

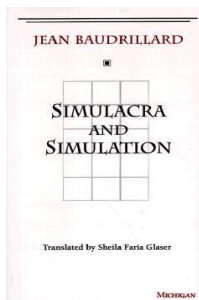
Lecture 3: Sport Spectacles

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Theory of the Spectacle II: Jean Baudrillard, "simulation" and "hyperreal"



Baudrillard's theory of the spectacle focuses primarily on the **convergence** of 'material' and 'televisual' reality.

This theory focuses on how technological 'simulations' of people, things and experiences are more and more a part of everyday life.

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Theory of the Spectacle II: Jean Baudrillard, "simulation" and "hyperreal"



Antisocial Networking

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Theory of the Spectacle II: Jean Baudrillard, "simulation" and "hyperreal"



Baudrillard proposed the idea of 'hyperreal' as one way of thinking about the way that cultural signs and simulations increasingly surround us.

In short, this is the blurring of the line between reality and 'hyperreality'...

In short, we increasingly interpret the world via screens and technology.

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Theory of the Spectacle II: Jean Baudrillard, "simulation" and "hyperreal"

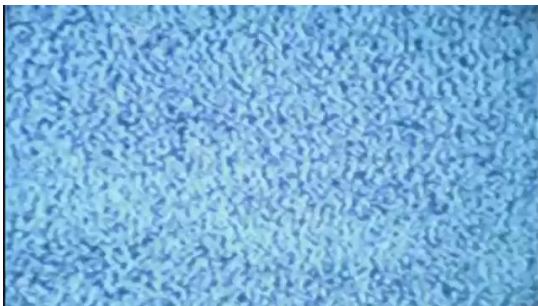
"[W]hen we watch the news on television, we see only a world interpreted, designated and rationalized [for us] by the TV screen...what we call reality is...often only a simulacrum of [the] actual events"



(Merrin 2005)

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Theory of the Spectacle II: Jean Baudrillard, "simulation" and "hyperreal"



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Theory of the Spectacle II:

Jean Baudrillard, "simulation" and "hyperreal"

Baudrillard used his theory of 'simulation' and 'hyperreal' to argue that *the actual material reality of the Gulf War* **conflicted with the televisual reality** of the mediated Gulf War.

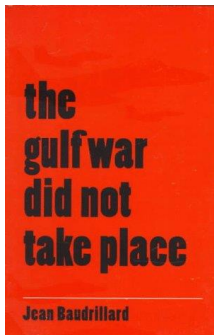
The 'reality' experienced by those directly involved, in short, was **different** than the 'reality' others experienced through media representations.



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Theory of the Spectacle II:

Jean Baudrillard, "simulation" and "hyperreal"



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Theory of the Spectacle II:

Jean Baudrillard, "simulation" and "hyperreal"

Following Baudrillard's theory, most of us did not watch the actual 2004 Athens Olympics.

Instead, we watched a 'manufactured' televisual representation of "Olympics: Athens 2004" on NBC.

NBC and TV executive Dick Ebersol produced a mediated *primetime Athens Olympic reality*, designed for maximum ratings (and thereby audiences, revenues, and profits).

This production did not necessarily reflect the material reality of the Athens Olympic experience.

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**'Manufacturing' the Sport Spectacle:
NBC and the Olympics**

Dick Ebersol, chairman of NBC Universal Sports:

**"I get to arrange how all these things
are perceived in the world"** (1996).

**"I live more than anything else
to produce the Games"** (2004).



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**'Manufacturing' the Sport Spectacle:
NBC and the Olympics**

The Ebersol/NBC model focuses on:

- 1) The presentation of a 'foreign' country and culture
- 2) A focus on American athletes and narratives.

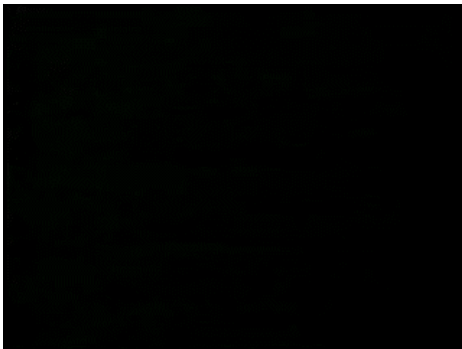
The NBC Olympics are based on:

- **The manipulation of Olympic 'spaces'**
- **The manipulation of Olympic 'emotions'**



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**'Manufacturing' the Sport Spectacle:
NBC and Olympic 'Spaces'**



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NBC and Olympic 'Spaces'**



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**'Manufacturing' the Sport Spectacle:
NBC and Olympic 'Emotions'**

"Emotions" are key to NBC's strategy of 'narrativizing' or constructing a story around the event(s) of the Olympics. This is due in part due to the producers' perception of gender differences in manufacturing the Games as a spectacle. Regarding NBC's coverage, Dick Ebersol said,

"While men enjoy sports 'from the outside in' - that is, they want the event itself and then, possibly, some connection with the people involved - women come to sports 'from the inside out.' Before they get interested in an event, they need to know the characters and sympathize with them."

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'Manufacturing' the Sport Spectacle:
NBC and Olympic 'Emotions'



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'Manufacturing' the Sport Spectacle:
NBC and Olympic 'Emotions'



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'Manufacturing' the Sport Spectacle:
NBC and Olympic 'Emotions'



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**'Manufacturing' the Sport Spectacle:
NBC and the Olympics**

The style and format of NBC's version of the Olympic Games has led some to call it the **"soap opera games"**:

"An athletics competition that is focused on media-driven aspects, and always manufactured for maximum sentiment, maximum ratings, and generating maximum revenue..."

Carlson, M. (1996). The soap opera games: Determined to make every event a tearjerker, NBC overplays the personal stories. *Time*: 48.

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**'Manufacturing' the Sport Spectacle:
NBC and Olympic 'Emotions'**



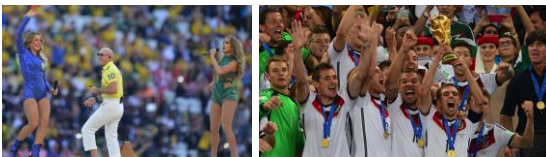
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(Atkinson 2012)

**Theory of the Spectacle II:
Baudrillard's "Non-event"**

For Baudrillard, **"a non-event"** is something which is, in a concrete material sense, something that actually occurs, but neither lives up to its projected definition (or purported social significance) nor is proportional to its assigned status in the media."

"In other words, a non-event justifies neither the meaning nor significance attributed to it through media representation."



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NBC Olympics: “simulation” and “non-event”



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NBC Olympics: “simulation” and “non-event”



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NBC Olympics: “simulation” and “non-event”



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Theory of the Spectacle II:
Baudrillard's "Non-event"

Is there something important we should
consider about the "**non-event**"?

Is there something "lost" in the production
and manufacturing of an "**event**"?



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