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Adventures in Media and Cultural Studies: Introducing the KeyWorks

It is increasingly clear that media and culture today are of central importance to the maintenance and reproduction of contemporary societies. Societies, like species, need to reproduce to survive, and culture cultivates attitudes and behavior that predispose people to consent to established ways of thought and conduct, thus integrating individuals into a specific socio-economic system. Forms of media culture like television, film, popular music, magazines, and advertising provide role and gender models, fashion hints, lifestyle images, and icons of personality. The narratives of media culture offer patterns of proper and improper behavior, moral messages, and ideological conditioning, sugar-coating social and political ideas with pleasurable and seductive forms of popular entertainment. Likewise, media and consumer culture, cyberculture, sports, and other popular activities engage people in practices which integrate them into the established society, while offering pleasures, meanings, and identities. Various individuals and audiences respond to these texts disparately, negotiating their meanings in complex and often paradoxical ways.

With media and culture playing such important roles in contemporary life, it is obvious that we must come to understand our cultural environment if we want control over our lives. Yet there are many approaches to the study of media, culture, and society in separate disciplines and academic fields. Often critics take a single perspective and use a specific method and theory to understand, make sense of, interpret, or criticize media and cultural texts. Others eschew all methodological and theoretical critical strategies in favor of empirical description and analysis.

We would advocate the usefulness of a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of media, culture, and society. Yet we do not believe that any one theory or method is adequate to engage the richness, complexity, variety, and novelty displayed in contemporary constellations of rapidly proliferating cultural forms and new media. We have therefore assembled what we consider some KeyWorks of current theories and methods for the study of the abundance and diversity of culture and media in the present age. The texts we have chosen are "*Key*" because we believe that the perspectives and theorists which we have included in this volume are among the most significant and serviceable for engaging the forms and influences of contemporary media and culture.

The material in this reader provides "keys" which help unlock the domain of meaning, value, politics, and ideology in familiar forms of cultural artifacts and practices. They furnish prisms which enable critical readers to see cultural texts and phenomena in a new light, generating insight into the sometimes hidden production processes and ideological constraints of media culture. Key theories and methods help unlock and unveil structural codes and organizing conventions of media texts, their meanings and values, and often contradictory social and political effects. Understanding culture critically also provides insight into the ways that media and culture construct gender and role models, and even identities, as the populace come to pattern their lives on the celebrities and stars of media culture. These readings are also "key" in that they open novel theoretical directions and formulations of culture and society; at the time of their writing, they presented inventive and sometimes revolutionary directions in the study of media and culture.

The texts selected are "works" in that their methods and theories enable media-involved readers to

engage in the activity of analysis, interpretation, criticism, and making sense of their cultural and social worlds and experiences. The theories and methods presented provide tools for critical vision and practice, helping to produce active creators of meaning and interpretation, rather than merely passive audiences. The KeyWorks thus empower those who wish to gain skills of media literacy, providing instruments of criticism and interpretation. They provide essential elements of becoming intelligent and resourceful cultural subjects, discriminating readers, and creative users and producers of contemporary culture.

The texts collected in this book can therefore help cultural consumers to become critics and creators. Our Introduction will accordingly attempt to demonstrate how the diverse approaches and texts that we have assembled provide valuable keys to cultural criticism and interpretation, helping to produce more competent and discriminating readers and critics. We discuss below how the specific groupings of the KeyWorks provide different approaches to the study of media and culture and point to the contributions and limitations of each perspective. In this opening Introduction, we accordingly furnish overviews of each distinctive way of seeing and engaging culture and media. More detailed presentation of the theorists and critics we have chosen, along with explications of the key concepts, theories, and methods selected, will head each of the six sections we have delineated.

Theory/Method/Critique: A Multiperspectival Approach

There is only *a perspective seeing,* only *a perspective "knowing"; and the* more *affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity," be.*
– Friedrich Nietzsche

Our opening discussion will also give the reader a sense of current debates and issues within cultural and media theory, emphasizing which issues and controversies are of crucial importance in the contemporary era. Our narrative will track salient developments in the study of culture and media, supplying a map of the prevailing fields of theories and methods which have proliferated especially since the 1960s. Indeed, to pursue our KeyWorks metaphor, each perspective

provides an opening into the complex terrain of contemporary media and culture, furnishing access to understanding the world in which we live. Each "key" will open doors to new domains, such as ideology and hegemony, the politics of representations, new media, globalization, social networking, and other current themes of media/cultural studies. They provide novel ways of seeing and understanding the flora and fauna of images, symbols, and messages through which we wander, trying to make sense and give shape to our lives.

The terrain of contemporary culture, however, is so vast, the maze of theories is so complex, and the debates over media and culture are so intense and convoluted, that we have necessarily had to choose some perspectives and theorists to the exclusion of others. In fact, there are many forms of media that saturate our everyday lives and the cultural change of the current technological revolution is so turbulent that it is becoming increasingly difficult to map the transformations and to keep up with the cultural discourses and theories that attempt to make sense of it all. Culture today is both ordinary and complex, encompassing multiple realms of everyday life. We – and many of the theorists assembled in this volume – employ the term "culture" broadly to signify types of cultural artifacts (i.e. TV, CDs, newspapers, paintings, opera, journalism, cyberculture, DVDs, Facebook, iPads, and so on), as well as discourses about these phenomena. Since culture is bound up with both forms, like film or sports, and discourses, it is both a space of interpretation and debate as well as a subject matter and domain of inquiry. Theories and writings like this Introduction are themselves modes of culture, spaces that attempt to make sense of particular phenomena and subject matter, and a part of a contemporary cultural field.

A theory is a way of seeing, an optic, that focuses on a specific subject matter. The Greek word *theoria* signifies perspective and vision which centers upon specific topics, processes, and attributes, as a theory of the state focuses on how the government works. Theories are also modes of explanation and interpretation that construct connections and illuminate sociocultural practices and structures, thus helping to make sense of our everyday life, as an analysis of how Microsoft dominates the computer software field would indicate what particular issues are at stake. Thus, cultural and social theories are descriptive and interpretive; they highlight specific topics, make

connections, contextualize, provide interpretations, and offer explanations. There is also a narrative component to theory, as in Adam Smith's or Karl Marx's theories of capitalism, which tell of the origin and genesis of the market economy as well as describing how it works, and in Marx's case offering a critique of and proposals for revolutionary transformation.

All social theories are perspectives that center attention on phenomena and their connections to the broader society and a wide range of institutions, discourses, and practices. As optics, or ways of seeing, they illuminate part of the social and cultural field, but may ignore or leave in darkness other dimensions. Consequently, constantly expanding one's theoretical perspectives and horizons helps to illuminate multiple dimensions of our cultural environment, providing richer and more complex understandings of our sociocultural life. Multiplying theories and methods at one's disposal aids in grasping diverse dimensions of an object, in making more and better connections, and thus provides richer and more comprehensive understanding of cultural artifacts or practices under scrutiny.

It is therefore our conviction that no one approach contributes *the* key to cultural and media criticism, that all given theories and methods have their limitations as well as strengths, their blind spots as well as illuminating perspectives. Hence, in our view, no one theory, method, or thinker dispenses privileged access to the truth of our culture and society; there is no magical formula or hermeneutic key to unlock the hidden secrets of cultural meaning and effects. Rather, we believe that the categories, theories, and texts here presented as KeyWorks provide tools for making sense of our life, or to switch the metaphor, weapons of critique which enable individuals to engage in discriminating practice in distinct contexts.

Furthermore, some of the theoretical perspectives offered will furnish useful material for some tasks, while others will prove more valuable for different projects. Someone might choose, for instance, to do a feminist reading of a cultural text, while at another time the category of race or class may be most salient to one's critical intentions. Analyses will necessarily often involve the confluence of these and other vectors. Likewise, one critical exercise might focus on the ideology of the text and the ways that texts legitimate and reproduce dominant forms of oppression, while another reading might emphasize the ways that spe-

cific texts resist dominant institutions and ideologies – or show how certain texts both legitimate and contest the established culture and society at the same time and are thus markedly ambiguous.

Viewing culture from political economy, from the perspective of analysis of the system of production and distribution, may disclose how the culture industry reproduces the dominant corporate and commercial culture, excluding discourses and images that contest the established social system. Closer reading of media texts can reveal a wealth of meanings, values, and messages, often contradictory. Examining how people engage cultural texts, however, may reveal that audiences refuse dominant meanings and offer their own, sometimes surprising, interpretations. Conjoining production/text/audience perspectives can accordingly help provide a more complex sense of how culture and media actually operate in everyday life.

It is our conviction that competent and critical cultural consumers and commentators need to be able to examine media, culture, and society from a variety of perspectives, in order to cultivate critical vision and understanding of the nature and effects of cultural production and the artifacts with which we interact. Each new approach, each emergent theory, equips the budding critic with a different way of seeing and interpreting, thus creating a more diverse perspective for understanding media and culture. Hence, the many concepts, theories, and methods embedded in the texts in KeyWorks will enable readers to engage for themselves in cultural and media criticism, and consequently to become competent critics and consumers.

The texts and approaches we have chosen for KeyWorks are foundational in the sense that they provide building-blocks for constructing analyses, interpretations, and criticisms of cultural texts and the societies in which they originate and operate. Most of the selections are "radical" in the sense that they go to the roots of the situation (the meaning of the Latin term *radix*), showing, for example, how media and culture are grounded in a social system and its conflicts. All of the perspectives we have selected are "sociological" in the sense that they show, in varying ways, how media and cultural texts are rooted in a particular system of political economy such as capitalism, or in the dominant media and cultural forms of a particular social order based on relations of domination and subordination in the arenas of gender, race, and class. The roots of media and cultural

texts are consequently embedded in social reproduction and conflict, part and parcel of our social life.

The theorists and writings chosen accordingly provide critical understandings and interpretations of media and culture, showing how they are often constructed to serve specific social interests and functions – and yet can be read, enjoyed, and interpreted in a multiplicity of ways. We conceive of KeyWorks as a toolkit that enables individuals to produce their own understandings, meanings, and critiques of contemporary culture, media, and society. We will try to make these often complex perspectives on media and culture accessible and to make our text "user-friendly" by, first, explaining in the sections that follow the key concepts and methods deployed in the leading competing approaches to the study of media and culture, and by introducing the theorists presented in our reader. And then, before each section, we provide more detailed contextualizing of both the particular topics through which we have organized the collection and the theorists and texts chosen. While the book was designed to be employed in classroom situations, we also hope that enterprising readers will use it on their own to become more competent cultural consumers and critics; hence, we also hope that it will prove valuable to people who wish to educate themselves in the theories and methods of cultural and media criticism. Consequently, we begin with discussion of the origins and meanings of some key concepts, to start the trek toward a more empowering critical cultural and media literacy that will enable people to make better sense of their world and to become more competent actors within it.

Culture, Ideology, and Hegemony

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas; i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. – Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

Contemporary criticism has forced students and teachers to see that there are no innocent texts, that all artifacts of the established culture and society are laden with meaning, values, biases, and messages that advance relations of power and subordination. There is no pure entertainment that does not contain representations, often extremely prejudicial, of class, gender, race, sexuality, and myriad social categories and groupings. Cultural texts are saturated with social meanings, they generate political effects, reproducing or opposing governing social institutions and relations of domination and subordination. Culture can also embody specific political discourses – liberal, conservative, oppositional, or mixed – advancing competing political positions on issues like the family and sexuality, masculinity or femininity, or violence and war. Cultural representations often transcode major political discourses and perspectives presenting, for instance, an array of positions on topics like sexuality, the state, or religion.

Culture in today's societies thus constitutes a set of discourses, stories, images, spectacles, and varying cultural forms and practices that generate meaning, identities, and political effects. Culture includes artifacts such as newspapers, television programs, movies, and popular music, but also practices like shopping, watching sports events, going to a club, or hanging out in the local coffee shop. Culture is ordinary, a familiar part of everyday life, yet special cultural artifacts are extraordinary, helping people to see and understand things they've never quite perceived, like certain novels or films that change your view of the world. Or, we would hope that some of the challenging theoretical texts included here will provide novel and transformative understandings of culture, media, and society.

The concept of *ideology*, for example, forces readers to perceive that all cultural texts have distinct biases, interests, and embedded values, reproducing the point of view of their producers and often the values of the dominant social groups. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels coined the term "ideology" in the 1840s to describe the dominant ideas and representations in a given social order. On their analysis, during the feudal period, ideas of piety, honor, valor, and military chivalry were the ruling ideas of the hegemonic aristocratic classes. During the capitalist era, values of individualism, profit, competition, and the market became dominant, articulating the ideology of the emergent bourgeois class which was consolidating its class power. Today, in our high-tech and global capitalism era, ideas that promote globalization, digital technologies, and an unrestrained market society are becoming the prevailing ideas –

conceptions that further the interests of the governing elites in the global economy.

As we note below, feminists, multiculturalists, and members of a wide range of subordinate groups, detected that ideologies also reproduced relations of domination in the arenas of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and further domains of everyday life. Feminists, for example, criticized sexist ideologies that advanced the domination of women by men and social institutions and practices that propagated male supremacy. Racist ideologies were criticized that furthered the subordination of specific races and ethnicities. In a broad sense, therefore, ideologies reproduce social domination, they legitimate rule by the prevailing groups over subordinate ones, and help replicate the existing inequalities and hierarchies of power and control.

Ideologies appear natural, they seem to be common sense, and are often invisible and elude criticism. Marx and Engels began a critique of ideology, attempting to show how ruling ideas reproduce dominant societal interests serving to naturalize, idealize, and legitimate the existing society and its institutions and values. In a competitive and atomistic capitalist society, it appears natural to assert that human beings are primarily self-interested and competitive by nature, just as in a communist society it is natural to assert that people are cooperative by nature. In fact, human beings and societies are extremely complex and contradictory, but ideology smoothes over conflicts and negative features, idealizing human or social traits like individuality and competition which are elevated into governing conceptions and values.

For classical Marxism, the ruling classes employ intellectuals and cultural producers who both produce ideas that glorify the dominant institutions and ways of life, and propagate these governing ideas in cultural forms like literature, the press, or, in our day, film and television. The concept of ideology accordingly makes us question the naturalness of cultural texts and to see that prevailing ideas are not self-evident and obvious, but are constructed, biased, and contestable. This notion makes us suspicious and critical, putting into question regnant ideas which often serve the interests of governing groups. Moreover, the more one studies cultural forms and representations, the more one sees the presence of ideologies that support the interests of the reigning economic, gender, race, or social groups who are presented positively and idealized, while subordinate groups are often presented negatively and prejudicially.

The Italian Marxian thinker Antonio Gramsci developed these ideas further, arguing that diverse social groups attained "hegemony," or dominance, at different times through inducing the consent of the majority of subaltern, or subordinate, groups to a given sociopolitical constellation. He points out that while the unity of prevailing groups is usually created through the state (as in the American Revolution, or unification of Italy in the nineteenth century), the institutions of "civil society" also play a role in establishing hegemony. Civil society, in this discourse, involves institutions of the church, schooling, the media and forms of popular culture, among others. It mediates between the private sphere of personal economic interests and the family and the public authority of the state, serving as the locus of what Habermas described as "the public sphere."

For Gramsci, societies maintained their stability through a combination of "domination," or force, and "hegemony," defined as consent to "intellectual and moral leadership." In this conception, social orders are founded and reproduced with some institutions and groups violently exerting power and domination to maintain social boundaries and rules (i.e. the police, military, vigilante groups, etc.), while other institutions (like religion, schooling, or the media) induce consent to the dominant order through establishing the hegemony, or ideological dominance, of a distinctive type of social order (i.e. market capitalism, fascism, communism, and so on). In addition, societies establish the hegemony of males and certain races through the institutionalizing of male dominance or the rule of a specific race or ethnicity over subordinate groups.

Hegemony theory for Gramsci involves both analysis of current forces of domination and the ways that particular political forces achieved hegemonic authority, *and* the delineation of counterhegemonic forces, groups, and ideas that could contest and overthrow the existing hegemony. An analysis, for instance, of how the conservative regimes of Margaret Thatcher in England and Ronald Reagan in the United States in the late 1970s and early 1980s, or the Bush/Cheney regime in the 2000s, won power would dissect how conservative groups gained dominance through control of the state, and the use of media, new technologies, and cultural institutions such as think-tanks and fund-raising and political action groups. Explaining the Thatcher–Reagan conservative hegemony of the 1980s and the Bush/Cheney hegemony of the early 2000s would require

analysis of how conservative ideas became dominant in the media, schools, and culture at large. It would discuss how on a global level the market rather than the state was seen as the source of all wealth and the solution to social problems, while the state was pictured as a source of excessive taxation, overregulation, and bureaucratic inertia.

A cultural hegemony analysis of how Barack Obama won the presidency in 2008 would discuss how Obama became a master of media spectacle, how his candidacy mobilized hopes for change, justice, and a new generation of liberal rule. Explaining Obama's rise to power would also require analysis of how his supporters used new media like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to organize support and mobilize in particular young audiences. It would describe how certain social movements and coalitions of color coalesced behind the Obama candidacy, as well as certain corporate factions.

A cultural hegemony analysis would therefore show how particular media, technologies, or institutions contributed to a broader sociopolitical domination by forces like fascism, communism, or market capitalism. A Gramscian theory would also discuss how a hegemonic social order is always contested by counterhegemonic forces, such as during the 1980s, when conservative rule was contested, and the 1990s, when it was in part overthrown with a resurgence of liberalism and social-democratic movements and regimes, as well as an upsurge of oppositional social movements. Such analysis, however, would also have to show how the more liberal hegemonic groups compromised with the dominant conservative forces, whereby liberal democrats like Bill Clinton, or social democrats like Tony Blair, would themselves take conservative positions in curbing welfare, cutting social spending, or unleashing military intervention.

Hegemony theory thus calls for historically specific sociocultural analysis of particular contexts and forces, requiring dissection of how culture and a variety of social institutions from the media to the university facilitate broader social and political ends. Analyses of hegemony emphasize that a wide array of cultural institutions function within social reproduction including the church, schools, traditional and elite culture, sports, and the entertainment media. The approach requires social contextualization of all ideas, representations, and cultural forms; it enjoins seeing societies as a locus of social contestation between competing groups who seek dominance and

who manipulate reigning institutions and culture to promote their ends.

Theories of hegemony and ideology were further developed by a group of thinkers who were organized around the German Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt in the 1930s. Their core members were Jewish radicals who later went into exile to the United States after Hitler's rise to power. Establishing themselves in a small institute in New York affiliated with Columbia University, the Institute for Social Research, they developed analyses of the culture industry which had emerged as key institutions of social hegemony in the era that they called state-monopoly capitalism. Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Walter Benjamin, who was loosely affiliated with the Institute, analyzed the new forms of corporate and state power during a time in which giant corporations ruled the capitalist economies and the might of the state grew significantly under the guise of fascism, Russian communism, and the state capitalism of Roosevelt's New Deal which required a sustained government response to the crisis of the economic Depression in the 1930s. In this conjuncture, ideology played an increasingly important role in inducing consent to a diversity of social systems.

To a large extent, the Frankfurt School inaugurated critical studies of mass communication and culture, showing in detail how the media were controlled by groups who employed them to further their own interests and domination. They were the first social theorists to see the importance of what they called the "culture industry" in the reproduction of contemporary societies, in which so-called mass culture and communications stand in the center of leisure activity, are important agents of socialization and mediators of political reality, and should be seen as primary institutions of contemporary societies with a variety of economic, political, cultural, and social effects.

Having experienced the rise of fascism and fascist use of the media in Germany in the 1930s, they noted during their exile in the United States how the culture industry was controlled by predominant capitalist economic interests and functioned to reproduce the established market society and democratic polity. The Frankfurt School developed a critical and transdisciplinary approach to cultural and communications studies, combining critique of political economy of the media, analysis of texts, and audience reception studies of the social and ideological effects of mass

culture and communications. They coined the term "culture industry" to signify the process of the industrialization of mass-produced culture and the commercial imperatives which drove the system. The critical theorists analyzed all mass-mediated cultural artifacts within the context of industrial production, in which the commodities of the culture industry exhibited the same features as other products of mass production: commodification, standardization, and massification. The culture industry had the singular function, however, of providing ideological legitimation of the existing capitalist societies and of integrating individuals into the framework of the capitalist system.

Furthermore, the critical theorists investigated the cultural industry in a political context as a form of the integration of the working class into capitalist societies. The Frankfurt School were one of the first neo-Marxian groups to examine the effects of mass culture and the rise of the consumer society on the working classes, which were to be vehicles of revolution in the classical Marxian scenario. They also analyzed the ways that the culture industry was stabilizing contemporary capitalism, and accordingly they sought new strategies for political change, agencies of social transformation, and models for human emancipation that could serve as norms of social critique and goals for political struggle.

Thus, in their theories of the culture industry and critiques of mass culture, the Frankfurt School were the first to systematically analyze and criticize mass-mediated culture and communications within critical social theory. Their approach suggests that to properly understand any specific form of media or culture, one must understand how it is produced and distributed in a given society and how it is situated in relation to the dominant social structure. The Frankfurt School thought, for the most part, that media culture simply reproduced the existing society and manipulated mass audiences into obedience.

One of their members, however, Walter Benjamin, had a more optimistic and activist view of the potential of media, such as film, to promote progressive political ends than his colleagues Horkheimer and Adorno. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin argued that film, sports, and other forms of mass entertainment were creating a new kind of spectator, able to critically dissect cultural forms and to render intelligent judgment on them. For Benjamin, the decline of the aura of the work of art – the sense of originality, unique-

ness, and authenticity – under the pressures of mechanical reproduction helped produce a public able to more actively engage a wide range of cultural phenomena. He argued that, for instance, the spectators of sports events were discriminating judges of athletic activity, able to criticize and analyze plays, athletes, strategies, and so on. Likewise, Benjamin postulated that film audiences as well can become experts of criticism and ably dissect the construction, meanings, and ideologies of film.

Benjamin saw that politics were being aestheticized in the contemporary era, deploying techniques of mystification and cultural manipulation to produce media spectacles to gain mass assent to specific political candidates and groups. He was one of the first to dissect the new public spheres that were emerging in the period when the fascist party and state used organs of public communication like film, radio, or the political rally to promote their ends. Moreover, Benjamin's work is also important for focusing on the technology of cultural reproduction, seeing the changes in new media techniques, and carrying out political critique, while calling for a democratic transformation of media technology and institutions.

A second-generation member of the Frankfurt School, Jürgen Habermas, grew up under German fascism, found it repellent, and undertook life-long investigations of contemporary society and culture, in part motivated by desire to prevent the recurrence of fascism. After studying with Horkheimer and Adorno in Frankfurt, Germany, in the 1950s, Habermas investigated in his early work the ways that a new public sphere emerged during the time of the Enlightenment and the American and French revolutions, and how it promoted political discussion and debate. Habermas's concept of the public sphere described a space of institutions and practices between private and public interests. The public sphere mediated for Habermas between the domains of the family and the workplace (where private interests prevail), and the state, which often exerts arbitrary forms of power and domination. What Habermas called the "bourgeois public sphere" consisted of the realm of public assemblies, pubs and coffee houses, literary salons, and meeting halls where citizens gathered to discuss their common public affairs and to organize against arbitrary and oppressive forms of social and public authority. The public sphere was nurtured by newspapers, journals, pamphlets, and books, which were read and discussed in social sites like pubs and coffee houses.

Habermas notes that newspapers were initially commercial sheets that disseminated "news" (i.e. what was novel and contemporary), but then were transformed into instruments of political debate under the pressures of the American and French Revolutions and the organization of political groups to revolutionize society. Yet newspapers also fell prey to commercial imperatives and often put profit and business interests above political opinion, selling advertising and papers via tabloid sensationalism and entertainment rather than disseminating political information and ideas. Moreover, as society became more dominated by mass media, powerful corporations came to control major institutions like newspapers, radio, film, and television. These arms of the culture industry served the interests of the media conglomerates and the corporations and advertisers who financed them. In this conjuncture, the public sphere was colonized by big media which came to dominate public life and which recast the public sphere from a locus of information and debate to a site of manipulation by corporate powers.

In retrospect, the theorists discussed so far articulate the ascending stages of modern Western societies. While Habermas's theory of the public sphere describes the earlier phase of liberal bourgeois society, Marx and Engels analyze the consolidation of the class rule of the bourgeoisie and hegemony of capitalism during the mid-nineteenth century. Gramsci in turn presents the transition from liberal capitalism to fascism in Italy in the 1930s, while the work of Horkheimer and Adorno can be read as an articulation of a theory of the state and monopoly capitalism which became dominant throughout the world during the 1930s. This era constituted a form of "organized capitalism," in which the state and mammoth corporations managed the economy and in which individuals submitted to state and corporate control.

The period is often described as "Fordism" to designate the system of mass production and the homogenizing regime of capital which sought to produce mass desires, tastes, and behavior. The culture industry discussed by Horkheimer and Adorno was the form of cultural organization parallel to Fordism as a mode of industrial production. Just as American automobiles were produced on assembly lines according to a well-organized plan and division of labor, so too were film, broadcasting, magazines, and assorted forms of media culture generated according to types and with a well-organized division of labor.

The decades following the Second World War were a period of mass production and consumption characterized by uniformity and homogeneity of needs, thought, and behavior, constituting a "mass society" and what the Frankfurt School described as "the end of the individual." No longer were personal thought and action the motor of social and cultural progress; instead gigantic organizations and institutions overpowered individuals. The period corresponds to the staid, ascetic, conformist, and conservative world of corporate capitalism that was dominant in the 1950s with its organization men, its conspicuous consumption, and its mass culture.

During this period, mass culture and communication were essential in generating the modes of thought and behavior appropriate to a highly organized and homogenized social order. Hence, the Frankfurt School theory of "the culture industry" articulates a vital historical shift to an epoch in which mass consumption and culture were indispensable to producing a consumer society based on uniform needs and desires for mass-produced products and a mass society based on social organization and conformity. It is culturally the time in the United States of strongly controlled network radio and television, insipid top-40 pop music, glossy Hollywood films, national magazines, largely conservative newspaper chains, and other mass-produced cultural artifacts. In the Soviet communist bloc, and other sectors where state-controlled broadcasting prevailed, systems of broadcasting were intended to reproduce the dominant national culture or state ideology, while serving as instruments of social integration and conformity.

Of course, media culture was never as massified and homogeneous as in the Frankfurt School model, and one could argue that the model was flawed even during its time of origin and influence and that other models were preferable (such as those of Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, Ernst Bloch, and others of the Weimar generation and, later, British cultural studies, as we suggest below). Yet the original Frankfurt School theory of the culture industry articulated the important social roles of media culture during a particular sociohistorical epoch and provided a model, still of use, of an exceedingly commercial and technologically advanced culture that promotes the needs of dominant corporate interests, plays a principal role in ideological reproduction, and enculturates the

populace into the dominant system of needs, thought, and behavior.

With the economic boom of the 1960s and the proliferation of new products and ideas, structuralism became the intellectual vogue in France. Theories of structure (linguistic, anthropological, social) emerged from an age of burgeoning technology and influenced the Marxist revisionism of French philosopher Louis Althusser. Beginning with Marx's thesis that the mode of production determines the character of social, intellectual, and cultural life, Althusser sees ideology as an effect of the structure of society, a force in which economic, political-legal, cultural, and ideological practices are interrelated to shape social consciousness. In Althusser's version of "structural Marxism," "ideological state apparatuses" (schooling, the media, the judiciary, etc.) "interpellated" individuals into preconceived forms of subjectivity that left no space for opposition or resistance. On this account, subjects were constructed as preconstituted individuals, men or women, members of a specific class, and were induced to identify with the roles, behavior, values, and practices of the existing state-capitalist society. In fact, it is Althusser who advanced the idea that ideology operates via everyday practices, rather than through some form of externally imposed doctrine. Combining psychoanalysis, Marxism, and structuralism, Althusser thus analyzed how individuals were incorporated into specific social systems and functioned to reproduce contemporary capitalist societies. A strain of Althusserian structural Marxism is evident in the early period of British cultural studies.

Following the lines of this narrative, we will argue through the Introduction that the subsequent forms of cultural and media analysis respond to developments within Western capitalist societies from the end of the Second World War until the present. Cultural theories analyze historical metamorphoses and novelties, and articulate sociohistorical conditions, practices, and transformations. Theories provide maps of social orders and tools to understand and transform them. The proliferation of theories in the past two decades itself highlights the increasing differentiation and fragmentation of Western societies during an epoch of intense social struggle and turbulent change. Accordingly, we will map the vicissitudes of theory in the post-Second World War conjuncture in the remainder of the Introduction, providing an overview of the emergence of leading theories, methods, and themes within the terrain of media and cultural studies.

Social Life and Cultural Studies

But certainly for the present age, which prefers the sign to the thing signified, the copy to the original, fancy to reality, the appearance to the essence, . . . illusion only is sacred, truth profane. Nay, sacredness is held to be enhanced in proportion as truth decreases and illusion increases, so that the highest degree of illusion comes to be the highest degree of sacredness. – Ludwig Feuerbach

Culture is produced and consumed within social life. Hence, particular cultural artifacts and practices must be situated within the social relations of production and reception in which culture is produced, distributed, and consumed in order to be properly understood and interpreted. Contextualizing cultural forms and audiences in historically specific situations helps illuminate how cultural artifacts reflect or reproduce concrete social relations and conditions – or oppose and attempt to transform them. The foundational writings that we discussed in the previous section provide concepts for situating culture and media within distinctive social and historical contexts. Likewise, in our Introduction, we are positioning the emergence of theories of media and culture within determinate sociohistorical circumstances, and are thus engaging in social contextualization ourselves.

After the Second World War, the consumer society emerged throughout the Western world. Whereas the primary US corporations were developing systems of mass production and consumption in the 1920s, which saw the rise of media industries like broadcasting, advertising, and mass publications to promote consumer goods, the 1930s Depression and then the Second World War prevented the introduction of the consumer society. As we observed above, the Frankfurt School, living in exile in the United States, were among the first to theorize this new configuration of society and culture in their critique of the culture industry, the integrative role of mass consumer society, and the new values and personality structures being developed. By the 1950s, theorists throughout the more evolved capitalist countries were producing theories of consumption, the media, and the changed conditions of everyday life to respond to the changes and transformations in the emergent consumer and media society.

In the United States, marketing research for big corporations and advertising agencies took up

broadcasting research, and out of this process a certain model of "mass communication" studies emerged. Paul Lazarsfeld and his colleagues at the Princeton Radio Research Institute, which included Frankfurt School member T. W. Adorno, began researching which programs audiences regularly tuned into, studied audience taste, and accordingly advised corporations concerning consumer demand for broadcasting product and what sort of programming was most popular. Hence, mass communications research emerged as an offshoot of consumer research in the 1940s and 1950s, producing a tradition of empirical study of the established forms of culture and communications.

Rapid modernization in France after the Second World War and the introduction of the consumer society in the 1950s provoked much debate and contributed to constructing a variety of discourses on the media and consumer society in France, inspiring Roland Barthes, Henri Lefebvre, Guy Debord, Jean Baudrillard, and their contemporaries to develop novel analyses of the emerging forms of society and culture. It was clear that the consumer society was multiplying images, spectacle, and new cultural forms and modes of everyday life. The leading French theorists of the period attempted to explain, make sense of, and in many cases criticize the novelties of the era.

Roland Barthes applied the emergent theories of structuralism and semiology to make sense of the expansion of media culture and its important social functions. Structuralism was developed in the 1950s by the French anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss, to articulate the basic structures of culture and society. Semiology, created earlier in the century by the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, analyzed the fundamental rules, codes, and practices of language usage. In the hands of Barthes, semiology assumed that society and culture were texts that could be analyzed for their structures, significance, and effects.

Barthes's *Mythologies* employed both methods to analyze the codes and meanings embedded in artifacts of popular culture ranging from wrestling to soap ads, while dissecting their social functions. The "mythologies" Barthes studied functioned to naturalize and eternalize the historically contingent forms of French bourgeois culture that he analyzed. In his famous reading of a picture of a Black African soldier saluting the French flag, for example, Barthes claimed that the image erased the horrors of French imperialism, presenting a sanitized portrait of a French soldier that made it appear natural that an African should salute the French flag and exhibit the proper signs of military behavior.

A very different historical and cultural approach to the study of media and culture was developed in North America in the 1950s and 1960s by Marshall McLuhan. In his distinguished and influential work *Understanding Media*, McLuhan described a paradigm shift from earlier print culture to the new media culture. Whereas print culture, McLuhan argued, produced rational, literate, and individualist subjects, who followed the linear and logical form of print media in thought and reasoning, the proliferating media culture produced more fragmentary, nonrational, and aestheticized subjects, immersed in the sights, sounds, and spectacles of media like film, radio, television, and advertising. The new media culture was, McLuhan argued, "tribal," sharing collective ideas and behavior. It was generating an expanding global culture and consciousness that he believed would overcome the individualism and nationalism of the previous modern era.

McLuhan aroused a generation to take media seriously as an active agent of fundamental historical change and media culture as an important terrain of study. In his groundbreaking work, *Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord described the proliferation of commodities and the "immense accumulation of spectacles" that characterized the new consumer society. Grocery, drug, and department stores were exhibiting a dazzling profusion of commodities and things to purchase which in turn were celebrated in advertising campaigns that inscribed the seductive consumer items with an aura of magic and divinity. The media themselves are spectacles in Debord's sense with MTV, for example, broadcasting a collage of dazzling music videos, ads, and sequences that attempt to capture the dynamics and attractions of contemporary youth culture. Films provide larger-than-life spectacle replete with special effects, snappy editing, and intense sound.

Hence, the "society of the spectacle" refers to a media and consumer society, organized around the consumption of images, commodities, and spectacles. In our day, malls, the cyberspectacle of the internet, and proliferating virtual-reality devices and domains expand the realm of the spectacle, providing new relevance to Debord's analysis. Moreover, the "society of the spectacle" also refers to the vast institutional and technical apparatus of contemporary societies which produce commodities and media

events. The concept encompasses all the means and methods ruling powers employ, outside of direct force, which subject individuals to societal manipulation, while obscuring the nature and effects of operations of domination and subordination. Under this broader definition, the education system and the institutions of representative democracy, as well as the endless inventions of consumer gadgets, sports, media culture, and urban and suburban architecture and design are all integral components of the spectacular society. Schooling, for example, involves sports, fraternity and sorority rituals, bands and parades, bullying, and various public assemblies that indoctrinate individuals into dominant ideologies and practices. Contemporary politics is also saturated with spectacles, ranging from daily "photo opportunities," to highly orchestrated special events which dramatize state power, to TV ads and image management for prepackaged candidates during election campaigns.

In the post-Second World War conjuncture, the spectacle became globalized as corporations like Coca-Cola and Pepsi, sundry national automobile corporations, IBM and the nascent computer industry, and subsequently McDonald's, Nike, Microsoft, Apple, and a cornucopia of global products circulated throughout the world. Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart record the response of Third World activists to the saturation of their Latin American culture with products from the Walt Disney Corporation. In their controversial *How to Read Donald Duck*, they provide critical dissection of the meanings, messages, and ideologies in artifacts as seemingly harmless as comic books. The authors explain that these popular comics contained a wealth of images and stories that naturalized capitalism and imperialism, much like the "mythologies" which Barthes criticized in France.

Critical approaches to society and culture were proliferating throughout the world by the 1960s. All of the theories we have discussed so far can be seen as providing models of media and cultural studies, but the school of British cultural studies that has become a global phenomenon of great importance over the last decades was inaugurated by the University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1964. Under its director, Richard Hoggart, and his successor, Stuart Hall, who directed the Centre from 1968 to 1979, the Birmingham groups developed a variety of critical perspectives for the analysis, interpretation, and criticism of cultural artifacts, combining sociological theory and contextualization with literary analysis of cultural texts. The now

classical period of British cultural studies from the early 1960s to the early 1980s adopted a neo-Marxian approach to the study of culture, one especially influenced by Althusser and Gramsci. Through a set of internal debates, and responding to social conflicts and movements of the 1960s and the 1970s, the Birmingham group came to concentrate on the interplay of representations and ideologies of class, gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality in cultural texts, especially concentrating on media culture. They were among the first to study the effects of newspapers, radio, television, film, and other popular cultural forms on audiences. They also engaged how assorted audiences interpreted and deployed media culture in varied ways and contexts, analyzing the factors that made audiences respond in contrasting manners to media texts.

From the beginning, British cultural studies systematically rejected high/low culture distinctions and took seriously the artifacts of media culture, thus surpassing the elitism of dominant literary approaches to culture. Likewise, British cultural studies overcame the limitations of the Frankfurt School notion of a passive audience in their conceptions of an active audience that creates meanings and the popular. Reproducing the activism of oppositional groups in the 1960s and 1970s, the Birmingham School was engaged in a project aimed at a comprehensive criticism of the present configuration of culture and society, attempting to link theory and practice to orient cultural studies toward fundamental social transformation. British cultural studies situated culture within a theory of social production and reproduction, specifying the ways that cultural forms served either to further social control, or to enable people to resist. It analyzed society as a hierarchical and antagonistic set of social relations characterized by the oppression of subordinate class, gender, race, ethnic, and national strata. Employing Gramsci's model of hegemony and counterhegemony, British cultural studies sought to analyze "hegemonic," or ruling, social and cultural forces of domination and to locate "counterhegemonic" forces of resistance and contestation.

British cultural studies aimed at a political goal of social transformation in which the location of forces of domination and resistance would aid the process of political transformation. From the beginning, the Birmingham group was oriented toward the crucial political problems of their age and milieu. Their early spotlight on class and ideology derived from an acute sense of the oppressive and systemic effects of class in

British society and the movements of the 1960s against class inequality and oppression. The work of the late 1950s and early 1960s Williams/Hoggart/Hall stage of cultural studies emphasized the potential of working-class cultures; then began in the 1960s and 1970s appraising the potential of youth subcultures to resist the hegemonic forms of capitalist domination. Unlike the classical Frankfurt School (but similar to Herbert Marcuse), British cultural studies looked to youth cultures as providing potentially potent forms of opposition and social change. Through studies of youth subcultures, British cultural studies demonstrated how culture came to constitute distinct forms of identity and group membership and appraised the oppositional potential of diverse youth subcultures.

British cultural studies came to center attention on how subcultural groups resist dominant forms of culture and identity, creating their own style and identities. Individuals who conform to hegemonic dress and fashion codes, behavior, and political ideologies produce their identities within mainstream groups, as members of particular social groupings (such as white, middle-class, conservative Americans). Individuals who identify with subcultures, like punk or hip hop, look and act differently from those in the mainstream, and create oppositional identities, defining themselves against standard models.

As it developed into the 1970s and 1980s, British cultural studies successively appropriated emerging analyses of gender, race, sexuality, and a wide range of critical theories. They developed ways to examine and critique how the established society and culture promoted sexism, racism, homophobia, and additional forms of oppression – or helped to generate resistance and struggle against domination and injustice. This approach implicitly contained political critique of all cultural forms that promoted oppression, while positively affirming texts and representations that produced a potentially more just and egalitarian social order.

Developments within British cultural studies have been in part responses to contestation by a multiplicity of distinct groups that have produced new methods and voices within cultural studies (such as a variety of feminisms, gay and lesbian studies, many multiculturalisms, critical pedagogies, and projects of critical media literacy). Hence, the center and fulcrum of British cultural studies at any given moment was determined by the struggles in the present political conjuncture, and their major work was conceived as political interventions. Their studies of ideology and the politics of culture directed the Birmingham group toward analyzing cultural artifacts, practices, and institutions within existing networks of power. In this context, they attempted to show how culture both provided tools and forces of domination and resources for resistance and opposition. This political optic valorized studying the effects of culture and audience use of cultural artifacts, which provided an extremely productive focus on audiences and reception, topics that had been neglected in most previous text-based methods. Yet recent developments in the field of cultural studies have arguably vitiated and depoliticized the enterprise, as we shall note in the conclusion to the Introduction.

British cultural studies, then, in retrospect, emerges in a later era of capital following the stage of state and monopoly capitalism analyzed by the Frankfurt School into a more variegated, globalized, and conflicted cultural formation. The forms of culture described by the earliest phase of British cultural studies in the 1950s and early 1960s articulated conditions in an era in which there were still significant tensions in England and much of Europe between an older working-class-based culture and the newer mass-produced culture whose models and exemplars were the products of the American culture industry. The initial stage of cultural studies developed by Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and E. P. Thompson attempted to preserve working-class culture against the onslaughts of mass culture produced by the culture industry. Thompson's historical inquiries into the history of British working-class institutions and struggles, the defenses of working-class culture by Hoggart and Williams, and their attacks on mass culture were part of a socialist and working-class-oriented project which assumed that the industrial working class was an agent of progressive social change and that it could be mobilized and organized to resist the inequalities of the existing capitalist societies and work for a more egalitarian one. Williams and Hoggart were deeply involved in activities of working-class education and oriented toward socialist working-class politics, seeing their form of cultural studies as an instrument of progressive social change.

The initial critiques in the first wave of British cultural studies of Americanism and mass culture in Hoggart, Williams, and the Birmingham Centre paralleled to some extent the earlier critique of the Frankfurt School, yet celebrated a working class that

the Frankfurt School saw as defeated in Germany and much of Europe during the period of fascism and which they never saw as a strong resource for emancipatory social change. The early work of the Birmingham School was continuous with the radicalism of the first wave of British cultural studies (the Hoggart–Thompson–Williams "culture and society" tradition). The post-1980s work inspired by British cultural studies became global in impact and responded to the new cultural and political conditions described in postmodern theory which we discuss below.

As we shall see, many forms of the study of culture and media preceded and accompanied the development of British cultural studies. In the following sections, we will observe examples of European and North American cultural studies and developments within the field throughout the world in the globalization of media and cultural studies. We will also present a range of perspectives, often critical of the Frankfurt School, British cultural studies, and the other theories that we have so far examined. Next, however, we will introduce an approach to media and culture which focuses on the system and practices of production and distribution. This "political economy" perspective is sometimes taken as antithetical to cultural studies, and representatives of each position often attack each other, claiming their approach is superior. We, however, will argue that cultural studies and political economy viewpoints can be integrated, and that both are key parts of a more inclusive critical media and cultural theory.

Political Economy and Globalization

The anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy. – Karl Marx

A political economy approach to media and culture centers more on the production and distribution of entertainment, advertising, news and information, and new media than on interpreting texts or studying audiences. The references to the terms "political" and "economy" call attention to the fact that the production and distribution of culture take place within a specific economic and political system, constituted by relations between the state, the economy, social institutions and practices, culture, and organizations such as the media. Political economy thus encompasses economics and politics, and the relations between them and the other central structures of society and culture. With regard to media institutions, for instance, in Western democracies, a capitalist economy dictates that cultural production is governed by the laws of the market, but the democratic imperatives mean that there is some regulation of culture by the state. There are often tensions within a given society concerning which activities should be governed by the imperatives of the market, or economics, alone, and how much state regulation or intervention is desirable to assure a wider diversity of broadcast programming, or the prohibition of phenomena agreed to be harmful, such as cigarette advertising or pornography.

Political economy highlights that capitalist societies are organized according to a dominant mode of production that structures institutions and practices according to the logic of commodification and capital accumulation. Cultural production and distribution are accordingly profit- and market-oriented in such a system. Forces of production (such as media technologies and creative practice) are shaped according to dominant relations of production (such as the profit imperative, the maintenance of hierarchical control, and relations of domination). The system of production (e.g. market- or state-oriented) is important, as suggested below, in determining what sort of cultural artifacts are produced and how they are consumed. Hence, "political economy" does not merely pertain solely to economics, but to the relations between the economic, political, technological, and cultural dimensions of social reality. The structure of political economy links culture to its political and economic context and opens up cultural studies to history and politics. It refers to a field of contestation and antagonism and not an inert structure as caricatured by some of its opponents.

Political economy should also discern and analyze the role of technology in cultural production and distribution, seeing, as in McLuhan, how technology and forms of media structure economic, social, and cultural practices and forms of life. In our era, the proliferation of new technologies and multimedia – ranging from computers to DVDs to new types of digitized film and music – call attention to the key role of technology in the economy and everyday life and make clear that technological and economic factors are often deeply interconnected. In a time of technological revolution, the role of technology is especially important, and so political economy must engage the dominant forms of technology in its analysis.

In the present stage of capitalist hegemony, political economy grounds its approach within empirical analysis of the actual system of cultural production, investigating the constraints and structuring influence of the dominant capitalist economic system and a commercialized cultural system controlled by powerful corporations. Inserting texts into the system of culture within which they are produced and distributed can help elucidate features and effects of the texts that textual analysis alone might miss or downplay. Rather than being antithetical to approaches to culture, political economy can contribute to textual analysis and critique. The system of production often determines what type of artifacts will be produced, what structural limits there will be as to what can and cannot be said and shown, and what kind of audience effects cultural artifacts may generate.

Study of the codes of television, film, or popular music, for instance, is enhanced by examining the formulas and conventions of media culture production. These cultural forms are structured by well-defined rules and conventions, and investigation of the production of culture can help elucidate the codes actually in play. Because of the demands of the format of radio or music television, for instance, most popular songs are three to five minutes long, fitting into the format of the distribution system. Because of their control by giant media corporations oriented primarily toward profit, film and television production in the US is dominated by specific genres such as talk and game shows, soap operas, situation comedies, action/adventure shows, and so on. This economic factor explains why there are cycles of certain genres and subgenres, sequelmania in the film industry, and crossovers of popular films into television series. Seeing how competition for audiences decides what shows are produced also helps explain why there is homogeneity in products constituted within systems of production with established generic codes, formulaic conventions, and well-defined ideological boundaries.

Furthermore, one cannot really discern the role of the media in events like the Gulf War without analyzing the production and political economy of news and information, as well as the actual text of the Gulf War and its reception by its audience. Or, one cannot fully grasp the Madonna phenomenon without discussing her marketing strategies, her political environment, her cultural artifacts, and their effects. Likewise, in appraising the full social impact of pornography, one needs to be aware of the sex industry and the production process of, say, pornographic films, and not just on the texts themselves and their effects on audiences.

In addition, study of political economy can help ascertain the limits and range of political and ideological discourses and effects. Study of television and politics in the United States, for instance, suggests that takeover of the television broadcasting networks by leading transnational corporations and communications conglomerates was part of a "right turn" within US society in the 1980s whereby powerful corporate groups won control of the state and the mainstream media. For example, during the 1980s all three networks were taken over by leading corporate conglomerates: ABC was purchased by Capital Cities, NBC merged with GE, and CBS was bought by the Tisch Financial Group. Both ABC and NBC sought corporate mergers, and this motivation, along with other benefits derived from the Reagan administration, might well have influenced them to downplay criticisms of Reagan and to generally support his conservative programs, military adventures, and simulated presidency.

During the 1990s, the rise of new information industries created new powerful corporate forces, some of which merged with major old media companies like the MSNBC merger between Microsoft and NBC, while in the 2000s powerhouse corporations like Google and Yahoo absorbed new media and a wealth of other businesses and technologies. By 2003, ten gigantic multinational corporations, including AOL Time-Warner, Disney/ABC, General Electric–NBC, Viacom–CBS, News Corporation, Vivendi, Sony, Bertelsmann, AT&T, and Liberty Media, controlled most of the production of information and entertainment throughout the globe. The result is less competition and diversity, and more corporate control of newspapers and journalism, television, radio, film, and other media of information and entertainment, trends that have continued in different forms in the Age of Google, Yahoo, and emergent forms of new media. In the current conjuncture that is exhibiting a crossing of boundaries and synergy between information and entertainment industries, there have been significant mergers between the immense corporations. Previous forms of entertainment were rapidly absorbed within the internet, with the computer coming to be a major household appliance and source of entertainment, information, play, communication, and connection with the outside world. Currently, cell phones, iPads,

and other devices are making entertainment, news and information, and communication portable, But ongoing debates over "Net neutrality" or widespread access to the internet and communication highlight the battles over ownership that are products of corporate mergers and policy-level shifts to the right.

The corporate media, communications, and information industries are frantically scrambling to provide delivery for the wealth of information, entertainment, and further services that includes increased internet access, cellular telephones and satellite personal communication devices, and computerized video, film, and information on demand, as well as internet shopping and more unsavory services like pornography and gambling. Hence, study of the political economy of media can be immensely useful for describing the infrastructure of the media, information, and communications industry and their effects on culture and society. Yet political economy alone does not hold the key to cultural studies, and important as it is, it has limitations as a single perspective.

Some political economy analyses reduce the meanings and effects of texts to rather circumscribed and reductive ideological functions, arguing that media culture merely reflects the ideology of the ruling economic elite that controls the culture industry and is nothing more than a vehicle for the dominant ideology. It is true that media culture overwhelmingly supports capitalist values, but it is also a site of intense conflict between different races, classes, gender, and social groups. Thus, in order to fully grasp the nature and effects of media culture, one should see contemporary society and culture as contested terrains and media and cultural forms as spaces in which particular battles over gender, race, sexuality, political ideology, and values are fought.

Feminist political economy involves domestic activities like cleaning, child-rearing, shopping, and additional forms of consumption. Feminist critics contend that activities of packaging, marketing, and display are important dimensions of the capitalist economy and that therefore study of consumption is as significant as production in constructing political economy. As feminist political economists point out, questions of economic power extend to issues of social power. At the heart of studies of political economy lies the question of how social resources are controlled and by whom – a question that lays open issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, and other social groupings that underpin economic privilege and power (or the lack thereof).

As Eileen Meehan observes (pp. 242–249), patriarchy and capitalism are historically intertwined; her analysis brings to the surface the ways in which the media industries' commodification of audiences rests on the intersecting dynamics of these parallel vectors of power. Media artifacts operate simultaneously on economic and cultural levels, with one circumscribing the other. Her analysis elucidates the way that societal divisions of labor based on gender, coupled with prejudices about gender, play a significant role in defining and differentiating the media's commodity audience.

Political economy today necessarily involves discussion of a global capitalist world economy in an era marked by the fall of communism in 1989, technological revolution, and the emergence of a "new economy" based on computer and communication networks. The term "globalization" is often deployed as a cover concept for the new world economy, but as Herbert Schiller argues, its continuities with the old world-system of market capitalism should not be ignored. In fact, globalization is a contested term with some identifying it with new forms of imperialism, and seeing it as predominantly negative, while others equate it with modernization and the proliferation of novel products, cultural forms, and identities. In fact, it is best to see it as an extremely complex and ambiguous phenomenon that contains both exciting and progressive forms like the internet, novel terrains of cyberculture, and emergent economic and political actors and groups in the world economy – combined with the growing strength of transnational institutions, intensified competition on a global level, heightened exploitation, corporate downsizing, and greater levels of unemployment, economic inequality, and insecurity.

The conception of political economy that we are proposing goes beyond traditional, sometimes excessively economistic approaches that focus on more strictly economic issues such as ownership, gatekeeping, and the production and distribution of culture. Instead, we are suggesting that it involves relations between economy and polity, culture and people, as well as the interconnection between production and consumption, distribution and use. Although some conceptions of political economy are reductive, focusing solely on the economic dimension, we believe that far richer notions of political economy are possible.

In addition, we would argue that both political economy and more sociologically and culturally oriented approaches to the study of media culture should be combined. For some decades now,

however, advocates of media and cultural studies based in textual or audience analysis have been at war with those who advocate a political economy optic. The hostility between political economy and cultural studies, in our view, reproduces a great divide within the field of communication and cultural studies between two competing approaches with different methodologies, objects of study, and, by now, bodies of texts that represent the opposing schools. This dichotomization pits social science-based approaches that take media and communications as their object against a humanities- and text-based view that focuses on culture.

A largely textual approach centers on the analysis and criticism of texts as cultural artifacts, employing methods primarily derived from the humanities. The methods of political economy and empirical communications research, by contrast, utilize more social science-based research strategies, ranging from straight quantitative analysis to more qualitative empirical studies of specific cases or topics, structural analysis of media institutions, or historical research. Topics in this area include analysis of ownership patterns within the political economy of the media, empirical studies of audience reception and media effects, or structural analysis of the impact of media institutions on the economy, politics, or everyday life.

Consequently, the seemingly never-ending hostility between political economy and cultural studies replicates a bifurcation within the fields of communications and culture between competing paradigms. In our view, the divide is an artificial one, rooted in an arbitrary academic division of labor. These conflicting approaches point to a splintering of the field of media communications into specialized subareas with competing models and methods, and, ironically, to a lack of communication in the field of communications. The split reproduces an academic division of labor which – beginning early in the twentieth century and intensifying since the end of the Second World War – followed the trend toward specialization and differentiation symptomatic of the capitalist economy. The university has followed this broader trend which some theorists equate with the dynamics of modernity itself, interpreted as a process of ever-greater differentiation and thus specialization in all fields from business to education. This trend toward specialization has undermined the power and scope of cultural and media studies and should be replaced, as we are arguing, by a more transdisciplinary position.

Moreover, in the present configuration of the emergence of a new global economy, critical cultural and media studies need to grasp the global, national, and local systems of media production and distribution. In the 1960s, critics of the global capitalist system described the domination of the world economy by transnational – mostly American and European – corporations as "imperialism" or "neo-imperialism," while its supporters celebrated "modernization." Today, the term "globalization" is the standard concept used to describe the new global economy and culture. One of the features of globalization is the proliferation of new voices and perspectives on culture and society and the politicization and contestation of forms of culture previously taken for granted. In a global culture, the proliferation of difference and new actors are part of the landscape and the question of representation becomes intensely politicized and contested, as we see in the next section.

The Politics of Representation

Representation in the mediated "Reality" of our mass culture is in itself Power. – Larry Gross

Whereas political economy approaches to the media and culture derive from a social sciences tradition, analysis of the politics of representation in media texts derives from a humanities-based textual approach. Earlier, mass communications approaches to media content ranged from descriptive content analysis to quantitative analysis of references, figures, or images in media texts. The more sophisticated methods of textual analysis, however, derive from more advanced understandings of texts, narratives, and representation, as well as the contributions of critical concepts such as ideology and hegemony.

The idea that all cultural representations are political is one of the major themes of media and cultural theory of the past several decades. In the 1960s, feminist, African American, Latino, gay and lesbian, and diverse oppositional movements attacked the stereotypes and biased images of cultural representations of their groups. These critiques of sexism, racism, homophobia, and other biases made it clear that cultural representations are never innocent or pure, that they contain positive, negative, or ambiguous representations of diverse social groups, that they can serve pernicious interests of cultural

oppression by positioning certain groups as inferior, thus pointing to the superiority of dominant social groups. Studies of representations of women or blacks on American television, for instance, would catalogue negative representations and show how they produce sexism or racism, or would champion more positive representations.

Early interventions in the politics of representation concentrated on primarily "images of" particular social groups, decrying negative images and affirming more constructive ones. The limitations of such approaches were quickly apparent, and already by the 1970s more sophisticated analyses began emerging of how texts position audiences, of how narratives, scenes, and images produce biased representations. There emerged, then, more sophisticated understanding of how textual mechanisms help construct social meanings and representations of specific social groups. Exclusions of groups like Latinos, as well as negative stereotypes, were emphasized, as were the ways framing, editing, subtexts, and the construction of pictorial images produced culturally loaded and biased representations of subordinate groups. The narratives of media culture were scrutinized to discern how certain (usually socially dominant) forces were represented more affirmatively than subordinate groups, and there was a search for narratives and representations that more positively represented social types that had been excluded or negatively presented in mainstream culture (i.e. various ethnic groups, gays and lesbians, or members of the deaf community).

The turn toward study of audiences in the 1980s, as we have noted, also created more complex notions of the politics of representation and construction of meaning by stressing how audiences could perform oppositional readings, reacting negatively to what they perceived as prejudiced representations of their own social groups, thus showing themselves to be active creators of meaning, and not just passive victims of manipulation. Reading culture was seen as a political event, in which one looked for negative or positive representations, learned how narratives were constructed, and discerned how image and ideology functioned with media and culture to reproduce social domination and discrimination.

The debates over the politics of representation and how best to analyze and criticize offensive images of subordinate groups provided a wealth of insights into the nature and effects of culture and media. Culture was now conceived as a field of representation, as a producer of meaning that provided negative and positive depictions of gender, class, race, sexuality, religion, and further key constituents of identity. The media were interpreted as potent creators of role models, gender identity, norms, values, and appropriate and inappropriate behavior, positioning audiences to behave in diverging ways. Audiences, however, were eventually able to perceive themselves as active and creative, able to construct meanings and identities out of the materials of their culture.

Culture and identity were regarded as constructed, as artificial, malleable, and contestable artifacts, and not as natural givens. Representations in turn were interpreted not just as replications of the real, reproductions of natural objects, but as constructions of complex technical, narrative, and ideological apparatuses. The emphasis on the politics of representation called attention to media technologies, as well as narrative forms, conventions, and codes. It was determined that formal aspects of media texts, such as framing, editing, or special effects, could help construct specific representations and that different technologies produced different products and effects.

In addition, the growing emphasis on the active role of audiences from the 1980s to the present suggested that people could creatively construct cultural meanings, contest dominant forms, and create alternative readings and interpretations. Audiences could be empowered to reject prejudicial or stereotyped representations of specific groups and individuals, and could affirm positive ones. The politics of representation focused on both encoding and decoding, texts and audiences, and called for more critical and discriminating responses to the products of media production.

Consequently, cultural representations were perceived to be subject to political critique and culture itself was conceived as a contested terrain. Film, television, music, and assorted cultural forms were interpreted as an arena of struggle in which representations transcode the discourses of conflicting social movements. Beginning in the 1960s, alternative representations of gender, race, class, the family, the state, the corporation, and additional dominant forces and institutions began appearing in a sustained fashion. More complex and engaging representations of women, for instance, transcoded the critiques of negative stereotypes and sexist representations, as well as the demand for more active and positive representations. Calls for alternative voices and the creation of oppositional subcultures were met by

increased cultural production by women, people of color, sexual minorities, and others excluded from cultural debate and creation. Giving voice to alternative visions, telling more complex stories from the perspective of subordinate groups, and presenting works of marginalized people shook up dominant systems of cultural production and representation. The process created more variety and diversity but also intensified cultural resistance, as a backlash against oppositional groups of women, people of color, gays and lesbians, and various marginalized subcultures inevitably began. In many ways, the contests over representation have intensified as we have entered a supposedly "postracial, postfeminist" era where differences have purportedly ceased to matter, yet inequities persist. As Patricia Hill Collins astutely observes (pp. 318–337), contemporary representation functions "to erase the workings of racial discrimination" and other structural problems, while perpetuating power hierarchies and oppression.

The Postmodern Turn

It seems that to talk seriously about postmodernism today, one is still by definition being defensive. This is because postmodernism has become everybody's favorite bête noire, *while at the same time not only generously providing something solid to argue against, when so many other things have been "melting in the air," but also, in some mysterious way, being a concept in the right place at the right moment. Postmodernism has therefore served the function of shifting the paradigms in cultural studies and sociology, doing that kind of intellectual work which inevitably provokes controversy and protest, all the more so when what seems to be at stake are precisely those terms like history, society and politics that have given substance and direction to the kind of work we do as teachers and researchers and the reasons why we do it.* – Angela McRobbie

The notion of the postmodern implies a fundamental rupture in culture and history. It suggests that there are important changes in the economy, society, culture, the arts, and our everyday life which require new theories, ways of perceiving the world, and forms of discourse and practice. Yet as the above quotation

indicates, post modernism is extremely controversial, with discourses and practices of the "post" attracting some and repelling others.

To make sense of the bewildering variety of uses of the family of terms within the field of the postmodern, we would propose distinguishing between modernity and postmodernity as epochs or stages of history; modernism and postmodernism as developments within art; and modern and postmodern theory as opposed to modes of theoretical discourse and intellectual orientations toward the world. In terms of the narrative of our Introduction, a postmodern turn in culture and society would correspond to an emergent stage of global capitalism, characterized by new multimedia, exciting computer and informational technology, and a proliferation of novel forms of politics, society, culture, and everyday life.

From this perspective, postmodern theorists like Jean Baudrillard, Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault, Fredric Jameson, Angela McRobbie, Mark Poster, and others are attempting to engage the new technologies, the emergent forms of culture and identity, the innovative modes of theory and discourse, and the ascendant forms of global capitalism that are shaping the contemporary era. Just as previous theories and methods responded to the emergent historical conditions of their era, so too do the postmodern theories attempt to engage novel and original contemporary conditions. But just as previous theories and methods had their limitations and blindspots, postmodern theory also has its omissions and deficiencies. Hence, we would caution our readers, who are perhaps eager to embrace the latest theories and approaches, to be alert to drawbacks, as well as the benefits of the postmodern turn.

French theorist Jean Baudrillard was one of the first to engage the novel forms of culture in theorizing the modes of simulation and hyperreality by which he described the emergent media and cyberspaces of the new technologies. While he was prescient in perceiving the importance of new forms of culture and fields of cultural experience, by declaring "the end of political economy" and by claiming that simulation, hyperreality, and nascent modes of media and computer culture are autonomous organizing forces of the contemporary world, he forfeits insight into the connections between new technologies and form of culture and the restructuring of global capitalism.

North American cultural theorist Fredric Jameson, by contrast, in his famous article

"Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" (pp. 407–433), interprets the emergent forms of postmodern culture within the context of contemporary capitalism, thus connecting the economy and culture. For Jameson, postmodernism is a form of culture appropriate to the glitzy surfaces, culture of image and spectacle, and high-intensity emphasis on appearance, style, and look found in contemporary consumer and media culture. Theorizing postmodernism, for Jameson, requires understanding the new forms of global capitalism and culture that are emerging, of which postmodernism is a symptomatic form.

Seen in retrospect, the cultural populism, turn to the audience, and fetishism of the popular that emerged in British cultural studies during the 1980s and 1990s can be read as part of a postmodern turn in cultural studies which corresponds to a new stage of consumer and global capitalism. The Frankfurt School described a mass society and culture that sought to incorporate individuals into a more homogenized culture, controlled by big corporations, the state, and centralized media. By contrast, the current form of consumer capitalism is more fragmented, specialized, aestheticized and eroticized, and celebratory of difference, choice, and individual freedom than the previous stage.

The postmodern turn has generated a great variety and diversity of novel forms of cultural studies and approaches to the study of media and culture. At their most extreme, postmodern theories erase the economic, political, and social dimensions of cultural production and reception, engage in a type of cultural and technological determinism, indulge in theoreticist blather, and renounce the possibility of textual interpretation, social criticism, and political struggle. In a more dialectical and political version, postmodern theory is used to rethink cultural criticism and politics in the contemporary era. In addition, postmodern theory can be effective in calling attention to innovative configurations and functions of culture, as it charts the trajectories and impacts of new technologies, the emergent global economy and culture, and the novel political terrain and movements, without losing sight of questions of political power, domination, and resistance. In addition, some versions of postmodern theory provide extremely useful transdisciplinary perspectives, as did the Frankfurt School, British cultural studies, feminist, and diverse critical theories at their best.

New Media, DIY, and Social Networking

Human beings make their own history, but not under circumstances of their own choosing.
– Karl Marx

A dramatic technological revolution, centered on computer, information, communication, and multimedia technologies, has been changing everything from the ways people work, to the ways they communicate with each other and spend their leisure time. This technological revolution is often interpreted as the beginnings of a knowledge or information society, bringing with it notions of a revitalized public sphere and heightened levels of creativity and interactivity. At the same time that technological revolution is underway, important demographic and socio-political changes are taking place in the United States and throughout the world. Emigration patterns have created the challenge of providing people from diverse races, classes, and backgrounds with the tools and competencies to enable them to succeed and participate in an ever more complex and changing world. Social institutions have had to evolve rapidly to try to keep pace with these changes: for example, the new "information society" poses tremendous challenges to educators to rethink their basic tenets, to deploy the new technologies in creative and productive ways, and to restructure schooling to respond constructively and progressively to the technological and social changes that we are now experiencing.

During the 1980s, computer technologies changed the way we wrote, researched, and communicated. Corporations like Apple and Microsoft, the Open Source movement, and a generation of hackers began working on developing new media and new applications. In the 1990s, the internet emerged as a new field of culture wherein new technologies and media became much more than solely information technology, but are also technologies of entertainment, communication, and play, encompassing and restructuring both labor and leisure. As it developed in the 1990s and into the new millennium, the internet became a vast open frontier of play, social identity construction and networking, and research, as the computer took on multiple functions and became the center of life for many.

In the last section, we discussed how mergers in the entertainment and information industries created

corporations involved in TV, film, magazines, newspapers, books, information databases, computers, and other new media. Many new media from the 1990s and 2000s, however, came from below as young computer wizards created blogs and wikis, Google and Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Many of these new media were conceived in the earlier libertarian computer ethos that insisted "information wants to be free," and served to create utopias of information, gaming and play, social communication, and diverse content covering a wide expanse of topics delivered by new media and social networking sites. Social networking became a major component of everyday life for a younger "digital generation" who lived their lives on-line. The virtual life substantiated the postmodern claim that major ruptures and breaks were occurring in history as more and more people spent much of their lives in cyberspaces and virtual worlds. The DIY (Do-It-Yourself) component of the new media and social networking meant that everyone could be a cultural producer and participate in the new networked culture, as well as a consumer of the wealth of information and new media content.

Thus, rethinking the notion of the media "audience" to notions of the "prosumer" or "peer provider," and challenging our understandings of message encoding and encoding, are underway as new theories of media use are developed for the wireless world. At the same time, the new virtual terrain has become the field of new contestations and struggles over power and ideology: China has imposed rigorous censorship requirements on foreign internet providers, with particularly inflammatory confrontations with Google; Tunisia attempted to tightly control internet use but activists learned how to use cell phones to mobilize anti-government protests; the Egyptian government shut down all internet access at the start of anti-government protests in 2011; and major U.S. communication corporations like AT&T and Comcast are engaged in lobbying efforts to annihilate "Net neutrality," or equal access to the web, in favor of a taxation system that would privilege wealthy content providers and chill the emerging online public sphere.

On the user side, social relations and communication of youth and other participants in the cyberculture have produced headline-generating stories. Cyberbullying has led to well-publicized suicides, and cybercrime and identity theft have become a normalized danger in on-line commerce and communication, as more people use the internet for business as well as pleasure. Online gaming consumes young users' lives, with some obsessed players purportedly dying in cyberspace as they neglect food and sleep. Younger and older people use Twitter and Facebook to sext, as well as text, opening up their private lives to public scrutiny and perhaps scandal, as Congressman Anthony Weiner discovered in June 2011 when risqué pictures which he'd recklessly sent to young women were suddenly the rage of old and new media and he was forced to resign.

In light of these contradictory and highly politicized tensions at work in the new media environment, new theoretical directions and conceptual frameworks are needed to chart the social, cultural, and political impacts of these technologies. For many, however, the term "new media" is problematic in that it generally refers to computers and digital technology, which have now been around for decades. The notion of "new" media also suggests a rupture and a fundamental break with previous media, and while computerization and digitization have enormous effects and are an important novelty, there still are continuities with previous media. As Marshall McLuhan argued, new media often absorb the format and structures of old ones, as television took up the format of previous radio genres and the same corporations dominated both, and "new media" have progressively absorbed the forms of "old media" from writing to broadcasting and video to proliferating forms of multimedia. Yet digitization is a novelty and emergent forms of digital media and culture require careful theoretical and political analysis, as the contributors to our volume carry out, pointing out distinctive and novel features of the emergent digital culture.

However widespread and common – or not – computers and new technologies become, it is clear that they are of essential importance for labor, politics, education, and social life, and that people who want to participate in the public and cultural life of the future will need to have computer and new media access and literacies. Moreover, although there is the threat and real danger that the computerization of society will increase the current inequalities and inequities in the configurations of class, race, and gender power, there is the possibility that a democratized and computerized public sphere might provide opportunities to overcome these inequities. In the next section, we will accordingly address some of the ways that oppressed and disempowered groups and social movements are using the new technologies to

advance their interests and progressive political agendas as technology and politics are increasingly globalized.

Globalization and Social Movements

> *Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells,*
> –Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

Postmodern, as well as modern, theorists recognize that the world is increasingly marked by transnational cross-currents and flows which on the one hand are destabilizing traditional concepts of the nation-state as they become supplanted by multinational corporations and cross-border affiliations, and on the other hand are reasserting the dominance of Western capitalism. As Arjun Appadurai argues, the "global processes involving mobile texts and migrant audiences" cross and trouble the borders of the modernist nation-state, unlocking a global imagination that opens up the possibilities of new forms of identity, solidarity, and politics. Yet Appadurai does not present an uncritical and idealizing vision: the flows that crosscut the globe are sometimes violent and repressive, at other times democratic and progressive. Globalization is a contested term with some identifying it with new forms of imperialism, and seeing it as predominantly negative, while others equate it with modernization and the proliferation of innovative products, cultural forms, and identities. For example, Douglas Kellner and Richard Kahn (pp. 597–613) identify the uses of the internet in creating alternative public spheres that foster political activism and progressive, emancipatory sodalities formed through the use of blogs and other virtual networking tools.

In fact, it is best to see globalization as an extremely complex and ambiguous phenomenon that contains both exciting and progressive forms like the internet, novel terrains of cyberculture and social movements, and emergent economic and political actors and groups in the world economy – combined with the growing strength of transnational institutions, intensified competition on a global level, heightened exploitation, corporate downsizing, and greater levels of unemployment, economic inequality,

insecurity, terrorism, and war. Jan Nederveen Pieterse (pp. 567–582) acknowledges the ambiguity of globalization as a concept and argues for a recognition of plural forms of globalization that give rise to new modes of sociopolitical organizing and "hybrid spaces," such as cities of peasants or ethnically mixed neighborhoods and cultures.

Globalization is connected with the scientific-technological-economic revolution which involves the advent of emergent forms of labor, politics, culture, and everyday life. The networked global economy contains economic opportunities, openings for political transformation, and a wealth of innovative products and technologies which might improve the human condition. Yet it also threatens to increase divisions between the haves and the have-nots, to deplete diminishing resources, to undermine union and labor rights, and to circulate novel forms of war and terrorism. Hence, globalization is highly ambiguous, with both promising and threatening features. The internet, for example, can aid progressive political struggles and movements, or can be used by corporations to enforce their hegemony and control. As Kahn and Kellner argue in a concluding article in this collection (pp. 597–613), social movements all over the world are producing "alternative globalizations" creating a "globalization from below" that fights to save the environment and animal species, to advance human and civil rights of a variety of groups, and that struggle to create a more sustainable, democratic and just world, using new media and social networking to promote progressive political change. Indeed, in the Arab Spring of 2011, movements in Tunisia and Egypt used social media and networking to help organize movements that overthrew entrenched dictatorships and inspired movements of democratic uprisings and social transformation throughout the Middle East and the globe.

Globalization is always proliferating new forms of media and culture. In addition, global forces are both creating novel modes of cultural homogenization and proliferating cultural differences and hybridities. It is advancing the interests of major US and other transnational corporations, as well as providing openings for new economic forms and players. Global processes are producing proliferating transnational institutions and forces, while challenging the state to strengthen its authority and regulatory powers. And as globalization comes ever more to the fore, the importance of the local is highlighted and dramatized. Globalization is thus one of the dominant forces of our era and

has expanded the terrain and scope of media and cultural studies.

Concluding Remarks

Despite their dissimilarity, many of the theories and methods that we have discussed in this Introduction, ranging from the Frankfurt School to British cultural studies to French postmodern theory, are transdisciplinary in terms of their metatheory and practice. Standard academic approaches are discipline-oriented, with English Departments typically analyzing cultural forms as literary texts, Sociology Departments focusing on the social dimension of culture, Political Science Departments highlighting the politics of culture, and so on. By contrast, transdisciplinary perspectives subvert existing academic boundaries by combining social theory, cultural analysis, and political critique. Such transdisciplinary theory requires knowledge of a multiplicity of methods and theories that we have indeed attempted to assemble in our reader.

While our multiperspectivist approach might suggest to the reader a liberal pluralist tolerance of disparate theories and methods, we want to advance more systematic and critical perspectives. Against pluralism and eclecticism, we believe that it is important to challenge the established academic division of labor and to develop a transdisciplinary approach that contests both the bifurcation of the field of media and cultural studies and the society that produces it. A critical media and cultural studies will overcome the boundaries of academic disciplines and will combine political economy, social theory and research, and cultural criticism in its project that aims at critique of domination and social transformation.

Such a critical venture must also engage the emergent cultural, political, and social forms of the present era. Confronting new technologies, multimedia, and modes of experience such as cyberspace and social networking creates a variety of challenges for media and cultural studies, ranging from the need to chart the emergent cultural terrains and experiences to producing multiple literacies to analyze and evaluate these spheres and their forms. Since media and culture are themselves a type of pedagogy, one needs to create a counterpedagogy to question and critically analyze the often distorted forms of knowledge, misinformation, deceptive images, and seductive spectacles of the media and consumer society. Cultivating critical media literacy to analyze intelli-

gently contemporary forms of culture calls for advancement of a new postmodern pedagogy that takes seriously image, spectacle, and narrative, and thus promotes visual and media literacy, the ability to read, analyze, and evaluate images, stories, and spectacles of media culture. Yet a postmodern pedagogy is concerned to develop multiple literacies, to rethink literacy itself in relation to new technologies and cultural forms, and to create a cultural studies that encompasses a wide array of fields, texts, and practices, extending from popular music to poetry and painting to cyberspace and multimedia like DVDs or iPods and iPads.

The particular pedagogy employed, however, should be contextual, depending on the concrete situation, interests, and problems within the specific site in which cultural studies is taught or carried out. Yet the pedagogy must address salient general issues. Media culture is produced in a context of asymmetries of race, class, and gender and concrete relations of domination and subordination that must be accounted for in any critical analysis. For us, a postmodern pedagogy does not elide or occlude issues of power; rather, it allows for a contemporary understanding of current social and cultural configurations of culture, power, and domination. While the distinctive situation and interests of the teachers, students, or critics help decide what precise artifacts are engaged, what methods will be employed, and what pedagogy will be deployed, the sociocultural environment in which cultural production, reception, and education occur must be scrutinized as well.

Hence, a transdisciplinary media and cultural studies would productively engage postmodern theory and emergent interpretive discourses and methods while maintaining important traditional goals like cultivating literacy, critical thinking, and the art of interpretation. We are currently living in a proliferating image and media culture in which new technologies are changing every dimension of life from the economy to personal identity. In a postmodern media and computer culture, fresh critical strategies are needed to read cultural texts, to interpret the conjunctions of sight and sound, words, images, and spectacle, that are producing seductive cultural spaces, forms, and experiences. This undertaking also involves exploration of the emergent cyberspaces and modes of identities, interaction, and production that are taking place in the rapidly exploding computer culture, as well as exploring the new public spaces where myriad forms of political debate and contes-

tation are evolving and new forms of social interaction involved in social networking. Yet engaging the fresh forms of culture requires using the tools and insights already gained, rather than simply rejecting all "modern" concepts and theories as irrelevant to the new "postmodern" condition. As we have argued, adequately understanding postmodern phenomena requires contextualization in terms of the way that novel cultural artifacts are produced by the dominant mode of production and are used to reproduce – or contest – existing figurations of class, race, gender, and other forms of power and domination.

Indeed, a future-oriented media and cultural studies should look closely at the development of the entertainment and information technology industries, the mergers and synergies taking place, the syntheses of computer and media culture that are being planned and already implemented, and emergent wireless technologies and new modes of social interaction. A global media and cyberculture is our life-world and fate, and we need to be able to chart and map it accordingly to survive the dramatic changes currently taking place and the even more transformative novelties of the rapidly approaching future.