

The Four Key Concepts Of Media

This course is intended to help you understand the media by watching carefully and thinking critically, thereby improving your media literacy.

By the time you finish high school, you will have spent an average of 11,000 hours in school and over 15,000 hours watching television, playing video games or using the internet. This course will teach you to analyze the images and messages you are bombarded with on a daily basis. You will become “media literate” and know how to understand and utilize the mass media.

Mass Media: The methods of communication used to reach large numbers of people at the same time – TV, Newspapers, radio, magazines, films, books, the internet

1) MEDIA CONSTRUCTS REALITY.

Fact: a 20:1 ratio of footage shot to footage used for the evening news is not unusual.

- What parts do you think they use?
- They want exciting and entertaining news that keeps the audience interested.

What news stories do we see?

- Local stories that might concern us.
- Stories that grab and hold our attention (accidents, riots, wars, etc.)
- News about well-known people (Princesses, Presidents) – would we hear about these people if they weren’t famous?

Homework: Watch the news tonight (any time, any channel) and note the first story that is covered. Why was this story deemed important enough to lead the news? Try to watch a range of news broadcasts so that we can compare notes tomorrow.

2) THE MEDIA HAVE THEIR OWN FORMS, CODES AND CONVENTIONS (LANGUAGE)

Q. In films, what codes are used to help you tell the good guys from the bad guys?

Q. What is the usual setting for a sit com?

Q. What are the purposes of these Forms, Codes, and Conventions?

These forms and codes are constructed with design, editing, camera angles, sound, lighting, organization and language.

There are also common formulas that are accepted:

- horror films
- TV news reports
- perfume advertisements

Homework: List some codes, conventions, or standard ingredients used in the following:
Saturday Morning Cartoons, Soap Operas, Movie Posters, Music Videos

3) THE MEDIA PRESENTS IDEOLOGIES AND VALUE MESSAGES

We all have a set of assumptions about the world that shape our views on issues:

- The roles of men and women
- The need for a job
- What makes “the good life”

This set of beliefs is called an “ideology.”

We are accustomed to the ideologies the media presents:

- Hot cars are associated with beautiful women
- Drinking beer leads to a “party time lifestyle”
- Women are more concerned with clean clothes and sparkling dishes than men

Is there any truth to these ideologies?

Homework: Select two advertisements from magazines or newspapers that present ideologies or beliefs. Explain the ideologies.

4) THE MEDIA ARE BUSINESSES THAT HAVE COMMERCIAL INTERESTS

Fact: The media is a multi-billion dollar business

- It cost \$3 million for a 30 second commercial during 2009’s Superbowl
- The average cost of a 23 minute sitcom is \$1 -2 million (“Seinfeld” was 3 million an episode)

How it works: TV programs provided sponsors with audiences. Therefore, sponsors are understandably concerned about the size of an audience and the ratings of these programs. The cost of advertising increases as programs gain more viewers (this explains why the news is constructed the way it is).

What is the purpose of music videos?

Are the bands paid?

-They are really 4-minute commercials to sell CDs.

Q. Why do some bands stop making videos despite the fact that one of their albums may still have several video-worthy songs?

Homework: What TV shows do you watch?

Do the products advertised appeal to you?

Research the original purpose of a soap opera (do’t just guess)