



Academic ideas and arguments (theories) for A Level

The GCE specifications for AS level and A level both specify a set of theories to be studied, though the wording of the specification ('theories including...') suggests that further theories may be studied if so desired.

Theories for AS:

- Barthes , Todorov, Neale (**media language**);
- Hall, Gauntlett (**representation**);
- Curran and Seaton (**industries**);
- Bandura, Gerbner, Hall (**audiences**).

Theories for A Level:

- Barthes , Todorov, Neale, Levi-Strauss, Baudrillard (**media language**);
- Hall, Gauntlett, Van Zoonen, hooks, Butler, Gilroy (**representation**);
- Curran and Seaton, Livingstone and Lunt, Hesmondhalgh (**industries**);
- Bandura, Gerbner, Hall, Jenkins, Shirky (**audiences**).

A short explanation of each theory is listed in Appendix 5e of the A Level specification, under the heading 'Academic arguments and ideas to be studied'.

At both levels (AS and A Level) **theory will only be assessed in the in-depth studies** (paper 1 section A: News and Online, paper 2 section B: Long Form Television Drama).

There will be **NO assessment of theory in relation** to advertising and marketing, magazines, music videos, film, radio and videogames. So there is no requirement to study theory against these six media forms.

Terminology of new specifications

The specification and assessment objectives refer to 'academic ideas and arguments' rather than 'theories', but we might usefully assume that the term 'theories' will probably be used more in practice. The longer formulation may well be more accurate in the sense that some of the authors may not have produced systematic, coherent theories, but that need not concern us here. The Specimen Assessment Materials (available at <http://ocr.org.uk/alevelmediastudies>) do not use the phrase 'academic ideas and arguments' but instead name the specific theories to be used, which suggests that this formulation of words will continue on into the live exams, meaning that students shouldn't need to know the term 'academic, arguments and ideas'.

Don't get confused between 'theories' and 'the theoretical framework'. The theoretical framework comprises the whole of media language, representations, industries and audiences, which also includes the theories associated with each area – i.e. those listed above.

All theories must be studied in relation to the in-depth studies (news and online and television). There must be opportunities for students to make reference to all the theorists in exam answers at some point across the life cycle of the specification, but not all in any one exam.

These opportunities might be given by explicitly naming a theory to be used in an answer, or it might be that questions could be answered with some reference to the theory (e.g. Baudrillard might be referenced by students discussing *Mr Robot*, but perhaps not by students discussing *The Killing*). These approaches can be seen exemplified in the specimen papers and mark schemes and indicative content for news and online and television.



Two ways theories are used in the A Level assessment

1. For analysis (AO2.1) questions or knowledge and understanding (AO1) questions

Here theory will be touched on as part of a wider answer. The theory will be named in the question, possibly naming a concept from the theorist that must be applied. Where the concept is named, any appropriate use of that concept is acceptable – the student does not have to show that the named theorist used it in exactly that way. See the specimen paper component 1 question 1: this names 'Van Zoonen's concept of patriarchy' in the question. The indicative content in the mark scheme suggests that any effective use of the term 'patriarchy' to analyse the extracts from the media products is acceptable.

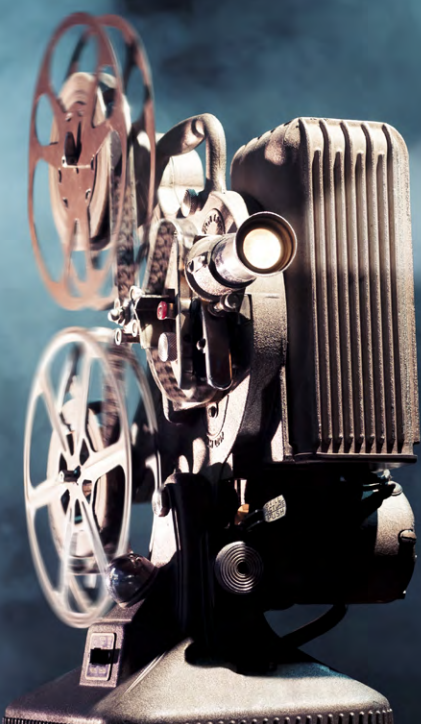
Where theory is not explicitly required by the question, students *may* still make reference to theories in their answers, as long as they are demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the appropriate areas of the theoretical framework or using the theory to analyse a product; however, this is not a requirement and answers may gain full marks without using theory.

Theory may be particularly useful in answers to synoptic questions as a way of covering more than one area of the theoretical framework, but that is not the only way of doing this.

2. For evaluation of theories (AO2.2) questions

Here the question is about evaluating the theory, most commonly its usefulness for understanding a media form (in-depth studies only: print and online newspapers and long form television drama).

- The question does **not** ask for analysis of media products using the theory, though some may be included as part of an evaluation of its usefulness. Arguing that a theory does not fit one particular iteration of a media product (e.g. the set product studied) does not evaluate its usefulness for understanding the media form as a whole.
- The question does **not** ask for elucidation of the theory, though some may be included as part of an evaluation of its usefulness. There are no marks in the assessment criteria for knowledge and understanding of the theory, so there is no need to teach more of the theory than is needed to evaluate its usefulness. In practice, we expect that the summaries of the theories provided in the appendix to the specification should be enough detail to allow top level answers to these questions.
- The question **does** ask for evaluation, applying knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework – this will be knowledge and understanding of the media language, representations, industries and audiences for one of the in-depth studies (print and online newspapers and long form television drama). Thus, for example, an answer might first outline the usefulness of Barthes' semiotics in understanding print newspapers by showing how the theory may be used to analyse any sign, such as an image or a headline, perhaps giving an example. The answer might then outline the limitations of Barthes' theory in understanding print newspapers by arguing that it doesn't tell us anything about audience interpretations, how the working practices of this cultural industry produce these signs, the role of the interests of those with power and control over newspapers, and so on. The answer might implicitly (as I have done) or explicitly use other theorists in order to show the limitations of any one theory – if naming the other theorists the student should be careful to remember that the question is about the one theorist named in the question, so other theorists are only relevant insofar as they show the usefulness or limitations of the named theorist.



The one way theories are used in the AS assessment

The AS assessment differs from the A Level assessment in that there is **no requirement to evaluate theories**, so use of theory is only as part of the theoretical framework for either analysis (AO2.1) questions or knowledge and understanding (AO1) questions.

Teaching use of theory in wider questions

Many theories will naturally become relevant in the course of analysing media products and studying the media forms, so opportunities to apply all the theories should arise in the course of studying the nine media forms.

Theories of media language:

- Barthes will be relevant to any connotative analysis.
- Neale will be relevant to any consideration of genre.
- Levi-Strauss and Todorov will be relevant to any study of narrative.
- Baudrillard will be relevant to any intertextual product.

Theories of industries:

- Curran and Seaton will be relevant to the ownership and control of any media industry studied.
- Livingstone and Lund will be relevant to regulation.
- Hesmondhalgh will be relevant to the study of any cultural industry.

Theories of representation:

- Hall will be relevant to any representation in which power operates or to exploring how representations may be contested.
- Gauntlett will be relevant to any representations that offer complex and contradictory images.
- Van Zoonen, hooks, and Butler will be relevant to any representation of gender (i.e. all representations of people), and hooks will be even more widely relevant to representations of race, class, sexuality and gender.
- Gilroy will be relevant to any representation of race and ethnicity (i.e. all representations of people) and of Western culture.

Theories of audience:

- Bandura and Gerbner will be relevant to any discussion of media effects.
- Hall will be relevant to any discussion of decoding.
- Jenkins and Shirky will be relevant to any online 'participatory culture' with 'amateur producers'.

For this purpose, theories should be integrated into studying products (news and online and television) rather than treated as a separate study.



Teaching evaluating theories

It is a matter of debate whether or not it is a good strategy to teach the evaluation of all 19 theories in relation to the three in-depth studies as this entails teaching up to 57 possible combinations. While some theories clearly do not fit particular media forms (e.g. Todorov's narratology is not designed for newspapers) this does not bring down the number of combinations very far.

At the very least, students will need to know the basic tenets of each theory and have practised and applied the skill of evaluating theories in relation to the three in-depth studies (news and online and television).

There may be some advantage to teaching theory evaluation as a separate part of the course, insofar as this knowledge and understanding will be tested separately in the exam. However, it is difficult to see how this would motivate students. Perhaps a hybrid approach would be to teach the theories as an integrated part of the study of the set products and media forms, then use evaluating theory as a way of revising this study towards the end of the course.




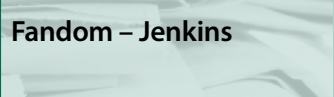
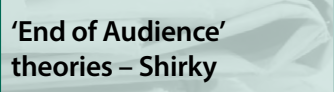
The table on the following page is designed to show how each of the theories might be evaluated against each of the in-depth studies. Those that are shaded are not really appropriate to a particular media form, so the exams are less likely to ask for them to be evaluated against that form. The table is deliberately repetitive to demonstrate how many advantages and limitations are transferable from one theory to the next.

1. Print newspapers


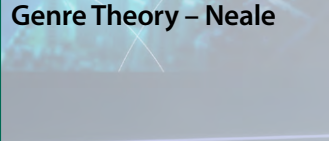
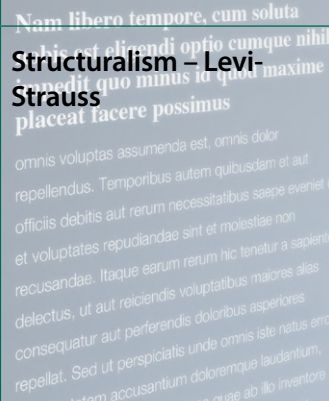


| Theory | Usefulness for understanding print newspapers | Limitations for understanding print newspapers |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Semiology – Barthes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any sign, including language and image, to tease out connotations and ideology. Draws attention to the naturalising effect of ideology in any text – this applies particularly to newspapers, as headlines typically assume a shared view of the world with the readers in order to be easily understood. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to newspapers as it is a general theory of signification. Does not tell us anything about the ownership and control of newspapers and the process of mediation that leads to the messages in newspapers. Does not tell us about how audiences interpret newspapers and give meaning. |
| Genre Theory – Neale | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any media product that has genres – including print newspapers – and links together media language, audiences, and industries. The concept of genre as a shared code explains how genres can change (e.g. the quality press becoming more like tabloids) and hybridise (e.g. the middle-market tabloids, such as the Mail, that follow both 'tabloid' and 'broadsheet' conventions). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The theory was developed primarily in relation to film products, where genre is an important marketing tool, unlike newspapers which appeal to audience loyalty or sell themselves by front page splashes that emphasise individual difference rather than generic similarities. |
| Structuralism – Levi-Strauss | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any cultural product, including newspapers. Particularly applies to newspaper stories that set up an 'us' and 'them' opposition, in which the audience are invited to think of themselves as 'us', a common mode of address in newspapers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to newspapers as it is an extremely high level theory of culture. Does not tell us anything about the ownership and control of newspapers and the process of mediation that leads to the messages in newspapers. Does not tell us about how audiences interpret newspapers and give meaning. |
| Narratology – Todorov | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enables us to think of news stories as a series of 'disruptions', each implying an initial equilibrium and a possible resolution. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was not designed to explain news stories but narratives with resolutions, so does not fit most news stories that die out without resolution. |
| Postmodernism – Baudrillard | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any cultural product, including newspapers. Particularly applies to news about news, or celebrities who are famous for being famous, where there is no clear sense of a 'real' lying behind the hyperreality. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to newspapers as it is an extremely high level theory of the postmodern world. |

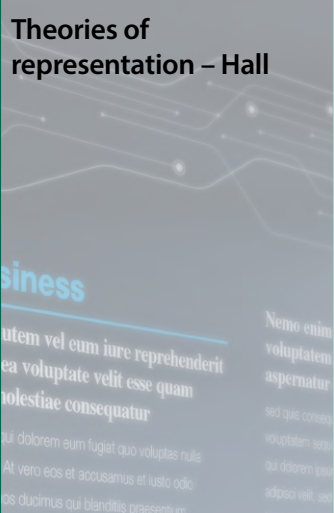
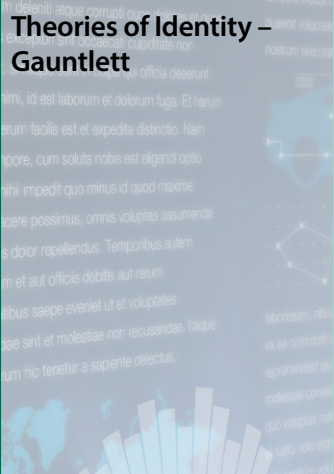

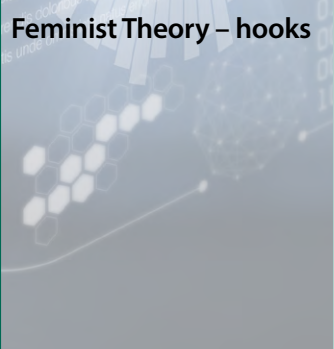
| Theory | Usefulness for understanding print newspapers | Limitations for understanding print newspapers |
|--|---|--|
| Theories of representation – Hall | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any media product, including newspapers. Applies particularly to the way in which newspaper headlines try to fix the meaning of a representation, both the copy and the photographs. Draws attention to the role of power in representations – both the general distribution of power in society and the power of the newspaper as an institution – but also the power of the audience to decode representations in different ways. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to newspapers as it is a general theory of representation. |
| Theories of Identity – Gauntlett | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any media product, including newspapers. Applies to the sense of identity that a newspaper can offer its readers – e.g. the identity of a liberal, progressive Guardian reader or a patriotic, hard-headed Mail reader. Applies to the way different sections of a newspapers offer diverse and sometimes contradictory media messages to audiences, thus offering a range of points of identification. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many audiences, especially young people, will not gain a sense of identity through newspapers but through self-expression online and by consuming forms of popular entertainment. Assumes that audiences are powerful, active agents, and so may underestimate the power of media conglomerates to shape popular culture, tastes, and identities. |
| Feminist Theory – Van Zoonen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any media product, including newspapers, especially representations of gender. The concept of patriarchy may be applied to the ownership and control of newspapers, the recruitment and ethos of newspaper professionals, news values, and the representation of gender in newspapers, especially the representation of women's bodies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to newspapers as it is a general theory of patriarchy. In prioritising gender inequalities, the theory may not aid analysis of other forms of inequality in representation in newspapers. In stressing the influence of social conflict on representations the theory may underestimate the influence of social consensus on representations. |
| Feminist Theory – hooks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any media product, including newspapers, especially representations of gender. The concept of 'intersectionality' draws attention to misrepresentations and stereotypes based on one or more of gender, race, class and sexuality, and their inter-relationship in any newspaper representations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to newspapers as it is a general theory of patriarchy. In stressing the influence of social conflict on representations the theory may underestimate the influence of social consensus on representations. |

| Theory | Usefulness for understanding print newspapers | Limitations for understanding print newspapers |
|--|--|---|
| Theories of Gender Performativity – Butler | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any media product, including newspapers, especially representations of gender. Can be applied particularly to lifestyle sections of newspapers, where the performance of gender may be demonstrated in fashion and make-up advice, for example, and in articles about forms of 'gender trouble'. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to newspapers as it is a very high level theory of gender. |
| Theories around ethnicity and post-colonial theory – Gilroy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any media product, including newspapers, especially representations of race, ethnicity and the post-colonial world. The concept of the 'Black Atlantic' draws attention to continuities in the culture created by the African diaspora across national boundaries, e.g. in newspaper representations of black popular culture. The concept of the 'Post-colonial melancholia' draws attention to the continuing role of colonial ideology – of the superiority of white western culture – across a range of representations in newspapers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to newspapers as it is a general theory. In prioritising race and the post-colonial experience the theory may not aid analysis of other forms of inequality in representation in newspapers. In stressing the influence of social conflict on representations the theory may underestimate the influence of social consensus on representations. |
| Power and media industries – Curran and Seaton | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studying newspapers as an industry draws attention to issues such as: forms and effects of ownership and control, the working practices of journalists and other creators, and issues of risk and profitability. Applies to the narrow range of political opinions expressed by British national newspapers, with a bias to pro-capitalism. Applies to the long history of 'press barons' owning newspapers in order to achieve status and wield political power. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In prioritising the effects of ownership and control on the content of newspapers this theory may not aid in understanding how ideologies, audience choice or media language conventions may determine media content. |
| Regulation – Livingstone and Lunt | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not apply to newspapers due to 'press freedom'. |
| Cultural Industries – Hesmondhalgh | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The idea of the cultural industries draws attention to newspapers as an industry – its forms and effects of ownership and control, the working practices of journalists and other creators, and issues of risk and profitability. Applies particularly to the response of newspapers to competition for readers and advertising revenue from the 'new' media. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In prioritising the effects of ownership and control on the content of newspapers this theory may not aid in understanding how ideologies, audience choice or media language conventions may determine media content. |




| Theory | Usefulness for understanding print newspapers | Limitations for understanding print newspapers |
|---|--|--|
| Media effects – Bandura  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May apply to a wide range of media products, including newspapers. Would most apply to strongly delivered newspaper messages that are consistent across newspapers, e.g. about the wrongness of terrorism. Draws attention to the need to investigate the direct effects on individuals who consume newspapers. Supports the arguments of those who think newspapers should be regulated to avoid public harm. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was originally developed to explain the effects of media that are powerful in positioning audiences, such as television – newspapers representations or aggression or violence may be less likely to produce imitative behaviour. Newspaper messages are likely to be contradicted by messages from politically and socially opposing newspapers (e.g. the Guardian and Mail), especially in areas of social or political conflict (e.g. Brexit). Prioritising the effects of the media on the audience may mean that the effects of the audience on the media are underestimated. |
| Cultivation theory – Gerbner  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May apply to a wide range of media products, including newspapers, where content analysis is widely used to study consistency in messages. Would most apply to strongly delivered newspaper messages that are consistent across newspapers, e.g. about the wrongness of terrorism. Draws attention to the need to investigate the longer-term effects on individuals who consume newspapers. Supports the arguments of those who think newspapers should be regulated to avoid public harm. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The theory was developed to explain the power of television, so may be less applicable to newspapers, where media consumption is rarely as heavy. Newspaper messages are likely to be contradicted by messages from politically and socially opposing newspapers (e.g. the Guardian and Mail), especially in areas of social or political conflict (e.g. Brexit). Prioritising the effects of the media on the audience may mean that the effects of the audience on the media are underestimated. |
| Reception Theory – Hall  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May apply to a wide range of media products, including newspapers. Draws attention to the range of different possible audience readings of a newspaper's messages and values, while acknowledging the role of power in creating dominance within newspaper messages and values. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumes that there is one dominant meaning to which the audience responds – does not fit messages with a multitude of different possible readings (e.g. deeply ironic messages). |
| Fandom – Jenkins  | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not apply to print newspapers due to their centralised production. |
| 'End of Audience' theories – Shirky  | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not apply to print newspapers due to their centralised production. |




2. Online newspapers

| Theory | Usefulness for understanding online newspapers | Limitations for understanding online newspapers |
|--|--|---|
| Semiology – Barthes  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any sign, including language and image, to tease out connotations and ideology. Draws attention to the naturalising effect of ideology in any text – this applies particularly to newspapers, as headlines typically assume a shared view of the world with the readers in order to be easily understood. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to newspapers as it is a general theory of signification. Does not tell us anything about the ownership and control of newspapers and the process of mediation that leads to the messages in newspapers. Does not tell us about how audiences interpret newspapers and give meaning. |
| Genre Theory – Neale  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied insofar as the online version of the newspaper follows codes and conventions established in print version of newspapers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The theory was developed primarily in relation to film products, where genre is an important marketing tool, unlike the online, social and participatory media where genre is less developed. |
| Structuralism – Levi-Strauss  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any cultural product, including online newspapers. Particularly applies to newspaper stories that set up an 'us' and 'them' opposition, in which the audience are invited to think of themselves as 'us', a common mode of address in newspapers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to newspapers as it is an extremely high level theory of culture. Does not tell us anything about the ownership and control of newspapers and the process of mediation that leads to the messages in newspapers. Does not tell us about how audiences interpret newspapers and give meaning. |
| Narratology – Todorov  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enables us to think of news stories as a series of 'disruptions', each implying an initial equilibrium and a possible resolution. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was not designed to explain news stories but narratives with resolutions, so does not fit most news stories that die out without resolution. |
| Postmodernism – Baudrillard  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any cultural product, including online newspapers. Particularly applies to news about news (e.g. stories about viral stories), or celebrities who are famous for being famous, where there is no clear sense of a 'real' lying behind the hyperreality. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to newspapers as it is an extremely high level theory of the postmodern world. |

| Theory | Usefulness for understanding online newspapers | Limitations for understanding online newspapers |
|--|--|--|
|  <p>Theories of representation – Hall</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be applied to any media product, including online newspapers. • Applies particularly to the way in which newspaper headlines try to fix the meaning of a representation, both the copy and the photographs. • Draws attention to the role of power in representations – both the general distribution of power in society and the power of the newspaper as an institution – but also the power of the audience to decode representations in different ways. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not explain anything specific to newspapers as it is a general theory of representation. |
|  <p>Theories of Identity – Gauntlett</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be applied to any media product, including online newspapers. • Applies to the sense of identity that a newspaper can offer its readers – e.g. the identity of a liberal, progressive online Guardian reader or a celebrity-savvy online Mail reader. • Applies to the way different sections of a newspapers offer diverse and sometimes contradictory media messages to audiences, thus offering a range of points of identification. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumes that audiences are powerful, active agents, and so may underestimate the power of media conglomerates to shape popular culture, tastes, and identities. |
|  <p>Feminist Theory – Van Zoonen</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be applied to any media product, including online newspapers, especially representations of gender. • The concept of patriarchy may be applied to the ownership and control of newspapers, the recruitment and ethos of newspaper professionals, news values, and the representation of gender in newspapers, especially the representation of women's bodies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not explain anything specific to newspapers as it is a general theory of patriarchy. • In prioritising gender inequalities, the theory may not aid analysis of other forms of inequality in representation in newspapers. • In stressing the influence of social conflict on representations the theory may underestimate the influence of social consensus on representations. |
|  <p>Feminist Theory – hooks</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be applied to any media product, including online newspapers, especially representations of gender. • The concept of 'intersectionality' draws attention to misrepresentations and stereotypes based on one or more of gender, race, class and sexuality, and their inter-relationship in any newspaper representations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not explain anything specific to newspapers as it is a general theory of patriarchy. • In stressing the influence of social conflict on representations the theory may underestimate the influence of social consensus on representations. |

| Theory | Usefulness for understanding online newspapers | Limitations for understanding online newspapers |
|---|---|---|
|  <p>Theories of Gender Performativity – Butler</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be applied to any media product, including newspapers, especially representations of gender. • Can be applied particularly to lifestyle sections of newspapers, where the performance of gender may be demonstrated in fashion and make-up advice, for example, and in articles about different forms of 'gender trouble'. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not explain anything specific to newspapers as it is a very high level theory of gender. |
|  <p>Theories around ethnicity and post-colonial theory – Gilroy</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be applied to any media product, including online newspapers, especially representations of race, ethnicity and the post-colonial world. • The concept of the 'Black Atlantic' draws attention to continuities in the culture created by the African diaspora across national boundaries, e.g. in newspaper representations of black popular culture. • The concept of the 'Post-colonial melancholia' draws attention to the continuing role of colonial ideology – of the superiority of white western culture – across a range of representations in newspapers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not explain anything specific to newspapers as it is a general theory. • In prioritising race and the post-colonial experience the theory may not aid analysis of other forms of inequality in representation in newspapers. • In stressing the influence of social conflict on representations the theory may underestimate the influence of social consensus on representations. |
|  <p>Power and media industries – Curran and Seaton</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studying newspapers as an industry draws attention to issues such as: forms and effects of ownership and control, the working practices of journalists and other creators, and issues of risk and profitability. • Applies to the narrow range of political opinions expressed by British national newspapers, with a bias to pro-capitalism. • Applies to the long history of 'press barons' owning newspapers in order to achieve status and wield political power. • Corrects over-optimistic views of the internet as an arena for freedom and unlimited creativity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In prioritising the effects of ownership and control on the content of newspapers this theory may not aid in understanding how ideologies, audience choice or media language conventions may determine media content. |
| <p>Regulation – Livingstone and Lunt</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not apply to online media due to difficulties of regulation. |

| Theory | Usefulness for understanding online newspapers | Limitations for understanding online newspapers |
|--|---|---|
| Cultural Industries – Hesmondhalgh  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The idea of the cultural industries draws attention to newspapers as an industry – its forms and effects of ownership and control, the working practices of journalists and other creators, and issues of risk and profitability. Corrects over-optimistic views of the internet as an arena for freedom and unlimited creativity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In prioritising the effects of ownership and control on the content of newspapers this theory may not aid in understanding how ideologies, audience choice or media language conventions may determine media content. |
| Media effects – Bandura  <p>n libero tempore, cum soluta is est eligendi optio cumque nihil edit quo minus id quod maxime eat facere possimus voluptas assumenda est. omnis dolor an...</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May apply to a wide range of media products, including online newspapers. Would most apply to strongly delivered newspaper messages that are consistent across newspapers, e.g. about the wrongness of terrorism. Draws attention to the need to investigate the direct effects on individuals who consume newspapers. Supports the arguments of those who think the internet should be regulated to avoid public harm, e.g. to remove fake news and terrorist propaganda. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online newspaper messages may often be challenged by audiences in comments, tweets or other posts, which would reduce the effect of the original messages. Prioritising the effects of the media on the audience may mean that the effects of the audience on the media are underestimated. |
| Cultivation theory – Gerbner  <p>uptates repudiandae sint et molestiae non andae. Itaque earum rerum hic tenetur a sapiente us, ut aut reiciendis voluptatibus maiores alias equatur aut perferendis doloribus asperiores at. Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis iste natus er uptatem accusantium doloremque laudantium, rem aperiam, eaque ipsa quae ab illo inventore is et quasi architecto beatae vitae dicta sunt</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May apply to a wide range of media products, including online newspapers. Would most apply to audiences within a 'digital bubble' who only consume messages from a narrow range of sources that target their demographic and psychographic (e.g. news feeds on Facebook). Draws attention to the need to investigate the longer-term effects on individuals who consume online newspapers, especially heavy online users. Gerbner's interest in the attitudinal effects of violent representations suggests that news sites which value 'bad' news are possibly creating the belief in the audience that the world is a dangerous place characterised by negative events. Supports the arguments of those who think online newspapers should be regulated to avoid public harm. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The theory was developed before the arrival of the online media and may be out-dated. Online newspaper messages may often be challenged by audiences in comments, tweets or other posts, which would reduce the effect of the original messages. Prioritising the effects of the media on the audience may mean that the effects of the audience on the media are underestimated. |

| Theory | Usefulness for understanding online newspapers | Limitations for understanding online newspapers |
|---|---|---|
| Reception Theory – Hall  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May apply to a wide range of media products, including online newspapers. • Draws attention to the range of different possible audience readings of a newspaper's messages and values, while acknowledging the role of power in creating dominance within newspaper messages and values. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumes that there is one dominant meaning to which the audience responds – does not fit messages with a multitude of different possible readings (e.g. deeply ironic messages). |
| Fandom – Jenkins  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draws attention to the potentially revolutionary effect of online media on news and the threat this represents to traditional models of news gathering and distribution. • Draws attention to how online newspapers increasingly rely on participatory media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to disseminate news. • Draws attention to the role of participatory culture in developing citizen journalism. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fandom and participatory culture are less likely to occur in relation to online newspapers when compared to other areas of the internet due to their type of content and the ethos of professional journalism. • This optimistic view of the power of online audiences may underestimate the power of the oligarchy of media conglomerates to shape and control online content and the importance of journalism as a professional practice. |
| 'End of Audience' theories – Shirky  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draws attention to the potentially revolutionary effect of online media on news and the threat this represents to traditional models of news gathering and distribution. • Draws attention to how online newspapers increasingly rely on participatory media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to disseminate news. • Draws attention to the role of amateur producers in citizen journalism. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online newspapers have not embraced the 'publish then filter' model of the new media as top newspaper brands rely on their authority as a news brand to sell themselves, so this theory explains less about online newspapers than it would for fully user-generated online content. • This optimistic view of the power of amateur producers may underestimate the power of the oligarchy of media conglomerates to shape and control online content and the importance of journalism as a professional practice. |

3. Long form television drama

| Theory | Usefulness for understanding long form television drama ('LFTVD') | Limitations for understanding long form television drama |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Semiology – Barthes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any sign, including language and image, to tease out connotations and ideology. Useful for 'micro' analysis of media language. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to LFTVD as it is a general theory of signification. Less useful for analysing 'macro' media language elements such as narrative and genre. Does not tell us anything about the ownership and control of television and the process of mediation that leads to the messages in television. Does not tell us about how audiences interpret television and give meaning. |
| Genre Theory – Neale | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was developed primarily to explain film genre, but can be applied to LFTVD as this is the most filmic form of television output, requiring an intertextual relay of pre-publicity and reviews to generate the large audiences required. Draws attention to processes of difference-within-repetition and hybridity in LFTVD. The theory of the shared code can be applied to the long form television drama itself as a form – early versions of the form such as <i>Twin Peaks</i> established audience expectations of twisting and enigmatic narratives that have been developed through each addition to the generic corpus – despite the fact that these dramas range across various different genres. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many LFTVDs have the resources to rely on elements such as high production values, the star system, tone and exoticism rather than genre to market themselves, emphasising individual difference rather than generic similarity. |
| Structuralism – Levi-Strauss | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any cultural product, including LFTVDs Can be used to analyse LFTVD narratives by analysing, for example, how they set up an 'inside' and 'outside' opposition, asking the audience to identify with the inside, and then in some cases play around with this opposition to disorientate the audience. Can be used to analyse representations and their ideological effect, by seeing which side of an opposition is valued by the narrative. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to LFTVDs as it is an extremely high level theory of culture. Does not tell us anything about the ownership and control of television and the process of mediation that leads to the messages in newspapers. Does not tell us about how audiences interpret television and give meaning. |

| Theory | Usefulness for understanding long form television drama ('LFTVD') | Limitations for understanding long form television drama |
|--|---|--|
| Narratology – Todorov | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Todorov's theory is sufficiently simple to be widely applicable, meaning that it is possible to identify the key elements - equilibrium (often implied) and disruption - in long form television drama. Todorov's theory is very useful in teasing out the messages and values underlying a narrative, in pointing to the significance of the transformation between the initial equilibrium (displayed or implied) and the new equilibrium. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was not designed to explain long form serial narratives but single narratives with resolutions, so does not explain complex narratives where climax and resolution are necessarily delayed and sometimes, in programmes that are designed to last many series, are never reached. Todorov's theory does not help to understand television's tendency towards segmentation rather than linearity, e.g. the multiple segmented storylines of some long form dramas. Todorov's theory does not help to understand narrative strands that do not add to the narrative drive towards resolution but establish characterisation, spiral out from the main linear narrative or create cliffhangers. |
| Postmodernism – Baudrillard | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any cultural product, including LFTVD. The theory may be celebrated in LFTVDs that refuse any simple identification of 'the real' in the fictional world (e.g. Mr Robot). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to LFTVDs as it is an extremely high level theory of the postmodern world. |
| Theories of representation – Hall | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any media product, including LFTVDs Draws attention to the role of power in representations – both the general distribution of power in society and the power of the television industry – but also the power of the audience to decode representations in different ways. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to LFTVDs as it is a general theory of representation. |
| Theories of Identity – Gauntlett | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any media product, including LFTVDs LFTVDs may tend to offer diverse and contradictory representations that audiences can use to think through their identity as they have the time and resources to develop complex representations. LFTVDs often attempt to reach and engage an international audience by offering a local representation with international resonance, thus increasing the diversity of representations of place and cultures, especially the successful non-English language LFTVDs. LFTVDs may achieve cult status, adding to their value in helping create identities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumes that audiences are powerful, active agents, and so may underestimate the power of media conglomerates to shape popular culture, tastes, and identities. |

| Theory | Usefulness for understanding long form television drama ('LFTVD') | Limitations for understanding long form television drama |
|--|---|--|
| Feminist Theory – Van Zoonen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any media product, including LFTVDs, especially representations of gender. The concept of patriarchy may be applied to the ownership and control of television, the recruitment and ethos of television professionals, and the representation of gender in LFTVDs, especially the representation of women's bodies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to LFTVDs as it is a general theory of patriarchy. In prioritising gender inequalities, the theory may not aid analysis of other forms of inequality in representation in LFTVDs. In stressing the influence of social conflict on representations the theory may underestimate the influence of social consensus on representations. |
| Feminist Theory – hooks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any media product, including LFTVDs, especially representations of gender. The concept of 'intersectionality' draws attention to misrepresentations and stereotypes based on one or more of gender, race, class and sexuality, and their inter-relationship in any LFTVD representations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to LFTVDs as it is a general theory of patriarchy. In prioritising gender linked to other inequalities, the theory may overlook similarities or equalities in representation in LFTVDs. In stressing the influence of social conflict on representations the theory may underestimate the influence of social consensus on representations. |
| Theories of Gender Performativity – Butler | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any media product, including LFTVDs, especially representations of gender. Can be applied particularly to LFTVDs where the performance of gender is foregrounded, e.g. through representations of women preparing to present their bodies for display, representations of people training or reinforcing characters in masculinity, or representations that expose or disrupt heteronormativity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to LFTVDs as it is a very high level theory of gender. |
| Theories around ethnicity and post-colonial theory – Gilroy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be applied to any media product, including LFTVDs, especially representations of race, ethnicity and the post-colonial world. Gilroy draws attention to the continuing role of colonial ideology – of the superiority of white western culture – across a range of representations in LFTVDs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not explain anything specific to LFTVDs as it is a general theory. In prioritising race and the post-colonial experience the theory may not aid analysis of other forms of inequality in representation in LFTVDs. In stressing the influence of social conflict on representations the theory may underestimate the influence of social consensus on representations. |

| Theory | Usefulness for understanding long form television drama ('LFTVD') | Limitations for understanding long form television drama |
|---|---|---|
| Power and media industries – Curran and Seaton | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studying television as an industry draws attention to issues such as: forms and effects of ownership and control, the working practices of creators, and issues of risk and profitability. Applies particularly to the international dominance of the American streaming services distributing many LFTVDs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In prioritising the effects of ownership and control on the content of television this theory may not aid in understanding how ideologies, audience choice or media language conventions may determine media content. |
| Regulation – Livingstone and Lunt | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies in part to LFTVDs produced by European public service broadcasters who may be regulated in the interests of citizens. Applies in part to LFTVDs produced by American cable and streaming services that treat audiences as consumers and, at most, are only lightly regulated to avoid harm. Draws attention to the challenge of globalised television industries to traditional regulation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The study of Ofcom was from a national perspective, so only applies to the consumption of these LFTVDs in Britain or to British LFTVDs. |
| Cultural Industries – Hesmondhalgh | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draws attention to the: forms and effects of ownership and control, such as the differences between the purely commercial American television products and the public service ethos of most of the European producers. Draws attention to the issues of risk and profitability in LFTVDs where high budgets are at stake and the ways producers will try to minimise these risks by using formatting – e.g. genres, the star system – and co-production deals for the smaller European broadcasters. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In prioritising the effects of ownership and control on the content of television this theory may not aid in understanding how ideologies, audience choice or media language conventions may determine media content. |
| Media effects – Bandura | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May apply to a wide range of media products, including LFTVDs. Draws attention to the need to investigate the direct effects on individuals who consume LFTVDs. Supports the arguments of those who think television should be regulated to avoid public harm. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The complex and nuanced representations common to LFTVDs are less likely to cause a direct effect on audiences. Prioritising the effects of the media on the audience may mean that the effects of the audience on the media are underestimated. |

| Theory | Usefulness for understanding long form television drama ('LFTVD') | Limitations for understanding long form television drama |
|--|--|--|
| Cultivation theory – Gerbner | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May apply to a wide range of media products, including LFTVDs. • Draws attention to the need to investigate the longer-term effects on individuals who consume LFTVDs, especially heavy 'box-set' users. • Gerbner's interest in the attitudinal effects of violent representations suggests that television programmes are possibly creating the belief in the audience that the world is a dangerous place characterised by negative events. • Supports the arguments of those who think television should be regulated to avoid public harm. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The complex and nuanced representations common to LFTVDs are less likely to cause an indirect effect on audiences. • Prioritising the effects of the media on the audience may mean that the effects of the audience on the media are underestimated. |
| Reception Theory – Hall | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May apply to a wide range of media products, including LFTVDs. • Draws attention to the range of different possible audience readings of a LFTVD's messages and values, while acknowledging the role of power in creating dominance within television messages and values. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumes that there is one dominant meaning to which the audience responds – does not fit messages with a multitude of different possible readings (e.g. deeply ironic messages). |
| Fandom – Jenkins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies particularly to the range and diversity of representations offered by LFTVDs to 'textual poachers' who wish to use these products to create their own culture, e.g. via fan sites. • LFTVDs may achieve cult status, adding to their value for fans. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This optimistic view of the power of audiences may underestimate the power of the oligarchy of media conglomerates to shape and control television content. |
| 'End of Audience' theories – Shirky | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draws attention to the way audiences for LFTVDs can provide value for each other by using websites to offer comments, parodies, merchandise (e.g. Sarah Lund sweaters) and so forth. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not apply to broadcast television. • Streaming services do not reflect the view of the online media proposed by Shirky insofar as they primarily operate like the 'old' media in offering centrally-produced content. • This optimistic view of the power of audiences may underestimate the power of the oligarchy of media conglomerates to shape and control television content. |



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