

Content and Representation in the Media

Constructing the News

Name and date begun:

Time allocation:

2 lessons

Learning objectives:

- Students should understand that the news is a social construction which may or may not reflect the ideologies of the media companies.
- Is the news constructed to reflect a media hegemony of news collection in that it is a deliberate conspiracy to control and dominate?
- Does the concept of news merely reflect the interests and prejudices of the audiences who buy newspapers and watch television?
- Does the concept of news reflect the nature of the professionalism of journalists who must decide on 'newsworthiness'.

Key Concepts and vocabulary

See your lesson notes for a list of ideologies and philosophies. These must be learned in addition to the following:

- Social construction
- Moral panic
- Newsworthiness
- Editorial decision making
- Agenda setting
- Gatekeeping

Additional reading and references

Graeme Burton (1998) *Access to Sociology: Media and Popular Culture* Chapter 5 page 61 ff.

Paul Trowler (1996) *Sociology in Action: Investigating the Mass Media (2nd Edition)* Chapter 8, page 150 ff.

Abercrombie and Warde (1994) *Contemporary British Society 2nd Edition* pages 419 - 431

Personal Development ideas

- If you are not already doing so on a regular basis, then you must start watching the news and current affairs programmes on television in a critical manner. Listen to **Radio 4** news programmes and read newspapers.
- Watch news programmes such as **Have I Got News For You** and **What the Papers Say**. This second programme is fascinating and you should think of making notes.
- Try reading copies of **Private Eye** which are very critical of the news media and journalists.

Overview of the debate

- Can the news be trusted to be unbiased?
- Can governments influence the news the journalists report?
- Can journalists actually create the news and influence our tastes?
- Do journalists merely report what we want to hear?

Revision tips

- Be sure that you fully understand the key concepts of **agenda setting**, **gate keeping**, **editorial content** and **social construction**. Refer back to **phenomenology** for consideration of social constructions.
- Revise and clarify your notes on **content analysis** as a sociological methodology.
- Make sure that you are fully aware of the work of the Glasgow Media Unit and that your notes are excellent.

What you should have in your folder when this work has been completed correctly:

- A clear explanation of each of the glossary terms
- Acceptable lesson notes.
- Evidence that you have looked the two textbooks and made notes
- A list of the factors that Galtung and Ruge said affect the newsworthiness of a story.
- Examples of actual controversial media news stories which you can consider in any extended essay writing.