TECH1002-18 Social Media Innovation

Lecture One: Mediation/Remediation

1. Introduction:
Key words:
- Social
- Media / Culture / Technology
- Key concepts:
- New Media /Remediation
- Hyperreality

http://robwatsonmedia.net/
https://wiki.our.dmu.ac.uk/w/index.php/TECH1002_Social_Media_Innovation

2. What Explains This?
https://youtu.be/jQKSPEO6TzY

3. What is digital media changing:
- What we do and how we do things?
- How we express ourselves and use language?
- How we relate to other people?
- How we think?
- The ways we manage our social identities?

4. What is Media?
"A medium is something that stands in between two things and facilitates interaction between them… The fact is, all interaction – and indeed all human action – is in some way mediated" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 2).

"You cannot act alone. In order to do anything or mean anything or have any kind of relationship with anyone else, you need to use tools. In a sense, the definition of a person is a human being *plus* the tools that are available for that human being to interact with the world" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 2).

"We should be thinking about media as a process, as a process of mediation" (Silverstone, 1999, p. 13)

"To do so requires us to think of mediation as extending beyond the point of contact between media texts and their readers or viewers. It requires us to consider it as involving producers and consumers of media in a more or less continuous activity of engagement and disengagement with meanings which have their source of their focus in these mediated texts, but which are extended through, and we are measured against, experiences in a multitude of different ways" (Silverstone, 1999, p. 13).

5. Plato's Cave:
"Plato has Socrates describe a gathering of people who have lived chained to the wall of a cave all of their lives, facing a blank wall. The people watch shadows projected on the wall by things passing in front of a fire behind them, and begin to designate names to these shadows. The shadows are as close as the prisoners get to viewing reality. He then explains how the philosopher is like a prisoner who is freed from the cave and comes to understand that the shadows on the wall do not make up reality at all, as he can perceive the true form of reality rather than the mere shadows seen by the prisoners"("Allegory of the Cave," 2014).

Imprisonment in the Cave: Plato begins by asking Glaucon to imagine a cave inhabited by prisoners who have been imprisoned since childhood. These prisoners are chained in such a way that their legs and necks are fixed, forcing them to gaze at the wall in front of them (514a–b). Behind the prisoners is a fire, and between the fire and the prisoners is a raised walkway. Along this walkway is a low wall, behind which people walk carrying objects "...including figures of men and animals made of wood, stone and other materials." (514c–515a). In this way, the walking people are compared to puppeteers and the low wall to the screen over which puppeteers display their puppets. The people walking are behind

the wall on the walkway, so their bodies do not cast shadows on the wall, but the objects they carry do. The prisoners cannot see any of this behind them, and are only able to view the shadows cast upon the wall in front of them. The sounds of the people walking echo off the shadowed wall, the prisoners falsely perceive these sounds to be that of the shadows.

Plato suggests that, for the prisoners, the shadows of artefacts would constitute reality, because they have not seen the light. They would not realize that what they see are shadows of the artefacts, which are inspired by real humans and animals outside of the cave. Furthermore, Plato suggests that the prisoners would "assign credit and prestige" to whomever among them could quickly remember which shadows came before, predict which shadows would follow and name which shadows were normally found together. Plato is conveying in the imagery of this game that the prestige of winning this game is not in fact an honour at all, because the prisoner is lacking the knowledge of the world outside the cave.

Departure from the Cave: Plato then supposes that one prisoner is freed, being suddenly compelled to stand, turn, walk and look towards the fire. The light would hurt his eyes, and cause great difficulty for him to see the object's shadows he had seen before. In his pain, Plato continues, the freed one would turn away and run back to what he can make out; the shadows of the carried objects. He is then told that what he has formerly seen has no substance, and that what he now sees (the carried objects) constitutes a greater reality. When he sees the world outside the cave he begins to question his previous beliefs.

The freed one is then dragged in pain and irritation up and out of the cave. Upon exiting the cave, this discomfort only intensifies as the radiant light of the sun overwhelms his eyes. The sunlight is representative of the new reality and knowledge the freed one is experiencing. Slowly, his eyes adjust to the light of the sun. He is first able to see only shadows of things. Next he can see the reflections of things in water and later is able to see things themselves. He is then able to look at the stars and moon by night and finally he is able to look upon the sun. He is then able to behold the sun and deduces that it is the "...source of the seasons and the years, and is the steward of all things in the visible place, and is in a certain way the cause of all those things he and his companions had been seeing." (See also Plato's Analogy of the Sun, which occurs near the end of The Republic, Book VI.)[3]

Return to the Cave: Socrates next asks Glaucon to consider the condition of this man.
"If such a man were to come down again and sit in the same seat, on coming suddenly from the sun wouldn't his eyes get infected with darkness?...And if he once more had to compete with those perpetual prisoners in forming judgments about those shadows while his vision was still dim, before his eyes had recovered, and if the time needed for getting accustomed were not at all short, wouldn't he be the source of laughter, and wouldn't it be said of him that the went up and came back with his eyes corrupted and that it's not even worth trying to go up? And if they were somehow able to get their hands on and kill the man who attempts to release and lead up, wouldn't they kill him?".

Socrates mentions that returning one's eyes, that have become acclimated to the light of the sun, would be overcome by the darkness of the cave. This is analogous to what happened to his eyes when they were first exposed to the radiant light of the sun (516e-518a). The darkness the freed one experiences in the return to the cave signifies the ignorance of one's thoughts before he is able to see all things through the light of the sun. The prisoners, according to Socrates, would infer from the returning one's disorientation (on account of the cave's darkness) that the upward journey out of the cave had damaged his eye sight and that they should not undertake a similar journey. Socrates concludes that the prisoners, if they were able, would even reach out and kill any who attempted to drag them out of the cave. (517a). Socrates insists that the enlightened must return to the cave in order to share their enlightenment with the prisoners, even if it results in death. By analogy, Socrates is implying that the enlightened philosopher must descend from a continuous intelligible contemplation of the good to share in the visible lives of his fellow citizens for the well-being of the whole. (520a-c)"("Allegory of the Cave," 2014).

6. Signs & Symbols:
"Mediation is like translation… It is never complete, always transformative, and never, perhaps, entirely satisfactory. It is always contested" (Silverstone, 1999, p. 14).

"Mediated meanings move between texts, certainly, and across time. But they also move across space, and across spaces. They move from the public to the private, from the institutional to the individual, from the globalising to the

local and the personal, and back again. They are fixed, as it were, in texts, and fluid in conversations" (Silverstone, 1999, p. 15).

"Media, under McLuhan's analysis, constitute a broad category: cars, speech and language are examined alongside what we more commonly think of as media -- newspapers, television and radio. All of these "artefacts" can be treated as media because, as technologies, they mediate our communication; their forms or structures alter how we perceive and understand the world around us. McLuhan argues that media are languages, with their own grammar and structure, and that they can be studied as such"("Old Messengers, New Media: The Legacy of Innis and McLuhan," 2014).

"McLuhan believed that media exert effects by reshaping the ways in which individuals, societies and cultures perceive and understand their environments"("Old Messengers, New Media: The Legacy of Innis and McLuhan," 2014)..

7. Symbolic Interaction:
"These tools that we use to mediate between ourselves and the world can be thought of as *extensions* of ourselves. In fact, the famous Canadian media scholar Marshall McLuhan called media 'the extensions of man.' He didn't just mean things that we traditionally think of as media like television and newspapers, but also things like light bulbs, and human language, in short all *mediated means* which facilitate action" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 2).

"All constructions of reality, all notions of definition, identifications, and explanations, all matters of education, enterprise, entertainment, interpersonal relations, organisational practices, cultic involvements, collective behaviour, and political struggles of all sorts are rooted in the human accomplishment of intersubjectivity" (Prus, 1996, p. 2).

"Working with stocks of knowledge (and conceptual schemes) gleaned through interaction with others, but now applying these in particular or situated contexts, in familiar and in different ways, people formulate thoughts, achieve unique experiences, experience novelty, and pursue creativity. Indeed, given the limitations of their existing (linguistic) stocks of knowledge on a collective basis as well as individual variants within, people's experiences may well outstrip their abilities to retain and formulate more precise or lasting images of these events" (Prus, 1996, p. 12).

8. Recap:
What Explains This? https://youtu.be/V2NG-MgHqEk

9. McLuhan - The Medium is the Message:
"Marshall McLuhan is best known for the provocative thesis that the most important aspect of media is not to be located within issues connected to cultural content, but in the technical medium of communication. The medium, declares McLuhan, is the message" (Stevenson, 2002, p. 121).

10. Marshal McLuhan:
"Herbert Marshall McLuhan, CC (July 21, 1911 – December 31, 1980) was a Canadian philosopher of communication theory and a public intellectual. His work is viewed as one of the cornerstones of the study of media theory"("Marshall McLuhan," 2014).

"McLuhan is known for coining the expressions the medium is the message and the global village, and for predicting the World Wide Web almost thirty years before it was invented"("Marshall McLuhan," 2014).

"[I]f a new technology extends one or more of our senses outside us into the social world, then new ratios among all of our senses will occur in that particular culture. It is comparable to what happens when a new note is added to a melody. And when the sense ratios alter in any culture then what had appeared lucid before may suddenly become opaque, and what had been vague or opaque will become translucent" (Marshall McLuhan, 1962, p. 41).

http://youtu.be/viuIKgjLnDE

11. Extensions of Man:

The core of McLuhan's theory, and the key idea to start with in explaining him, is his definition of media as extensions of ourselves. McLuhan writes: "It is the persistent theme of this book that all technologies are extensions of our physical and nervous systems to increase power and speed" (90) and, "Any extension, whether of skin, hand, or foot, affects the whole psychic and social complex. Some of the principle extensions, together with some of their psychic and social consequences, are studied in this book" (4). From the premise that media, or technologies (McLuhan's approach makes "media" and "technology" more or less synonymous terms), are extensions of some physical, social, psychological, or intellectual function of humans, flows all of McLuhan's subsequent ideas. Thus, the wheel extends our feet, the phone extends our voice, television extends our eyes and ears, the computer extends our brain, and electronic media, in general, extend our central nervous system.

"As an… illustration, and perhaps more importantly in terms of McLuhan's thesis on the media, the book is conceptualised as an outgrowth of the eye, while radio is represented as the technological expression of the ear" (Stevenson, 2002, p. 122).

"During the mechanical ages we had extended our bodies in space. Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned" (Marshal McLuhan, 1964, p. 3).

"It was not until the advent of the telegraph that messages could travel faster than a messenger. Before this, roads and the written word were closely interrelated. It is only since the telegraph that information has detached itself from such solid commodities as stone and papyrus" (Marshal McLuhan, 1964, p. 89).

"McLuhan treated all technologies as extensions of our bodies: a pencil is an extension of the hand, while the wheel is an extension of the feet. He insisted, however, that these extensions are dialectical: products of the environments from which they come (including social, political and economic dimensions), they also alter that environment. In this way, both environments and technologies mediate our lives. McLuhan argued that media create environments that influence our perceptions to such an extent that we fail to fully take notice of their effects"("Old Messengers, New Media: The Legacy of Innis and McLuhan," 2014).

 "Crucial to an understanding of these processes is the dominance of print culture after the appearance of Gutenberg's bible in the early modern Europe" (Stevenson, 2002, p. 122).

"McLuhan argues that the portable medium of print enabled ideas and perspectives to be circulated across space. In terms of time, the dominance of a writing culture had shortened human memories, because information could now be stored in the durable medium of the book" (Stevenson, 2002, p. 122).

"Anderson argues that the period between 1500 and 1550 combined print capitalism's need to find new markets, the technological advances of the printing press, and the expression of languages other than Latin in print. These factors created new languages of power that helped foster forms of national legitimacy undermining the central authority of the feudal church" (Stevenson, 2002, p. 122).

"In the medieval period, manuscripts were firmly located in physical space, rarely used punctuation, and were mostly read aloud. Medieval scholarship, in McLuhan's terms, was more for the ear than the eye. With the move towards a predominantly print culture the human senses had become increasingly compartmentalised and specialised. Whereas oral cultures allowed the rich interplay of all the senses, print culture abstracted writing from speech and promoted the visual component of the human organism. The dominance of written forms of communication cultivated a rationalised culture that was linear, uniform and infinitely repeatable. Print cultures replaces the sensuous play of oral cultures with a predictable and standardised mode of thought" (Stevenson, 2002, p. 123).

"The Gutenberg press converted space and time into the calculable, the rational and the predictable" (Stevenson, 2002, p. 123).

12. Hot/Cold Media:

"The transition to electronic communication can be connected with a change in the experiential nature of modernity. This is best represented through the gradual displacement of hot media with cool media" (Stevenson, 2002, p. 123).

"A hot medium is one that disallows participation and is high in informational content. Conversely, cooler media leaves more spaces for the audience to participate and exhibit lower levels of information intensity" (Stevenson, 2002, p. 123).

"Speech is a cool medium of low definition, because so little is given and so much has to be filled in by the listener. On the other hand, how media do not leave so much to be filled in or completed by the audience. Hot media are, therefore, low in participation, and cool media are high in participation or completion by the audience" (Marshal McLuhan, 1964, p. 23).

13. Globalisation:
"Today the lives of the globe's citizens are wrapped around a seemingly endless encounter with material and symbolic modes of communication" (Stevenson, 2002, p. 125).

"The co-ordinates of time and space have vanished, to herald a world where the sense of individualised detachment fostered by a book culture has given way to one where everyone is 'profoundly involved with everyone else'" (Stevenson, 2002, p. 125).

"The global village has swept aside the hierarchical, uniform and individualising culture of print production and replaced it with a more tactile culture of simultaneous happenings" (Stevenson, 2002, p. 125).

"A culture driven along by electricity does not flow from any one place or location, but is quite literally organised into networks that have no connecting centre. The technology of communication, therefore, extends our central nervous system into a sensuous global embrace with the rest of humanity" (Stevenson, 2002, p. 125).

14. Recap:

15. Media Affordances & Constraints:
"We cannot go far in our concern with the media without enquiring into technology. Our interface with the world" (Silverstone, 1999, p. 19).

"Western man acquired from the technology of literacy the power to act without reacting… We acquire the art of carrying out the most dangerous social operations with complete detachment. But our detachment was a posture of non-involvement. In the electric age, when our central nervous system is technologically extended to involve us in the whole of mankind and to incorporate the whole of mankind in us, we necessarily participate, in depth, in the consequences of our every action. It is no longer possible to adopt the aloof and dissociated role of the literate Westerner" (Marshal McLuhan, 1964, p. 4)

"Strictly speaking, the process of mediation and the tension between what tools allow us to do and what we do with them is fundamentally the same whether you are using pencil and paper or a word processing programme. What is different… are the kinds of affordances and constraints digital tools offer and the opportunities they make available for creative action. In many ways, digital media are breaking down boundaries that have traditionally defined our literacy practices" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 13).

"All tools bring with them different kinds of **affordances** and **constraints**. The way McLuhan puts it, while new technology *extended* certain parts of us, they *amputate* other parts" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 3).

16. Breaking Down the Barriers:
"One example is the way digital media are breaking down boundaries of time and space… Another example is the way digital media are breaking down barriers that traditionally governed the way we thought about language – for example the distinction between spoken language and written language" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 13).

"Digital media are even breaking down barriers that used to divide literacy practices themselves. Because they facilitate new ways of distributing our attention, they allow us to participate in many practices simultaneously" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 14).

17. Media Literacies:
"Mastering many of the literacy practices we will be discussing in this book depends not so much on being able to mimic things that others have done, but rather on being able to mix tools with one another and with environments and people to create new meanings and activities and identities" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 14).

18. Critical Literacies:
"The crux of the concept of mediation is that we cannot interact with the world without doing it through some kind of medium, and the media that we use play an important role in determining how we perceive the world and the actions we can take. And so part of mediation has to do with how we are to some degree 'controlled' by the tools that are available to us to take action" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 99).

"There are at least four ways that media can exert control over us. The first is through what we have been calling *affordances* and *constraints*. Different tools make some actions more possible and other actions less possible… The second way media exert control over us is through social conventions that grow up around their use. The away particular tools get used is not just a matter of what we can do with them, but also of the ways people have used them in the past… The third way media exert control over us is through who has access to the. The distribution of tools, both technological and symbolic is always unequal… Finally, media exert control over us through how easy or difficult they are for us to use. All tools require that people learn how to use them" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, pp. 99-101).

19. Lock-In:
"The longer we use some technologies, the harder it becomes for us to get along without them or to switch to competing technologies, either because we have organised so many of our activities around the affordances of these technologies or because so many of our friends use them that abandoning them might result in social isolation. The phenomenon by which technologies make it progressively difficult for us to spate ourselves from them is called lock-in" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 100).

20. Recap:

21. Alternatives:
"Fortunately, the way media exert control over us is only half the story of mediation. Mediation involves human agency. While media exert considerable control over what we can do with them, we also exert control over how we use media" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 100).

"The first has to do with our ability to choose (or **appropriate**) the media we use. Although we may feel we are locked in to particular choices, there are often alternatives choices available… "The second way we can control media is by finding new ways to use them, which may not have been intended by their designers – that is by **adapting** them to fit our own purposes… "The third way that we can control the media is by actually changing or **modifying** ('modding') them in sometimes small but significant ways to make them more suitable for our purposes… Finally, the fourth way we can control media is by **mixing** two or more tools together such that the constraints of one tool are cancelled out by the affordances of another, opening up actions which neither of the tools alone could have made possible" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, pp. 100-101).

22. Backfilling:
"New media are constructed on the foundations of the old. They do not emerge fully fledged or perfectly formed" (Silverstone, 1999, p. 20).

23. Remediation:
"Remediation operates in both directions: users of older media such as film and television can seek to appropriate and refashion digital graphics, just as digital graphics artists refashion film and television" (Bolter & Grusin, 2001, p. 48).

"It would seem, then, that all mediation is remediation. We are not claiming this as an a priori truth, but rather arguing that at this extended historical moment, all current media function as remediators and that remediation offers us a means of interpreting the work of earlier media as well. Our culture conceives of each medium or constellation of media as it responds to, redeploys, competes with , and reforms other media" (Bolter & Grusin, 2001, p. 55).

"Mediation in this sense is less determined, more open, more singular, more shared, more vulnerable, perhaps to abuse" (Silverstone, 1999, p. 15).

24. Hacking:
"The process of mediation, then, is not just a matter of media controlling people or people controlling media. It is a matter of the *tension* between what technology wants us to do and what we want to do with it, between the limitations it imposes on us and our ability to get around these limitations by 'hacking' it" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 101).

25. Hyperreality:
"Walt Disney once gave Billy Graham a tour of his park. When Graham observed that Disneyland was a mere fantasy, Disney is supposed to have replied: 'You know the fantasy isn't here/ This is very real… The park is reality. The people are natural here; they're having a good time; they're communicating. This is what people really are. The fantasy is – out there, outside the gates of Disneyland, where people have hatreds and people have prejudices. It's not really real' (cited by Bryman 1995, 169-170)" (Bolter & Grusin, 2001, p. 171).

"Baudrillard (1983) has contended that (American) television is preoccupied with itself as a medium and only pretends to be offering events as they happen: that television is a cultural device for covering up the absence of the real. The shock value of Baudrillard's claim rests on an old-fashioned premise that there should be a strict separation between the medium and the reality and that therefore media should be transparent to reality. Baudrillard expects us still to believe that the Renaissance logic of transparency is the norm from which our culture has diverged" (Bolter & Grusin, 2001, p. 194).

'In the early 1970s Jean Baudrillard defined mass media as 'speech without response'. These days, messages only exist if they are indexed by search engines, retweeted with shortened URLs, forwarded through emails and RSS feeds, liked at Facebook, recommended through Digg or, we must not forget, commented on the page itself. Media without response seem to be unthinkable' (Lovink, 2011).

Recap:

26. Conclusion:
"Our concern with mediation as a process is therefore central to the question of why we should study the media: the need to attend to the movement of meanings across the thresholds of representation and experience. To establish the sites and sources of disturbance. To understand the relationship between public and private meanings, between texts and technologies. And to identify the pressure points" (Silverstone, 1999, p. 18).

"The point that… McLuhan w[as] trying to make was not just that cultural tools allow us to do new things, but that they come to define us in some very basic ways. They usually don't just affect our ability to do a particular task. They also affect the way we relate to others, the way we communicated and the way we think" (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 2).

27. Critical Questions:
What is digital media changing:
- What we do and how we do things?
- How we express ourselves and use language?
- How we relate to other people?
- How we think?
- The ways we manage our social identities?

http://youtu.be/4PN5JJDh78I

28. Carl Sagan – Blue Dot

https://youtu.be/4PN5JJDh78I

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