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# Cultural materialism and the teaching of media : The lesson of Raymond Williams

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# CULTURAL MATERIALISM AND THE TEACHING OF MEDIA: THE LESSON OF RAYMOND WILLIAMS

BY

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of

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# Table of Contents

# Abstract

This study seeks to examine Raymond Williams' concern with media education and its relevance to contemporary curriculum in Western Australia. By means of a critical study of specific texts of Williams, it was intended to explore the possibility of refining the Western Australian Media Studies syllabuses from a cultural materialist perspective.

Williams' writings lead to the conclusion that media education should be more specifically related to popular culture. The cultural materialist approach enables and encourages a close link between the Western Australian Media Studies syllabuses and students'own cultural experiences. Cultural materialism recognises that culture and society are in a state of constant change and that this should be reflected in the continual reviewing of syllabus practices and content. The lesson of Raymond Williams is that it is time for some change: cultural materialism provides an appropriate theoretical framework to refine and restructure media education in Western Australia.

## Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief if does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

**Signature**

**Date**...~~December 1995~~...

iv

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

In this thesis some aspects of cultural materialism as presented in selected writings of Raymond Williams will be discussed, and some implications of these for media teaching in the late 1990's and beyond, established.

The main area of Media Studies that is dealt with in this thesis is the extent to which the study of popular culture is incorporated into the syllabus content and practices. In our society the mass media are rapidly changing and are culturally specific. Any syllabus dealing with this subject matter needs to reflect these characteristics. This thesis examines the current Media Studies syllabuses and the extent to which current content and practices reflect contemporary changes in society's interaction with the mass media.

The work of Raymond Williams is considered in order to identify his theory of cultural materialism, which may be able to provide a theoretical framework for media education in Western Australian Media Studies syllabuses. The current curricula lack an appropriate and explicit theoretical base to enable popular texts to be studied in relation to their social and political context. Raymond Williams' theory of cultural materialism provides such a framework. A study of some of Williams' writings, as well as commentary by others, will provide the opportunity to develop a definition of cultural materialism and to assess its value as a theoretical framework. An analysis of Media Studies in Western Australian schools will be undertaken to establish if it accommodates popular culture to

an appropriate extent. Additionally, a consideration of how the syllabus can be amended and improved, in light of Raymond Williams' perspective, will be undertaken. By synthesizing Williams' writings, as well as others' works on cultural materialism, and a summary of the writings by Media Educators, and salient points of the West Australian Media Studies curricula, it is intended to define cultural materialism and to ascertain its relevance to the mass media, since the mass media effect changes in society and create similarities between cultures. Thus it may be possible to establish the relevance of applying appropriate ideas about cultural materialism to the current secondary school media studies courses.

The significance of this thesis lies in establishing the implications of the relationships between cultural materialism, the mass media, and media education in the 1990's. It also provides a basis for reasoned argument in recommending and supporting the inclusion of popular culture as a relevant aspect in media education courses, and for developing the basis of a rationale for the refining of media education in Western Australia. Although a great deal is already known about media education and cultural materialism, it is the nature of the relationships between these factors that gives rise to the need for this study to be undertaken. This study seeks to provide a more closely articulated understanding of what Raymond Williams means by "cultural materialism" as a theoretical basis for media teachers. This enables course content to be reviewed and if necessary adjusted to provide an appropriate framework for future directions in media education. It also assists in the establishing of the new and emerging roles of media educators as we approach a new century.

Raymond Williams sees cultural materialism as a theory and a theoretical framework for understanding the role of the mass media in society. By applying the concepts inherent in cultural materialism, it is possible to influence the content in secondary school Media Studies courses to ensure that media education is relevant to the students it seeks to educate.

The research method employed in this study is a critical analysis of texts. The study considers the central concepts of Williams' work and provides a critical reading of the Media Studies curriculum. It also suggests an alternative approach which avoids the problems of alienation associated with the current course. This study combines both historical and descriptive research designs.

This thesis contends that Williams' work, specifically his theory of cultural materialism offers educators a way of solving these problems. Williams believes it will be the "...test of our cultural seriousness whether we can in the coming generations redesign our syllabuses to a point of full human relevance and control" (Williams, 1958, p. 14).

# Raymond Williams

## Biographical detail.

There would be few cultural analysts who would refute the notion that individuals and their social environments are inextricably linked. We are, in essence, products of our past and present experiences. A fundamental tenet of materialism is that social being determines consciousness and that social practice defines consciousness. It is, therefore, no surprise that Raymond Williams' background and upbringing exerted significant influence on his thinking and attitude towards society and its culture.

Born in 1921 at the Welsh border town of Pandy, he was the son of a railway signalman. His community was truly working class, and the numerous references to his deep and often personal childhood experiences typify the enormous impact his early cultural experiences were to have on his thinking and writing. Williams was nurtured in his Welsh working class environment and themes of working class culture featured prominently in his early writings. Williams' childhood environment was a fiercely socialist one which laid the foundation of his attitudes, values and thinking in later life. He grew up in the depression of the late 1920's and 1930's, which was harshly felt in the country and industrial communities in Wales. He was educated at the village school at Abergavenny, Wales, and he won a scholarship to Trinity College Cambridge, where he studied English Literature. Williams' insistence on rooting his political ideas in personal experience has meant that in much of his writing he reflects on his childhood in the Welsh border country

and his student days as a communist at Cambridge. At the tender age of eighteen he became a member of the Communist Party and remained so for two years. In 1942 he married, and subsequently became a father of three children. He saw active service during the Second World War and as a "large part of his life was experience of the Second World War followed by a coldwar" (Eldridge & Eldridge, 1994, p. 2) Williams became suspicious of leadership. Part of the reason behind Williams' shift in opinions generally resulted from his wartime experience - "Williams relationship to Marxism changed in relation to his intellectual position. There were also changes in his personal commitments; the pacifist of 1938 became the Soldier in Normandy in 1944" (Eldridge & Eldridge, 1994, p. 9). Following this he worked in adult education at Oxford. In 1961 he was elected a Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, became a University Reader in Drama, and from 1974-83 was the Professor of Political Science at Stanford University, California. Following a distinguished life as an educator and writer, Williams died on 26th January, 1988.

There can be no doubt that Raymond Williams, the Welsh cultural analyst, occupied a prominent position in the intellectual landscape of the 1960's. He was an original and radical thinker. Since F.R. Leavis he is probably the most influential cultural critic. In the Introduction to *Resources of Hope* (1989), Robin Blackburn says of Williams "he is the most authoritative, consistent and original thinker in the English speaking world" (Williams, 1989, p. ix). Williams' Marxist background, together with his personal experiences, strongly influenced his ideas, especially about education, culture and ordinary people. Williams, however, preferred to think of himself as a revolutionary socialist or

communist and historical materialist than as a Marxist. Williams "cultural work was linked to his conception of a democratic **long revolution** " (Williams, 1989, p. x). He was also fascinated by the relationship between technology, social change and the role of the media in effecting changes in contemporary culture. Williams forms a link between idealism and materialism, "Leavisism", and Marxism in his cultural theory of cultural materialism. His coinage of the term "cultural materialism" and the theory together with the supporting body of work are indicative of Williams' originality of thought.

Raymond Williams was a writer and a critic. In many less formal ways Williams was a "sponsor, contributor and guide to a host of radical educational, cultural and political ventures, across more than three decades" (Williams, 1989, p. 33). His range of writings crossed a broad spectrum including works on cultural studies, literature, communication, mass media and education. He also wrote drama and novels which explore political themes. In total Williams wrote four novels and a trilogy set in his native Wales. He was a respected writer and editor for a number of series, published a range of essays in literary journals, and was the book reviewer for *The Guardian*. The range and intensity of his work was truly remarkable and almost without exception his writing has a historical dimension. Throughout his writing he exhibits an "understanding of, and commitment to, a radically transformed social order" (Williams, 1989, p. xi) which was integral to both his visions and achievements. His enduring influence as a socialist is evident and his pre-occupation with the cultural construction of meanings has had a profound effect on media educators. Williams produced "a group of works which deals centrally with issues of cultural change and communication" (Williams, 1989, p. x). It is his works on cultural

materialism, communication, the mass media and media education which are the focus of this study.

## Cultural materialism.

In order to fully understand cultural materialism it is necessary to discuss each term separately. "Culture" refers "to not only a body of intellectual and imaginative work, it is also essentially a whole way of life" (Williams, 1958, p. 311); it refers to all aspects of society. One must be careful here to identify society not as a homogeneous but as a composite group. Culture deals with social consciousness, the learned repertory of thoughts and actions exhibited by members of a social group. A culture has two aspects. The first aspect refers to "the known meanings and directions which its members are trained to" (Williams, 1958, p. 4). The second aspect of culture is "the new observations and meanings which are offered and tested" (Williams, 1958, p. 4). A further distinction is made later in this text when Williams goes on to define culture as "common meanings, the product of a whole people, and offered individual meanings, the product of a man's whole committed personal and social experience" (Williams, 1958, p. 8). Later in an article *The Idea of a Common Culture* (1968), in *Resources of Hope*, Williams goes on to elaborate on this statement. He asserts that a common culture or a culture in common is ordinary:

> that there is not a special class or group of men, who are involved in the creations of meanings and values either in a general sense or in specific art or belief. Such creation could not be reserved to a minority, however gifted, and was not even in practice so reserved; the meanings of a particular form of life of a people, at a particular time seemed to come from the whole of their common experience, and from its complicated general articulation and if this is so, meanings and values are widely and not sectionally created. (Williams, 1989, p. 34)

7

In *Culture is Ordinary,* Williams states that "culture is ordinary. That is the first fact. Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions and in arts and learning" (Williams, 1989, p. 4).

The term "materialism" refers to a method which looks at the possessions which a society values. Materialism is the value system - how life is lived. It takes account not only of the values we possess but also those to which we aspire. It refers to the foundation upon which public institutions, legal conceptions, the arts and religious ideas of people have evolved. This point specifically in regard to institutions, becomes extremely pertinent to a discussion of the mass media and communication systems in general further into this study. The central tenet of materialism lies in the notion that social beings determine consciousness, and social practice defines consciousness. Cultural materialism as a theory reveals Williams' very strong sense of the materiality of culture. He criticises Leavis' humanism when he says "it was certainly an error to suppose that values or artworks could be adequately studied without reference to the particular society within which they were expressed" (Williams, 1989, p. 16). He was equally critical of communist Marxism, and moved then to his own theory of cultural materialism where he "would define the theory of culture as the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life, the analysis of culture is the attempt to discover the nature of the organisation which is the complex of these relationships" (Williams, 1989, p. 63).

Materialism is generated by numerous influences and "is stubbornly resistant to the lures of idealism" (Milner, 1993, p. 5). It encompasses deep-seated beliefs which deal with the immediate - "the here, the now". It is not concerned with history, nor is it concerned with the future. It is ephemeral rather than transient. In Western democracies materialism has strong links to capitalist societies. In our society mass media producers are engaged in commercial enterprise, which is itself underpinned by capitalist philosophy. Materialism relates to the ability to place a value, for example a monetary value, on products, objects and people. Williams strongly believes that:

> it is impossible to discuss communication or culture in our society without in the end coming to discussing power ... There is the power of established institutions, and there is increasingly, the power of money which is imposing certain patterns of communication that are very powerful in the society as a whole. (Williams, 1989, p.19)

Materialism, as a theory of culture, is therefore related to commercial enterprises rather than to abstract qualities such as integrity and the like. In his article *Means of Communication as Means of Production* (1980) in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* Williams elaborates on the aforementioned when he says that "the means of communication are themselves means of production... the means of communication are always socially and materially produced and reproduced" (Williams, 1980, p. 5).

The examination of how values come to materially exist and how they come to exert influence is strongly linked to how Williams perceives communication processes and the role of the mass media. The mass media engender and instil values and attitudes. Perhaps even more important is the role of the mass media in selecting and mediating the values which permeate the culture. Williams perceives the mass media, in Marxist terms, as a superstructure which in its simplest notion "had been the reflection, the imitation or

the reproduction of reality of the base in the superstructure in more or less a direct way" (Williams, 1980, p. 32). The modern notion of mediation is something more than simple reflection or reproduction - indeed something radically different from either reflection or reproduction actually occurs. The patterns whereby culture is produced and reproduced were central concerns and pre-occupations for Williams, along with communication and its associated technologies. The mass media, in all its forms, is in this twentieth century one of the most dominant modes of communication. Williams defines "formal communication systems as the language of the group and all the institutions - religious information, sometimes of command, of persuasion, of entertainment, of art" (Williams, 1989, p. 32). Williams implores us to recognise and "approach a theory of communication, and to have some idea of how communication relates to community, how it relates to society, what kind of communication systems we have now, what they tell us about our society and what we can see as reasonable direction for the future" (Williams, 1989, p. 20). Communication systems are right at the centre of social membership. They reveal how members of a society regard each other, what people think, where their priorities lay, what they include and omit in importance.

Williams contends that it is through the mass media that the material social existence of attitudes and values came to exert their influence. However, the rule of the mass media in Williams' view extends well beyond this. He believes that the mass media are responsible for the expansion of acceptable values and attitudes; "we live in an expanding culture and all the elements in this culture are themselves expanding" (Williams, 1989, p. 13).

Materialist perspectives, particularly in regard to the power of the media, "are primarily Marxist" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 175). The hegemonic theory, favoured by

Williams, emphasises "the role of ruling ideas in achieving subordination to the interests of the dominant classes" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 175).  There are, however, strong overtones in Williams' writings, of the social cultural theory which "seeks to understand the meaning and place assigned to popular culture in the experience of particular groups in society and also to explain how mass culture plays a part in integrating and subordinating potentially deviant or oppositional elements in society" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 175). Boyd-Barrett in *The Social Science Tradition* believes that the cultural perspective "sees the cultural dimension as interwoven with all social practice", and seeks to, "place the media and other practices within a society conceived of as a complex expressive totality" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 180). We can perhaps best understand what Williams means by the cultural materialist approach by looking more closely at the medium of television.

There is little doubt that television is a factor in our cultural experience.  Williams recognised, as did the Newsom report in 1963, that the media -  and in particular television - "had a particularly important role to play in increasing knowledge, in allowing children to glimpse the world beyond their own experiences - an expansion of their cultural experiences" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 12).  This report states the importance of understanding one of our systems of signification and the subsequent importance of media education with strong Williams overtones:

> here we should wish to add a strong claim for the study of film and television
> in their own right, as powerful forces in our culture and significant sources of
> language and ideas ... the most important and general use of these media,
> however, as a major means for the mass communication of cultural
> experiences, is not generally dealt with in schools. ... little attention is paid
> to the degree to which film and television enter into and influence the lives of
> our pupils and to these media as legitimate means for the communication of

personal experience alongside literature, music and painting. (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 12)

From his earlier writings in *Culture and Society* Williams acknowledged that the importance of television was "the common life of the qualities it embodied" (Williams, 1958, p. 286). He was constantly alerting members of society to the fact that broadcasting "can be diagnosed as a new and powerful form of social integration and control" (Williams, 1974, p. 23). Williams offered a great deal of comment on the social, commercial and political manipulating power of the medium. This concern with the commercial, political and social nature of the medium has been of continued interest. Alvarado (1992) shares some of Williams' views. Both writers stress that it is important to study television because it is both an industry and a set of state institutions "whose purpose is to present itself, to expose itself continuously and conspicuously as no other set of institutions does and yet which constantly effaces its own practices and methods, constantly denies its own materiality through the arguments of objectivity and neutrality" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 94). Such study not only enables the study of a set of representations of the world, the language used to make representations *normal* and *acceptable* but also a set of institutions, how they function - "the apparatus used to maintain the status quo, to help reproduce the existing structure of society" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 94). We need also to ensure when dealing with the media such as television, that we consider them as well "for the integrity of their treatment of human values and as valuable art forms capable of communicating depth of experience" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 13).

Cultural materialism is, therefore, an appropriate and useful framework for exploring the role of the mass media in modern society; achieving this through media education must

become a priority. We need to empower students with the skills to interpret and to create the conventions of the mass media which surround them. Alvarado (1992) goes part of the way in providing a starting point for media education. He suggests that the "process of teaching and learning is always a struggle and the provision of information is a part of that struggle" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 98).

The cultural materialist approach encourages us to consider the ways in which we use the media, to look at how often "... we organise our personal timetables around the media, and, indeed, the inseparability of the media from our everyday lives" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 173). They are a part of the fabric of life interwoven "...so naturally, so ordinarily through so many areas of our day to day existence" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 174), affecting both the temporal and spatial organization of life, and therefore expressing cultural values. Television does more than instil values and norms; "it also extends and develops cultural habits" (Williams, 1974, p. 67). Perhaps the strongest argument for the careful consideration of the role of television in contemporary society, from a cultural materialist view, comes from Williams himself in *Television, Technology and Cultural Form* (1974): "indeed the very nature of television which is commercial in character is as a cultural and political form directly shaped by and dependent on the norms of a capitalist society selling both consumer goods and a "way of life" based on them" (Williams, 1974, p. 41).

## Theory of cultural materialism according to Williams.

Williams' theory of cultural materialism provides us with a way of looking at culture, materialism, communication systems - specifically the mass media and the complex networks that are our society. Cultural materialism establishes a relation between culture and cultural products such as the mass media.

Cultural materialism was developed by Raymond Williams as a theory to establish the materiality of culture. This emergent theory came about by his converging views on the theoretical continuum between literary humanists such as F.R. Leavis and British Communist Marxism. From British Communist Marxism he "inherited a radically socialistic critique of the **materiality** of ruling class political, economic and cultural power" (Milner, 1993, p. 36). The Leavis view of culture was outlined in a pamphlet *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* (1930). Here he outlined a particular view of culture which has become widely influential. From this publication onwards, and particularly in *Scrutiny*, Leavis presented his essential case. The basis of his case is shown in Milner's *Cultural Materialism* (1993):

> In any period, it is upon a very small minority that the discerning appreciation of art and literature depends. This minority constitute the consciousness of the race at a given time. For such capacity does not belong merely to an aesthetic realm: it implies responsiveness to theory as well as to art, to science and philosophy in so far as these may affect the sense of the human situation and nature of life. (Milner, 1993, p. 21)

Of Leavis's view, Williams found that it offered "an emphasis on the primacy of literature, called on one to do a certain job and had a radical tinge which supported a critical interest and engagement in the problems of contemporary civilization (Williams, 1989, p. 34).

To Williams, as to many other since (eg. Masterman) the crucial point was that the emphasis placed on the minority culture was objectionable. The essential nature and role of the minority is clearly outlined by Williams in *Culture and Society*. According to Leavis:

> upon the minority depends our power of profiting by the finest human experiences of the past; they keep alive ... parts of tradition. Upon them depend the implicit standards that order the finer living of an age, the sense that this is worth more than that ... In their keeping ... is the language, the changing idiom, upon which fine living depends and without which distinctive spirit is thwarted and incoherent. By *culture* I mean the use of such language. (Williams, 1958, p. 247)

Williams agreed with Leavis "...that a society is poor indeed if it has nothing to live by but its own immediate and contemporary experience"(Williams, 1958, p. 248). However, Williams believed that "the ways in which we can draw on other experiences are more obvious than literature alone" (Williams, 1958, p. 248). Williams supports the drawing of formerly recorded experience from not only "literature, but history, building, painting, music, philosophy, theology, political and social theory, physical and natural sciences, anthropology and indeed the whole body of learning" (Williams, 1958, p. 248). He is also keen to suggest that we draw on the "experiences that are otherwise recorded: in institutions, manners, customs, family memories" (Williams, 1958, p. 249). To Williams, literature has its place, but it is not exclusive and neither is the notion of the powerful minority in establishing culture. Williams warns us that we cannot reduce experience to literary evidence alone. Williams "inherited from Leavisism a commitment to the holistic conceptions of culture and methods of analysis, a strong sense of the importance of the particular whether in art or in life and the insistence on the absolute centrality of culture" (Milner, 1993, p. 36). Situated between Marxism & Leavisism is Williams' cultural

materialism, which is at its most simplistic level a science of human society; it may be regarded as a scientific investigation about human social life which refers exclusively to how one proposes to account for social cultural differences and similarities. Cultural materialism, Williams explains:

> is a theory of culture as a (social and material) productive process and of specific practices, of arts, as social uses of material means of production (from language as material **practical consciousness** to the specific technologies of writing and forms of writing through to mechanical and electronic communication systems). (Williams, 1980, p. 243)

Robin Blackburn, in *Resources of Hope* (1989), suggests that Williams accepted the fundamental propositions of historical materialism and by adding his own contributions to them arrived at his body of work - cultural materialism. What Williams endeavours to explain with this theory is how a society or culture comes to assume attitudes or value of possessions. He seeks to provide a theoretical explanation for how cultures arrive at their own value laden view of society.

Raymond Williams' ideas on cultural materialism enable him to establish a theory which refers exclusively to how we can account for the socio-cultural differences and similarities in a society. He is primarily concerned about how a society comes to value aspects of its way of life. In *Making Connections* (1994), cultural materialism is described as an approach which Raymond Williams proposes to enable us to understand the processes of social change. Eagleton (1988) described Williams' contribution thus:' "almost single handedly he transformed socialist cultural studies in Britain from the relative crudity of the 1930's Marxism to an impressively rich, subtle and powerful body of theory (Eldridge & Eldridge, 1994, p. 3). This new and emergent approach resulted in a new general theory

of culture, by which Williams means "a theory of relations between elements in a whole way of life" (Eldridge & Eldridge, 1994, p.46). Williams has a preoccupation with the wholeness and integration of culture as a way of life. This theory has the ability to embrace change to incorporate an expanding culture. It accommodates the constant changes in culture and society which is vitally important for media education. The theoretical approach embodied in cultural materialism is concerned with "the analysis of all forms of signification within the actual means and conditions of their production" (Eldridge & Eldridge, 1994, p. 32).

Williams' method here is to study the language: " that is to say, the words and sequences of words which particular men and women have used in trying to give meaning to their experience" (Williams, 1989, p. 16). The process of signification includes, in the Williams perspective, the incorporation of the very powerful forms of communication employed by the mass media. When Williams wrote *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (1974), he understood that television itself could be seen as a number of pre-existing forms of communication. "...but in so far as drama was concerned, its sheer availability to so many people is unprecedented in human history - soaps, serials, thriller, westerns, detective and police drama, the classics of the theatre, the screening of films originally made for the cinema - these are now ingrained in our cultural and social life" (Williams, 1994, p. 25-27). The focus of Williams' theory of cultural materialism, in relation to communication and the mass media, is the proposition that we can have a democratic system of communication. However, in order to try and achieve this, we must recognise and embrace a number of conditions. Williams believes

that social life and patterns of communications are inextricably intertwined, so it is misleading to speak of reality and then communication about reality: "how people speak to each other, what conventions they have as to what is important and what is not, how they express these in institutions by which they keep in touch: these things are central. They are central to individuals, and central to the society" (Williams, 1989, p. 23). In the society of the 1990's these institutions include the mass media, in all its forms - "Books, journals, magazines, newspapers, theatre, films, radio, television, records, compact discs, videos and advertising - all these go to make up what we collectively term **the media** - that is to say, of communication" (Eldridge & Eldridge, 1994, p.98). The importance lies in recognising that communication, in all its patterns and forms, is the very fabric of society. "They are human constructions and so, in principle, subject to criticism and the possibilities of change. But the institutions in which they emerge and flourish can be very powerful" (Eldridge & Eldridge, 1994, p. 99). Williams underlines this point throughout his writing. The essence of his argument is that all members of a society should have access, in equal proportions, to the means of production in order to achieve a democratic participation in the creation and dissemination of meanings and values.

Communication, Williams believes, belongs to the whole society. In order to be a healthy society, communication depends on maximum participation. It is at this point that he criticises and questions the democratic and participatory nature of the present structure of the institutions of the mass media. Communication is, he tells us, "a science of penetrating the mass mind and of registering an impact there" (Williams, 1958, p. 301). He believes that "mass communication theory carries with it the idea of a few controlling

the many and this is what has to be publicly contested" (Eldridge & Eldridge, 1994, p. 65). Williams goes on to qualify this point further by saying, "I believe that the system of meanings and values that a capitalist system has generated has to be defeated, in general and in detail by the most sustained kinds of intellectual and educational work". (Williams, 1989, p. 76). Williams contends that the creations of meanings and values must not be seen "as the exclusive property of elite groups in society, we should see it as a common inheritance which through education and communication, should be made as widely available as possible" (Eldridge & Eldridge, 1994, p. 101). He perceives that individual members of society must endeavour to wrest control by constantly challenging "the systems of meanings and values which a capitalist society has generated " (Williams, 1989, p. xiv). The working out of the idea of culture is a " slow reach again for control" (Eldridge & Eldridge, 1994, p. 62).

It is the very capitalist nature of Western societies which reduces the impact of the individual in the democratic participation of the construction of values and meanings. "We live in a society where selling by any effective means has become the primary ethic" (Williams, 1980, p. 185). What is of great concern to Williams, as it should be to us all, is that "it is not only goods that are sold in a particular kind of economy but people who are sold in a particular kind of culture" (Williams, 1980, p. 185). Advertising is the driving force which underlies the mass media in a market based economy. Whether a product or media artefact is good is not at the root of concern. The issue lies in their marketability. "Advertising is seen as a social and cultural form that responds to the gap

between expectation and control by an organised fantasy" (Eldridge & Eldridge, 1994, p. 37). Williams explains that:

> it is impossible to look at modern advertising without realising that the material object being sold is never enough; this indeed is the crucial cultural quality of its modern forms. If we were sensibly materialist, in that part of our living in which we see things, we should find most advertising to be of insane irrelevance. Beer would be enough for us, without the additional promise that in drinking it we show ourselves to be manly, young in heart, or neighbourly ... it is clear that we have a cultural pattern in which the objects are not enough but must be validated, if only in fantasy, by association with social and personal meanings which in a different cultural pattern might be more directly available. (Williams, 1980, p. 185).

Commercial interests dominate the mass media, determining and shaping the content and form of media products, media production and media consumers. One of Williams' critical concerns is the significance of capitalism on cultural formations, where we see the imposition of meanings, values and attitudes on a community rather than the generation of the same by the members of a society. This commercial capitalist domination manifests itself over and above the primary consideration of the function and purpose of a common culture which "is not a consenting conformist society; it is a free contributive and common process of participation in the creation of meanings and values" (Eldridge & Eldridge, 1994, p. 75).

## Role of cultural materialism in media education.

Williams writes that "education is society's confirmation of its common meanings and of human skills for their amendment" (Williams, 1989, p. 75). Media education is a part of an "education for responsible citizenship" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 50). The ways of coming to terms with our cultural environment depends upon the quality of our media education. We need to empower members of society with the skills and knowledge to challenge and change the systems of meanings and values which capitalist society has generated. This is a major thrust of Williams' work and it is a view shared by such contemporaries as Williamson, who writes that education is valid "as long as it leads to questioning, which is a pre requisite for social change" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 83). The processes of "education, organisation of family, work etc. are involved in a continual making and remaking of an effective dominant culture and on them, as experienced, as built into our living its reality depend" (Williams, 1980, p. 39). Communities as a whole need to perceive the cultural construction of meanings as a response to the urgent pressure of material survival. What we need to ensure is the recognition of a "relationship between the fundamental understanding of communication processes and the ability to innovate and adapt to change" (French & Richards, 1994, p. 95). This train of thought is not new: "The philosophers", said Marx "have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point however is to change it" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 42). Change can only be effected when one has control and control is gained via knowledge and understanding. Twentieth century critics such as Richard Hoggart believe that cultures "are made up of patterns of beliefs, values, ideas, and emotions, together with their characteristic forms of expression through which groups

define, interpret and respond their experience of social life and social change" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p.14) Education needs to respond to developments and trends of major significance within society. It is "the process of giving to the ordinary members of society its full common meanings, in light of their personal and common experience" (Williams, 1958, p. 14). Williams was acutely aware of the role and power of education. In his conclusion to *Communications* (1962), he outlined the need for a "new arts and education policy aimed at diffusing civic skills and democratic access to cultural resources as widely as possible" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. xiii).

It was firmly believed by Williams that education should not only be relevant to students but should embrace the nature of their everyday cultural experiences and provide a sense of ownership about their cultural identity. His theory of cultural materialism sits extremely comfortably with Robert Shaw's comment that an educator "entrusted with a special responsibility for communications, has some duty to attempt to introduce the new media of popular culture into the classroom, not simply as audio-visual aids or in ... artistically acceptable forms ... but in representative examples" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 16). Williams is concerned to emphasise that society as a whole should "specify the institutional and material conditions for democratic participation" (Williams, 1989, p. x). The role of media education is vital because it is through the mass media that culture is produced and reproduced. "The crux of Williams' argument is that we need to reconsider the role of the great tradition in social life; rather than see it as the exclusive property of elite groups in society we should see it as a common inheritance, which through education and communication should be made as widely available as possible" (Eldridge & Eldridge,

1994, p. 101). Williams' comments here have strong overtones of the contemporary Marxist; Williams' political associations were in constant change. By the 1980's he aligned himself with the contemporary Marxist view that education "aims to create a socialist society, with a common culture which would incorporate an educated and participatory democracy" (Williams, 1989, p. 75). The significance of this viewpoint is in the way he considers the individual and the individual's total understandings and meanings:

> we have to learn to teach each other the connections between a political and economic formation, a cultural and educational formation and, perhaps hardest of all the formations of feelings and relationships which are our immediate resources in any struggle . Contemporary Marxism, extending its scope to this wider area, learning again the real meanings of totality is then, a movement to which I find myself belonging and to which I am glad to belong. (Williams, 1989, p. 76)

Education, we are told in *Making Connections* (1994), works on "the premise of respect for the person and the recognition that people may change and grow in their tastes and interests" (Eldridge & Eldridge, 1994, p. 100). It is essential that education should be constantly in transition, never stationary, responsive to the needs of the society it seeks to educate. Our current media education programs need to change in order to reflect the changing intellectual and cultural attitudes to the media and teaching about the media. Williams, in the past, and contemporaries such as Oliver Boyd Barrett, advocated change. A lack of this change has stagnated the current Western Australian syllabuses and significantly reduced their relevance. It would be fair to say that in a quest for academic acceptance of the Western Australian Media syllabuses, human relevance has been the ultimate concession. Williams believes that we must not only acknowledge the significant role the media play in the political and social sphere of the modern world, we

must also encourage students through our media education programs to"explore and analyse the nature of communication systems and what they tell us about the kind of society we live in" (Eldridge & Eldridge, 1994, p. 99). The cultural materialist perspective provides a sound and reasoned framework through which such exploration and analysing can occur.

What Raymond Williams offers us then, in his theory of cultural materialism, is an explicit theoretical base which enables the mass media to be studied in relation to their social and political contexts. Apart from Williams' works offering an explanation of the role of the media in the modern world, he strongly suggests in his writings that we must acknowledge that media messages must be considered in the light of the society from which they have been generated. He clearly establishes the need and responsibility of education to embrace the ordinary everyday media experiences of the media consumer through encouraging the incorporation of the study of popular texts. Here then, we have the basis for soundly reconsidering the current syllabuses; we have a theoretical framework which is appropriate and explicit, and which allows for the incorporation of the study of popular texts on their own terms.

Chapter 3

## Media Studies: Current Situation

The current Media Studies syllabuses in Western Australia have existed with little revision for the last decade. The foundations of the current syllabuses emerged from the dominance of screen studies in the late 1950's and 1960's. In fields such as communication and cultural studies change is a common occurrence, but the Western Australian syllabuses have failed to reflect such changes in both content and practice, in contrast to media education and the National Curriculum in the United Kingdom, where the study of the "popular" or "mass" cultural forms are encouraged as a means of helping students validate their cultural experiences as a totality. There is no apparent reflection of the rapid and varied changes in culture and society over the same period of time - specifically in relation to students and their electronic environment.

That education should be relevant to the experience of the learner is central to the humanistic viewpoint. Despite slightly differing viewpoints such as those of Meredyth (1971) and Tyler (1949), this is the underlying basic philosophical stance that this study assumes. Williams reminds us of the role of eduction in *Culture is Ordinary* (1958), where he tells us that:

> education is society's confirmation of its common meanings, and of the human skills for their amendment ... education is ordinary: that it is before anything else, the process of giving the ordinary members of society their full common meanings, in light of their personal and common experience. (Williams, 1958, p. 14)

The aim of media education is to build bridges between the classroom and the real world "being aware and open to the nature of pupils' everyday cultural experiences" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 16). Greater need exists than is met in the present syllabuses. Media education needs to accommodate the students' own cultural experiences and build these bridges in an integrated cross media approach rather than a rigid medium-by-medium one which exists in the current Western Australian syllabuses.

The Teaching-Learning Program of the present syllabus in Year 11 and Year 12 (see appendix A), identify specific media which are to be addressed. In Year 11, for example, photography, mass print, or television are the designated media for study. In Year 12, the specified media are film, radio and television. The selection of the media which are to be addressed suggests that some media are more worthy of study than others. The basis of this assumption is unclear and is most probably a reflection of the underlying values and attitudes of the syllabus committee at the time of writing the documents. Compounding this problem of "worthiness", the examination of the media is further restricted and isolated by the actual structure of the syllabus program. From the three media offered for study, only two are to be chosen. One medium is the major area of study, to be examined in detail and allocated two-thirds of class time. The other medium selected becomes the minor area, with time and detail allocated accordingly.

There are other problems associated with the division of major and minor areas of study. Television is a recommended medium of study in both Year 11 and Year 12. While few

would refute the enormous impact television has on students' lives, I would suggest that radio has equal, if not more significant impact for students in middle teenage years.

27

This medium-by-medium approach suggests no apparent point where comparative cross-media studies could or should occur. It would be far more logical and realistic to consider the mass media, not in isolation, but as they occur in society, and examine their cumulative impact. Goodwin and Whannel's (1992, p. 53) approach suggests that it would not only appear more practical and relevant but also more sound educationally to look at an aspect of popular culture, such as the Surf culture with its media representations in print, billboards, radio, film, advertising with an examination and discussion about values and attitudes associated with this culture and what it reflects about society in the 1990's.

The current Western Australian syllabuses contain amongst other things substantial emphasis on film, news, and persuasive forms of the mass media and reflect a pre-occupation with the consideration of Media Studies as an "art form". The push for academic respectability rather than student relevance in the 1970's and 1980's placed media as an art form. Consequently there has been a concentration on the high art end of the media spectrum. For example the notion of film genre became "highly fashionable" and along with it the implied and associated accompanying "highbrow" values and attitudes. So influential was the concept of genre established by the film media that it was quickly adapted by other academic areas, in particular, literature. The concentration still

evident on screen studies, characteristic of media education in the 1960's, does not include the study of popular culture with which the mass media is inextricably intertwined. Both the upper school and lower school Media Studies courses are anachronistic. The Media Studies Unit Curriculum was written in 1986 to 1987 and has not been revised since. While the upper school syllabuses make mention of books which deal with popular culture in their reading lists, the books deal with a content not incorporated into the syllabuses. Current courses examine the medium and not the culture. The courses have failed to keep pace with the culture behind the technology.

The syllabus is elitist in the selection of content and resources popular at the time of writing but not necessarily appropriate now. Elitism is defined here as being concerned with "high brow" aspects of culture and as having relevance to only a minority of the student population. The elitist structure of the current Media syllabuses is reflective of popular media viewing in the late 1950's and 1960's. It is particularly reflective of historical viewing of television, and its examination of this medium is rudimentary. In the lists of recommended resources there are two references to texts which address popular culture. The first is by Fiske, Hodge and Turner, *Myths of Oz* (1987) and the second is by Spearitt and Walker (eds), *Australian Popular Culture* (1979). In the actual content area popular culture is conspicuous by its absence in the syllabuses. The medium-by-medium approach lacks wholeness by largely ignoring the common experiences of the community via their popular culture. The current year 11 and 12 syllabuses (see appendix A) are *elitist* - in that they accommodate a number of preferred authors and texts and exclude the media experiences and knowledge of the students they are meant to

encourage and enlighten. For example the predominance of texts such as those by McMahon and Quinn throughout the resource list and their linking to student outcomes in each specified medium not only suggests content determination but also an accompanying methodology.

The methodology itself invites special comment. Since the writers of the current syllabuses were largely influenced by recent semiotic studies the documents that have been created are substantially oriented towards text analysis. This has resulted in the exclusion of the relevance of other possible backgrounds, movements and theories including cultural materialism. Texts cited in the Resources section of the syllabuses such as, *Exploring Images* (McMahon & Quinn, 1984), *Real Images* (McMahon & Quinn, 1986) and *Stories and Stereotypes* (McMahon & Quinn, 1987), emphasise the textual analysis approach to media education which has dominated the teaching of media over the last decade or more. It is interesting to note that Leavis, who was a proponent of textual criticism without reference to the context of texts, was criticised by Masterman (1985) whose writings inform much of the rationale for the textual criticism stance of the present syllabus. Indeed the methodology of Leavis still persists in the current Western Australian Media Studies syllabuses. The problem with this methodology is the tendency to analyse what is represented in the media product, rather than considering the values and attitudes of the society that have enabled the media products to be generated and perpetuated. There needs to be greater concern for the relevance of the media product to the student, with emphasis on the context in which the media product is consumed.

Current Media Studies syllabuses alienate students from their culture by avoiding the study of popular texts and by making that study too formal and abstract. The syllabuses need to take greater account of the place of media in students' every day lives. Williams suggests that teachers and curriculums should embrace the leisure interests of pupils by recognising the special virtues of specific media and confronting their essential qualities. In terms of practice the current Western Australian syllabuses tend to reflect the assumption stated by Halloran and Jones (1986) that "high culture is preferable to popular culture - a distraction which young people were to be provided with the right kind of apparatus to defend themselves against its effects" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 10). In terms of theoretical basis many aspects of the current syllabuses display notions of the inoculatory or moral approach which was prevalent in the 1970's. This approach to education emerged as a result of a deep concern "among educators and literary critics that young people needed to be protected against what was considered to be the very harmful and powerful influences of the mass media" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 10).

Goodwin and Whannel in their chapter "Understanding Television" (1990) in *Media Education - an introduction*, when talking about current media education thinking, say "there has also been a related interest and commitment to the popular" (1992, p. 53). That is to say, while theory in the 1970's often looked at popular television to discover whether or not it measured up to certain preconceived theoretical and political criteria, the 1980's have seen a shift towards taking the popular on its own terms beginning with actual public taste cultures rather than abstract theories. This period has seen a shift from

"a focus on "serious" television (drama, documentary, news, current affairs) to "popular" entertainment (soaps, sit coms, pop music, video, sport, gameshows" (Goodwin & Whannel, 1992, p. 5). Their views have been supported by other media educators such as Hall in "The Media and Society" (Hall & Whannel, 1964). Taking popular culture on its own terms as actual public taste cultures is an aspect absent in the current West Australian Media syllabuses. Also cited in "Understanding Television" (Goodwin & Whannel, 1992, p. 74) is an example of a media video production activity where students survey commercial rap videos including a look at associated fashions and a discussion of the importance of rap as a youth culture. This accommodates the students, their interests, their culture, media representations of their culture and their production skills. Western Australian Media Studies syllabuses do not incorporate or encourage this cross-media approach.

There is little in the resources, contents and practices which is likely to embody what Hoggart refers to as a "deeply felt authentic experience which strikes genuine chords in the audience" (Murdock & Phelps, 1992, p. 15). Education should be relevant and Media Education should also be relevant. The current syllabuses are relevant to only a minority of the student population to the exclusion of the majority. This is a key deficiency. There is very little in the content of the current syllabuses that acknowledges the interests of the students. Rather, they seem to ignore the importance of looking at the media through the eyes of the students - valid consumers within society. The syllabuses do not reflect the changing intellectual and cultural attitudes towards the media and teaching about the media. An important aspect of current media education deals with

"being in touch with the prevailing mood of the ordinary people" (Murdock & Phelps, 1992, p. 16).

32

Considering these criticisms levelled at the current Western Australian syllabuses it can be justifiably argued that now is the time to change the direction of our Media Studies syllabuses to be more reflective of the 1990's. Student relevance and experience must be pivotal in any refined or renovated syllabus. We should take heed of Williams's advice when he says: "it will be a test of our cultural seriousness whether we can in the coming generations redesign our syllabuses to a point of full human relevance and control". (Williams, 1958, p. 14).

# Chapter 4

## New Directions

From Williams' writing on cultural materialism and his views on media education it is possible, and I would suggest reasonable, to recommend a redirection of the syllabuses' practices and content based upon the principles of cultural materialism. Specifically, consideration should firstly be given to the characteristics of the mode of production which determine the general character of the social and political processes of life. Secondly, we should note that behaviour is governed by the thought that human life is rule-governed. Thirdly, and perhaps of even greater significance, is the examination of how attitudes and values come to exert an influence on society generally. In relation to the latter, the role of the mass media is clear. At a simple level, the media engender and instil values and attitudes, select and mediate the values which permeate the culture, enable the expansion of acceptable values and attitudes, and importantly, establish a relation between culture and cultural products such as the mass media.

Our existing practice, reflected in the current Year 11 and Year 12 syllabuses, emphasises the "what does the media do to us" line of inquiry. This implies a sense of helplessness about media products rather than concentrating on empowering students via a social relevance approach. One of the more influential approaches to media education has been:

> the field of Cultural Studies developed by people such as Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall in the 1950's and 1960's. In this tradition educators have sought to move away from arguments about what is worthy of study... to address the question of what constitutes culture and how children's cultural experiences, both actual and potential, might properly be understood and developed. (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 136).

Here we see the direction that our syllabuses should take, an approach based around the proposition that media education is "to address children's cultural experiences as a totality" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 136). The current syllabuses advocate a medium-by-medium approach, which places the emphasis solely on the characteristics of one set of practices. This prioritises specialist investigation into a selected medium over the understanding and knowledge of elements which recur across the media and ignores a central tenet of cultural materialism which is the fact that people usually experience the media as a set of interrelated and interacting systems. The emphasis is on the text alone in isolation from its social context. It is the cultural experiences of children that we need to address. We need to place the information about "institutional structures within the broader context of children understanding more fully about our social formation , about their position within it, and about how it might otherwise be" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 98). Cultural materialism, as an approach, allows us to have a framework within which such inquiry can occur.

The syllabuses (appendix A) reveal an emphasis upon the informational and persuasive forms of the mass media. Current views reflect Williams' opinion that media education needs to go beyond the informational and persuasive forms - these are important but provide a limited view of media education which "fails to take into account children's predominant media experience which is with fictional and entertainment forms" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 136). Media education is concerned with far more than maintaining the cultural status quo : teaching about the dominant forms of cinema, television and other media. I would suggest that while these topics have a place in media

education there is a responsibility on educators to provide children with "the opportunity to see cultural artefacts which, for reasons of access and circulation might otherwise remain outside their experience" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 430). Here we have the provision to move outside the established and recognised mass media to examine some of the alternative rather than dominant forms. Students should be encouraged to investigate alternative bookshops, publishing houses, newspapers and the like and to consider the social and political conditions which keep these popular forms outside the dominant media.

As well as encouraging investigation and discussion, media educators should also provide children with the opportunity to extend their creative capabilities by ensuring that they get to experience media forms and products they might otherwise not encounter. Media education must enable children to investigate the possibilities of media technology appropriate to their own context and resources. For example, if we take the children's entertainment medium of the 1990's - computer games, we should consider both the private and public context in which they are played, the concepts of winning, competition, leisure and the associated values and attitudes. We need to encourage students to explore how the nature of the context influences the nature of the games, why they have an effect and what they tell us about the society in which we live. They could also be encouraged to consider creating computer games which challenge the dominant attitudes and values - the possibilities are endless.

The development of work on popular television, newspapers and advertising is important to media education in making such education more accessible to younger students.

Moreover, the move in media education "away from film studies and towards popular television and advertising has enabled media teachers to address important social institutional issues through artefacts with which children readily identify" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 428). Herein lies the basis for recommending that the Western Australian Media Studies syllabuses follow the contemporary media educators lead and move away from the *"high arts* of Western culture to the more realistic exploration of advertising, pop music, family photographs, television drama" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 429). If we look at advertising for example, the current Western Australian syllabuses need to include the study of advertising in a much wider sense, not only considering it as it occurs in mass print and the electronic media, but also as it occurs in the environmental media which constantly surrounds students. This encourages students to consider the audience, the consumers of media artefacts who rarely contemplate the media in isolation.

Inherent in the current syllabuses are characteristics of the inoculative approach which suggests that "high culture is preferable to popular culture" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 10). If we look at the film content, for example, the current content evokes the charge of being elitist, or at best too narrow. There needs to be an increased student understanding of how film relates to society. Greater emphasis needs to be given to film-making as creation - the use of film-making in the classroom as a means of personal expression rather than as an exhibition of film grammar rules. Some of the most valuable creative work can be drawn from students generating media products which are relevant to their own cultural context. This "creativity relates not only to the ability of students to

generate their own ...expression of feeling", but also embraces "...all the skills and understandings that might be involved in any form of practical activity" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 74). Creativity needs to be encouraged, so that students experiment with forms and techniques "not in slavish imitation of broadcast media, but in an attempt to find an appropriate means of making a statement" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 75). This creative experimentation can best be illustrated by considering a practical activity outlined by Roy Stafford in his article *Redefining Creativity; Extended Project Work in G.C.S.E. Media Studies*. In one project outlined in this article, students "produced a survey of commercial rap videos, including a look at associated fashions and a discussion of the important of rap as a youth culture" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 74). Surely practical experimentation along these lines has far greater relevance than a general expectation that students will "exhibit some practical skills in one medium" (appendix A, p46). A close examination of the current year 12 Media Studies syllabus reveals the use of practical work not as creative experimentation but as a simulation exercise designed to "demonstrate understanding of the codes and conventions" (appendix A, p45). This seems to contradict most international trends in regard to the role of practical work.

As well as incorporating creative film-making the syllabuses need to reflect the changing nature of film as a medium. In the current climate the distinction between film and television has been blurred, as evidenced by the proliferation of video outlets. Television and film are viewed by teenagers as being different only in social rather than media terms.

Generally, throughout the syllabuses, the context must be given greater consideration so that students study both the context and the text with equal emphasis.

There has been a shift in the 1980's "toward taking the popular on its own terms beginning with actual public taste cultures rather than abstract theories" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 153). This is an approach which is not only supported by Williams, but also by contemporaries such as Goodwin, Whannel and Gramsci. Popular culture emerges from the collective practice rather than being imposed by an elite. Popular culture expresses "a community's distinctive sense of themselves as people living in specific localities" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 14). Teachers have some duty to attempt to introduce the new media of popular culture into the classroom because both teachers and curricula should embrace the leisure interests of their pupils. The study of popular culture addresses these concerns. The study of popular culture indicates a willingness on the part of educators to respond to "the development and trends of major significance within society" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 50). Media education should seize upon the common cultural experiences of students and encourage the study of popular culture. Through a study of popular culture students are empowered with the skills and knowledge to "define, interpret and respond to their experience of social life and social change" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 14). Students need to be encouraged to explore the dominant meanings and values perpetuated in the popular media and to understand the political, social and commercial motivation behind such creations. Investigation at this level will enable students to realise that "questions of culture are questions of value and hence questions of politics" (Eldridge & Eldridge,

1994, p. 75). We need to alert students to the fact that "we cannot infer the state of mind, feeling or quality of life of the consumers of popular culture from the character of the product" (Eldridge & Eldridge, 1994, p. 75).

Popular culture, as displayed in the mass media must be considered in the educational context because it is these products that young people claim as their own and that they enjoy. All forms of popular culture which children encounter through the mass media should be treated with an equal right to be enjoyed as much as any other form. We must treat knowledge as a cultural resource. "The essence of, the unique quality of, human learning is that it is facilitated by social interaction and grounded in culture" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 240). It is through the process of communication that children come to understand culture and it is through understanding that they "may come to own, to possess, what they have learnt. They are then enabled to be active participants in, and creators and critics of, the culture of their society" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992, p. 240). It is one important function of education to assist the creation and continuity of culture.

It is to Williams' comment on changing syllabus direction that we must now return. In 1958, in *Culture is Ordinary*, Williams urged educators to "redesign our syllabuses to a point of full human relevance and control" (Williams, 1989, p. 15). Change is not to be feared but approached with open mindedness ever aware of the changing nature of culture, society and education. "The process of teaching and learning is always a struggle and the provision of information is a part of that struggle" (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett,

1992, p. 98).    One of Williams' greatest contributions to the teacher of the 1990's is perhaps the urgency which he generates about teachers being in touch with the students and responsive to their culture. In *Resources of Hope*, Robin Blackburn comments thus: "Williams work on education and communications was to create a climate of discussion and expectation" (Williams, 1989, p. xii). Educators must now realise the fruits of these discussions and turn expectation into reality.

# Conclusion

The lesson of Raymond Williams in regard to the teaching of media is a valuable one. Williams' theory of cultural materialism provides a much needed theoretical framework for the Western Australian Media Studies syllabuses. Williams' cultural materialist approach allows for and encourages the study of popular texts, and the culture they embody, as teachers endeavour to empower students with the skills and knowledge to understand the role of the mass media in society. This study has sought to establish the significant role of cultural materialism in media education in the 1990's. From the implications drawn in the closing chapter of this thesis it is obvious that the current syllabuses are lacking relevance to the real life experiences of the learners. If we are to be innovative and courageous in redirecting syllabus content and practices so that they are reflective of, and relevant to, the current time frame, as well as incorporating the potential to modify the syllabus as time and culture progresses, then we are well advised to heed the lesson of Raymond Williams. It is time to move away from the anachronistic and structuralist approaches which have prevailed over the last decade in media studies courses. Raymond Williams offers teachers a theory which can help media education to become more relevant, meaningful and exciting for the future.

# MEDIA STUDIES (YEAR 11) – D012

## General Aims

A study of the media aims to increase student understanding of how the media work, how they produce meaning, how they are organised, and how they go about the business of constructing 'reality'

Students studying this course are likely to represent a wide range of academic abilities. It is likely that some of the students will not master all of the stated objectives. It is important to determine a pace and style of learning that best suits each student. The detail furnished in the objective outline has been provided in the hope that appropriate individual student programs are designed. All students should be able to enjoy the satisfaction of mastering some of the objectives.

It is the prerogative of teachers to determine the approach that they will take with their students. however. the following should be considered.

The aim is to teach the understandings outlined in the course. Student activity, whether production or analysis orientated is a valid method of achieving this aim. Students of all ranges of academic ability can enhance their learning through carefully chosen activities. It also recognises that active student participation will result in understandings in addition to those outlined in the course objectives. However, teachers are cautioned against engaging in activity programs merely for their own sake

## Educational Objectives

Through the study of this course students should be able to demonstrate development of language competence in.

- reading and viewing
- speaking and listening
- writing and production
- analysis of texts from different media.

### The Problematic Nature of the Mass Media
The implications of the term 'media'

Students will have the ability to describe the characteristics of the mass media being studied

The implications of the term 'mass'

Students will have the ability to

- outline the implications of the existence of a mass audience on marketing procedures, types of products and profits

- perceive the privileged position (economic political) of those who are in a position to affect the products

The specific characteristics of photography, mass print or television

Students will have the ability to

- distinguish between the form and content of a medium (e.g. a form of television is domestic, therefore content is designed to accommodate lower concentration levels)

- identify the major characteristics and limitations of the form (e.g. the implications of broadcast as part of the form, of time constraints upon content of format upon content)

## Media Products as Constructions
### Fact and fiction in the media
Students will have the ability to:

- recognise that the distinction between fact and fiction in the media can be unclear

- recognise that both 'factual' and 'fictional' programs are media constructs.

### The patterns of media construction
Students will have the ability to:

- identify the various genres in television

- identify the various genres within a mass print form (e.g. comics - love. adventure etc., magazines – sport, hobby etc )

- identify the various uses of photographs within a mass print form (e.g. photojournalism, advertising, news, nature, glamour)

- describe in more detail the way in which one specific genre/style/presentation has shaped the media message (e.g. a closer examination of photo journalism, adventure comics, television quiz shows etc.)

- identify broad patterns of programming, scheduling, presentation and distribution of the media being studied

- describe the way in which these patterns affect the constructs.

### The notion of reality
Students will have the ability to:

- identify the elements of realism that are important to an understanding of the mass media, namely narrative structure where it occurs, importance of characters. emotive appeal that is generated and actions, motivations and images that bear strong resemblance to perceived reality

- apply these understandings to the media being studied - narrative structure where it occurs, importance of characters within the narrative and actions and motivations bearing a strong resemblance to perceived reality

- apply their understanding of these elements to television

- recognise that newspapers contain mediated reports of events that have occurred

- identify the ways in which newspapers reinforce their aura of authenticity and verisimilitude, particularly use of newspaper photographs, style of reporting (quotes. datelines, names and places), layout (headlines hierarchy, by-lines, format) and repetition and consistency.

## Methods of Construction
### The selection process operating in the construction of media representations
Students will have the ability to:

- identify significant elements of selection of television with particular reference to montage, visual and audio codes and conventions

- assess the way in which these elements create meaning

- identify the selection processes operating in a still image as it appears in a mass media product – posters, billboards, magazines, newspaper photographs, advertisements and comics
- with particular reference to layout and the codes and conventions, apply their knowledge of the selection processes operating in the media to one medium
- demonstrate their knowledge of the selection processes operating in the media by the construction of a message (e.g. construction of the front page of a newspaper, compilation of a video advertisement, a photo-documentary).

The terminology of the mass media

Students will have the ability to use terminology in so far as it is necessary to convey meaning (not as an end in itself).

The form of media constructions with particular reference to narrative

Students will have the ability to:

- recognise narrative as the basis for structuring experience
- differentiate between narrative and non-narrative forms
- identify the significant elements of narrative, particularly setting, character, conflict and resolution
- identify the codes operating in particular media in the construction of character, conflict, setting, resolution
- apply their understanding of narrative to an analysis of a particular media presentation
- compare the ways in which narrative is structured in different media e.g. television and mass print
- compare the ways in which the form of the medium affects the construction of the narrative, particularly the effect of broadcast, print and exhibition
- identify the extent to which narrative contributes to the illusion of reality.

The codes and conventions of media constructions

Students will have the ability to:

- identify the codes and conventions operating in the medium of study, with particular reference to the technical, symbolic, written and audio codes (where applicable)
- assess the importance of the codes in the way that they affect the selection process, the development of narrative and the creation of meaning
- apply their knowledge of the codes/conventions to particular products of the mass media.

The temporal parameters of media constructions

Students will have the ability to:

- identify the parameters of presentation in television, particularly programming and time slots
- identify the time considerations in the presentation of newspapers and magazines, particularly deadlines, potential markets, immediacy and flexibility.

The spatial parameters of media constructions

Students will have the ability to:

- identify the way space is used within the frame in photography and television to create an illusion
- identify the way space is used within the frame to suggest a larger world beyond the frame
- identify other techniques used in television to create the illusion of real space.

## Control of the Constructions

### Political factors affecting media constructions

Students will have the ability to identify the political pressures and constraints acting upon the media, with particular reference to:

- television – programming, news coverage, current affairs television, advertising
- print – notion of freedom of the press, advertising, news coverage
- photojournalism – political issues involved, including censorship, propaganda, culturally appropriate subject matter.

### Economic factors affecting media constructions

Students will have the ability to identify the nature and importance of the economic factors affecting media constructs, with particular reference to the structure of ownership of the media, marketing procedures, ratings and advertising and technological change.

### Significant developments in the history of the mass media

Students will have the ability to recognise an historical context for the media that they are studying. (Note: the historical context must be relevant and pertinent to the study of modern mass media, not a study pursued in isolation. For example, the effect of satellite technology upon news selection processes, the development of display advertisement as an outcome of industrialisation and mass markets).

### Authorship in the media

Students will have the ability to:

- recognise that the question of authorship is a complex one when applied to media constructs
- postulate possible sites of authorship in television programs e.g. presenters, actors, directors, producers, company owners, camera people or a combination of these
- postulate possible sites of authorship in the mass print (particularly newspapers) e.g. journalist, photographer, cartoonist, editor, owners, advertisers, script writer - or a combination of these.

## Value Systems of the Constructions

### Representation of stereotypes

Students will have the ability to:

- recognise that stereotype is a typification of a group based upon selection and exclusion of particular attributes
- recognise that stereotype typification necessitates some degree of simplification, and therefore, misrepresentation
- identify the symbols that are used for particular stereotype typifications e.g. Aborigines, women, workers, youth
- recognise that the symbols used in stereotype are not arbitrary but are a consequence of the selection and exclusion of perceived attributes
- recognise that the stereotype is a shared concept, therefore can be used by the media as a 'shortcut' to meaning (e.g. status and role are embodied in an image of a woman washing dishes)

- recognise that the 'shortcut' of the media stereotype, like all shared concepts, is culturally regenerated.

The tendency for media representation to become accepted as 'normal' or 'natural'

Students will have the ability to:

- recognise that media stereotyping is an active process that involves identification of a real condition or attitude of a group and then placing a negative evaluation on this attribute ie.g. the Aboriginal pattern of kinship responsibility that is stereotyped as parasitic)
- recognise that media stereotyping actively inverts cause and effect (e.g. young people unable to find employment. hence forced into idleness and stereotyped as jobless because they are idle)

# Teaching – Learning Program

Students will address one of the following in detail: Photography (as it occurs in the mass media). Mass Print (including newspapers. magazines. comics. graphic communication) or Television. In addition students will undertake a study of one of the above in less detail. Two-thirds of class time is to be spent on the major area of study and one third on the minor area of study. Because of its importance. television is nominated in both Year 11 and 12. However. it is strongly recommended that if television is offered as a major area of study in one year, then it becomes a minor study area in the other.

Students would be expected to exhibit some practical skills in one medium. but the skills should reveal mastery of understandings. Mastery of technology is only a means towards this end.

It is strongly recommended that the Australian media provide the initial and principal focus for the course. This recommendation is made in the knowledge that there are ample films. videotapes and reference texts available to support an Australian focus. It will be necessary to introduce overseas material and references so that the Australian media experience can be placed in perspective. but it is felt that the Australian focus is a more relevant starting point. The reference section of this course reflects this perspective.

## Content

The problematic nature of the mass media

The implication of the term 'media'.

The implications of the term 'mass'.

The specific characteristics of photography. mass print or television.

Media products as constructions

Fact and fiction in the media.

The patterns of media construction.

The notion of reality.

Methods of construction

The selection process of words. images and sounds in the construction of media representations.

The basic terminology associated with the media being studied.

The form of media construction with particular reference to narrative.

The codes and conventions of media constructions.

The temporal parameters of media constructions.

The spatial parameters of media constructions.

Control of constructions

The political factors affecting media constructions.

The economic factors affecting media constructions.

The significant developments in the history of the mass media.

Authorship in the media.

Value systems of constructions

Representation of stereotypes.

The tendency for media representations to become accepted as 'normal' or 'natural'.

The value systems contained in media representations.

# Time Allocation

The minimum time required to achieve the objectives of this course is 120 hours. Typically the course will be taught over the entire school year. Schools wishing to vary this delivery pattern are required to notify the Director, Secondary Education Authority.

# Resources

## General – Teachers

Alvarado. Gutch and Wollen. *Learning the Media: An Introduction to Media Teaching.* Macmillan, London. 1987.

Alvarado and Tulloch. *Dr Who: The Unfolding Text.* 1984.

Barr, T.. *The Challenge of Change: Australia's Information Society.* Oxford University Press. 1987.

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Fiske, Hodge and Turner. *Myths of Oz: Reading Australian Popular Culture.* Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1987.

Johnson. L.. *The Unseen Voice: A Cultural Study of Early Australian Radio.* Routledge, London, 1988.

Masterman. L.. *Teaching the Media.* Comedia, London, 1985.

*Media Information,* a monthly journal from the Australian Film. Television and Radio School.

O'Sullivan. et al.. *Key Concepts in Communication,* Methuen. London. 1983.

Tulloch, J.. *Australian Cinema: Industry, Narrative and Meaning.* Allen and Unwin. 1982.

Tulloch. J.. *Legends on the Screen: The Narrative Film in Australia. 1919-1929.* Currency, 1981.

Windschuttle. K.. *The Media,* Penguin, Australia, 1984.

## General – Students

Alvarado and Tulloch. *Dr Who: The Unfolding Text,* 1984.

Burgmann and Lee (eds), *Constructing a Culture,* Vol. 4 of *A People's History of Australia,* Penguin, 1988.

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## Television – Teachers

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Ellis, J., *Visible Fictions,* Routledge and Kegan Paul, London. 1982.

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## Television – Students

Atterton, M., *Australian Showbiz.* Sunshine, Brookvale, NSW, 1984.

Goldstein and Goldstein, *Prime Time Television,* Crown, New York. 1983.

Groves, S., *Soap! A Pictorial History of America's Daytime Dramas.* Contemporary Books, Chicago, 1983.

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McMahon, B., and Quin, R., *Stories and Stereotypes,* Longman. Melbourne. 1987.

Root, J., *Open the Box,* Comedia. London. 1986.

Tulloch and Moran, *A Country Practice.* Currency, Sydney, 1986.

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Dyer, G., *Advertising as Communication.* London, Methuen, 1982.

Goffman, I., *Gender Advertisements,* Macmillan, London, 1979.

Hartley, J., *Understanding News,* Methuen, London, 1982.

Short and Dickenson, *The Newspaper: An Alternative Textbook.* Fearson, California, 1980.

Williamson, J., *Decoding Advertisements,* Boyars, London, 1978.

Windschuttle, K., (ed.), *Fixing the News,* Cassell, NSE, 1981.

## Mass Print – Students

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Chapman, S., *Great Expectations: Advertising and the Tobacco Industry,* Comedia, London, 1986.

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King, J., *A Cartoon History of Australia: A Social History of History in Cartoons,* Savvas, Adelaide, 1983.

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Lindesay, V., *The Inked in Image,* Hutchinson, Melbourne, 1979.

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Myers, K., *Understains: The Sense of Seduction of Advertising.* Comedia, London, 1986.

Pickering, L., *Cartoons by Australian Kids,* Tupart, Sydney, 1982.

Willey, K., *News News News,* Child and Henry, NSW, 1982.

## Photography – Teachers

Barthes, R., *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography,* Jonathan Cape, London, 1982.

Berger, J., *Ways of Seeing,* Penguin, Middlesex, 1972.

Berger, J., *Another Way of Telling,* Writers and Readers, UK, 1982.

Burgin, V., (ed.), *Thinking Photography,* Macmillan, London, 1982.

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Associated Press, *Moments in Time,* Angus and Robertson, Melbourne, 1984.

Cannon, M., *Australia: A History in Photographs,* Currey O'Neil, Melbourne, 1983.

Campbell, B., *Exploring Photography,* BBC, London, 1978.

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Evans. H.. *Pictures on a Page.* Heinemann. London. 1978.

Graham. K.. *Say Cheese: Snapshot as Art and Serial History:* Collins. London. 1986.

Hall and Mather. *Australian Women Photographers 1840-1960.* Greenhouse. Richmond. Victoria. 1986.

Lamb and Postle. *Images of Our Time.* Currey O'Neil. Melbourne. 1985.

McMahon. B.. and Quin. R.. *Exploring Images.* Bookland. Perth. 1984.

# Assessment Structure

Assessment structures are an integral part of all Accredited Courses.

The structure specifies:

1. the components and learning outcomes to be included in assessment
2. weightings to be applied to these components
3. the types of assessment considered appropriate for the course.

**Table 1**

| Syllabus Content | Weighting percentage |
| --- | --- |
| The problematical nature of the mass media | 15-25 |
| Media products as constructions | 15-25 |
| Methods of constructions | 15-25 |
| Control of the constructions | 15-25 |
| Value systems of the constructions | 15-25 |

**Table 2**

| Learning Outcomes | Weighting percentage |
| --- | --- |
| Knowledge and understanding of media texts (content and context) | 20-30 |
| Skills of analysis and interpretation of media texts | 20-30 |
| Associated skills of research, reading, writing, discussion of media texts | 20-30 |
| Skills involved in media production | 20-30 |

**Table 3**

| Types of Assessment | Weighting percentage |
| --- | --- |
| Evaluation of professional media products | 20-30 |
| Tests of oral written competence | 20-30 |
| Research | 20-30 |
| Media production | 20-30 |

# MEDIA STUDIES (YEAR 12) – E012

## General Aims

Media Studies aims to increase student understanding of how the media work, how they produce meaning, how they are organised, and how they go about the business of constructing reality.

## Educational Objectives

Through the study of this course students should be able to demonstrate development of language competence in:

- reading and viewing
- speaking and listening
- writing and production
- analysis of texts from different media.

### The Problematic Nature of the Mass Media

**The implications of the term 'media'**

Students will have the ability to describe the characteristics of the media being studied.

**The implications of the term 'mass'**

Students will have the ability to:

- recognise that the term 'mass' is both simple and complex. – e.g. (1) there are numerous demographic subdivisions of audience, hence market (2) mass has different implications when applied to film and radio
- recognise that ratings and box office returns are directly related to the marketers' knowledge of the 'mass' audience.

**The specific characteristics of film, radio or television**

Students will have the ability to:

- distinguish between form and content of a medium and identify the ways in which form affects content (e.g. television is a broadcast medium which encourages the programming of live entertainment)
- identify the major characteristics and limitations of the form; of time constraints upon content; of presentation upon content (e.g. films on television compared with films shown in cinemas).

**Theories of media analysis**

Students will have the ability to:

- recognise that there are many theories of media analysis
- recognise that the application of different theories will result in different perceptions about the mass media
- recognise that no one theory provides a complete understanding of its subject.

### Media Products as Constructions

**Genre in film**

Students will have the ability to:

- identify various genres in film

- identify the ways in which a genre will affect the development of the narrative
- recognise the limitations of a genre approach as an explanation of the constructions (e.g. alternative approaches, such as auteur, may emphasise different aspects of the constructions).

**Genre in television**

- Students will have the ability to:
- recognise that television genres have not been historically moulded to the extent of film genres
- recognise the significance of 'broadcast' for television constructions
- identify broad patterns of programming and scheduling.

**Radio formats**

Students will have the ability to:

- recognise the similarities between radio and television as broadcast media
- identify broad patterns of programming and scheduling.

**Realism and the constructs**

Students will have the ability to:

- identify the elements of realism in narrative fictions (e.g. in feature films, soap operas, radio comedy)
- identify the elements of realism in narrative non-fiction (e.g. in dramatic documentary, radio current affairs)
- identify elements of realism in non-narrative forms (e.g. radio talkbacks, some advertisements).

### Methods of Construction

**The selection process in the media being studied**

Students will have the ability to:

- identify significant elements of selection of film and television with particular reference to montage and visual and audio codes and conventions
- assess the function of montage, the visual and audio codes and conventions in particular programs
- identify the selection processes that take place in the compilation of radio programs with particular reference to news, music, chat and talkback programs
- recognise the way in which consistency of the selection pattern develops a station image
- recognise that the final media construction is an outcome of numerous editing procedures embracing concept development, pre-production, production and post-production
- demonstrate skill in the ending procedures associated with either concept development or pre-production, or production or post-production in one medium
- recognise the limitation that genre imposes upon the selection/editing processes.

**The basic terminology in the media being studied**

Students will have the ability to use terminology in so far as it is necessary to convey meaning (not as an end in itself).

**The form of media constructions with particular reference to narrative and rhetoric**

Students will have the ability to:

- recognise narrative as a basis for structuring film and television experience
- differentiate between narrative and non-narrative forms in television and radio
- identify the uses of rhetoric in television and radio, with particular regard to advertising
- identify the significant elements of narrative in film and television particularly setting, character, conflict and resolution
- identify the codes used in the construction of character, conflict, setting, resolution
- apply their understanding of narrative to an analysis of a particular film or television program
- identify the ways in which the elements of narrative (setting, character, conflict and resolution) are used in a particular genre (e.g. news, soap, drama, TV quiz)
- compare the ways in which narrative is structured in different media
- compare the ways in which the form of the medium affects the construction of the narrative, particularly the effect of broadcast and exhibition
- identify the extent to which narrative contributes to the illusion of reality
- identify the occurrence of the narrative elements (setting, character, conflict, resolution) in more rhetorical forms (e.g. talkback radio, advertisements, TV quiz shows, variety shows, TV magazine programs, radio disc jockey programs)
- identify the specific ways in which the codes are used in a rhetorical form in order to elicit a specific response (e.g. (1) fast cutting and 'up-tempo' music in television advertisements (2) the emotive language of late night radio talkbacks)
- demonstrate an understanding of the codes and conventions of narrative and rhetoric (e.g. a simulation production exercise, a production exercise, an analysis exercise).

**The codes and conventions associated with the media being studied**

Students will have the ability to:

- identify the codes and conventions operating in film and television, with particular reference to the technical, symbolic, written and audio codes
- recognise the context within which the codes operate (e.g. film on videotape is a different context from film in a cinema)
- assess the importance of the codes in the way that they affect the selection process; the development of the codes and conventions to particular film and television
- identify the codes and sub-codes operating in radio (e.g. sub-codes of dialogue such as intonation, inflection, timbre)

- identify the codes associated with specific radio programs (e.g. sound effects in sport programs) and determine the ways in which they create meaning.

**The temporal parameters of the media being studied**

Students will have the ability to:

- identify the parameters of presentation, particularly programming, time slots, segmentation and potential for responsiveness and flexibility
- identify the time considerations in the presentation of film, particularly seasonal considerations and ratings considerations
- recognise that radio and television, being broadcast media, operate in the present time which in part determines programming (e.g. propensity for live sport, news, interviews)
- recognise the ways in which time is depicted and manipulated in film and television (i.e. the representation of shortened, lengthened or simultaneous time).

**The spatial movements of the media being studied**

Students will have the ability to:

- identify the way space is used within the frame in film and television to create an illusion
- identify the way space is used within the frame to suggest a large world beyond the frame
- identify techniques used in film and television to create the illusion of real space
- identify the way in which time and space manipulations affect the development of the narrative in film and television.

## Control of the Constructions

**Political factors in Australia that affect the media being studied**

Students will have the ability to:

- identify the political pressures and constraints acting upon the media in Australia with particular reference to television (programming, news coverage, current affairs and advertising), to radio (news coverage and advertising) and film (Australian productions)
- identify the legal constraints affecting the media in Australia with particular reference to advertising, self-regulation, and programming.

**Economic factors in Australia that affect the media being studied**

Students will have the ability to identify the nature and importance of some economic factors affecting Australian media constructs, with particular reference to the distinction between public service (ABC) and commercial media and to the implications of funding in public service and commercial media.

**Significant developments in Australian history that have affected the media being studied**

Students will have the ability to:

- recognise the significance of government intervention in the Australian film industry

- recognise the ties of television to the press and radio as significant in its historical development.

**Implications of corporate ownership across the Australian media**

Students will have the ability to:

- identify the major corporate groups in the Australian media
- identify the degree of networking in the Australian media and assess the implications of networking
- recognise the significance of corporate ownership when speculating upon future media developments such as cable or satellite technology.

### Value Systems of the Constructions

**Representation of authority figures and heroes**

Students will have the ability to:

- identify the existence of star systems in the media being studied
- identify the codes that establish authority figures (e.g. program format, clothing, performance, voice timbre)
- recognise the commercial significance of stars and authority figures (e.g. for box office, ratings, promotions, advertising).

**The function of connotation and myth in the representations**

Students will have the ability to:

- recognise that stars and authority figures can be 'read' as symbol combinations that convey meaning (e.g. the appearance of particular rock stars as representing dissent from mainstream culture)
- recognise that the symbol combination incorporated in the star is a condensation of meaning (a short-cut) that emphasises certain traits and ignores others (that is, they are cultural myths, or explanations of the culturally acceptable).

**The value systems associated with the representations**

Students will have the ability to:

- interpret specific stars in terms of the values that they represent (e.g. Marilyn Monroe as white, middle class, 1950s sexuality)
- identification of specific stars as representing the values associated with sub-cultural groups, (e.g. punk rock stars)
- recognise that stars are vehicles for reinforcing and redefining the dominant cultural values.

**Dominant cultural and sub-cultural factors affecting receptivity of the audience**

Students will have the ability to:

- recognise that membership of particular sub-cultures affects a 'reading' of a star and the values that the star represents
- identify some of the factors that qualify an individual for membership of a sub-culture, (e.g. age, interests, economic background).

# Teaching – Learning Program

Students will address one of the following in detail:

- film
- radio
- television

In addition students will undertake a study of one of the above in less detail. Two-thirds of class time is to be spent on the major area of study and one-third on the minor area of study.

Note: Because of its importance, television is nominated in both the Year 11 course and the Year 12 course. However, it is strongly recommended that if television is offered as a major area of study in one year, then it becomes a minor study area in the other.

It is the prerogative of teachers to determine the approach that they will take with their students; however, the following should be considered.

Whatever approach is used, the aim is to teach the understandings outlined in the course. Student activity, whether production or analysis oriented, is a valid method of achieving aims. Students of all ranges of academic ability can enhance their learning through carefully chosen activities. It is also recognised that active student participation will result in understandings in addition to those outlined in the course objectives. However, teachers are cautioned against engaging in activity programs merely for their own sake.

There is a course requirement that students be able to apply the understandings that they have gained (most prevalent in the methods of construction section) to one medium. Hence students would be expected to exhibit some practical skills in one medium, but the skills should reveal mastery of understandings. Mastery of technology is only a means towards this end.

Students undertaking media studies courses are likely to represent a wide range of academic abilities. It is likely that some of the students will not master all of the stated objectives. It is also important to determine a pace and style of learning that best suits each student. The detail furnished in the objective outline has been provided in the hope that appropriate individual student programs are designed. All students should be able to enjoy the satisfaction of mastering some of the objectives.

The Year 12 course has been designed recognising that some students will wish to undertake further media study at tertiary level. The needs of these students will also influence particular approaches.

## Content

There are five sections in this course.

### The Problematical Nature of the Mass Media

The implications of the term 'media'

The implications of the term 'mass'.

The specific characteristics of film, radio or television.

Theories of media analysis.

## Media Products as Constructions

Genre in film.

Genre in television.

Radio formats.

Realism and its constructs.

## Methods of Construction

The selection process in the media being studied.

The basic terminology in the media being studied.

The form of media construction with particular reference to narrative and rhetoric.

The codes and conventions associated with the media being studied.

The temporal parameters of the media being studied.

The spatial parameters of the media being studied.

## Control of the Constructions

The political factors in Australia that affect the media being studied.

The economic factors in Australia that affect the media being studied.

The significant developments in Australian history that have affected the media being studied.

Implications of corporate ownership across the Australian media.

## Value Systems of the Constructions

Representation of authority figures and heroes.

The function of connotation and myth in the representations.

The value systems associated with the representations.

Dominant cultural and sub-cultural factors affecting receptivity of the audience.

# Time Allocation

The minimum time required to achieve the objectives of this course is 110 hours. Typically the course will be taught over the entire school year. Schools wishing to vary this delivery pattern are required to notify the Director, Secondary Education Authority.

# Resources

## General

Allen, R., (ed.), *Channels of Discourse: Television and Contemporary Criticism*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1987.

Fiske, J., *Television Culture*, Methuen, London, 1987.

## General - Teachers

Alvarado, Gutch and Wollen, *Learning the Media: An Introduction to Media Teaching*, Macmillan, London, 1987.

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Barr, T., *The Challenge of Change: Australia's Information Society*, Oxford Press, Oxford, 1987.

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Turner, G., *National Fictions: Literature, Film and the Construction of Australian Narrative*, Allen and Unwin, 1986.

Windschuttle, K., *The Media*, Penguin, Australia, 1984.

## General - Students

Alvarado and Tulloch, *Dr Who: The Unfolding Text*, 1984.

Burgmann and Lee, (eds), *Constructing a Culture*, Volume 4 of *A People's History of Australia*, Penguin, 1988.

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