

Week 9 Reality Television

Slide – Postmodern world

Postmodernism – signs predominate in the media

1. Postmodernist talk of stories or narratives, **refer to the stories we tell ourselves** about the way reality works
2. Knowledge has a plural character
3. There are **knowledges or truths** rather than the truth or knowledge
4. Modern societies have moved from productive to reproductive cultures (Lyotard, Baudrillard)
5. between appearances and reality is lost.
6. The **overproduction of signs by the** media wipes out any distinction between the **image and the reality** and leads to **the loss of any stable meaning.**
7. In postmodernism there is **no coherent, unified representation** of the world, except within **temporary and shifting confines** of an interpretive community

Slide – Baudrillard

Context of postmodernism

1. Baudrillard is a French intellectual philosopher and post-modern critic and is an extreme proponent of post-modernity.
 1. He looks at how our post-modern world is no longer real but only **a simulation of the real**

Hyperreality, simulacra and mass media

1. He looks at ideas of **hyperreality, simulacra** and the mass media
2. Baudrillard uses the term to mean the condition of postmodernity where the **simulacra are no longer** associated with anything real
3. Where the **signs, images and models** that circulate have become **detached** from any real material object

Signs have replaced reality

1. Baudrillard claims our society has **replaced all reality** and meaning with **symbols and signs**.
2. All we know as real is actually a **simulation of reality**
3. The world is composed of **simulations of reality** which exist in layers and cannot be traced back to their original subjects (if these exist)

Simulacra

1. Simulacra – he terms – are signs of culture and media that create the reality that we perceive.
2. The **world is saturated by imagery**, infused with media, sound and advertising.
3. This simulacra of the real surpasses the real world and thus becomes **hyperreal** - A world that is **more real than real**.
4. I.e. we think that the **representations** are more important than the 'real.'

Society has lost touch with reality

1. Baudrillard would argue that we, as a society, have **lost touch with reality**.
2. Instead, we're **hooked into a simulation of reality**, made up of things like [television](#), the Internet, etc.
3. This new "reality" **supplants** the real thing.

Baudrillard – postmodern culture (a world of signs)

1. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Jean Baudrillard argues that our "**postmodern**" culture is a **world of signs** that have made a **fundamental break from referring** to "reality."
1. Baudrillard's concept of simulation is the **creation of the real through conceptual** or "**mythological**" models which have **no connection** or **origin** in reality.

Simulacra

1. **Simulacra are copies of things** that **no longer have an original** (or never had one to begin with). e.g., Disneyland's Main Street USA is a representation of something that exists in the absence of reality.
2. There is **no underlying meaning**, only an exploration **of surfaces**.

Phases of representation

- Baudarillard talks about phases of representation as follows
 1. The image is the reflection of a profound reality
 - Where the image is a **good reflection of reality**
 2. The images masks a profound reality
 - The image is an **inadequate reflection** of reality
 3. The image **masks the absence of a profound** reality
 - This is make believe and deception
 4. The image is **disconnected from reality** –
 - Now this is the order of simulacra rather than reality

Slide Hyperreality

World of hyperreality (distinction between real and unreal are blurred)

Blurring boundaries

1. Thus the **boundary** between the **image, or simulation**, and reality implodes (breaks down).
2. This creates a **world of hyperreality** where the distinctions **between real and unreal** are blurred.
3. The masses get bombarded by these **images (simulations)** and **signs (simulacra)** which encourage them to buy, vote, work, play,... but eventually they become apathetic (i.e. cynical).
4. Some call this the **plastic age** or the **age of simulacra**

Collapse of all boundaries

1. **Simulation and simulacra become the real** so there are no stable structures on which to ground theory or politics.
2. Culture and society become a **flux of undifferentiated images** and signs.

Reality Television

1. There is so much reality television everywhere!

2. Defined as programming that supposedly documents unscripted real life situations
3. Often features unknown cast of people who are not professional actors.

Ethos, logos, pathos

1. Which we could argue is an example of pathos driven communication
2. If you remember **Aristotle and ethos, logos, pathos**

Ethos

1. This is where the character and credibility of the speaker can influence the audience – the expert.

Pathos

1. This is the use of **emotional** appeals to the audience

Logos

1. This is the use of **reasoning** to construct an argument

Reality television and pure pathos!

1. The tv shows are designed to **entertain** and help us to **feel**
2. They contain pathos to the **extreme (emotion)**
3. But some argue it is **entertainment without substance and is emotional pornography**

Television shows

1. Shows like **X Factor** and **strictly** have the key feature of unknown as to who will be the winner
2. **Adorno** refers to the mass cultural industries as the **dream industry**
 1. Winning a reality tv show is a **dream come true** for the winners
 2. The same format is **repeated** in many other **reality shows**

Scripted reality

1. The television shows such as the only way is **Essex and made in Chelsea** are BAFTA award winning scripted reality television shows
2. Some describe shows like this (Geordie Shore, Kardashians etc.) as Big Brother without walls and reality soaps.

Youtube and reality television

1. And of course we can think about YouTube and vloggers in relation to these ideas.

Baudrillard

1. So where does reality start and stop with all these reality shows
2. Obviously for the ones with contestants – **their reality** is taking part in the show
3. But there is often **editing** that makes us see these contestants in certain ways – sometimes heavily edited (the video diary in BB house)
4. Is something like **TOWIE or Made in Chelsea** a copy of something that is distorted from reality?
5. How do we know that these people are **actually living** this way?
6. Is it completely **simulacra** and made up – **fake**?

Applying ideas from Baudrillard

1. **Benefit street** is another **reality tv show** where first episode of Benefits street showed residents discussing their dependence on benefits
2. The **residents** however, told the Birmingham Mail they were **tricked** into appearing saying they were told the series would be about the **community spiri**, But were portrayed as **antisocial benefit scroungers**, irresponsible parents, drug takers etc.
3. Labour **MP Anne Begg** – noted ‘There wasn’t anybody who was a typical benefit claimant featured on the programme at all’

Levels of

1. The image is the reflection of a profound reality
 - Where the image is a **good reflection of reality**
 - **Which shows might fall into this category? (Vloggers perhaps, lifestyle reality shows perhaps)?**
4. The images masks a profound reality
 - The image is an **inadequate reflection** of reality
 - Would you place TOWIE, Geordie shore here?

5. The image **masks the absence of a profound** reality

- This is make believe and deception
- This where the scripts have more precedence than reality itself
- You could argue that some shows have moved to this state.

6. The image is **disconnected from reality** –

- Now this is the order of **simulacra** rather than reality
- Are we in this situation yet with reality television?
- **Benefit street** perhaps?

You decide whether you think the fake/imaginary has replaced reality on these so called reality television shows