Take-Home Midterm Exam: Media English Spring 2012

Part I: What We've Studied

For Part I, answer any two of the four following questions. Repeat: Complete only two (2) of the three (4) questions in Part I. (You can choose which ones you want to complete.) Then complete Part II. Make sure you read the whole exam before completing it.

Your answer should be typed and double-spaced, and otherwise conform to the guidelines for formatting your written work outlined on our class website. A minimum length of 500 words per answer is recommended, though 750 words is probably going to allow you more space to explain yourself. The maximum length for one answer is 1000 words. *(Do not write more than 1000 words!)*

1. In our discussion of KONY2012, we explored how (a) media is inherently manipulative, and (b) many of us are likely to trust--even foolishly--well-made, professionally-edited media. We made fun of the people who bought KONY2012 Action Kits, but the fact is that most of us get fooled by "slick" media production, such as the use of images, the "storytelling" that happens in the video, the powerful use of images, and powerful visual metaphors in the video.

For your answer to this question, discuss three aspects of this phenomenon of unwarranted trust in media, by discussing another specific piece of media that has successfully deceived you in a way that cost you personally. (The "cost" does not need to involve money: it can be a cost of "time" or "energy" or simply the cost of changed behaviour caused by a false belief.) Explain three specific and technical aspects of the media that caused you to be "fooled" by it.

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2. During our discussion of the situation comedy ("sitcom") as an implicitly political form of media, we discussed the way in which sitcoms are inherently political, and present conservative (*Friends*) or liberal (*Modern Family*) attitudes and conceptions about social norms. The idea is that these attitudes and conceptions can influence the attitudes of the public, preserving traditional attitudes or advancing more open and liberal attitudes throughout society.

Consider two examples of mainstream TV shows within your own society (Korean for Korean students, and Mongolian, Thai, or Russian TV shows for our foreign students) and present them in terms of this kind of analysis. Choose one program that presents a conservative position, and another that presents a relatively liberal position. Note: we performed our analysis in terms of the cast of characters in a show, but you can discuss storyline, casting, or other factors instead if you like.

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3. In our discussion of censorship, the idea was mentioned that violence in movies, TV, and computer games leads to violence in real life, especially among children. Yet, in reality, there seems to be pretty strong evidence to the contrary: more pornography seems to result in less rape--because the people who would be raping use porn as a substitute--and more violent media seems to result in less violence in real life--again, apparently because violent media acts as a substitute for real-life violence. (See this article at Slate.com for more: <http://slate.me/tM5Thn>. Indeed, as Stephen Pinker argues, we are shocked by horribly violent things mainly because we live in the least-violent moment in human history, globally: <http://bit.ly/g6an2>.

Assuming that pornography does reduce rape, and violent media does reduce real-life violence, is it immoral for governments to censor pornography and violence in media, regardless of the negative effects on their citizens--especially women and children? Give three reasons why you do or do not think so!

Part II:

As I have explained before in this class, part of the process of becoming an effective student of media is learning to ask intelligent questions and then seek out the answer to those questions. This section of the exam tests your skill development related to this aspect of the course.

Therefore, to complete Part II, you need to formulate (create!) your own question regarding some aspect of media. It should be as close as possible in quality and difficulty to the questions above.

You can approach in a new way one of the aspects of media that we have already discussed (the politics of entertainment, namely sitcoms; the power of media manipulation, as in KONY2012; the issue of censorship; and the question of whether copyright law needs to be reformed)

On the other hand, you can also turn to some aspect of media that we have not yet discussed, but which interests you personally.

After creating as outstanding a question as you can, research to find the best possible answer to your question. As above, you will answer your own question in a minimum of 500 words, and a maximum of 1000 words. (The minimum and maximum lengths ***do not*** your question, only the answer.) Part II will be graded both on the quality of your question, and the quality of your answer.

I expect that you will follow the same standard academic structure in answering your question as is suggested in the questions above: always giving three reasons for your opinion, discussing three aspects of a media topic, and so on.

This exam is due by 5pm on the 4th of May, and you can hand it in to my mailbox at thhe School of English Office (IH341). Lateness will incur a penalty to your grade. Please do not put off working on this until the last minute, or the quality of your work will suffer, which will be reflected in your grade.

Good luck!