



**Course Title and Number:** The Media in Britain

**Instructor:** Chris Mottershead

**Course Objectives:**

This course will offer an introductory outline to some key aspects of the mass media as they have developed in Britain since the middle of the twentieth century. The Press, Broadcasting and the Cinema will be examined in terms of their major developments and the ways that they now work in relation to British society in an era of increasing new and global digital media. The course will look at the ways the media are organised commercially, at the importance of changing media technologies and at the relationships between government, media and society.

A key focus of the course will be on how these different media present aspects of British life and interact with social and political changes. The course will look at the national press and its divisions in order to appeal to different social audiences. There will be an analysis of the different forms newspapers take, including their use of layouts, photographs and language as well as the variety of content they choose to cover. The particular nature of British broadcasting will be considered from its roots in a single national radio system of public service broadcasting through the ways in which this ideal was applied to television and its problematic position in the current situation of multi-channel broadcasting de-regulation. This changing media landscape will be exemplified by a case study of News Corporation as an international media conglomerate which is now influential across both the press and broadcasting in Britain. A survey of British cinema will look at examples! of how different film-makers have represented Britain. The current situation of British film making from the 1980s onwards will be outlined in terms of how British films have tried to come to terms with the international market and the types of films that have been produced, especially the 'heritage' films and those offering accounts of contemporary social problems. This survey will raise questions about the importance of the media offering explorations of the national culture.

**Course Learning Outcomes:**

- Students will gain some knowledge of the history of the press, broadcasting and

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cinema in Britain.

- Students will be familiar with the organisation, regulation and finance of the major media in Britain
- Students will be able to analyse examples of British media in terms of the cultural meanings being presented
- Students will develop an understanding of the debates around the role of the media in relation to national culture and about the political significance of the media.

### **Required text:**

Crisell Andrew An Introductory History of British Broadcasting (London Routledge 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2003 ISBN 0-415-24792-6 (pbk))

Murphy Robert British Cinema of the 90s (London British Film Institute 2000 ISBN 0-85170-762-9 (pbk))

### **Further reading will include:**

Murphy R (ed) The British Cinema Book 1997 (bfi publishing)

Negrine R Politics and the Mass Media In Britain 1989 (Routledge)

Tunstall J Newspaper Power: the new national press in Britain 1996 (Clarendon Press)

McNair B An Introduction to Political Communication (3rd ed) 2003 (Routledge)

### **Topics covered will include:**

- Introduction: what are the mass media and how do we relate to them?  
Outline of the course and its structure.  
The Press in Britain - how it is organised  
Reading: Tunstall J National Tabloids and Broadsheets (extract)
- Comparison of different types of national British newspaper.  
Theories of the political role of the press and broadcasting in Britain  
Reading: McNair B Politics, Democracy and the Media (extract)
- An outline history of broadcasting in Britain up to 1990. BBC Radio and Television, the introduction of Independent Commercial Television, The setting up of Channel 4  
Reading: Crisell p90-104, 201-203, 206-209
- The concept of Public Service Broadcasting and the regulation of television in Britain. Survey of a range of current television programmes from different terrestrial channels.  
Reading: Crisell p152-160
- The media and politics: case studies of conflicts between governments and media including the BBC's report on the Iraq dossier as investigated in the Hutton Report.  
Reading: Crisell p175-182. Negrine R Politics of Broadcasting (extract)

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- The challenge of commercial international media. The impact of Rupert Murdoch and BSkyB satellite television on Britain. The development of television in the digital era, the effects of deregulation and the future of Public Service Broadcasting  
Reading: Crisell p 244-260 p 264-268
- Introduction to British Cinema: a snapshot history of the British film industry, some 'realist' approaches to film in Britain, -the British Documentary Movement, Ealing Studios, the British 'New Wave' of the late 1950s and 1960s  
Reading: Murphy(ed) The British Cinema Book Ryall chap 3 'A British Studio System'
- Exporting Britain: the 'heritage' films, plus screening and case study of Shakespeare in Love (Madden 1999)
- Case study on Shakespeare in Love  
Exploring British society on film:  
Case study screening of Secrets and Lies (Mike Leigh 1996)  
Reading: Murphy chap 9, chap 4
- The British Film Industry today: the significance of Hollywood's global dominance; the importance of distribution; the British market; some examples of recent British films.  
Guest speaker: Neil Watson will talk about the role of UK Film Council and current developments in the British Film Industry  
Reading Murphy chap 2, chap 8
- Case study of Secrets and Lies

#### **Co-curricular activities will include:**

- **BBC tour**  
Behind the scenes tour of the BBC Television Centre where students are shown the newsroom and various studios from viewing galleries.
- **Press Complaints Commission**  
Visit to the offices of the independent organisation monitoring British newspapers and magazines to ensure they adhere to ethical guidelines. It deals with issues such as inaccuracy and complaints by the public.

#### **Instructional methods:**

The course will involve lectures, screenings linked to practical analysis, student-led presentations and class and group discussions. We hope to invite guest speakers involved in the media to offer accounts of current issues.

#### **Attendance:**

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Students are expected to attend all classes punctually.

### **Assessment Plan:**

#### Written work and Class Presentation

Three pieces of written work will be required; a short mid-course essay, a short commentary on new media and a longer final term-paper. All papers will be written in students' own time based on material studied in class. A single topic will be set for the mid-term essay but a choice of topics will be offered for the term-paper.

20% mid-course essay  
 15% class presentation  
 35% final paper  
 15% new media commentary  
 15% class participation and attendance plus quiz

The aim of the different assignments is for you to study different aspects of the British media. The mid-course asks you to look at representations of aspects of Britain offered by television programmes. The new media commentary should help you to recognize some of the changes to British media being brought about by the processes of digital convergence. The term paper will concentrate upon aspects of British cinema. The aim of the individual presentations is for you to explore other aspects of British media.

#### **Individual class presentations:**

Your presentation should be around 10 minutes (maximum 15 mins) and should be agreed at the start of your research with your professor. Your research is basically exploratory and descript and will involve you in looking at examples of British media or data about the media.

You may illustrate your presentation briefly if you wish and/or provide handouts though this is not a requirement.

You should be prepared for brief questions at the end of the presentation.

You should hand in your presentation notes to assist in the grading process (these will be returned)

#### Suggested topics for presentations:

- an account of how a magazine article represents aspects of British life or supposed concerns (e.g. gender, ethnicity, age, lifestyles, family relationships, health, sport etc.)

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- the newspaper treatment of a story about some event in Britain -either and/or both a broadsheet or a tabloid coverage over a period of several days, looking at both story content and presentational factors such as layout, photographs, headlines, language and the construction of the story.
- examples of advertisements selling Britain, British goods, or the British way of life
- a media-related web-site
- cinema exhibition patterns in London and related box-office figures
- a study of the display advertising in a newspaper or magazine and how this might relate to target readership
- a study of the television advertising during an evenings peak viewing (or daytime viewing) for a commercial television channel and the possible relationship of this to the programmes being shown.

#### Mid-course assignment:

This should be an account of either an extract or a complete television programme (which can be viewed live or recorded on video or DVD) considering the representation of some aspect of British life. The programme may be fictional, including soap operas, situation comedies, drama series or single plays or factual, including documentary, current affairs or a reality television series. Your assignment should both examine what social issues are explored in the programme and how the programme uses television conventions such as language, settings, camerawork, editing, sound and music.

**Length 750-1000 words**

#### News media commentary:

You will be given a small selection of newspaper articles about the organisation of some aspects of British media in relation to digital technology. You should write a short commentary based on this material on **Some current changes to British media.**

**Length 500 words**

#### Final Paper:

The final assignment will be based on materials and ideas covered in class. This assignment will require students to make notes on class discussion and viewing of films or extracts undertaken in class. The questions may also require reference to the relevant selected class reading. Whilst it may be appropriate to use material from the internet, such as film reviews or box office data, assignments should not be wholly dependent upon the internet. References should follow an agreed system such as the Harvard model.

Choose **one** of the following questions:

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1. What aspects of British history and culture as shown in Shakespeare in Love might appeal to audiences both in Britain and in other cultures?
2. What is the impact of Hollywood's international dominance of cinema on film production, distribution and exhibition in the UK?
3. How does Mike Leigh explore the effects of social class ethnicity and gender on family relationships in Secrets and Lies?
4. Review a recent British film (post 2000) in terms of the view of life in Britain it offers and suggest what its audience appeals might be.

**Length 1500-2000 words**

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