

Lecture 3: Sport Spectacles

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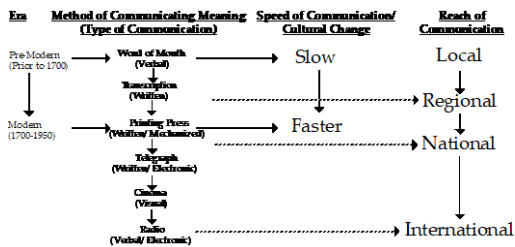


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Topic 1: 'Post-Modern Culture' and the Contemporary Cultural Economy

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The Evolution in Communicating the Cultural System (Meaning)



3

Industrial Capitalism and 'Modern Culture'

Automobile Industry



Film Industry



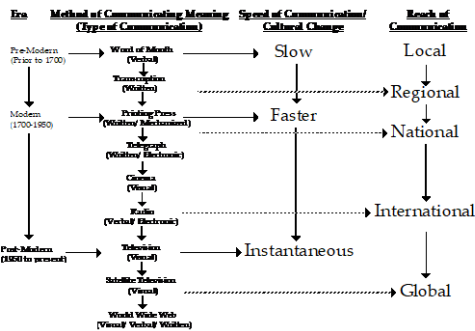
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Modern Culture & the "Television Age"



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The Evolution in Communicating the Cultural System (Meaning)



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The process of producing and performing signifiers has increasingly involved the communication of cultural symbols, meanings and experiences.

The forms of cultural communication have changed dramatically through the development and innovation of new communication technologies.

1970: "I'll talk to you when I see you"

1990: "I'll call you"

2000: "I'll email you"

2005: "Can I text you?"

2010: "Alright, facebook or text?"

2100: "I'll send you a telepathic message"

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“contemporary forms of media interpret, produce and distribute images in new ways...

“in doing so, [they] revolutionize the manner in which people apprehend and know reality”

SOURCE: Rail, 2001

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Cultural Economy & Post-Modern Culture



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RR2kJJU3BCA>

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As communications technologies and experiences have changed, so too have the ways in which **we exchange and interpret cultural meanings**.

We no longer live in the 'mass culture' of the post-war era. We now exist within a **"post-modern culture"**.



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Characteristics of "Post-modern Culture":

1) From 'mass culture' to 'niche culture'

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Industrial Capitalism
(1850-1950)



Capital generated from mass production and consumption of **MATERIAL** products

Late Capitalism
(1950-present)



Capital increasingly generated from the production and consumption of **CULTURAL** products, symbols and meanings

'Mass' Culture

→ 'Niche' Culture

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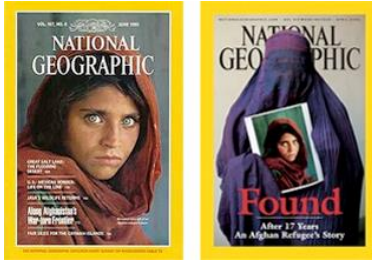
The diagram illustrates the shift from traditional media to social media. On the left, 'Traditional Media' is characterized by a top-down flow: Television, Media Outlets, Radio, and Print, all under 'Institutional Control'. This flow is mediated by 'centralized mediators' who 'pull' content from 'distributed mediators' (represented by a globe and a group of people) and 'push' it to the audience. On the right, 'Social Media' is characterized by a bottom-up flow: Blogs, Podcasts, Vlogs, Forums, Wikis, and Enterprise 2.0 Platforms, all under 'Consumer Control'. This flow is mediated by 'social consumption' (represented by a group of people) which 'pulls' content from the audience. A central vertical arrow labeled 'Shift' indicates the transition between these two models. The source is cited as <http://mash2012.wgiz.com>.

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1) From 'mass culture' to 'niche culture'

- Televisual and beyond (meanings, feelings, experiences)

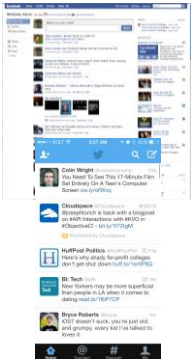
Post-modern culture: 'culture of the image'



According to Kearney (1989), post-modern culture is "a **culture of the image**" – our culture defined by the visual imagery of people, places, and things.

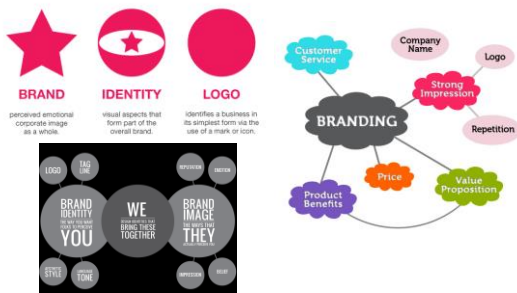
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Post-modern culture: 'culture of the image'



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Post-modern culture: culture of the brand 'image'? (‘image’ as meanings/experiences)



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Post-modern culture:
culture of the brand 'image'?
 ('image' as meanings/experiences)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Zk03ctwgW8>

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Post-modern culture:
culture of the brand 'image'?
 ('image' as meanings/experiences)



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Characteristics of "Post-modern Culture":

1) From 'mass culture' to 'niche culture'

2) 'Culture of the Image'

- Televisual and beyond (meanings, feelings, experiences)

3) 'Simulation'

- Represented and interpreted through technology

and

'Hyperreal'

- Increasingly difficult to discern between 'reality' and simulations/technological representations

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Jean Baudrillard, "simulation" and "hyperreal"



French philosopher Jean Baudrillard proposed the idea of 'hyperreal' as a way of thinking about how cultural signs and simulations increasingly surround us...

This, Baudrillard thought, results in the *blurring of the line between reality and 'hyperreality'*, as we interpret the world via screens and technology.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJg02ivYz5s>

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Post-modern culture: 'simulation' and 'hyperreal'



"What is real is no longer our direct contact with the world, but what we are given on (TV, computer, personal device) screens: screens are the world"

(Chen, 1997)

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Post-modern culture: 'simulation' and 'hyperreal'



"Although you may intellectually understand what happens at a casino, your consciousness thinks that gambling money in the casino is part of the "not real" world. It is in the interest of the decorators to emphasize that everything is fake, to make the entire experience seem fake. The casino succeeds in turning money itself into an object with no inherent value or inherent reality."

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Post-modern culture: 'simulation' and 'hyperreal'



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Post-modern culture: 'simulation' and 'hyperreal'



Bigger, Stronger, Faster* (2008)

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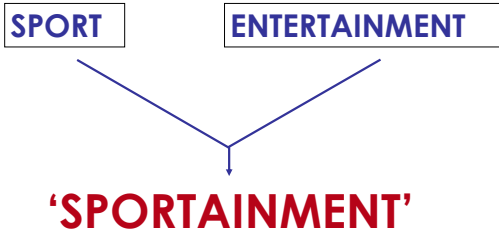
Post-modern culture: 'simulation' and 'hyperreal'



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Thus, within late capitalism and postmodern culture, sport and mass media have converged, *blurring the boundaries between sport and entertainment*, what we call

'sportainment':



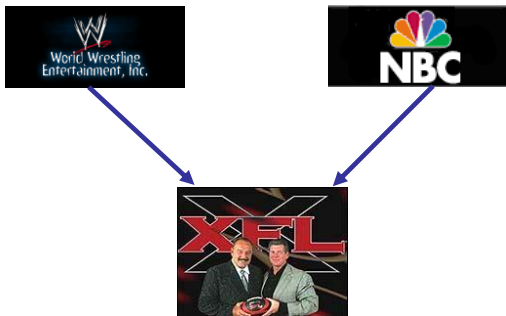
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Professional Wrestling as **'Sportainment'**



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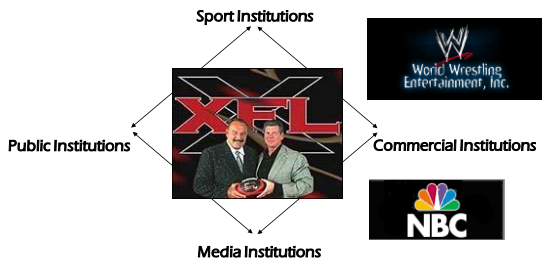
XFL: The **'Pinnacle of Sportainment'**?



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Sport as Culture Industry:

"interdependent economic and cultural institutions"



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XFL: The 'Pinnacle of Sportainment'?



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"I don't care how [the fans] are entertained. If they're entertained by the quality of football, great. If they're entertained from cheerleaders, terrific.

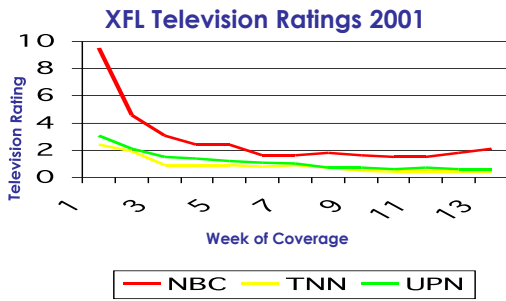


If they're entertained from the reality show and get to see and hear coaches and what they say at halftime where the NFL would never allow you to go, great."

(XFL founder Vince McMahon, quoted in Morgan, 2001)



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The XFL failed...but why?

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What if the NFL is always getting 'better' at sportainment – with better sport, better entertainment?

In other words, maybe the NFL is already 'more XFL' than the XFL ever could be?

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The NFL as 'Sportainment'



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The 'hegemony' of sportainment has meant that televised sport coverage (especially primetime network television) works to **augment or enhance** the basic nature of the sporting event, to **make it more entertaining to a primetime audience....**

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While we can point to the merging of entertainment into sport, there has also been a **sportization of primetime television**: recognizing the **inherent 'reality' of competition**, the attributes and expressions of sporting contests have become an important part of **the network media environment**.



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Sportization of Primetime: "Man vs Beast"



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Sportization of Primetime: Dancing with the Stars



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