

Learning Unit 1

Summary

	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Language & Academic Skills</i>	<i>Assignments</i>
1	Introduction to Accepted Views of the Media	–	Applying theoretical concepts Reading strategies Critical analysis	Find examples from newspapers or film of different overviews of the role of the media in society.

Overview

This session is an introduction to the subject of media theory: the analytical approach to news, radio, television and the internet. Lectures, classroom activities, videos, and resources combine to enable students to answer three key questions: 1) What is theory? 2) Why is theory important for understanding journalism? 3) How is theory generated?

The learning materials consist of PowerPoint presentations introducing the topic, handout / online worksheets (activities 1 and 2), film excerpts, examples of newspaper articles, and further reading and resources.

Objective

At the end of this lesson students should be able to have an overview of the subject in order to be capable of describing in detail how and why different theories of the media were and are generated (see course outcomes).

Language & Academic Skills

Applying theoretical concepts. Reading strategies. Critical analysis.

Classroom Activities

A1. What is theory?

Read through different definitions of “theory.” Which of them best relates to your daily experience of understanding and describing reality?

Watch the 10 minute excerpt on “The dawn of man” from the film *2001. A Space Odyssey*, by Stanley Kubrick. Then choose a definition that, in your opinion, best suits what this scene seems to reflect.

A2. How is theory generated?



Read through various newspaper articles and classify according to the categories of the scientific continuum (see slide “The scientific continuum” within the lecture PDF presentation). Are they more likely to be located in the area of “fact” or the one of “theories” (assumptions, ideological orientations, etc.)?

A3. How to deal with a mandatory course text: An example. Marshall McLuhan: Understanding Media. The medium is the Message.

1. Highlight the term “extension/s”
2. Write down sentences that include this term.
3. Replace the word “extension/s” with “media” if the latter doesn’t appear.
4. Rephrase these sentences to express the author’s purpose.

Assignments

Find examples from newspapers or film of different overviews of the role of the media in society.

Resources

<i>Type</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Context</i>
Video	<u>“The dawn of man”</u>	This scene from the Stanley Kubrick’s film <i>2001. A Space Odyssey</i> might help reflect on the basic process of human thinking through abstraction – the way social scientists create theories from facts to ideas and <i>viceversa</i>
Web resource	<u>Nine top tips for media students</u>	Posted by David Gauntlett on his site theory.org.uk , the “nine tips” to engage students in critical thinking.
Textbook supplement	<u>Key Themes in Media Theory</u>	A critical introduction to the key theories of media studies. The volume brings together different schools of media theory into a comprehensive text, examining in depth the ideas of key media theorists such as Lasswell, McLuhan, Hall, Williams or Barthes. See the



		introduction on "What media theory is" for this lesson.
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