

**MEDIA STUDIES—THEORIES AND THEORISTS**

Theory	Theorist	Summary	Nutshell	
<b>Semiotics</b>	Roland Barthes	The study of signs and meaning	<p>Texts communicate their ideas through <b>signification</b>.</p> <p>Signs function at a literal level (<b>signifier, denotation</b>) as well as a figurative level (<b>signified, connotation</b>).</p> <p>Exposure to certain symbolic constructions can become self-evident, as the sign becomes <b>myth</b> through <b>naturalisation</b>.</p>	Media Language
<b>Narratology</b>	Tzvetan Todorov	The study of narrative	<p>All <b>narratives</b> share a basic structure, moving from one <b>equilibrium</b> to another.</p> <p>These two states of equilibrium are separated by disruption or imbalance.</p> <p>The way that narratives resolve can have <b>ideological significance</b>.</p>	
<b>Genre Theory</b>	Steve Neale	The classification of media products	<p><b>Genres</b> are dominated by repetition of <b>codes</b> and <b>conventions</b> but must also incorporate <b>difference, variation</b> and <b>change</b>.</p> <p>Genres change as they borrow from and overlap with each other (<b>hybridity</b> and <b>subgenres</b>).</p> <p>Genres exist within specific <b>economic, institutional</b> and <b>industrial contexts</b>.</p>	
<b>Structuralism</b>	Claude Lévi-Strauss	The underlying structures through which meanings are made	<p><b>Texts</b> can be understood through an analysis of their <b>underlying structure</b>.</p> <p>Meaning is often produced through <b>oppositional pairs</b> (e.g. good v. evil).</p> <p>The resolution of these <b>binary opposites</b> can have <b>ideological significance</b>.</p>	
<b>Postmodernism</b>	Jean Beaudrillard	The making of meanings in a post-structuralist world.	<p>The boundaries between the “real” and “mediated” worlds have collapsed.</p> <p>Signs are a process of signification with no signifier underlying them; they no longer refer to anything “real” or “literal”.</p> <p>Mediated images now seem more “real” than the reality they supposedly represent (<b>hyperreality</b>).</p>	
<b>Theories of Representation</b>	Stuart Hall	How representations are constructed.	<p><b>Representation</b> is the production of meaning through <b>language</b> (a system of <b>signs</b>).</p> <p><b>Stereotyping</b> reduces people and things to a few simple <b>characteristics</b> or <b>traits</b>.</p> <p>Stereotyping tends to occur where there is <b>disparity of power</b>, with subordinated/excluded groups being different or “<b>other</b>”.</p>	Representation
<b>Theories of Identity</b>	David Gauntlett	Media help us to construct our identities.	<p>Media provides us with ‘tools’ and resources that we use to shape our <b>identities</b>.</p> <p>In the past, these media toolboxes were simple; as the mediated world has become more complicated, we now have a wide range of <b>media models</b> — a pick-and-mix of different ideas that we can choose from.</p>	
<b>Feminist Theory</b>	Liesbet van Zoonen	Gender is constructed through discourse.	<p><b>Gender</b>, as a product of <b>discourse</b>, changes depending on <b>cultural</b> and <b>historical context</b>.</p> <p>The <b>objectification</b> of women’s bodies is core to <b>Western patriarchal culture</b>.</p> <p>The <b>codes</b> used in mainstream media to construct the male body are different from the mediated/objectified female body.</p>	
	bell hooks	Smash the patriarchy.	<p><b>Feminism</b> is a political commitment rather than a lifestyle choice.</p> <p>The <b>intersection</b> of <b>race</b> and <b>class</b> (as well as <b>sex</b>) determine the extent to which individuals are exploited or oppressed.</p>	
<b>Theories of Gender Performativity</b>	Judith Butler	Identity is a performance.	<p>Identity is performatively constructed by the very “acts” or “expressions” that are thought to be its results.</p> <p>There is no inherent <b>gender identity</b> behind the expressions of gender.</p> <p><b>Performativity</b> is not a singular act, but a repetition or ritual.</p>	
<b>Theories around ethnicity and Post-colonial Theory</b>	Paul Gilroy	Exploring the legacy of colonialism and imperialism.	<p><b>Colonial discourses</b> continue to inform contemporary attitudes to <b>race</b> and <b>ethnicity</b>.</p> <p>“<b>Civilisationism</b>” constructs racial hierarchies and sets up <b>binary oppositions</b> based on notions of “<b>other</b>”ness.</p>	

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<b>Power and Media Industries Theory</b>	James Curran and Jean Seaton	Media is driven by the logic of power and profit.	Media is controlled by a small number of companies primarily concerned with gaining <b>profit</b> and <b>power</b> . Media <b>concentration</b> typically inhibits or <b>limits variety, creativity</b> and <b>quality</b> . Socially diverse patterns of ownership help to create conditions for more varied and adventurous media products.	
<b>Regulation Theory</b>	Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt	Exploration of media policy.	There is an underlying struggle between the need to further the interests of <b>citizens</b> (protection from harmful material) and the interests of <b>consumers</b> (choice, value, competition). The rise of <b>media conglomerations</b> and the emerging production, distribution and marketing of digital media have placed <b>traditional approaches to media regulation</b> at risk.	
<b>Cultural Industries Theory</b>	David Hesmondhalgh	Exploration of media industries.	Media companies try to <b>minimise risk</b> and <b>maximise audiences</b> through vertical and horizontal integration and through the form of their media/cultural products (through <b>genre</b> , serial <b>format</b> and by including <b>stars</b> ). The largest companies and conglomerates now operate across a number of media industries. The Internet, and its radical potential, has been partially contained by its incorporation into large, <b>profit-oriented cultural companies</b> .	
<b>Media Effects Theory</b>	Albert Bandura	The effects that media have on audiences.	Media is capable of <b>implanting ideas</b> directly into the minds of its audiences. Audiences respond to the <b>modelling</b> in media and, thereby, acquire new attitudes, styles of conduct and emotional responses. Media representation of transgressive or antisocial behaviour can lead audience members to <b>imitate</b> those forms of behaviour.	Audiences
<b>Cultivation Theory</b>	George Gerbner	The effects that media have on audiences	Repeated exposure to <b>patterns of representation</b> over long periods of time can shape and influence the way the audience perceives the world around them (i.e. by cultivating particular points of view and opinions). <b>Cultivation</b> reinforces mainstream, or dominant, values and <b>ideologies</b> .	
<b>Reception Theory</b>	Stuart Hall	Exploring encoding and decoding meaning.	<b>Communication</b> is a process involving <b>encoding</b> by producers and <b>decoding</b> by the audience. There are three hypothetical positions from which meanings can be decoded: 1. <b>the dominant-hegemonic position:</b> the encoder’s intended meaning is <b>fully understood</b> and <b>accepted</b> ; 2. <b>the negotiated position:</b> the legitimacy of the encoder’s message is acknowledge, but the message is <b>adapted</b> to better fit the decoder’s <b>individual experiences</b> or <b>context</b> ; 3. <b>the oppositional position:</b> the encoder’s message is <b>understood</b> , but the decoder <b>disagrees</b> with it, reading it in a contrary or oppositional way.	
<b>Fandom</b>	Henry Jenkins	Exploring fan’s participation in culture.	Fans are <b>active participants</b> in the construction and circulation of textual <b>meanings</b> . Fans also appropriate texts and read them in ways that are not fully authorised by the media producers (“ <b>textual poaching</b> ”) Fans construct their <b>social</b> and <b>cultural identities</b> by borrowing and inflecting mass culture images and participate in a culture that offers a vital <b>social dimension</b> .	
<b>‘End of Audience’ Theory</b>	Clay Shirky	Exploring the relationship between digital media production and consumption.	The <b>internet</b> and <b>digital technologies</b> have a profound effect on the relations between media and individuals. In the age of the internet, <b>audience</b> members or <b>no longer passive consumers</b> of mass media content: consumers now have the ability to “speak back to” media in various ways. Media consumers engage in the <b>creating and sharing of content with one another</b> .	