Session 1

Introduction: Culture, Media, Songs

1. CULTURE

(Some) Definitions in the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

a) Refinement of mind, taste, and manners; artistic and intellectual development. Hence: the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively.

b) Chiefly as a count noun. The distinctive ideas, customs, social behaviour, products, or way of life of a particular society, people, or period. Hence: a society or group characterized by such customs, etc.

c) The philosophy, practices, and attitudes of an institution, business, or other organization. Cf. *corporate culture*

The Beginnings of Cultural Studies in Britain

Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (1957)

Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (1958) and *The Long Revolution* (1961)

culture as "a whole way of life" and "a structure of feeling"

Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963)

culture as "a whole way of struggle"

The Birmingham *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* (CCCS)

founded in 1964 by Hoggart, closed in 2002, directed by Stuart Hall from 1968-1978

Structuralism (culture as a structure, not unlike language)

vs. Culturalism (culture as an organic 'way of life') divide

bridged by the post-Marxist thought of Antonio Gramsci (*Prison Notebooks* 1926-1934)

idea of **hegemony (**dominant culture, cultural politics and cultures of resistance)

the importance of power, signifying practices and the media

Cultural Studies and Cultures of Resistance / Countercultures

Subcultural Studies (e.g. Paul Willis, Dick Hebdige, Sarah Thornton)

Gender Studies (e.g. Judith Butler)

Postcolonial Studies/Globalisation Studies (e.g. Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, etc.)

The 'De-Territorialisation' of Culture (Transculture)

"As people move with their meanings, and as meanings find ways of travelling even when people stay put, territories cannot really contain cultures. And even as one accepts that culture is socially acquired and organized, the assumption that it is homogeneously distributed within collectivities becomes problematic, when we see how their members' experiences and biographies differ." (Hannerz 1996, 8)

2. MEDIA

"[w]hatever we know about society or the world in which we live, we know it from the mass media" (Luhmann 2000, 1)
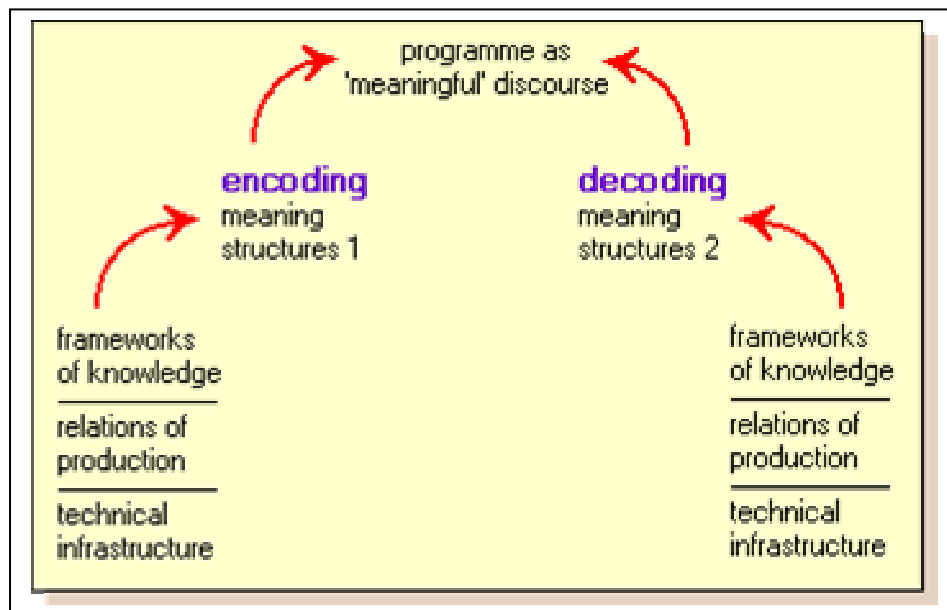
Precursors: The Media in Post-Marxist Theory

a) mass media as manipulation, the 'culture industry' (e.g. Theodor W. Adorno)

b) mass media as emancipation (e.g. Walter Benjamin)

The 'Transmission View' of Media

The Laswell-Formula (1949) (influenced by behaviourism)

Who? Says what? In which channel? To whom? With what effect?

Stuart Hall, Endcoding/Decoding (1973/1980)

3 types of medial reception:

    a) *dominant (or 'hegemonic') reading*

    b) *negotiated reading*

    c) *oppositional ('counter-hegemonic') reading*

The media do not 'transmit' meaning, but meaning emerges in the process of mediatisation

Media Types (following Werner Faulstich 2002)

    Primary (face-to-face, no technology involved)

    Secondary (technology involved in production – esp. print media)

    Tertiary (technology involved in both production and reception – analogue media
        such as telephone, radio, cinema or television)

    Quaternary (digital technology involved – computer, multimedia, e-mail, WWW)

3. SONGS

Lyrics vs. Poetry

"The existence of songs in sound, in time, is the simplest distinction between them and written verse. Song words are only given once in a performance and then are gone, carried along by the music and succeeded implacably by the next words" (Booth 1981, 7).

"Promoted into dominance by the new courtly culture, pentameter is an historically constituted institution. It is not natural to English poetry but is a specific cultural phenomenon, a discursive form. […][T]wo forms – the [medieval] ballad and the Renaissance courtly poem – exemplify opposed kinds of discourse: one collective, popular, intersubjective, accepting the text as a poem to be performed; the other individualist, elitist, privatized, offering the text as a representation of a voice speaking." (Easthope 1983, 55, 77)

Works Cited

Easthope, Antony (1983). *Poetry as Discourse*. London: Methuen.

Hall, Stuart (1993). "Encoding, Decoding." Simon During, ed. *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 90-103.

Hannerz, Ulf (1996). *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*. London: Routledge.

Luhmann, Niklas (2000). *The Reality of the Mass Media*. Stanford: Stanford UP.

Recommended Reading:

During, Simon (2007). *Cultural Studies: A Critical Introduction*. 3rd ed. New York: Taylor and Francis.

Kramer, Jürgen (1997). *British Cultural Studies*. Stuttgart: UTB. (in German)

Marchart, Oliver (2008). *Cultural Studies.* Stuttgart: UTB. (in German, but recommend)

Sommer, Roy (2003). *Grundkurs Cultural Studies / Kulturwissenschaft Großbritannien*. Stuttgart: Klett.

Storey, John (2003). *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture*. 2nd ed. Athens, GA: U of Georgia P.

Voigts-Virchow, Eckhart (2005). *Introduction to Media Studies*. Stuttgart: Klett.