

Slide 1: Gender and consuming Popular culture (Monday session week 1)

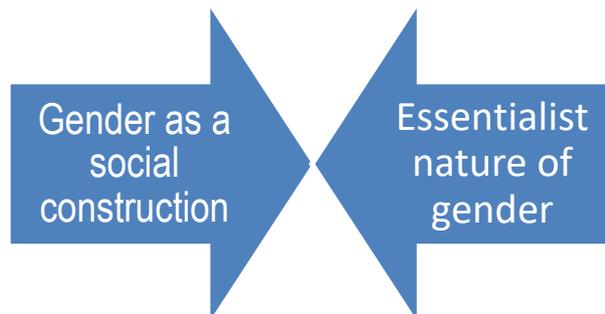
- Module outline and deadlines
- Topics for today – introduction gender, philosophy and popular culture including gender theory and our responses to consuming popular culture.

Slide 2: Popular Culture

- Popular culture and the media are linked
- Culture defined – texts and practise which produce meaning
- Philosophical reasons for how things are made or why certain ideologies dominate

Slide 3: Gender, social construction and performance

- Gender – socially constructed categories of masculine and feminine
- Simone de Beauvoir (1949)
- Gender as something we 'do'
- Essentialist nature of gender



- Plato suggested people had three elements – rational, courageous and appetitive and some may dominate. (Thus some kind of essence of self perhaps)

Slide 4: Understanding gender

- Stable core perhaps
- Some things more stable, some things more fluid.
- Where do you perceive your own gendered identity?

Slide 5: Goffman and Performance

- Goffman (1959): masculinity and femininity are gender roles which we perform
- We act through gender displays and we perform our gender for others.
- One criticism is that we are not free to perform how we want

- There are social structures that restrict and constrict how we act and behave

Side 6: Butler and performativity

- Gender is the outcome of performativity
- Where through the scripts of masculinity and femininity provided through such things as popular culture and media
- Give us the guidelines for to enact gender.
- They teach individuals how to do masculinity and femininity
- Drag reveals that gender is performative – men can do femininity; women can do masculinity
- Deconstructs that sex and gender are related
- Society focuses on differences rather than similarities
- Certain media is perceived to be gendered male/female (whether you agree that this is still the case is something that you can think about)

Slide 7: Encoding/Decoding

- Hall developed encoding/decoding to capture the complexity of production and consumption
- It accounts for the power of the media, but also the power of the audience to interpret media texts
- The preferred meaning is where the reader agrees with the dominant meaning
- Oppositional reading is where the reader rejects the preferred/dominant meaning
- Negotiated reading position is where the readers work with the preferred message and accept some elements and reject others
- Or they adjust the preferred meaning so it fits with their world view
- **Criticisms**
 - the **media are not a monolithic whole which constructs** one set of representations and message and different types of media exist with different political outlooks and agendas
 - Audience responses in Hall's model still revolve around a clear cut and coherent idea of (dis)agreement where
 - The encoding/decoding model is useful where there is media with strong political and ideological messages e.g. current affairs, magazines etc.
 - But in some media, it is difficult to identify an overall meaning which could be the preferred or dominant meaning.
- **Sub categories of encoding/decoding**
 - Audience responses cannot really be condensed into three reactions as Hall suggests

Slide 8: The consumer

- Many of the theories assume a particular kind of consumer and also a particular context of consumption
- The consumer is an individual on his or her own, who reads/views/listen a media text in a deep, concentrated and interested way who engage with the messages and then produce a responses
- Studies of magazine readers suggest that most are casual readers who browse and flick through magazines rather than reading them from cover to cover
- Watching television may be accompanied by other activities
- Collective consumption means that there are social relations which influence choice of what is consumed, for example, if friends talk about or watch a particular programme, you might do the same
- Gender has been shown to be a crucial factor in these relations

Slide 9: Gendered Media

- At a basic level we can say that media products are often gendered
- So certain magazines, television genres, films etc. tend to be addressed to and are often consumed by women or men
- Gendered media also focus on topics that are traditionally perceived as being masculine or feminine (e.g. love, romance, family relations, domestic issues OR cars, sports, politics, finance)!!
- Heavily gendered media have led feminists to investigate why certain products may appeal more to one gender than another
- Their explanations revolve around the concepts of referential consumption
- This refers to what is seen and watched to their own experiences
- The same is said to be the case for male genres as well
- relating what is watched to their own experiences and to people they know
- So the media are key sites that offer men and women discourses (often stereotyped) which position us as men and women in particular ways
- Modleski (1982) claimed that soap operas offer the ideal mother as the prime subject position - Marked by altruism and endless devotion to the family
- Seiter et al. (1999) found that most female viewers did not identify with the ideal mother and rejected this
- Especially working class women who identified with the soap villainess instead
- Thus the process of viewers making sense of a text and positioning themselves are shaped by different social factors
- There is a tendency for the media to promote middle class values and norms as universal

Feminist Philosophy: The Cartesian Legacy Tuesday session week 1

1. Since Plato, philosophers have become used to distinguishing between knowledge and opinion.
2. The philosopher **overcomes subjective prejudice** in order to give voice to reason and logic and objectivity
3. The **Cartesian** approach assumes that **reason** is the tool that enables us to gain knowledge which imposes a **dualism**
4. Feminists are among those that have rejected these **post-Cartesian assumptions**
5. But **knowledge is socially situated**, not timeless and unchanging

The Absent Body

1. The **body** is largely seen as irrelevant to **philosophy**, Except that our **senses** are seen to mislead us – emotions which detract from rational **thought and pursuit**
2. The body is a site, in **much philosophy**, to be contained and ruled and subdued.
3. Race, class, sex are **seen as incidental to the metaphysical essence** – or inner core of humanity
4. They carry little weight in regard to philosophical traditions

Feminist philosophy

1. Feminists however, explore **embodiment as relevant**
2. And there is renewed interest in **gender and object-relations**
3. Such as our **caring connection** with others –
4. Instead of seeing the world as rational knowers with no particular connections and duties, **Care ethics** takes its starting point as our embeddedness with others

Ethics of care

1. In traditional philosophy, **differences such as gender**, are thought **irrelevant for knowledge**
2. **Rationality is abstract** and apart from the networks of relationships that we find ourselves in. **This reinforces the dualism** of men ascribed as **rational and women as emotional**

Kuhn

1. Kuhn has argued in 1962 (The Structure of Scientific Revolutions) that **scientific theories are not neutral and value free**
2. Foucault and others highlight that **knowledge reflects the interests** of its knowers and that truths are informed by power relations

Feminist standpoint on objectivity

1. All knowledge is contested
2. Media space should be given to alternative views

3. Does popular culture and the media reflect interests unmarked by gender
4. Is **reason itself gendered?**
5. If you are writing your assignment – you need to think about these ideas. What is your **particular standpoint?**

Why the Workshops

1. **Knowledge retains in our mind** – when you learn something e.g. for an essay, it stays in your short term memory.
2. When you do something practical it moves into your **longer term memory.**
3. Reading about gender is useful, but the practical session make you **challenge your (and my) own assumptions.** This did happen last year!
4. Skills: When asked at an interview what you found challenging and how you overcame it, you can use this as an example (being out of your comfort zone perhaps but still taking part and then writing the blog about it).
5. Theory needs to be balanced with **these real life situations** – it is applying the theoretical knowledge to our everyday assumptions in a real setting.
6. It **stimulates deeper learning** – we are learning through the practical session but this then, according to education theory, enhances deeper learning

How to do well in your assignments

- Make sure you address the four areas of the grading criteria that we use to mark assignments (see page 10-11 of the module outline).
- **Argument** – you need to analyse ideas and arguments and come to your own conclusions. You need to make sure that you have addressed the question and that you are aware of key debates and ideas relating to the topic.
- **Research** – this is essential to the essays. You need to draw on a wide range of sources and to express and interpret the ideas that you read coherently and correctly. Quotes should be well chosen and also should show that you have engaged with the material you read. Make sure your ideas are backed up by academic sources that you have read and engaged with and that you use Harvard reference to show this.
- **Writing** - you need to write clearly and express your ideas fluently. You should not have punctuation or grammatical or presentation errors. Terminology should be explained in your own words.

- **Comprehension** – did you understand what you were required to do and address it in your assignment?

Submission

- For this module you have to submit an essay plan for assignment 1 so you will have individual tailored feedback.
- Please do not leave it till the last minute to upload work to SOLE as it often runs slowly near the 3pm deadline.
- If you are having difficulties submitting some lecturers will accept email to ihca@worc.ac.uk as proof that you completed the assignment by the deadline (check with the lecturer although this is not ideal as SOLE will not show a correct submission).

References

- Barker, C. (2008) *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, London, Sage.
- Hall, S. (1997) *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London, Sage. (There is now an updated version but not yet in the library)
- Milestone, K. & Meyer, A. (2012) *Gender and Popular Culture*. Cambridge, Polity. (not in library but a journal article by these authors is available)
- Modleski, T. (2008) *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced*, Oxon, Routledge (Ebook)
- Storey, J. (2009) *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture. An Introduction*. Harlow, Pearson Longman (Ebook)
- Tapfumaneyi, K.D.K & Rupande, G. (2013) The portrayal of gender relations in the media: Towards a gender sensitive media. *International Journal of Advanced Research*. Vol. 1(5), pp.571-578.