

# Introduction to Political Economy of Media

Media & Society

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# A short quiz to wake us up

True or false:

Marx argued that in a capitalist society workers' labour is paid according to the workers' needs.

Can you name one representative of the North American approach to the political economy of the media?

True or false:

Adam Smith, the father of political economy thought that nations should focus on being wealthy, not on being happy.

# Quiz continued

Political economists of communication/media are NOT interested in:

1. social relations, especially relations of power
2. the influence of media programmes on children's psychological development
3. changes in the production of news that are due to the development of new media technologies

True or false:

Mark Zuckerberg – CEO of Facebook – believes that the situation of refugees in camps can be improved by providing them with free education.

# VARIOUS APPROACHES AND RESEARCH TRADITIONS – NORMATIVE THEORIES OF THE PRESS

- Originally developed by Siebert et al. in 1956:
  1. authoritarian (not do anything that would disturb established authority, media always subordinate to such authority)
  2. free press (free from censorship, attack on gvt, party etc. should not be punishable, no restrictions on the collection and publication of info)
  3. social responsibility (media should accept and fulfil certain obligations to the society; high professional standards – truth, accuracy, objectivity, balance)
  4. Soviet media theory (media should serve the interest of and be owned by the working class, no private ownership, positive roles in the society)
    - McQuail (1983) adds two:
      5. development media theory (media should accept and carry out positive tasks in line with nationally established policy freedom of media can be restricted due to (1) economic priorities and (2) development needs of society)
      6. democratic-participant media theory (individually and minority groups have rights of access to media and rights to be served by the media; small scale, participative, interactive media)

Hallin and Mancini: Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics (2004)

- One aspect is professionalization of journalism

the North/Central European or democratic corporatist model

the Mediterranean or polarized pluralist model

and the North Atlantic or liberal model

Anglo-American/liberal model of journalism seems to dominate

(characterized by detachment, objectivity)

Southern European pathway: France and Italy – mix news and views and prioritize opinion over reportage

Germany, Scandinavia, BeNeLux – corporatist model – diminishing political parallelism, legacy of commentary-based approach and increasing emphasis on neutral/detached reporting

Frank Esser and Andrea Umbricht : Competing Models of Journalism?  
Political Affairs Coverage in U.S., British, German, Swiss, French and Italian Newspapers

<http://www.nccr->

[democracy.uzh.ch/publications/workingpaper/pdf/wp\\_55.pdf](http://www.nccr-democracy.uzh.ch/publications/workingpaper/pdf/wp_55.pdf)

# A small task

Where would your home country's/a country you know well media system fit in?

# James Curran's narratives of media history

- UK

“media's constitutional elevation is usually described in terms of two intertwined narrative themes. The first recounts how the press became free of government control by the mid-nineteenth century, followed by the liberation of film and broadcasting in the mid-twentieth century. The second theme is concerned with how the liberated media empowered the people.”

# Curran continued

- Challenges to the established narrative:
- Feminist – media remained under male controlled
- Radical – the media didn't remain free, they were re-integrated within dominant power structures
- Populist – a challenge to elitist culture, however, those exploring the rise of entertainment do not look at its impact on the democratic roles of the media
- Nation building



# A task in small groups

It is, however, not only totalitarian countries where lies or incorrect/misleading information gets into the news? What do you think influences news reporting in liberal democracies?

# What is PR?

Edward Bernays, otherwise known as 'The Godfather of Public Relations', was a pioneer in the field of propaganda and PR.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q-3qwEDyPM>

With propaganda, especially around the World Wars, came negative connotations of 'brainwashing' and 'manipulation' techniques, hence the need for an alternative. That alternative being public relations.

[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers\\_of\\_persuasion/powers\\_of\\_persuasion\\_intro.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/powers_of_persuasion_intro.html)

PR influences behaviour in an attempt to achieve certain objectives.

# Jürgen Habermas

*The theory of communicative action*

Habermas distinguishes two models of communication:

Communicative

&

Strategic

## Communicative

The communicative model strives towards achieving the mutual understanding of actors involved in the process of communication.

Relies heavily on:

- Sincerity
- Mutual trust
- Honesty

One may relate this to 'good' or 'honest' journalism.

## Strategic

The strategic mode is one in which the actor intends to gain an advantage in the situation without the other becoming aware of the said intentions

These gains could include:

Financial gain

Influence (political etc)

Image or reputation integrity

This could possibly be related to public relations (PR)

Zvi Reich (2010) MEASURING THE IMPACT OF PR ON PUBLISHED NEWS IN INCREASINGLY FRAGMENTED NEWS ENVIRONMENTS , Journalism Studies, 11:6, 799-816.

The extent to which the news media rely on public relations materials has attracted considerable research attention (cf. Curtin and Rhodenbaugh, 2001; Lewis et al., 2008; Reich, 2009). Studies have attempted to establish a bottom line for PR-originated input, ranging between 25 and 80 percent of news content according to the literature (Cameron et al., 1997). These theoretically and practically worthwhile research efforts proceed in four principal directions, to be discussed in detail below: (1) exposing PR use of the media to access and impact public opinion; (2) delineating the borderline between two “converging” and interdependent occupations, journalism and PR, that collaborate and compete over the social role of public news supplier; (3) redefining news believability, as different sources may be ascribed different levels of perceived credibility; and (4) raising questions of political equality, as PR’s advantageous position indirectly blocks access to nonprofessional sources.

Nick Davies on PR and journalism:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93615UWeXa>

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# Advertising as a Funding Model

Advertising – an important source of income for media; other sources also exist: subscriptions, paywalls, sponsoring etc.

For print media the decline in advertising revenue has been very significant, two main factors: emergence of online media and economic crisis

biggest growth in advertising can be traced back to 19<sup>th</sup> century United States and historical explorations suggest that it was actually severely resisted

# Advertising – cont.

Advertisers are interested in buying particular audiences and require data not only about the size of an audience but also about its composition and consumption habits.

Advertising and marketing agencies have used a range of methods for measuring audiences – including diaries, audimeters (for radio and television), people meters (developed for television), surveys, focus groups, interviews – and companies are seeking improved methods for measuring audiences particularly online.



# Advertising – cont.

impact of advertising on the diversity of contents produced, it reduces the supply of minority interest programmes = if an audience is not sizeable enough to be sold to an advertiser, it is unlikely to have media contents produced for it. In the case of ethnic minority media this funding model fails due to small audience size. Or even if the audience is sizeable enough, it may not be the most desirable one for advertisers (i.e. an audience with lower incomes).

# Advertising – cont.

The quality of journalism that is funded from advertising income has also been questioned. Some argue that the pressures on media to make increasingly more profits result in a shift to market journalism. “Advertisers do not pay for high-level quality journalism, but for the requested ‘quality’ of the sector of society to be reached. Market journalism, however, provides for a different construction of reality in the media and for a substantially different media reality. Its first and foremost objective is not to inform but to satisfy the targeted sector of society.” (Meier and Trappel 1998: 57 original emphasis)