

EXAM

ST-201: Media and political communication

Spring 2010

TIME: May 26th

TIME: 5 HOURS

Aids: English language Dictionary, or English to native language.

Instruction: Hand in this sheet with your exam papers.

Check out which language pack you have read: Norwegian _____ English _____

A: Short answer questions, 40% of the grade

Use about one third of your time.

Write approximately one half to one page for each answer

Answer three of the five alternatives

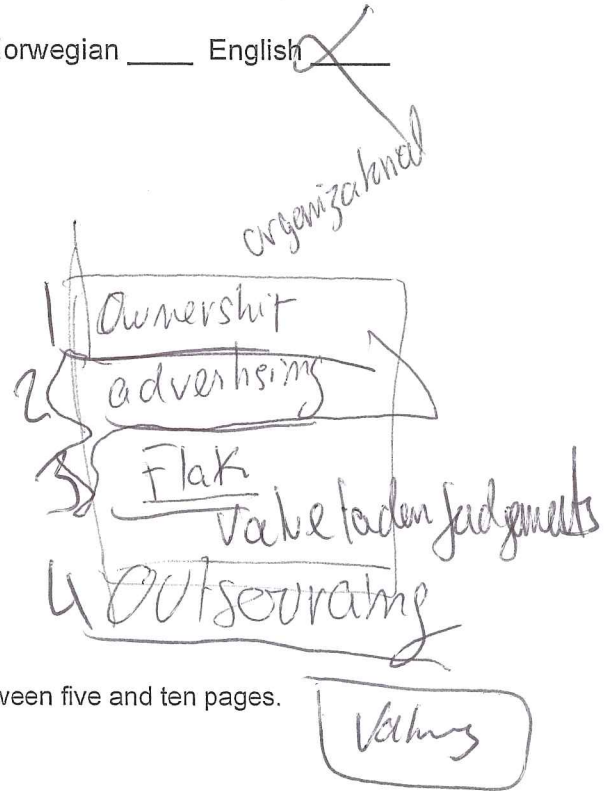
1. Define the term *news frame*
2. Define the term *media effect*
3. What is *agenda-setting*?
4. What is *mediatization*, or *medialization*?
5. Define the term *propaganda*

B: Essay answers: 60% of the grade

Use approximately two thirds of your time for this part. Write between five and ten pages.

Answer only one question

1. It is often noted that the study of political communication ought to pay more attention to *political culture*. Present and discuss that argument, based on your course readings. Use examples of your own choosing to illustrate your discussion.
2. Journalists tend to look at public relations consultants with skepticism: Why is that so? Answer that question with a particular emphasis on the idea of a "socially constructed reality".
3. Why is freedom of speech such a key issue in democratic society – and how would you say that processes of globalization strengthen or weaken established freedoms of speech?



THANK YOU



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English

A

1. Gornson would refer to the term news frame as a vague term. One could say that it is an unfolding narrative which actually contextualizes an intention or meaning to influence the agenda-setting about an issue or story.

We can add some characteristics to this term from five angles:

First, news frames are strategic conceived; somebody as an intention to target an audience with a message achieving the desired effect.

Second, framing is conflict oriented. News often come in form of quotations, drama and "spiss-formuleringer" tend to blur important nuances;

Third, news frames are person oriented, meaning that the media define who is allowed to have a say about an issue and who is kept out.

Fourth, to a greater degree news framing is ultimately issue oriented. It is far more easy today to unfold and derive details about global warming than it was for some decades ago.

Finally, news frames are episodic. It is a long term cultivation process and generally what we as citizens/consumers of media tend to remember are certain, general aspects of a long storyline.

I would like to exemplify the term news frames with the case regarding the firing of Pål Friis, the overchef doctor at Sorlands sykehuset.

What we first learned from the local news



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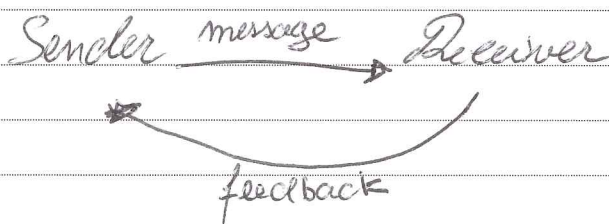
"Fædelandsvennen" was that Pål Friis was fired by his boss Olsen; the reasons why he got fired come afterwards in a rivalry between Friis and Olsen regarding how the hospital should develop in the future and how the budget should be elaborated.

Fædelandsvennen provides the arena for this discussion and also the resources for multiple feedbacks.

Ultimately, what we remember is episodic, a doctor got fired because he disagreed with his boss.

2. Media effect is an assumption resulting from strategic text conception. From the early 1930's media effect was supposed to have a direct effect on the audiences, what people read in the news papers or heard on radio had something to do with how one understood (political) reality.

Political communication was based on an epideictic transactional model, exemplified as:



Melombs and Shaw produced a study based on individual interviews during election campaigns in order to determine if ~~what~~ what people read in the newspaper had correlation with what people shared as personal meanings.

The findings were somehow unrealistic, but people tend to share part of the media composite meaning about reality. Another finding was that journalists

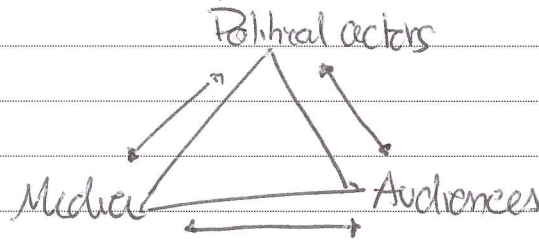


were not only interested in the content of the electoral campaign but also how the whole event developed itself.

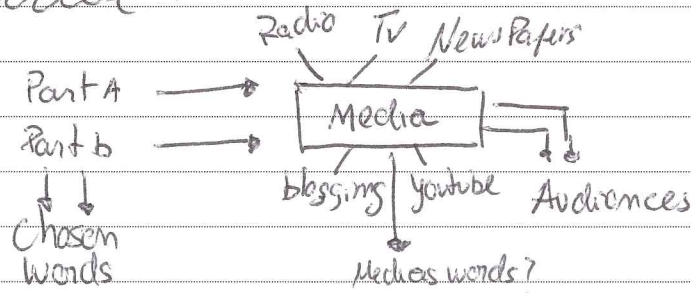
~~Chen~~ Chen would say that media (newspapers, radio) may not be successful in telling people what to think, but is stunningly successful in telling people what to think about.

From the 1960's onwards there is a belief in a two-flow communication effect. That is, how opinion leaders set the agenda and how the role of publicity affects the general meaning of audiences as a whole.

Now-a-days we have to analyse media effect from a macro-institutional level:



We also move from the transactional model to a ritual model:



what is so difficult is to determine how audiences will decode a particular message. Audiences are heterogeneous, composed of several cultural cleavages and thus vary in nature and size. Ultimately media effects is related to the understanding of social-semiotics.



5. Propaganda, a very interesting concept indeed. We can track its origins to the mass political communication machinery of the Third Reich. It is impressive how the Propaganda ministry used the media to mobilize public opinion in the causes of ideology.

The Gulf of Tonkin incident was a strategic well conceived propaganda method used by the Johnson administration to legitimize the war in south-east Asia. Although the counter-hegemony effect that the Vietnam War eventually produced (student uprisings, manifestations and violent rallies) was a result of a media moving around freely in the battle field. Whether the Vietnam War was lost on television is a plausible explanation.

Very good analysis could be further drawn in relation to the Falkland and Gulf War intervention, but retains the essence of the propaganda concept. I would like to take in account Chomsky's and others, Propaganda model consisting in five central elements (filters)

First Globalization produces more media conglomerates as News International, Time-Warner, CBS which ultimately are also part of bigger corporations as General Electric. These corporations are all tied to the stock market. Chomsky argues that it is unrealistic that the board of directors of these large corporations would have a say in particular issues of interest that could damage the company's image.

Second, advertising is an extremely important source of revenue for newspapers, without it the costs of production would allow for a competitive price in the market. As such, important sponsors



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could threaten to remove their support in face of, again, stories that unfolded negatively could produce undesired effects to that company to or to larger which also it is part of. Radical newspapers are not likely to have a long ~~organizational~~ institutional life following this logic.

Third, the Flak element; large companies can converge their interests forming alliances to scrap negative opinions that affects profit making. Ford; Exxon, Texaco are examples to how such corporations battled for the argument of Global warming when it became an issue in the public sphere.

Even BBC can't afford to have journalists everywhere. Outsourcing becomes relevant and the large media houses tend to place their journalists in 'news terminals' such as the White House, No. 10 Downing Street or the Pentagon. The relation the journalists have with the PR representatives is crucial in order to get the life blood of Media - fresh news. ~~whatever~~ whatever these officials say is considered legitimate and turned into news, whereas if journalists take the position of prisoners and alike, it's not the same thing and one has to remark such statements as biased or unrealistic in order to keep the reliability of the Media intact.

Finally it is presumed that journalist in breaking political reality often produce value laden judgments and bias.

The extent of bias will vary in a modern democracy and journalists, being prime definers often treat these bias as facts while covering a news story.



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To conclude my propaganda-term approach it is unfortunate to make some remarks about Chomsky's Propaganda-deterministic model.

One has to understand the organizational constraints in which journalists work; lack of time, editorial press and lack of information all contribute for some misleadings or inaccuracies while producing and shaping news stories.

B

① Jeffrey Jones argues that the relation between politics and media is based on three, but flawed assumptions:

- ① News are the main sphere on how we understand Politics.
- ② News acquisition is instrumental.
- ③ That politics ~~is~~ political engagement is regarded as physical activity - voting.

The first assumption disregards the intimate role that media has in our lives in understanding social reality and our identity as citizens sharing core values and beliefs. It also disregards that the news have differential effects in how we form our meanings of politics.

Different medias also produce different narratives to how a story is contextualized.

Entertainment is then seen as a ~~distraction~~ distraction to keep the citizens well informed. However recent studies in Europe and the U.S. show that people derive meaningful understanding of politics while watching humorous talkshows, take as an example *The Daily Show with*



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John Steward and others alike.
Citizen journalism, blogging and the use of search engines are facts that demonstrate that people are getting skeptical and to a greater extent criticize the top-down gate keeping role of the media.

As for the second assumption, that news is primarily an instrumental approach, well it is not like so. We do not just consume what is out there, on the spot. Citizens and audiences have meanings and a set of beliefs that make news interpretation based on these inferences and associations.

Third, while voting is certainly a very important aspect of a democracy the media also provides citizens with an image reservoir. It is through the media we get to know villains and heroes and mental maps that help us make decisions. Images are a much more subtle way ~~to~~ in order to understand reality.

In contrast to an instrumental approach, a cultural approach as argued by Jones emphasizes social-semiotics in regards to how audiences can interpret Political narratives in different ways and how Political Communication relies on cultural values and beliefs that citizens share, while convening in an unrestricted way to form a public sphere.

Jansen makes a very good point in line



with Jeffrey Jones and presents three elements that affects our political consciousness:

1. Previous political experience / core values and beliefs
2. Frame and framing transformation;
3. Fragmentation:

We make inferences based on previous experiences and this shapes the way we interpret news which are framed in such a way that sometimes can mislead us.

TV provides the arena where economic, political and cultural masses will try to impose their meaning in order to affect decision-making. Framing effect as seen earlier discussed but it can also refer to Katz's Crystallizing effect. If we take a back glance to the McArthur's day parade in 1951 we see a miscease between what people experience on the spot during the parade (rather boring parade) and what people at home experienced (very enthusiastic and lively parade). The way the camera shots were taken during the parade framed the event episodic thus creating a crystallizing effect.

Also note that a text can have several layers of meaning; an advertising meant to sell cigarettes to women can easily be conceived as how a woman should be ~~it~~ and behave at such time and place. The way the message is received can be as taken for granted from who produces it or it may have to be decoded.



Fragmentation has to do with globalization - You media converges and blends together. We as citizens have a much more influential input to how news gets mediated and who gets to write them.

This acceleration in new technologies compress time and what ultimately one retains from a news coverage is the immediacy.

How ~~dominant~~^{misleading} wasn't it to see journalists during the Gulf war downing gas masks while there was never a chemical attack of such nature!

Galtung and Ruge argued in 1965 that news media reflects patterns of recency/actuality, drama and stereotypes.

Take for example the Congo Case unfolded by VG, it was the third most ongoing news during 2009. You can we understand what really happened when the frame was set by these two Norwegian actors and when we have conceived it-African stereotypes?

It is very unlikely that one would get a neutral impartial overview of what really happen. And if one does eventually get to know all the facts what remains is a fraction, an episodic event. If one is not present at a certain time and place when something news worthy happens, one gets a mediated second hand knowledge of reality.

How we understand these things is important and how political actors presume ~~that~~ how we understand also has consequences, not only intentions. A good example was during the



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first Gulf war, Saddam Hussein, through Iraqi Television tried to explore the Vietnam Syndrome showing to ~~an~~ allied airmen, visually brutalized. The images rapidly got on the international media covering the war. This strategy was ill-conceived, Saddam while trying to get support for the Iraqi cause failed to do so, creating even more anger and frustration by the international community. Saddam failed to understand Social-Dynamics and how his message would be decoded.

This illustrates how important it is to understand culture and the way people as a whole behave while sharing core values and beliefs forming a collective identity. If one fails to understand culture as an independent variable while forming policies and decisions; while producing news is doomed professionally!

In closing remark; Political institutions and parties are constitutional accountable for the citizens, the media however ~~has~~ as expanding its functions as political actors doesn't seem to be affected by the same accountability, some scholars would argue.

I would like to comment and say that the media itself functions as a check or balances within the media. Take for example the rivalry between the two ~~top~~ American broadcasting stations when John Steward criticized an event during the financial collapse which ruined many.

Such balancing powers are also meant to influence how the media ultimately develops as the fourth estate.