**Political economy in Media studies**

POLITICAL ECONOMY… - Or, „how the economy is political.‟ - Or, „how does ownership of things have an effect on the daily life of a society?‟ - Or, „how does the allocation of economic resources and surplus capital influence the aggregate economic activity of a society?‟ -

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THREE IMPORTANT THINGS FOR POLITICAL ECONOMY

1. Economic ownership is centralized, and this has political consequences.

2. Media content is less significant than media ownership – economics is more important than ideology.

3. The working class always loses.

ASSUMPTIONS OF CRITICAL ‘POEC’ MEDIA THEORY

1. That the economy is not a neutral and separate sphere of society, but interrelated with politics and culture.

2. That a scientific analysis of the economy shows that it is exploitative of the working class.

3. That the political situation is unlikely to change unless the economic situation also changes.

WHAT CRITICAL ‘POEC’ TELLS US

1. That news and entertainment media is largely centrally controlled.

2. That we have very little choice in our sources of information.

3. That every purchase we make reinforces this situation.

GENERAL EXAMPLES - News Corporation and Fairfax Holdings, and their ownership of large amounts of Australian media networks. - Elsewhere: Berlusconi‟s ownership of Italian media; Roosevelt‟s control of US media leading to his US presidency continuing for four terms. - The centralization of film or television production, for instance: Viacom, Disney. - We can also think about the centralization of software and social networking sites: Microsoft, facebook, and Apple - Often, conspiracy theories operate along the lines of a confused account of political economy.

HOW POEC CRITICIZES OTHER THEORIES - The public sphere is impossible because most media texts come from people with vested economic interests – and there is no neutral space for discussion. - Media effects may be real, but the most significant effects of oppression come from the economy. - It is irrelevant whether a medium allows for a great degree of interactivity or communication: you don‟t own it, so you don‟t control it. Any control you have you have to pay for somehow.

BUT… - Control of content is not the same as control of interpretation. - Political economic theories generally ignore non- economic forms of oppression, such as sexism or racism. - Generally ignores the real differences between different media forms in favour of a broad overview. - Assumes that there is very little space for things to be otherwise. How can you resist?

HOW IS IT USEFUL? Maybe it is, because it is concerned with attributes of a text that are not apparent, and how these attributes have influence on a society‟s social and cultural concerns. Or maybe it isn’t, because it ignores the ideological content of text in favour of identifying a purely economic relationship between a text and an audience.

POLITICAL ECONOMY AND CULTURE “[T]he interrelationship of culture and the economic here is not a one-way street but a continuous reciprocal interaction and feedback loop.”

Introducing Marxist Media Theory A2 Media StudiesMedia Issues,Debates and Theories-

Objectives:• Define and explain selected ideas from within Marxist theory.• Demonstrate how these ideas can be used to help analyse media texts.

Background:• Marx was an economic theorist who wrote during the 19th Century.• His ideas deal with social and economic power relationships and have been influential in economics, politics and sociology and can be very useful for media students.

Key Ideas:• Power was held by a minority (the elite or bourgeoisie) who had access to capital and could use their money and power to generate more wealth.• The majority of the population (the mass or proletariat) had only their labour (strength and time) to help them make a living.• Industrialisation had meant that the elite were the only ones who had access to the means of production.• Without the ability to produce for themselves, the mass were dependent on the elite for survival.• To maximise profits, the elite needed to get as much labour from the mass for as little cost as possible.• The elite needed the mass to accept their position as powerless workers.

So, in effect…

The Superstructure Marx saw that certain structures act to support this financial power-base. The 2 main ways this can happen is via repression or ideologically. Repressive Structures: Ideological Structures: Those that threaten to act Those that act to construct the with force if rules are not values and ideologies which upheld. govern the way people behave.

Although Marx did not live to see the riseof the mass media in the 20th Century,Marxists came to see the media as partof the ideological power structure (theideological state apparatus or ISA) andclaimed the media was party to theconstruction and maintenance of ideas andvalues that supported the capitalistsystem.

False ConsciousnessThe ISA can work in a number of ways tocreate false consciousness - the belief inideas and values as truths when in factthey are constructed ideologies whichsupport the power base.