I. Democracy and Social Theory

A. Democracy: political system where people engage in collective self-governance, either directly or indirectly

1. authority: people

2. values: equality and freedom

2. ideals: individual and common good

3. individual rights vs government

B. Assumptions (based on classical political theory)

1. people are capable of rational action
   1. identifying interests or goals
   2. acting collectively to achieve them

2. people can recognize and will choose common good

C. Political environment

1. open civil society or public space

a. information

b. ideas

c. free association

2. free press

a. circulation of information and ideas

b. advocate for people (Fourth Estate)

c. challenge institutional power

d. pursuing truth (Journalism Code of Ethics)

3. social role: citizen

a. informed

b. active

D. Institutional arrangements

1. Government

a. constituted by the people

b. power authorized by the people

c. function

i. common good

ii. live, liberty and happiness (property)

d. ensures rights

e. authority is limited

i. Constitution

ii. law

iii. majority rule but rights of the minority

f. transparent

g. accountable

2. Education

a. citizenship

b. knowledgeable

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I. Theory of Mass Media

1. Thesis: Mass media socially constructs an “unreality” that is more compelling than reality. This unreality has the power to shape how we think, what we know, what we believe, and how we behave.
2. Analogy: Plato’s Allegory of the Cave
3. Classical Collective Behavior Theory (Le Bon, Tarde, Park, Freud)
   1. Mass Society and new phenomenon: public
      1. millions of people
      2. isolated and alienated
      3. irrational
      4. susceptible to persuasion by appeals to emotions

i.images

ii. symbols

iii. repetition

2. Means of persuasion: mass media

3. Radio: power lies with those who have the control of technologies of mass media

D. Argument

1. Mass media is ubiquitous
2. Conquered cultural space
3. It mediates life experience

1. Power of media as practice
   1. Creel Commission: U.S. Commission on Public Information
   2. The Birth of Spin: Edward Bernays
   3. Hitler: “Triumph of the Will”

5. Structure

1. corporate owned
2. advertising sponsored
3. relationship between owner, advertiser, and consumer

6. Television and the political system.

1. hours watched

b. source of information

c.campaigning

7. Function of corporate owned advertising supported news

a. profit

b. means to profitability

i. fire reporters

ii. close bureaus and fire support staff

iii. no investigative reports

iv. shorter stories

v. talking heads with guests

vi. cooperative relationship between editorial page and advertisers

c. news as entertainment

i. if it bleeds it leads

ii. personalities

iii. natural disasters

iv. “militainment”

d. consequences for citizens

i. coverage is down

ii. dependent on government sources

iii. dependent on “experts”

iv. VNRs and GNRs

v. “balance”

8. Television and political campaigns

a. political advertising

b. town hall meetings

c. photo ops

1. “debates”

e. “Horse Race”And they are off: into the first turn it is Hilary by a half length, Obama second and Edwards already a length back

9. Consequences for democracy: uninformed citizenry

10. Democracy in Mass Society: Walter Lippman

* 1. Modernity and Mass society
  2. New phenomenon: public

1. millions of people

ii. dispersed

iii. isolated

iv. incapable of understanding issues in modern society

v. irrational and emotional

vi. susceptible to appeals to emotions through images and symbols

* 1. Elite needs to run mass democracy

i.make decisions and get public to ratify them

ii. manufacture consent