

### **Lesson 1: Intro to Communication**

- An individual is always communicating with people around him or her whether he or she knows it or not.
- This idea is important because it helps to better define communication as a practice. When discussing the idea of communication, we determined that it is a process, one that involves the encoding and decoding of messages. This part of the definition makes note that the process of encoding messages is not always conscious or intended. In this same vein, each individual is going to decode a message differently based on a variety of factors including background, culture, race, gender, ability, religion, socioeconomic class, age, etc. This take home message is also important because it demonstrates an important idea that we learned this semester. We talked about color, tone, facial expressions, and body language, light and dark, music, silence, and movement dynamics as important communicators of meaning. Through these things alone, an individual can communicate a message, often without realizing. Texts, like television episodes can communicate unintended messages, which are equally as important as intended messages because they indicate an unconsciously embedded meaning in the text. Often, norms and ideals are established through these kinds of cues – we can often determine how a series feels about particular identities through laugh tracks, character reactions, a tone/mood, etc.

### **Lesson 7: Constructing Narratives**

- Different narratives show different truths. Those truths are based on who is telling the story and how that person tells it. The truths embedded in television narratives are also influenced by the social context in which they are created and viewed. These narratives both reflect and shape contemporary society.
- This semester, we often discussed the idea that there are endless, intertwining factors that contribute to the way a person encodes and decodes messages. Background, culture, race, gender, sexuality, age, socioeconomic class, and disability are some of the big picture identity factors we focused on. These kinds of identifiers contribute to how we understand ourselves, other people, and the world. We talked a lot about representation of these identity markers on television and the way that narratives are often constructed to exclude and marginalize non-white, non-straight, disabled, and low-income people. Because television is so far reaching and because it has the ability to shape the way people understand cultures different than their own, television has the incredible power to shape society. It is problematic when representations only reflect a single (white, straight, male, wealthy) identity because it reiterates the idea (often unconsciously) that only that perspective is normal or ideal. It is important to note that this perspective is certainly truth to people who identify in those ways, but it is a limited truth, which I discuss next.

### **Lesson 16: Representations of Sexuality**

- When discussing gender, sexuality, disability, race, and class, it is also important to discuss dominant ideology. Ideology is a framework of ideas, values, and beliefs. Dominant ideologies, propagated by the ruling class, which is largely homogenous,

involves the production and reproduction of specific ideas, values, and beliefs. Through media, average viewers begin to adopt those perspectives, internalizing them as their own.

- I had never thought about this idea before we discussed it in class. I have been thinking about it ever since. When we consider American media, there are only a small number of major media conglomerates that own and operate almost all of the media we consume. When so few, and when such a homogenous group of people controls the vast majority of media that a vast majority of Americans consume, it propagates a limited worldview. That worldview – largely straight, white, male, and wealthy – becomes situated as normal. We saw this idea take place in *Orange is the New Black* and *Kimmy Schmidt* in particular. Although there were a variety of non-straight sexualities incorporated into the narrative, the narrative was ultimately focused on and filtered through the straight, white protagonist. Streaming services are helping to introduce a wider variety of narratives about a wider variety of people. Because these services are paid, they do not have to abide by the same rules and regulations of network television. Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime can create shows (and are starting to create shows) that push back against the norm, introducing new kinds of storytelling and providing traditionally disenfranchised groups more opportunities to tell their own stories.

### **Lesson 22/23: Black Mirror**

- Major change – the loss of civil liberties and freedoms – doesn't happen quickly, it happens slowly over time and seamlessly. The loss of freedoms becomes normal, it becomes accepted. We accept small injustices, absolve ourselves of responsibility, and slowly, then all at once, we realize that we have embraced ignorance over intellect, opinions over fact, fighting over complacency.
- This idea is an important one, especially given the recent election. This election has made clear that the average citizen has very little control over his or her life. Voting is one way that the average citizen can gain some semblance of control; however, when presented with false information or when politicians and news outlets utilize tactics to sway public opinion, it can create a situation in which the average person ends up voting against his or her own interests. In class, we also discussed the idea that we have already given up so many freedoms through things like social media and smartphones. Our smartphones can be tracked, but they are convenient. We sign away our ownership of the things we post on social media accounts, but posting on these services connects us to others. When we sign contracts without reading them, when we forward clickbait, when we share our every activity online, when we ignore strong journalism about world events and politics, we are giving up our freedoms and setting the stage for a later and larger loss of freedom. It is also important that we understand and are able to identify and refute logical fallacies, which seem to be popping up in news media and in political rhetoric from the president himself.

## **Lesson 25: News Media**

- We need to be informed and actively seek out information. We need to be media literate – question what we see, who produced it, what their agenda and bias are.
- We learned about the tactics that news media utilizes, sometimes consciously, sometimes not, in order to shape the way consumers understand particular issues. Now, consuming news, I can see these tactics at play and I can see how they shift consumer focus to some issues and away from others, and how they can influence the way a person feels about a particular issue. When watching the news recently, I noticed framing and agenda setting as well as the way that news media makes a spectacle out of mass shootings. The same things the psychologist on Charlie Brooker's show said the media shouldn't do, is what the news media did. They showed sirens blaring, emphasized the body count, and showed idol-like non-stop images of the shooter. Understanding how news media shapes perception in cases like these helps me to be a more informed consumer. Also, when discussing the recent election, we talked about the importance of being informed and of taking an active role in seeking out strong journalism and of questioning sources. It is important that we have access to accurate journalism and that we wade through the mire that is political news. If we do not, we are giving up a freedom that is crucial to us shaping a world that we want to live in. This idea relates to television shows as well – we have to be media literate and ask ourselves whose truth is being portrayed and whose is being ignored.