

Module	Media Research and Cultural Studies
Course code	BAJH-MRCS
Credits	5
Allocation of marks	60% Continuous Assessment
	40% Final Examination

Intended Module Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this module, the learner will be able to:

1. Discuss the history and development of cultural studies and know the key concepts and theories involved.
2. Apply the theories learnt to a contemporary cultural issues of the day.
3. Use academic research and own original ideas to analyse contemporary cultural issues.

Module Objectives

This section of the course explores what culture is, what we mean by it, what we do with it and what it does to us. It raises a number of questions including how do we as individuals, and as groups, make sense of the world, and our place within it, and it analyses how these ways can be understood in terms of 'cultural processes'. It examines how cultural meanings are transmitted through different media, from the written word and the still image to electronic communication and how these cultural meanings impact on our sense of identity.

One of the objectives of this module, and indeed the degree as a whole, is to equip learners with the tools of critical thinking, enabling deeper understanding of the society we live in and particularly the communicative environment of that society.

The aim of this module therefore is to create a space to allow for reflection and critical thinking on a number of contemporary issues. On course completion learners have gained knowledge of a wide variety of research, are able to critically evaluate research and have a broad understanding of traditional and contemporary cultural theories and are able to apply these theories to any cultural issue, including film and television.

Module Curriculum

What is Culture?

The word culture is ubiquitous but what does it mean and has it always meant the same thing? This first topic looks at the idea of culture and offers some definitions of the word. This topic also seeks to identify cultural changes that have taken place in Ireland and whether these are unique to this country.

This introductory session therefore:

- examines definitions of culture and popular culture
- raises questions about how media relates to cultural studies

Ideology and hegemony in the media

It can be established that the creators of media products often construct products with predetermined ideologies. Sometimes audiences and commentators can perceive ideological output in media products that might not have been the intention of the product creators. It is also clear that in the 21st century world of multimedia, where there has also been a huge growth in the amount of media products being generated, that there are competing ideological views in the media we consume. In this topic we examine the processes of how ideology can be ingrained in media output and the factors driving ideology in the media. We examine Gramsci's concept of hegemony and other writers' interpretations of his work. For examples we look at US Film and TV output as well as an examination of Irish film and TV media products.

Advertising and society

The role that advertising plays in modern media is complex and omnipresent. The impact these processes have on how we behave as media practitioners and how society responds to advertising's extensive reach into many aspects of our social and personal lives demands attention and a critical engagement from media learners. In this model we look at theories of advertising beginning with the work of Berger and moving on to other writers such as *New York Times* journalists Stuart Elliott, and Todd Holden.

Identity

Who Am I? How do I define myself? How do others define me?

This topic examines why identity has become such an important topic in academia and in this section we look at the concept of ideology and how it impacts on identity. It examines the complex nature of identity and explore the use of the media to construct identities.

Media Violence and its Impact on Children and Adolescents

This module begins by looking at children and adolescents as audiences in their own right and explores differences between them and adult audiences. It also examines the debate concerning the impact the media has on children particularly with regard to violence. In raising the question of the possible causal connection between media violence and aggressive behaviour, media research on this subject is examined.

Social Capital and the Digital Age

Does the increase in our use of technology make us more connected with each other or less? How does it affect our relationships? This topic examines the concept of social capital and Robert Putnam's argument that we are becoming increasingly disconnected from each other.

This topic examines the positive and negative side to social capital, a concept popularised recently by Robert Putnam. A number of issues are explored in this topic including the concepts of civic engagement and what a 'healthy' democracy means and also an examination of voting trends both in Ireland and abroad.

Foucault: Punishment and Surveillance

The media reporting of crime has provided a popular subject for academics and researchers. This topic builds on previous research and reflects on the culture of punishment (including the use of the body as spectacle) from an historical and also Irish perspective. We examine how the punishment of prisoners has changed and how theory has been used/not used to underpin those changes. This topic also examines the relationship between prison and wider society.

Postmodernism

In this section we look at the concept of postmodernism as a way of understanding the changes that have taken place in society.

- Examining definitions of postmodernism and modernism and exploring the work of theorists such as Lyotard and Jameson
- Outlining characteristics of postmodernism including time-space compression
- Applying the concept of post-modernism to visual communication including film and television

Public Opinion and the language of News Media

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion - Our Social Skin* changed how many media and research practitioners perceived and understood trends and findings in public opinion research. In this section we introduce and critically study Noelle-Neumann's theories of public opinion and as a case study examine how the theories explains opinion poll trends in Ireland, Europe and the USA.