**Media Theory Booklet 1 – The Basics**

See also <http://www.slideshare.net/jonmeier/a2-media-theory-part-1>

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| **Hypodermic Needle Model**  The idea that media can affect audiences’ **behaviour and attitudes.**  Also called **Magic Bullet Theory.** One of the main **MEDIA EFFECTS** models.  Goes back to **Behaviourist theories** in psychology and also the ideas of the **Frankfurt School** (see below).  Implies audiences are **passive** and easily influenced.  Some validity in terms of propaganda and advertising.  Links between media and violence are not proved (**Bandura’s Bobo Doll** experiment 1960s was not conclusive).  **War of the Worlds** radio broadcast 1938 caused mass panic as it was so realistic.  Banning of films like **Clockwork Orange** (Kubrick, 1971) following reports of attacks on tramps. Again no clear link.  Jamie Bulger murder 1993 (suggested link with Child’s Play 3).  Prompt: injection of a media message drug | **Hypodermic Needle Model**  Space here for notes, diagrams & EXAMPLES |
| **Cultivation Theory (George Gerbner)**  The idea that, over a period of time, prolonged exposure to media violence produces (‘cultivates’) a **numbing** effect – **desensitizes** audiences.  Prompt: dentist’s injection | **Cultivation Theory** |
| **Mean World Syndrome (George Gerbner)**  Excessive TV watching leads to a pessimistic, negative view of the world.  1960s Research concentrated on negative TV content: news and drama.  Prompt: nasty TV | **Mean World Syndrome** |
| **Moral panics (Stanley Cohen) ‘Folk Devils & Moral Panics’ 1972**  Popular media, especially the populist tabloid press, create a falsely negative view of the world, spreading fear and insecurity.  They create a sense of panic and hysteria based on a **narrative of society’s moral decline** and **blame minority groups** for this decline.  Leads to **scapegoating** of minority, weak and vulnerable groups in society.  Creates division and **demand for firmer laws.** Thisstrengthens the position of those already in power and preserves **the status quo** (=keeps things the way they are).  **Moral panics are hegemonic:** the result is thatpower remains in the hands of the authorities and corporate wealth is protected. See below for **hegemony.**  Prompt: finger of blame | **Moral panics** |
| **Gatekeeping**  In traditional media, **editors and proprietors** (owners) decided on media content. Like nightclub security staff, they decided who to allow in. With digital media, the power of gatekeepers has been weakened as anyone can publish. Digital media is generally more **democratic**, traditional media was more **hegemonic**. Gatekeepers were often more concerned more about **protecting their own corporate interests** than genuinely informing or entertaining the public. See Chomsky’s **Propaganda Model** below.  Prompt: club security staff | **Gatekeeping** |

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| **Uses & Gratifications Model (Blumler & Katz)**  Active audience model  Audiences actively use media for 4 main purposes **(PIES):**  **Personal identity**: the media we consume defines who we are. Sometimes called *surveillance* or *self-scrutiny*.  **Information**: media helps us to find information.  **Entertainment**: provides pleasure (**GRATIFICATION)**  **Social interaction**: media helps us get on with similar people.  Prompt: lovely PIES | **Uses & Gratifications Model** |
| **Audience Theory**  (RECEPTION DEBATES – the way audiences receive media)  Main opposing debates are:  **Hypodermic Needle Model** v **Uses & Gratifications Model.**  **Mass audiences** are a feature of the traditional old-fashioned media landscape when there was less choice.  Modern audiences are **fragmented.**  Audiences can also be **passive** or **active** in the way they engage with media products.  We can also talk about **mass v niche** audiences.  Mass audiences are also **mainstream** audiences.  Modern audiences are more active in terms of **choosing** media content and also **producing** it themselves (UGC – user generated content)  A useful way to divide audience-types for analysis is **GEARS**:  **Gender** (and sexual orientation), **ethnicity** (race & religion), **age, region** (and nationality), **socio-economic group** (class) | **GEARS**  **FRAGMENTATION**  **RECEPTION DEBATES**  **ACTIVE v PASSIVE**  **MASS v NICHE** |
| **Y&R’s 4Cs model**  Advertising agency **Young and Rubicam** devised a segmentation model for analysing global audiences. This is known as the **Cross-Cultural Consumer Categorization (4Cs) model**. The main divisions are –**MARS-:**  **Mainstreamers, Aspirers, Reformers, Succeeders**  You can have fun deciding where your family fit in and which products & brands suit each category (cars, chocolate bars, supermarkets, clothes shops etc)  Prompt: Y&Rs mainstreamers like Mars bars | **Y&R’s 4Cs model** |
| **Flow Theory (2 Step Flow)**  The way information flows between media, **opinion leaders** and the public. This flow does not just go one way. Media influences the public but is also **influenced by** the public. It has to respond to what the public want, otherwise it would not sell. Politicians (opinion leaders) have to **respond to** the media and cannot simply dominate the media. Nowadays, opinion leaders are just as likely to be **celebrities and personalities**, not just politicians or religious leaders.  Shows the importance of media in shaping ideas and messages.  Media can **affect** as well as **reflect** society.  Prompt: a river flows from media to the people via opinion leaders & back again! | **Flow Theory (2 Step Flow)** |

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| **Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs**  Maslow pyramid of needs links with the U&G model.  Human interaction is based on certain needs, ranging from basic survival needs at the bottom of the hierarchy pyramid, to **self-fulfilment/ self-actualization** at the top. The promise of reaching goals, and fulfilling aspirations is a key part of media advertising, as well as the reward incentives of computer games.  The levels of the hierarchy from the bottom up are:  **survival (physiological) needs, safety needs, emotional needs, esteem needs, self-actualization.**  Prompt: Maslow climbing his pyramid towards his goal | **Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs** |
| **Dyer’s Utopian Pleasures Model –** also called **Utopian Solutions Model** entertainment = escape, distraction, fantasy. Pleasure = GRATIFICATION  Richard Dyer. **Utopia** = an ideal, perfect world. Opposite of **dystopia**.  Media provides **escape from the dull routine of everyday life**.  Routine is replaced by **variety**.  Dullness & dreariness are replaced by excitement & **intensity**  Scarcity by **abundance**.  Isolation/fragmentation by community, **togetherness**.  Prompt: Dyer’s utopian solutions for dire lives. | **Dyer’s Utopian Pleasures Model** |
| **Encoding /decoding model (Stuart Hall)**  meaning is **encoded (‘constructed’)** **by producers** and **decoded by audiences.**  A code implies that both sides understand the ‘rules of the game’.  Prompt: transmitting & receiving codes | **Encoding /decoding model** |

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| **Genre –** a category or style of film, music etc.  Genre can be **pure** or **hybrid**.  A genre is characterized by particular **generic codes and conventions** which make it easily recognisable. This is important for marketing purposes; a product must have a particular character so that it appeals to its **target** **demographic** (its intended audience).  Modern genre is becoming increasingly **hybrid** (mixed) to appeal to a wider audience. Mixed styles appeal to wider audiences.  Modern genre relies on a process of **repetition and variation** (Neale): some conventions stay the same and some are different.  Texts can **conform to** (follow) or they can **subvert** (disobey) expected conventions.  Prompt: genre labels in a vinyl record store | **Genre** |
| **Iconography** is a set of objects **(visual signifiers)** associated with a particular genre. It allows the genre to be quickly recognized. Iconography is an important aspect of **media representations**.  Prompt: haunted house fairground ride | **Iconography** |

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| **Representations**  Media representations are never neutral. (Even live sports & music events involve multi-camera set ups and mixing). They are always **deliberately and artificially constructed** to communicate a message, appeal to an audience, or convey a mood, emotion or idea. Media representations are a projection of one person’s or one group’s vision, therefore personalised and **subjective**.  **There is no representation without construction** (Daniel Chandler)  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  A **stereotype** is a widely-held but oversimplified representation of a particular type of person.  Traditional media often uses stereotypes because they are convenient short-cuts to convey meaning to audiences.  A **countertype** is a representation which contradicts the stereotype.    Prompt: media models of real things are constructed like Lego | **Representations** |
| **Visual signifiers**  The media word for objects. Every object in a media text is included for a purpose. The process of **mediation** (filtering reality to create a media text) involves deliberate **construction and manipulation of representations**. There is no accidental representation. **All representations** are **constructed** to **communicate a message** or to **convey an idea.**  Prompt: no media object is neutral | **Visual signifiers** |

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| **Denotation and connotation**  According to **Roland Barthes,** objects (signifiers) have two levels of meaning: **Denotation** is the **basic level** of meaning. An image of a rose **denotes** a sweet-smelling flower.  **Connotation** is the deeper, **symbolic level** of meaning. An image of a rose also **connotes** love.  Prompt: rose | **Denotation, connotation** |
| **Action & enigma codes**  **Roland Barthes** also pointed out that texts such as films are constructed using certain accepted ‘codes’ (=techniques) to communicate action **(action codes)** and codes **(enigma codes)** to communicate mystery. Action codes could include car chases, fast-paced music, fast straight-cutting. **Enigma codes** could include shadows, unnamed characters. These codes are recognized and accepted by audiences.  Prompt: Sherlock likes action & enigmas | **Action & enigma codes** |
| **Mediation**  The process of **filtering, selecting, deleting, distorting** which happens when a media text is produced. Reality is **re-presented** in a certain way in order to **communicate a message and appeal to a certain demographic**. Mediation is the act of **intervention** between text and reality.  Prompt: media fairground’s hall of mirrors – distortion & fun! | **Mediation** |

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| **Anchoring**  The process of **pinning down meaning**. e.g. a caption on a photo. This avoids ambiguity & polysemy.\*  Ensures a ‘**dominant reading’** (Stuart Hall) – the meaning intended by the producer. Also called the hegemonic reading – see below,  **\*Polysemy means ‘multiple meanings’.** This tends to be avoided in popular media forms (pop music, tabloid newspapers, blockbuster action films)  Prompt: an anchor fixes meaning so it doesn’t drift away. | **Anchoring** |

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| **Three readings (Stuart Hall)**  The way the audience understands, interprets (‘reads’) a text.  1) Mostly we interpret a text in the way intended by the producer  This is the **intended, dominant or hegemonic meaning** (the more obvious the message, the clearer the dominant reading).  2) Sometimes we misinterpret a text, fail to understand its meaning, we don’t get the point or don’t get the joke. This is the **oppositional reading.** e.g. thinking Borat is racist whereas he’s actually trying to expose the stupidity of racist people. Different audiences e.g. older people will often respond with an oppositional reading to texts aimed at younger audiences.  3) Often our understanding of a text’s purpose is somewhere between the dominant and oppositional reading. This is called the **negotiated reading**.  Prompt: Stuart Hall has 3 books | **Three readings** |

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| **Auteur theory**  The film **director** rather than the producer has complete control over the creative process of making a film. In traditional Hollywood films, the producers had most of the control. Film-making was a commercial rather than an artistic process. This balance shifted more towards directors with the influence of French New Wave and art house films of the 1960s. **Auteur directors** emerged such as **Alfred Hitchcock** and **Stanley Kubrick**. Nowadays certain directors are known as ‘auteur’ directors and respected for their distinctive style e.g. Tarantino, the Coen brothers, Woody Allen, Tim Burton. Of course **commercial success** is still a major consideration in funding a film, given the astronomically huge budgets involved.  Prompt: Auteurs are artists. Leave them alone! | **Auteur theory** |

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| **BBC & Public Service Broadcasting**  In the UK, the BBC is the main PSB. Public service Broadcaster. It receives money from the government via the licence fee, NOT from advertising revenue. It is **non-commercial** although it also makes a lot of money from selling programmes and formats abroad.  The BBC’s Public Service ‘remit’ (duty) is to **inform, educate and entertain**.  It must also follow a **diversity agenda i.e. to reflect the full ethnic, regional, age, gender and disability diversity** of the UK.  The BBC is one of the oldest, largest and most respected broadcasters in the world. It is supposed to be **impartial** (free of bias and government interference). It is sometimes criticised for being too close to the government, the Royal Family. London and the South of England.  It is also criticised for becoming too focussed on ‘dumbed down’ mass entertainment in order to attract audiences.  Prompt: BBC- 3 letters, 3 main roles | **PSBs** |
| **Globalisation**  the idea that media content is distributed and consumed across the world. Often criticised for being dominated by Western, especially US, ideologies **(‘cultural imperialism’).**  **Coca-colonization, the West vs the Rest.**  However there are examples of the cultural flow going from east to west: e.g. Bollywood, Martial Arts Films, Pokemon, Anime and Manga.  **Marshall McLuhan** was a cultural commentator who in the 1960s coined the term ‘**global village’** to describe the way technology and communication were making the world smaller.  Prompt: Simpsons conquers the world | **Globalisation** |
| **Useful mnemonics**  Key media concepts: RAILING  REPRESENTIONS, AUDIENCES, INSTITUTIONS & INDUSTRIES, LANGUAGE, IDEOLOGIES, NARRATIVE, GENRE  Moving image language forms codes & conventions: MCESS  MISE EN SCÈNE, CAMERAWORK/CINEMATOGRAPHY, EDITING, SPECIAL EFFECTS, SOUND  Camerawork: CAMPS  COMPOSITION & FRAMING, ANGLE, MOVEMENT, POSITION, SHOT  Print media codes & conventions: VTTI (useful for looking at magazine pages)  VISUAL, TYPOGRAPHICAL, TEXTUAL, INSTITUTIONAL | **Useful mnemonics** |

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| **Media Industries & Institutions**  Media industries cover: Producers, regulators, distributors, promoters, monitors e.g. BARB, RAJAR, BBFC, BBC, OFCOM, Netflix, News Corporation, Disney  **Convergence**: content and hardware merging into one. Websites usually contain multi-platform/multimedia content (print, audio, photos, video). Phones, TVs and games consoles are all ‘one-box’ multi-purpose devices.  **Synergy:** companies combining their work to maximize profit.  **Brand loyalty:** when audience-consumers stick to one brand. Media companies try to generate brand loyalty. This is hard as there is so much choice and audiences are so diverse and fragmented.  **Brand identity/values:** a media company will try to create a distinct identity which is easily recognizable in terms of style and content. They will aim to develop a **USP (unique selling point).** Involves branding, tagline, logo etc  **Product positioning** – a media company will develop products to appeal to a specific audience. Content can also be used by media companies to ‘position the audience’, attracting certain demographics, thereby increasing income and attracting advertising revenue.  There are strong links between media production and advertising. Media companies will use various strategies to promote products alongside their creative output (all these are also examples of **synergy** – combining forces to maximise collective benefits):  **Product placement**: e.g clearly showing a brand of car or watch prominently in a film  **Celebrity endorsement** (vloggers e.g. Zoella) Sports personalities & fashion, perfume brands.  **Merchandizing** (product tie-ins e.g. McDonalds & Disney)  **Programme sponsorship**: TV dramas & sport tend to be prominently sponsored by companies, especially as conventional advertising can now be by-passed and blocked. | **Industries & Institutions** |

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| **Narrative**  Media term for story, or the way a story is told.  Some key terms:  **Cliff-hanger** :a **serial** (where episodes are **linked** together) will often end on an unresolved tense moment – a cliff-hanger - to keep audiences hooked and wanting to find out what happens next.  **Non-linear narrative**: a story that jumps around in time, **fragmented** and disjointed, **non-chronological;** full of **flashbacks** and flash-forwards.  **Narrative framing**: the ‘outer’ story of a story within a story (crime genres normally follow this structure).  **Sequels, prequels and spin-offs** (e.g. Star Wars)keep a franchise fresh and marketable.  **‘Long form’ narrative**: epic multi-season, multi-episode TV series e.g. Game of Thrones. Suits off-line (non-scheduled, not live) viewing and **binge watching**. Counteracts live reality TV elimination shows which encourage people to watch at the scheduled time.  **Multi-strand narrative:** contains lots of sub-plots and storylines which tend to  **foreground/ highlight/spotlight** /**focus on** a particular character’s story and backstory in a soap.  **Utopian vs dystopian narratives:** utopia is the perfect ideal world; dystopia is a nightmarish, imperfect world.  **Death of scheduling –** downloading and streaming mean that viewers no longer watch programmes ‘live’ at the time of broadcast. More personalized form of media engagement.  **Some other useful terms**  **Social realism:** a film genre dealing with the grim challenges of everyday working class life. British directors such as Mike Leigh and Ken Loach  **Verisimilitude**: a good word to use instead of ‘realism’. It means ‘true to reality’. Media representations of reality are not realistic. They are *convincing, believable, plausible*. Codes & conventions often reinforce a sense of verisimilitude.  **Juxtaposition:** contrast, the clash of opposites. So many media conventions, especially in film, involve **juxtaposition** – the use of contrasting, complementary shots e.g. left to right pan followed by a right to left pan. | **Narrative** |

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| **Narrative Theory: Todorov – three part narrative structure**  **Equilibrium disruption resolution**  Sometimes the last stage is called ‘ restored equilibrium’  **Syd Field** The Hollywood scriptwriter talked about a screenplay’s 3 acts:  **set-up; conflict; pay-off.**  Modern narrative often breaks the three-part structure.  **Conflict** is almost always the main aspect of film and TV narrative. It generates interest and audiences; and this generally converts into **advertising revenue**. Reality TV productions e.g.The Apprentice are **cast and edited to highlight conflict.**  Prompt: Todorov with a T; ‘Tree’ part narrative | **Todorov** |

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| **Narrative theory: Propp’s 8 character types**  **Hero False hero Villain Princess Donor Helper Father Dispatcher** Vladimir Propp discovered 8 basic character types (archetypes) in his study of Fairy Tales. Some of these types overlap. Often there is no clear link to all eight in modern narrative but there are still certain defined character types.  Prompt: Vladimir has 8 props | **Propp** |
| **Narrative theory: Binary opposites (Claude Levi-Strauss)**  Identified the presence of contrasting themes in myths and stories.  e.g. good v evil; male v female; light v dark; innocence v guilt;  human v machine; natural v supernatural; alien v human.  Prompt: Levi-Strauss (2 part surname) like the binary opposites | **Binary Opposites** |

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| **Postmodernism**  Important cultural movement. Covers a wide variety of modern cultural products. **The starting point is: Nothing is original.**  The features of postmodern texts involve some of the following:  reinvention, simulation, remixing, mash-up, imitation borrowing, intertextuality, hybridity  ‘Homage’= a tribute to another artist  Bricologe (= sticking random pieces together)  Pastiche = comic mixing styles;  Parody= making fun of other styles usually by exaggerating its conventions  Form over content (=importance of outward aesthetic appeal over content)  self-reflecting text – e.g. a film which clearly states to its audience’ I am a film’  self-conscious irony  blurring of boundaries; merging of high & low culture e.g. classical and rap music  Prompt: In Postmodernism nothing is original | **Postmodernism** |
| **Hyperreality (Baudrillard)**  An aspect of postmodernism  The idea that **screen-based simulated reality** is more real to us than actual authentic reality. We experience so much of the world second hand through mediated forms that our direct experience of actual reality is somehow less real.  The Matrix plays with these ideas of simulation. Links to idea of the **‘disneyfication’** of reality: the transformation of society into a Disney-style theme park.  Prompt: Hyperreality means we’re trapped inside our screens | **Hyperreality** |

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| **Feminism** (e.g. Germain Greer, Betty Friedan, Judith Butler, Naomi Wolf)  ‘Second wave’ Feminism, starting in the 1960s, campaigned for an end to discrimination against women. In media terms it targeted sexism, objectification and the dominance of patriarchal (male) values in a male-dominated industry. Negative representations of women in the media were used to make money and gratify male audiences. It is argued that these representations become part of gender conditioning and perpetuate sexual exploitation, injustice and even violence.  Prominent in this debate:  Laura Mulvey – Male Gaze Theory: media images show women reflecting a ‘male gaze’, looking at the camera as though it is a male onlooker. This depersonalizes and objectifies them.  Gaze Theory is exemplified by art critic John Berger (‘Ways of Seeing’ 1972).  *“men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at…….*  *A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself.”*  Bechdel test: a test for sexism in films, coined by graphic artist Alison Bechdel. For a scene in a film to be truly non-sexist it must have at least two named female protagonists talking to each other, without the presence of a male, about something other than men.  Patriarchy is the dominance of men and male values. Patriarchy is an example of hegemony. | **Feminism** |

**MORE ADVANCED MEDIA THEORY –MAINLY FOR YEAR 2 BUT USEFUL TO START EARLY**

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| **Hegemony (Marx)**  **Hegemony and hegemonic** are key media words even if no-one is quite sure how to pronounce them.  The power of one group in society over another. Often this means the rule of a **minority elite over a majority**. In the past, power was concentrated in the hands of the monarchy, aristocracy and powerful landowners. Then it moved into the hands of factory owners and bosses. In media terms, hegemonic power is in the hands of proprietors (=media owners), corporations, **conglomerates** (big media multi-companies), politicians, the ‘**establishment**’.  Marx quotation: “in every age, the ideas of the ruling classes are the dominant ideas”.  The opposite of hegemony is **pluralism or liberal pluralism**. | **Hegemony** |
| **Cultural hegemony (Gramsci)**  Neo-Marxist view that the masses (ordinary people) are kept in a **subordinate role** by the powerful elites not through force or violent repression but by a process of winning their **consent**. (= agreement). **Hegemony** is achieved by winning over the consent of the masses.  Masses are made compliant, (= passive & cooperative) through the **soft indoctrination** of harmless cultural entertainment.  The submissive conformism of the masses blindly accepting their own exploitation is known as **false consciousness.**  Prompt: Sheep + grass = happy sheep. | **Cultural hegemony (Gramsci)** |
| **The Frankfurt School** (Adorno, Horkheimer) extends the above idea by stressing that the media & entertainment industry effectively **exploits audiences by turning them into mindless consumers** who buy products, and ‘**buy into’ (= accept blindly )**  the values of the corporate establishment (e.g. through advertising). This is an extension of the Neo-Marxist Gramscian view of **cultural hegemony.**  Media stifles **individuality, encourages conformity**  and creates mass audience-consumers who are content as long as they are entertained.  Media entertainment industry creates **false hopes and needs** turning audiences into frustrated consumers who live in a state of **constantly unfulfilled aspiration**. The only people who benefit are the big corporations (conglomerates). Media manipulates audiences in order to raise profits and strengthen the power of corporations.  The view that everything is aimed at generating maximum revenue and profit is called the **Political Economy Model.**  Prompt: Zombie shoppers hooked on adverts | **The Frankfurt School** |

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| **Propaganda Model (Noam Chomsky)**  **Herman & Chomsky ‘Manufacturing Consent’ 1988**  News is subjected to ‘**5 Filters of editorial bias’** before it reaches the public. These filters show that media organisations put corporate, commercial interests (i.e.profit) above ‘truth’. The 5 filters show the **Political Economy** model in action. Decisions are made about what is considered newsworthy but these decisions are coloured by capitalist values.  News is filtered (**mediated**) in the following ways:  The need to please advertisers.  The need to please owners & sponsors.  The need to follow an anti-communist agenda (also anti-terrorist, pro-US set of values).  The need to avoid ‘flak’, criticism & controversy from powerful groups.  The need to respect the powerful official sources who provide information. | **Propaganda Model** |
| **Traditional News Values (Galtung & Ruge)**  Even in the 1960s, it was recognised that news was never just purely factual but influenced by various factors. Newsworthy content would attract audiences (and therefore advertising revenue). These news ‘values’ were determined by factors such as  **Scale:** the size and impact of a major news event.  **Proximity:** the nearness of the event to the audience. Events nearer home have more impact than events further away.  **Personalization:** the individual human story behind a mass disaster or accident.  **Elite groups:** news concerning powerful people or countries.  **Negativity:** ‘bad news is good news’.  **Uniqueness:** strange, quirky, original stories would attract audiences.  **Predictability & expectedness** – e.g. an ongoing event such as the impact of bad weather | **Traditional News Values** |
| The study of signs, signifiers and meaning is called **Semiotics** | **Semiotics** |
| **Iconic indexical symbolic signifiers**  Semioticians identify three types of signifiers:  **Iconic signifiers**: an image that closely looks like the object it represents e.g. the road sign for ‘no overtaking’  **Indexical signifiers**: an image that has a connection with its representation e.g. an image of a footprint in snow would indicate the presence of a person.  **Symbolic signifiers**: an image that has no obvious direct connection with its representation e.g a flag, road diversion symbols (black square or triangle on a yellow background) | **Iconic indexical symbolic signifiers** |