Why study the media?

6 reasons for teaching media:

1. We live in a mediated environment.
2. Media literacy emphasizes critical thinking.
3. Being media literate is part of being an educated citizen.
4. Media literacy promotes active participation in a media-saturated environment.
5. Media education helps us to understand communication technologies.
6. Media literacy is important to all subject areas.

Today's definition of literacy is more than reading and writing. In order to be functionally literate in our media-saturated world, children and young people—in fact, all of us—have to be able to read the messages that daily inform us, entertain us and sell to us. As the Internet becomes a fact of life, the critical thinking skills that help young people navigate through traditional media are even more important.

Media literate people understand that media are constructed to convey ideas, information and news from someone else's perspective. They understand that specific techniques are used to create emotional effects. They can identify those techniques and their intended and actual effects. They are aware that the media benefit some people, but leave others out. They can (pose and sometimes answer) questions about who benefits, who is left out, and why.

Media literate people seek alternative sources of information and entertainment. Media literate people use the media for their own advantage and enjoyment. Media literate people know how to act, rather than being acted upon. In this way, media literate people are better citizens.

Media saturation

Television is not the only mass medium that accounts for media saturation. When one considers pop music, radio, newspapers, magazines, computers and video games—in addition to TV—we are exposed to more mass media messages in one day than our grandparents were in a month.

Media influence

The media sell "audience consciousness." They try to predispose people not just to buy certain detergents, cars or aspirin, but to simply buy.

The manufacture and management of information

Most governments and businesses have public relations (PR) departments, whose purpose is to get the "good news" about them out into the public consciousness. Many succeed so well that much of what is reported as "news" in fact comes directly from PR departments and press releases.

Media education and democracy

Political leaders have discovered the influence of the media. Those who use the media will get their way regardless of public policy or personal integrity.

The increasing importance of visual communication and information

For hundreds of years, society has valued literacy—the reading and understanding of texts. In today's society, the visual image is arguably more important than the printed word—yet there has been no corresponding focus on reading the meaning of visual images.

The growing privatization of information

The world economy is fast becoming an information economy, with information a commodity to be bought and sold. A danger exists that new classes of "information-rich" and "information-poor" people may result, with the information-poor unable to afford the information they need to better their lives.

Educating for the future

The above issues will not decline in importance. Tomorrow's world, in fact, will be increasingly dominated by mass media and communications technologies. Generations of the future will need to understand how the mass media influence society.

The Media Department teaches its students:

Key Concepts

Media education in the UK is characterised by the development of a set of 'Key Concepts' that can be found in the specifications for all media qualifications. These refer to any media product such as a film, television programme, audio recording etc. (often referred to as 'media texts'). The concepts are:

- Media Language (the formal properties of media texts)
- Genre (the classification of texts)
- Representation (the ways in which ideas and values or specific groups or types of people are constructed in media texts)
- Institution (the organisation of media production and issues of ownership and control over communication)
- Audience (the target audience for media products and the range of audience behaviour in 'reading' texts)