

Soc1923: Critical methods in media and cultural studies

Week 1, 2016



Overview of today's session

- **Course outline**
- **Course assessment**
- **Methods in media and cultural studies**
- **Research project**



Course outline

- **Weeks 1-7: methods, guest interviews**
 - Each week: 1-2 methods; 1 guest whose work we read and discuss in terms of methods
- **Weeks 8-10: group projects;**



Course assessment

- **Group research projects developed each week**
- **Group work documented in online research portfolio**
- **Group work summarised in presentations Week 19**
- **Individual essay reflecting on methods in media and cultural studies**
 - Question is already in the course outline

Assessment for this course is:

Group work: research methods portfolio 25%; due week 19, 14 March

Group work: presentation of research project 15%; due Week 19, 15 March

Individual essay on research (3000 words) 60%; due Monday Week 21, Summer term, 15 April 2015, 5pm.



How to study media cultures today?

- Media:

... a form of unevenly shared consciousness of persistently external events. [Media] is what appears to happen, in these powerfully transmitted and mediated ways, in a world within which we have no other perceptible connections but we feel is at once central and marginal to our lives. (Raymond Williams, 1973: 295-6)

- Culture

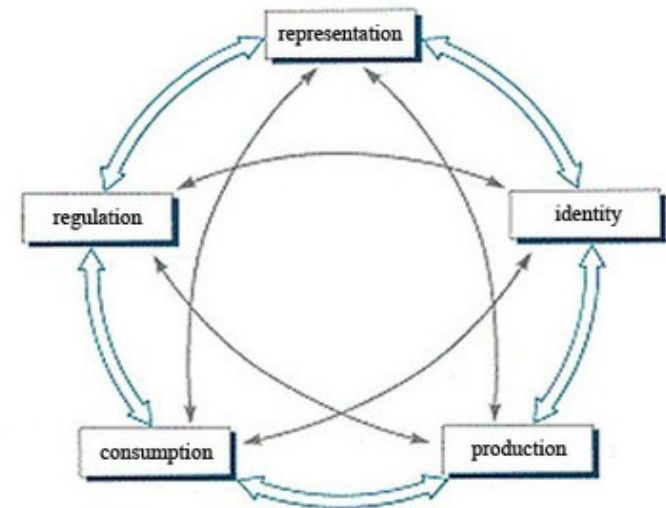


Fig. 1 du Gay et al's Circuit of Culture

VANITY FAIR

JULY 2015

“Call me Caitlyn”

By BUZZ BISSINGER Photos by ANNIE LEIBOVITZ





Let your
faith
be bigger
than your
fears



How to study media cultures today?

- **Media**

... a form of unevenly shared consciousness of **persistently external events**.
[Media] is what appears to happen, in these powerfully transmitted and mediated ways, in a world within which **we have no other perceptible connections** but we feel is at once **central** and **marginal** to our lives. (Raymond Williams, 1973: 295–6)



Textual methods

- **From 'classic' cultural studies methods (semiotics) to contemporary 'textual environments.'**



Visual methods

- **From formal composition analysis to 'expert readings.'**
- **From 'expert readings' to 'discourse analysis'**



Discourse analysis

- **Analysis of how statements structure what we think**
- **Moving from elite or authoritative examples to a more diverse archive**



Ethnography

- **Observing what people do with and in media as participants (not just as audience or spectator)**
- **Researcher becomes a participant**
- **Challenges of digital ethnography**



Choosing the group project topic

- **Topic does not have to be something that everyone in the group is interested in**
- **Requirements:**
 - international in scope
 - Involves recent event (2015 onwards)
 - e.g. a news event, a media event (e.g. film launch), an online event ('blue' dress), something in popular culture, etc.
 - Can be researched using multiple methods – textual, visual, discourse analysis, ethnography
- **In your groups, brainstorm a list of five possible topics, and then rank them in order of group interest.**



Setting up the group research portfolio

- **Sign up a for a blog account (wordpress, blogger, blog.com) and make sure everyone has access to it**
- **Send me the address or URL so I can see it.**
- **Post a brief description of the research topic and why it is interesting (300-400 words)**
- **Post the description to the blog**



Next week

- **Textual analysis**
- **Read article by Anne Cronin on advertising & cities**

