FLC Class 4/02/2003
“Globalization and Mass Media”

Characteristics of Globalization
- “Globalization is taking place in a new historical period in which relations between people and institutions cross national boundaries to form a new type of interdependence.”
- The main features of this new era are:
  - the emergence of a single transnational or global economy
  - the weaknesses of nation-states & unilateralism
  - the spread of a global culture, media networks, and global consciousness
  (Source: M. Albrow. Globalization)

Forces of Globalization
Capitalism: an economic system based on profit and wage-labor, which constantly seeks to expand into new markets. TNCs are major actors
  - In 1990, 135 Multinational Corporations had revenues > $1 Billion equivalent the GNP of 60 countries
  - Of the 100 largest economies in the world, 51 are corporations and 49 are countries

Technology: New technologies advance a revolution in transportation (cars, shipping, rail, air, space…) and communication (telegraph, telephone, fax, email, web, satellite, cable, laser, fiber-optic…)

Universalism: viewing and valuing the world from a single set of concepts

Imperialism: the imposition of European and then American institutions around the world, often by military means combined with superior economic forces and technologies

Emergence of a Global Culture
- Historically: Culture contact was slow mediated through soldiers, merchant traders, missionaries, scientists & immigrants
- Now we live in a “Global Village:” Instant communication through advertising, radio, newspapers, cable & satellite TV, internet, cell phones …
- Cultural “Ambassadors” are CNN, CocaCola, Ronald McDonald, Big Bird, Michael Jordan, Santa Claus, Tourism, Hollywood, Britney Spears.…
- Emergence of global cultural commodities: World Music, World Cuisine, World Wide Web, World Literature…
- Is it a one-way flow (=Americanization)? Or does it also affect the U.S. as a “cultural melting-pot”?

Emergence of Global Media Markets
- As other commodities and markets, media are increasingly global (MTV, BBC-ABC, Murdoch, Viacom, AOL Time Warner, News Corp, Vivendi, Sony, nonprofit networks/Al Jazeera, advertising/PR partnerships/wire services)
- Parallel emergence of global media consumers (1+ billion people are reached by global media/TV/Internet (although vast national & regional differences still exist)
- National governments are in a dilemma how to control information flow b/c airwaves are truly “borderless.”
- Defense: Some gvts to supervise access to newsprint, internet & satellites. Increased use desinformation, tools of mass psychology tools, “embedding” (Iraq war)…

Differences in World Media Systems (Print, Audio, Video)
Biagi 2002
- Western Europe and Canada
- Eastern Europe
- Middle East and North Africa
- Africa
- Asia and the Pacific
- Latin America & the Caribbean
Mass Media Classification

Biagi 2002

Theories analyzing the relationship b/w media, government, and politics distinguish somewhat simplistic:

- Totalitarian control of state media (Soviet Union)
- Authoritarian control via licensing & censorship (Turkey)
- Libertarian free marketplace regulated by private ownership and advertising (U.S.)
- Social responsibility=> gvt. oversight to support fair reporting & prevent excessive private control (Europe)
- Developmental propaganda=> gvt. promotion of certain aspects of national economic & social well-being (China)

Non-Western Critique of Global News & Information Flows

Biagi 2002

- Major international news services are based in the West and promote Western bias and ethnocentricity in content, presentation & values
- UNESCO MacBride Report criticized libertarian free market ideology & pointed out the power of advertising. Proposed governmental controls to enforce fairness & ethical conduct
- But attempts to regulate global media penetration failed although UNESCO Declaration (1978) supports principles of nationally self-reliant communications & self-determination of a New World Information and Communications Order (NWICO). President Reagan withdrew financial support crippling UNESCO initiatives

How To Detect Bias In News Media? (Newspaper, TV, Radio News, Internet)

Media as “gatekeepers” have tremendous power in

- Setting cultural guidelines and the values transported
- Influencing content and presentation
- Shaping the political discourse

Media need to be challenged to report fair, accurate & to avoid stifling critical thinking

Ask QUESTIONS to detect bias

Question 1: Who are the sources? Are they reliable?

- Be aware of the political perspective of sources used in a story. Without a broad spectrum of sources media serve as megaphones for those in power
- Where do sources originate? Are they carefully checked for from so-called “unnamed insiders”?
- Do foreign correspondents speak, read, and write the host country’s language? How long are they living there? Are they familiar with a foreign culture?
- Media over-rely on "official" sources (propaganda) by Government, Corporations & Establishment think tanks. Progressive, minority, and public interest voices are mostly underrepresented.
- Are reporters independent or paid wage earners of news outlets? Where are they “embedded”? Is there a possibility of self-censorship, intimidation, even fear of death?

Question 2: What is the freedom of journalists?

EXAMPLES of intimidation:

- Palestinian journalists for Palestinian media are rarely granted Israeli press cards for travel in Israel. And Palestinians working for foreign media do not get Israeli press credentials
- Palestinian and sometimes foreign journalists are regularly targeted by Israeli troops for harassment and violence. 10 Palestinian journalists were shot or wounded by Israeli troops in 1998 alone

Question 3: Who owns and controls media?

- Ownership and advertisers have an important impact on the message and the bias of private media corporations
EXAMPLES
- Murdoch empire
- Fox news

Question 4: Is there a lack of diversity?
- What is a media's race & gender diversity compared to the community it serves and the topic they report on?
- How many producers, editors or decision-makers at news outlets are women, people of color, and vocal minorities?

EXAMPLES:
- A FAIR's 40-month survey of Nightline found its U.S. guests to be 92 percent white and 89 percent male
- A similar survey of PBS's NewsHour found its guestlist was 90 percent white and 87 percent male

Question 5: From whose point of view is the news reported?
- Do those directly affected get a voice or are their views "represented" by politicians or corporate executives?

EXAMPLES:
- Who is interviewed on parental notification of abortion: male politicians or women under 18?
- Economics coverage usually looks at how events impact stockholders rather than workers or consumers
- War "shows" interview retired "armchair" generals & male commentators at home NOT frontline soldiers or innocent civilians who experience the horror of war first hand

Question 6: Are there double standards?
- Do media hold some people to one standard while using a different standard for other groups?

EXAMPLES:
- Youth of color who commit crimes are referred to as "superpredators," whereas adult criminals who commit white-collar crimes are often portrayed as having been tragically been led astray
- Think tanks partly funded by unions are often identified as "labor-backed" while think tanks heavily funded by business interests are usually not identified as "corporate-backed"
- UN human rights & the Geneva Convention is invoked for "our" POW's while otherwise the UN is ignored & enemy POW's are treated as "outlaw Feddayin," "terrorists" or "war criminals"

Question 7: Do stereotypes skew coverage?

EXAMPLES:
- Does coverage of the drug crisis focus almost exclusively on African Americans, despite the fact that the vast majority of drug users are white?
- Does coverage of women on welfare focus overwhelmingly on African-American women, despite the fact that the majority of welfare recipients are not black?
- Are lesbians portrayed as "man-hating" and gay men portrayed as "sexual predators" (even though children are 100 times more likely to be molested by a family member than by an unrelated gay adult—Denver Post, 9/28/1992)?
- Are Muslims often cited in the context of fundamentalism and terrorism?

Question 8: What are the unchallenged assumptions?
- Often the most important message of a story is not explicitly stated
- The last sentence(s) often carry the most remembered message

EXAMPLES:
- In coverage of women on welfare, the age at which a woman had her first child will often be reported—the implication being that the woman's sexual "promiscuity," rather than institutional economic factors, are responsible for her plight
- Coverage of rape trials will often focus on a woman's sexual history or what she was wearing
as though it calls her credibility into question
- War coverage often implies that conquered people are happy to be "liberated" and asked for "our" help in "regime change"

Question 9:
Is the language loaded?
- When media adopt loaded terminology, they help shape public opinion.
EXAMPLES:
- Wording can make a huge difference: 70% approve "affirmative action" programs but only 46% approve the wording "racial preference" (Harris Poll 1992)
- Using "collateral damage" instead of "innocent civilians killed in bombing raids" makes war look like less brutal & bloody

Question 10:
Is there a lack of context? What is omitted?
EXAMPLES:
- Coverage of so-called "reverse discrimination" usually fails to focus on any of the institutional factors and the history which created prejudice, economic inequality, and institutional racism in the first place
- Simply focusing on suicide bombings in Palestine misses the context of collective and individual despair and weakness in the face of overwhelming power that makes people commit such desperate acts: decades of Israeli military occupation, land confiscation and settlement, assassinations of leaders, economic closure, discrimination, human rights violations, and repression of dissent

Question 11: Do the headlines, pictures, and stories match?
- Usually headlines are not written by the reporter. Since many people just skim headlines, misleading headlines have a significant impact
EXAMPLES:
- In a New York Times article on the June 1988 U.S.-Soviet summit in Moscow, Margaret Thatcher was quoted as saying of Reagan, "Poor dear, there's nothing between his ears." The Times headline: "Thatcher Salute to the Reagan Years."
- The picture of a killed civilian on a bridge may be a person who came under crossfire although a caption may say the unknown person was a "terrorist in civilian clothes and was shot by troops in self-defense"

Question 12: Are stories on important issues featured prominently?
- Look at where stories appear. Newspaper articles on the most widely read pages (the front pages and the editorial pages) and lead stories on television and radio will have the greatest influence on public opinion
EXAMPLE:
- A lead story may tell the bravery of a platoon who saved an enemy child from the rubbles of a bombed hospital. BUT the much more important fact that Central Command now denies enemy combatants the status of POW's and will deport them to an isolated island prison for secret military trials without hearing is buried in a three-liner on the bottom of page 13.

Question 13: Are facts personalized & emotionalized?
- Instead of providing insight into conflicting interests and power struggles media often personalize and emotionalize
EXAMPLES:
- Conflicts between countries over economic resources or political control is depicted as a personal struggle between leaders
- To make people listen and develop partisan feelings, news are emotionalized by using exaggerated examples, by manipulating patriotism, or by creating fear, horror & disgust

How Can One Make the Best Out of the Global Media?
1. Use diversity and compare news reporting and interpretation domestically AND abroad.
2. Consult regularly web-based sources and "alternative" or dissident media who challenge the status quo ("muckrakers")
3. Do not buy anything by its “face value.” Permanently check 11 questions
4. Learn how to select and sort out information. Try to get the “big picture” instead of being deceived by overblown titbits of irrelevant information
5. Become critical of your & our own cultural “America-centrist” bias
6. Try to be fair, just, honest & non-hypocritical in your judgment

Questions and Tasks
- Given local, national, and regional media diversity, can we speak of “the global media”?
- What are the social, political, and cultural effects of worldwide communication and the development of global media networks? Are they altogether positive or negative?
- How many different types of media and outlets did you use in the last week. Did you also consult non-U.S. sources? Why or why not? What obstacles do you encounter in using non-American media sources?