I.Neo-Marxism and Power: Social Construction of Consumerism

1. Rethinking Power
2. Power: Domhoff
3. 1984 vs Brave New World
4. Power: Neo-Marxism
5. capacity to achieve goals and
6. assimilate resistance

i.create world of illusion

ii.create psychologies (people) that willingly inhabit it

iii.call it freedom

iv.“house with a thousand rooms”

v.the “cave” as freedom

1. Neo-Marxism/Critical Theory
2. Neo-Marxists: Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse
3. Works: Dialectic of Enlightenment and One Dimensional Man
4. Two areas of inquiry
5. Enlightenment: What went wrong?

promise: reason, science and progress

reality: fascism, holocaust, nuclear weapons, colonialism

1. Strengths and weaknesses of Marxism

social formations: a (not “the”) determining factor economy

base/superstructure

superstructure takes on life of own

1. Culture as liberation, culture as power

i.liberation

ii.power: culture industry

dystopian world

one dimensional inhabitants

C. Consumerism: the “ism” that won the century, not communism, fascism, or capitalism.

1. consumer psychology

a. social construction of psychology that organizes life around buying. “I buy therefore I am.”

b. psychological traits

i. ***discontent*** :“I am not okay, I need something . . .”

ii. ***anxiety***

iii. confuses reality and illusion: desires become “needs”

iv. “things who buy things in a world of things”

c. “self-worth”

i. positional goods

ii. “you are what you own”

2. depends upon the social construction of a world of illusion, a “pseudo-reality”

a. “world” is eternal cornucopia of commodities

b. best of all possible worlds

i. freedom

ii. personal fulfillment

c. no other world desirable

3. depends on keeping contradictions invisible

D. Consumerism and social control

1. deflects person from social role as citizen

2. lessens class conflict

3. individual’s primary role as consumer

4. “false consciousness”

E. PR! Creating the world of illusion

1. Truth is not something to be discovered but created

1. Freud and the manufacture of psyches
2. unconscious

b. power of images

i.appeal to unconscious.

ii. “art of making people want things” and “this thing will make you happy.”

F. . Television: “dream machine”

1. advertising

a. creating the American Dream

b. new techniques

i. little substance/entertaining

ii. suggestive, appealing, desirable images

iii. association of values

“rugged individualism”: Marlboro

“freedom”: automobile

2. entertainment

a. domestic sitcoms

b.“Joneses”

G. Saturation of Cultural Space

1. “Its everywhere”
2. social networking and “stuff”

H. Consumer Utopia

1. world of illusion
2. world of “freedom”