

## **Narrative and ideology**

### **Q1. (3 marks)**

**Describe the relationship between audience engagement and the construction of media narratives.**

All media products are designed and created with an audience in mind. The creators of the media product understand the demographics of their audience and how they can impact them using the appropriate media code and conventions when creating their narrative. Thorough research goes into the audience before the media product is created and circulated in society. The creators take the following into account;

- Previous readings of the media product
- Audience physical context
- Audience emotional engagement
- Reception at the time of the media products' release
- Audience expectations and possibilities
- How audiences are influenced by the conventions
- How audiences read (understand) and engaged by fictional narratives.

Media narratives are interpreted by audiences in a variety of ways, therefore it is important for the creators to consider these dot points in the Development, Pre Production and Post Production phases.

### **Q2. (4 marks)**

**Explain how ideology can shape media narratives.**

Media narratives present versions of the world through the process of combining a cause and effect relationship between events and characters. Understanding how these stories are constructed and understood by audiences also requires us to be aware of the context of their production. When an audience is consuming and connecting with a media product they are subconsciously identifying with the narrative based on the ideologies of that society and time period. If audiences watch texts from previous time periods the question is often proposed, 'How did anyone find this funny?' Creators know the answer to this, 'You had to be there. Meaning that based on the ideologies at the time the narrative was constructed and distributed the audience would have a better understanding of the humour.

Audiences today and beyond, whom are used to narratives with montages and fast editing may find it very difficult to engage with films from 1979 and not identify with the themes and content that exist within them. The creators of media will spend time researching the ideologies and social beliefs of the society before distribution. This is to ensure their media product has the appropriate audience connection.

### **Q3. (6 marks)**

**Explain why audiences from different periods of time engage with, consume and read media narratives differently. In your response, refer to ONE of the narratives that you studied this year.**

Time and technology have always been secondary to audience engagement. While new tools provide opportunities to engage audiences across multiple platforms, the aim of the director, writer, programmer and vlogger is to capture the audience's attention and emotion. They will use whatever tools are available and appropriate. Technology then becomes a determining factor as to how the media narrative is constructed and distributed. Therefore audiences are now experiencing media using different devices. They can be engaged and consume the narratives in a variety of contexts. Audiences now and beyond expect more from their media. And the creators realise that the power of audience has shifted. Audience play a major role in the distribution of media. Social media has dramatically changed the platform of distribution.

Erin Brockovich, was a film text distributed in the year 2000. The narrative was centred around the true story of an inspiring women who brought a small town to its feet, winning the biggest payout of any law injustice. Erin played by Julia Roberts was an American legal clerk and environmental activist, who, despite her lack of formal education in law, was instrumental in building a case against the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) of California in 1993. Given the text was representing the American society in the time period 1993, particular code and conventions were employed by the director to convey the characters and story arcs.

In the opening sequence of the narrative the audience is presented with Erin's character and understand her as a poor, single mum who is struggling to make a better life for her and her three young children. The dialogue of her character implies her defeated life and the costume reflects her sexual, tacky style. However, what she lacks in style and sophistication she makes up for in confidence and attitude. The audience instantly admire her and follow the point of view of this narrative. Her costume and acting barely shifts throughout the development and closure of the narrative. Using this convention as a technique to have the audience fight for her character throughout the duration of the film. In America in the 90's women's rights were a topic of discussion and women were represented and known in the media for their appearance and sexual attitudes. The success of this film text is based off this ideology. The director encourages the audience to engage with the explicit ideology of feminism and asks the audience to root for her character.

**Q4. (7 marks)**

**Analyse how the relationship between TWO media codes and /or conventions convey meaning in another narrative that you have studied this year.**

In the text, **The Intern** (2015), Point of View and Character Development reveal the ideology of gender and the changing identity of how females and males are represented in the American society. Audiences of this text relate heavily to the characters Ben played by Robert Deniro and Anne Hathaway's character Jules. The point of view of the narrative is presented from Anne's character Jules. To the audience Jules is a successful business owner who's husband is the stay at home dad, that takes care of their five year old daughter. By allowing Jules's character to retain the point of view of the narrative, the audience link their understanding of women in the workplace with her.

The ideology of women being independent, educated and successful is one that American audiences can relate to in the year 2015. Men are increasingly being represented as the father figure who is caring, compassionate and less of the hero character. The audience can identify this through Jules point of view. Although she is the CEO of her business and the income provider for her family, the narrative reveals that her husband is cheating on her. Despite the audience feeling empathetic towards her character, the narrative propels them to understand that this affair is necessary for him to, "feel like a man". Therefore the ideology of men needing to feel empowerment and strength is still necessary in the American society. "Women can still not have it all". The successful career, a husband willing to stay home and raise the children. The point of view now shifts within the narrative to Robert's character Ben, an older, chivalrous, gentleman whom reveals the ideologies of the 50's to the audience. His remark to Jules in the resolution of the narrative is a profound moment within the narrative and demonstrates how the ideology of masculinity has evolved. "You should be able to have a successful career and have your husband not cheat on you".

Character development of the two leading protagonists establishes a strong connection to the ideology of masculinity and femininity in the film text. Over the course of the narrative, Anne Hathaway's character rides the 'arc' to arrive at the destination of victory and happiness. Her character is introduced in the opening sequence as being successful and throughout the development we see her character go through set backs and failures, which is a common story arc sequence. The audience is presented with the, damsel in distress, requiring the assistance of a man to help her. In this case, the audience is presented with Robert's character Ben supporting her to victory in the closure of the narrative. Proving that America still retains the dominant belief that women require advice in order to, "have it all".

## Media Production Process

### Q5. (3 marks)

**Describe how you intended to engage the specific audience for which you designed your media product.**

All media products are designed with an audience in mind. All creators of media ensure they are implementing the code and conventions aligned with their media form.

Here you discuss what your media form was – Moving Image / Print etc.

Then describe the code and conventions you applied to your product in order to engage your audience. What techniques did you investigate and apply to engage your audience?

For example:

The use of white space was the centre of my composition of my photography sequence. I understood that by using a large amount of white space above my object allowed my audience to focus on the main attraction. It gave depth to my final product and allowed the eye of my audience to feel the empathy for my portrait.

The convention of sound, in particular non-diegetic was the focal element to my moving image. The use of foley was included in the post production stage of my creation to enhance the mood and give life to the narrative for the audience.

**Q6. (6 marks)**

**Describe how the media codes and conventions that you explored were applied in your media production design. In your response, refer to narrative, genre or style.**

*This response requires you to use media language and describe how the code and conventions you revealed were applied to your folio and link this description to one of the following – Narrative / Genre or Style. You could discuss two of these if you wanted to. It wouldn't get you more points but some students will find it easier for a six mark question to look at two.*

For example:

While images and fonts communicate a message, white space can be used to enhance and clarify the important information. You've probably heard of the phrase 'less is more'? Well, it's almost always the case when applied to design. I found this relevant to my media production design. I was able to identify that the convention of leaving negative space above my portraits allowed the narrative of grief and loss to be explored by my audience.

White space funnels your eye towards the content and allows your message to stand out. Clarity doesn't mean boring design; rather a strong design will speak for itself rather grabbing for the audience's attention. I wanted my audience to experience the emotion on the portraits face, to express the narrative of, 'hard, mysterious life'. I felt by leaving an amount of negative space the portraits eyes amplified their grief, therefore propelling the narrative to the audience.

For example:

Non-diegetic sound was a convention that I relied on to propel the narrative and inform the audience that my short film's genre was a psychological thriller. Audience expect to hear certain sounds when presented with the thriller genre. The use of a waterphone was a foley sound that I researched in the development stage of my media production design. Evidence from my concept testing revealed that when humans heard the waterphone they immediately referenced, scare, isolation and intimidation. All of these adjectives align themselves perfectly with the psychological thriller genre.

**Q7. (6 marks)**

**Explain how feedback processes used during post-production helped you refine your media product.**

Audience is one of the most important considerations when planning a media product. Concepts are just ideas until they reach an audience and the impact you intended is realised. Understanding the audiences' knowledge of your subject matter is fundamental to forming a clear picture of whom will be consuming and enjoying your media product and essentially the narrative you wish to tell.

In order to gain advice from my audience I put together a series of questions around my media production. I printed several screen shots that I took of my short film and allowed my audience to sit with each image for three minutes before revealing what their suggestions were. At this stage of the feedback cycle I didn't provide any sound to audience. I wanted them to sit with the visual without having the hearing sensory. I then asked the following question, "What sound do you expect to hear? And what emotion will this draw your attention too?".

After collating eight responses to all my six screen shots I discovered that some of the sounds I was planning to use in my media product did not align with my audience expectations. They wanted to hear something different or in fact hear nothing at all. They wanted the, 'less is more' impact. I was then able to go back in post-production and edit out the unnecessary sound, which in turn created a deeper impact of my audience.

## Agency and control in and of the media

### Q8. (4 marks)

**Provide one example in which audiences exercise agency over the media in the contemporary media landscape, and explain how this example conveys the dynamic and changing relationship between the media and its audience.**

Audiences now a days have greater control and influence over their engagement and consumption of a media product over time. The contemporary media landscape now provides audiences with greater agency (the ability to act and make choices) based on their consumption. Media distribution in previous demographics was controlled through one platform of distribution.

Newspapers or news broadcast were controlled by the same company and producers. Therefore, previous audiences had minimal control over the content they were exposed. In a 21st century, the relationship between media and an audience has progressed significantly. An example of this only search engine, Google, which symbolises the transition from old to new media.

Google's capacity to read a user's online data and determine the direction of their search entails that audiences are able to gain control through the nature of their search and content they are exploring through previous searches, likes and interest. A users direction of search provides control over what they are choosing to expose themselves too unlike a previous audience's relationship with the media.

### Q9. (6 marks)

**Explain how the globalisation of media institutions has had an impact on the regulation of media content in Australia. In your response, refer to a specific example.**

Some claim that media forms and/or texts can have a range of influences on individuals and society where the number of online users is increasing. Media and its exposure to the world has grown a considerable amount due to globalisation with approximately 3 356 million active social media users on a global scale. Many challenges and concerns have arisen due to such online interaction, leading to an urge for greater regulation of media content in Australia.

The increasing access to photoshopped images and editing and filters, has left individuals feeling inadequate and issues of body image. Many believe that media regulation is not doing enough to protect online users from its damaging effects. Dr Bromberg stated that "For several decades, there has been extreme pressure on women to be extremely,

unhealthily thin," due the exposure of edited images, where the "images do not look like the women in reality." Bromberg continues that "social media makes it easy for people to quickly post unhealthily thin images of women to millions of people," and leaves them to compare themselves to what they see. Such notion is a contributing factor to many health concerns such as eating disorders, and it is argued that laws and legislation should be implemented to protect online users from this exposure. Australia currently has a Voluntary Industry Code of Conduct on Body Image that urges the fashion, media and advertising industries to refrain from using Photoshop. However, Bromberg believes that "Australia's legal system can look to countries that have legislated" such as France and Israel, "which requires models to have a minimum BMI in order to work." and "if an image was modified... it must contain a warning."

**Q10. (5 marks)**

**Social networks have enabled new models of production, distribution, consumption and reception based on the sharing of commercial and user-generated content.**

**Describe the impact that these new modes have on the relationship between the media and its audience. In your response, refer to one or more aspects of the image above.**

Across the social media platform, particularly looking at the application of Snapchat, evidence has seen a direct relationship with patients seeking plastic surgery to look more like the filtered version of themselves. The changing relationship between what filters are provided to the audience from the media application causes viewers to see different perceptions of themselves.

The dynamic software is capable of editing a selfie, in which according to researchers from Boston University has dubbed 'Snapchat dysmorphia' in which people ask plastic surgeons to reproduce the "insta fix" they see from their smartphone of these selfies. Researcher's article also noted that in 2017, 55% of surgeons brought evidence to this case reporting seeing patients who requested surgery to look better in selfies.

**Q11 (5marks)**

**Describe an ethical and/or legal issue arising from media institutions harvesting and selling and individual's personal information.**

The result of new media distribution channels and upgraded technology agents, is now exposing consumers personal data like never before. We are living and working in an environment where we now have to be concerned if we go an interview that the employee will shortly after use a search engine to derive personal information. The ethical implications of this are increasingly harmful to each individual. Most adult audiences are aware that once something goes online it is always trackable and extremely hard to disguise. However, with a more vulnerable audience like the, elderly, youth or low English speaking individuals we see a more naive approach to online sharing and uploading.

It has been proven that Facebook and Google have sold information about their customers to Government organisations. The ethical and legal issues surrounding this are affecting everyday users of these platforms. Audiences have not given permission for these Government agencies to access their personal data, therefore the invasion of privacy is on the increase.

## SECTION B

### Q1. (10 marks)

**Media narratives can convey ideology through the selection and application of media codes and conventions.**

**Analyse how media codes and conventions convey ideology in the media narratives that you have studied this year.**

The relationship between media and society is a complex one. Most media products will allow audiences to interpret and understand the narrative through the use of different code and conventions aligned to the media form. Along side the conventions employed to interact with the audience are the ideologies that are implied or explicitly injected into the narrative. It would be professionally and financially irresponsible for film-makers, newspaper editors, photographers, writers and advertising executives to ignore or insult the core beliefs of the very market they are trying to influence.

Looking at gender as an ideology, we can see that overtime the representation of femininity and masculinity has evolved. Audiences are now being presented with different ideas of women on screen to reflect the changes in society. Women are now considered to be independent, educated and strong. In the same way that men are now represented as compassionate, father figured and less of the dominant character. In both film texts that we explored this year, it was evident that femininity and masculinity still has a long way to go if promoting equality and gender role switching is the dominant social belief in the American and Australian society.

The Intern (2015) represents both female and male leading characters and the narrative is based around the ideology of gender. The text was produced for the American market, therefore conveyed the message of women as professional CEO's in its plot. Conventions such as story and character arcs, acting and multiple storylines are employed by director, Nancy Meyers. The audience are often relayed the message that women are more than capable of running a successful business but cant seem to be both a mum and full time employee. The audience are also presented with the idea, that in order for men to be the stay at home dad they need more empowerment, hence placing the co-current multiple storyline of the affair in the narrative. Proving that the American audience is still not 100% ok with the idea of the stay-at-home father, having them feel some compassion for his character.

Anne Hathaway uses her stylistic acting to encourage the audience to relate to her demanding work ethic. Her character Jules is often seen

walking with purpose and attitude and seen ignoring those beneath her. Her tone of voice is high pitched and direct, indicating that she is confident with her professional abilities. However, when her character is represented as the mother, her confidence decreased. The audience notice her tone of voice to be shaky with her sentence structure out of place. Her body language is clumsy and we often see her tired and defeated whenever she is around her daughter. This would indicate to the audience that she is not able to do both things well, be a mum and be the CEO. This aligns with the American attitudes about mothers in the workforce only making up 23% of the population.

Anne's character goes through a transformation throughout the narrative and the story arc of, success meets failure meets victory is presented to the audience. It is here we see the explicit ideology of gender in play. Director Meyers, understands her audience and allows them to experience the narrative as they would feel comfortable with. She brings the resolution of the narrative to a halt by keeping the married couple together, even after the affair storyline is revealed. This ensuring that the romantic genre stays in tact and the audience feel satisfied with the plots final outcome. Providing the audience with the conclusion that in 2015 women can be both successful in their career and family life.

**Q2. (10 marks)**

**The media has always been considered to have the capacity to influence, but these days the balance or power is changing and arguments about who can influence and a market have become highly contested.**

**Discuss how the change in methods of production, distribution, consumption or reception of media products has changed the extent of media influence.**

Media has always been a powerful tool, however the balance of power is changing with control becoming increasingly in the hands of the audience alongside media producers. Media exercises its force through the production of software such as Google. Google, a searching tool to websites, has the capacity to read all of an individual's data and determine the direction of their search. This tool then has the power to sell its content to governments and institutions, in which influence the distribution, consumption and reception of media products. Institutions may use the data to sway advertising or the creation of media products that are appealing to the largest proportion of people in the target of increasing profit. The consumption of these products will therefore influence a greater number of people and their reception, as they are continued to be surrounded by similar topics.

This can be illustrated through body image, a powerful and highly discussed topic that is highly influenced by not only producers but also consumers. Through the increasing number of Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat users but also magazines and work out adverts, individuals are constantly reminded and compared to others. A 2016 study researched at Penn State University suggested that viewing other people's selfies lowered self-esteem. However, distributors continue to market these products and producers continue to enhance this due to its popularity, as research proves this is what individuals want to see and be surrounded by.

Applications such as Snapchat and Instagram are controlled heavily by audiences, as they choose the best versions of themselves to be digitalized and shown to the world. They have the power to spread a positive note on body image or distort themselves and create a desire to be something someone is not. This has created 'Snapchat Dysmorphia', in which according to research from Boston University, involves people asking plastic surgeons to reproduce the "insta fix" they see in their own smartphone-edited selfies. The increased number of selfies an individual takes and distributes can be seen as worrying, as this is a mental condition that causes people to become obsessed with perceived defects in their appearance.