis
  - Expanded markets + Age of Nationalism bring about era of multilateral/international agreements
- Intellectual property is a huge part of policy
- What is Intellectual Property?
  - A work or design that involves human creativity, such as a manuscript, an invention, or a design, to which one has rights and for which one may apply for copyright, for a patent, or for a trademark
- U.S. establishes first copyright law in 1790, but does not sign international agreement on copyright until 1988
  - The U.S. were notorious for piracy in the 19th century (ironic how they are the current copyright cops with the given history \*GASHER\*)
- Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting (1929)
  - Otherwise recognized as the Aird Commission
  - Turned radio into government institution
  - With Canadian radio dominated by local and privately owned stations, the RCRB wanted to break this system up and provide large and publically owned radio stations
  - By doing so, Canada set an important precedent on the government and their interaction in media, specifically radio
  - Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission created (1932)
    - CRBC is tasked with fostering national unity
    - The goal: inform citizens on national issues & build national character
    - Began hockey broadcasts in 1933
  - Before Aird Commission, Canadian radio was completely unregulated and many complaints took place including signal interference, lack of Canadian culture on the stations, and more
  - Opposed to direct advertising to pay for programming
    - Saw this as crass and very American
    - Tolerated some indirect advertising (sponsorships)
    - Wanted to follow precedent set by the British and BBC
- Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (1949-1951)
  - Otherwise known as The Massey Commission
  - Conducted the most thorough study on Canadian Culture
    - Studied all aspects of culture: museums, libraries, archives, universities, etc., in addition to mass media
  - Founded that culture in Canada should promote “the national interest”
  - Studied TV as a new medium with commercial TV taking off in the U.S., and TV being in its infancy in Canada
  - Recommended that TV follow the same model as radio

- Recommended that Canada should focus on government control, more emphasis on Canadian content, and avoid crass commercialization & protect against U.S. cultural imperialism
  - When discussing the language issue: "Canadianism" depends on embrace of both founding cultures
  - CBC takes over television broadcasting in 1952
- Royal Commission on Broadcasting (1956-1957)
  - Also known as The Fowler Commission
  - Result of the Massey Commission recommended broadcasting be revisited within a few years
  - Is there a need for state regulation of broadcasting in Canada? Fowler Commission said yes!
  - In defense of state regulation:
    - Limited # of frequencies require licensing system
    - Broadcasting too powerful to let the market rule
    - Threat of excess commercialism without government regulation
    - Regulation is the only way to guarantee Canadian content
  - Canadian Content rules go into effect, monitored by Board of Broadcast Governors (1959)
- Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee (1981-1982)
  - Referred to as The Applebaum-Hébert Committee
  - Marks major break from previous cultural policy in Canada
  - Went against many of the other commissions and their findings, saying that it should allow for more self-regulation for the public companies, to place limits on the government's involvement in culture, and insisted that culture should not be overly dependent on single-source funding
  - Rejects three pillars of 20th-c. Canadian cultural policy
    - Mass communication should serve "the national interest"
    - Mass media should avoid wholesale commercialization
    - American media is a force of cultural imperialism that must be resisted

## **1920s Canadian Cinema**

- Challenges facing Canadian filmmaking:
  - Huge nation with small & widely dispersed population
  - Lacking finances & filmmaking expertise of more powerful nations
  - Shares border w/ economic & filmmaking powerhouse
  - Screens controlled by interests in NYC & Los Angeles
  - Difficult getting Canadian films screened even in Canada
- National Film Board of Canada formed in 1939
  - NFB wartime documentaries & style:
    - Clear messages & persuasive arguments, with powerful omniscient narration ("Voice of God")
    - Strong visuals, bold graphics, effective editing, stirring music
- John Grierson named first commissioner
  - Seen as the father of the documentary movement in the English speaking world
  - Fascinated by power & influence of mass media
    - Realized that mass media can be detrimental to the masses, but can also help shape a public opinion

# Lecture 7: Journalism

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## Journalism & Content Production

- Journalism is a form of content that is produced
- News is generally presented in a story-like format
  - A news report will include characters, conflicts between different parties
- News stories follow a widespread formula, the inverted pyramid
  - The Lead: introduction & most important part of the article
  - The body: most interesting facts & colourful details
  - The bottom of the story: least essential information; could be trimmed, if need be, and article would retain meaning
- News stories are not simple reflections of reality
  - Often compared to a mirror
  - \*GASHER\*: News stories never simply never "mirror" reality
- If this representation of the world is not 100% accurate, where are the distortions coming from?
  - The journalists?
  - The newsroom?
  - The sources?
  - The management?
  - Somewhere else?
- \*GASHER\* Another metaphor that's used to describe journalism is "gathering"
  - Journalists just go and "gather" the information, and overlook the intensive process of selection that comes with news production
- Melvin Mencher's 7 criteria of newsworthiness:
  - Timeliness
  - Impact
  - Prominence
  - Proximity
  - Conflict
  - Peculiarity
  - Currency
- David Manning White
  - Production process & "gates"
  - Gatekeeping in the newsroom
  - Extensive filtering operation
  - "Mr. Gates"
    - Only selected 1 out of 10 stories
    - Selection process was idiosyncratic
  - Revealed what news got covered, but not how it was covered
- For instance, every news organization establishes a brand
  - What is "The New York Times" brand?
    - Most serious mass-circulation newspaper in U.S.
    - Most storied newspaper in America
    - America's "newspaper of record"
    - "the Times effect"
- Two types of newspapers:
  - Tabloids
    - Focus on sensationalism, attention-grabbing photos & screaming headlines
    - Format is easy for consumers to handle and digest
    - Tabloid: originally a brand name for a pill that was easy to digest
  - Broadsheets

- Focuses on "hard news" (news that is substantial and involves committed journalism)
  - Focuses on politics and foreign affairs
  - Format demands time and attention
- \*GASHER\* prefers the metaphor of "the frame" when it comes to describing news-making process
  - "through words, images, sounds and story themes, journalists 'frame' reality"
    - Decide what to leave out
    - How to depict, what to emphasize, whose voices are heard, what meanings are taken away
  - Implies limits to what can be reported
  - More honest metaphor
- \*GASHER\* journalism's "fundamental guiding ideal": the quest for the truth
  - Also the freedom of the press
  - The right to operate without interference
- The problem of objectivity
  - Most believe that journalists should perform their duties "objectively"
    - How do we achieve true objectivity?
    - How do we overcome our subjective selves?
  - Complete objectivity/subjectivity are unattainable extremes
  - Journalists try to address this issue by being fair and balanced
    - Telling both sides of the story is common
- Two important legal issues related to journalism:
  - Libel
    - "The publication or broadcasting of 'a false and damaging statement.' Such a statement must be seen to discredit or lower the public perception of an individual, corporation, labour union, or any other 'legal entity.'"
  - Contempt of court
    - Offense of being disobedient or disrespectful to a court and its officers in the form of behaviour that defies authority, justice and the dignity of the court

# Lecture 8: Technology

November 18, 2015 9:32 AM

## Technology

- Techne, meaning art, craft or skill in Latin
- Langdon Winner: Technology involves 3 factors
  - Pieces of apparatus
  - Techniques of operation
  - Social institutions that are sites of technical activities
- Instrumentalism:
  - Technology is viewed as value-neutral tool meant to serve a purpose
    - \*GASHER\* believes this view is naïve
    - Technologies of all kinds have important implications
- Technological Determinism
  - Reductionist theory that states technology helps shape social structure and cultural values of a society
- Substantivism
  - Rather than us controlling technology, it is controlling us
  - Technological advancements costs a price - while something is gained, something is also lost
  - Technological advancement raises more problems than it solves
- Constructivism
  - Technology arises within and under control of a society
- In the beginning: “the Colossus era”
  - Four trends in computing between 1940s and 1970s
    - Increased power
    - Decreased size
    - Decreased cost
    - Increased simplicity
  - Resulted in the personal computer era
- The PC revolution
  - In the 70s, computers were small enough to fit on a desktop, and people had fantasies of computers becoming widespread in a similar fashion to TV
    - TVs went from obscurity to
  - Big corporations (IBM) began to expand their market to small businesses and houses
  - Garage operations (Apple) began to help with the advancement of making the computer more personal