

Exam: Theories on Communication and Media

Exam on Lecture Part, June 2021

Please, answer the questions in whole sentences and with your own words. (Please note: Any form of plagiarism will result in a failed exam.)

1. (4 pts)
 - a) Explain the communication according to Shannon-Weaver and elucidate why this model is not appropriate to describe and analyse communication.
 - b) Discuss the impossibility of not communicating (“one cannot not communicate”) and why it holds true. Give examples and argue in detail.

2. (4 pts)
 - a) Explain what connotative and denotative mean, and in addition explain them with self chosen examples.
 - b) Are the signals of traffic lights discursive or presentational symbols? Justify your answer in detail and explain what discursive and presentational symbols are.

3. (12 pts) In this course the four validity claims of communicative action (according to Habermas) were discussed:
 - a) Name the four validity claims of communicative action and explain each of them elaborately.
 - b) A member of a project team says to their colleague, who is also part of this team: “You shouldn’t be late whenever we meet!”
With which sentence would the colleague have to answer in each case, if s/he wanted to question each of the four validity claims (with regard to the said utterance). (Formulate the respective sentences as an answer [= 4 sentences]). In addition, give reasons why the corresponding validity claim is questioned by the respective sentence.
 - c) For the rest of this question we consider a project team, the members of which don’t have face-to-face-contact, but are located in different places. The team members therefore communicate via computer-mediated communication (e.g. via E-Mail):
Which of the four validity claims can be validated easily in this case, which of them with great difficulty and which of them cannot be validated at all? Reason in detail for each validity claim, why it can be validated easily / with difficulty / not at all in such a situation of communication and cooperation.

4. (4 pts)
 - a) What is the social heritage: Give a definition and an explanation of this term. Why is the social heritage of particular importance to human beings?
 - b) Explain the double relationship of language with social heritage.

-
5. (4 pts)
- Explain what is understood by “culture industry”, and what are its functions and consequences?
 - Is the concept of culture industry a deterministic approach to social reality? Justify your answer in detail.
-
6. (4 pts) Analyse the function of recommender systems and recommender algorithms in late modernity (including the problems to which recommender systems are a technical answer and how these problems are connected with the use of new digital media in late modernity). Illustrate your answer using concrete examples of recommender systems (and make clear, why these are examples for the described issues).
-
7. (4 pts)
- Situation 1: Five dogs, all being in one room, react with salivation in response to the ringing of a bell, to which they are trained.
- Situation 2: Twenty students, all sitting in one classroom, start up from their chairs and leave the room as soon as the school bell rings.
- What is the difference between the behaviour of the dogs in situation 1 and the behaviour of the students in situation 2?
 - Is the ringing of the bell in situation 1 a meaningful (significant) symbol for the dogs?
 - If yes, why?
 - If not, why not?
 - Is the ringing of the bell in situation 2 a meaningful (significant) symbol for the students? -
 - If yes, why?
 - If not, why not?
-
8. (14 pts)
- Explain the differences between the “representative publicness” and the “bourgeois public sphere” and elaborate why it came to the transition from the “representative publicness” to the “bourgeois public sphere”.
 - Why is the “bourgeois public sphere” - although in principle “civic” - de facto “bourgeois”, and what are the consequences of this fact?
 - Why is a well functioning public sphere an important basis for democracy (as it developed in Europe and North-America from the 18th/19th century on)? Which role does media play in this context?
 - What are the main characteristics of culture industry and why / in which way does culture industry not primarily contribute to a well functioning public sphere but de facto undermine it?
 - What are the characteristics and consequences of the new forms of publicness created by the use of new digital media in late modernity?
-
-

Please go to page 3 (MC questions)

MC-Questions (1 pt each):

Possible answers:

- A. (i) true || (ii) true || (iii) true
- B. (i) true || (ii) true || (iii) false
- C. (i) true || (ii) false || (iii) true
- D. (i) false || (ii) true || (iii) true
- E. (i) true || (ii) false || (iii) false
- F. (i) false || (ii) true || (iii) false
- G. (i) false || (ii) false || (iii) true
- H. (i) false || (ii) false || (iii) false

Please, answer the questions 9 and 10 by writing down one of the letters A to H onto your answer sheet.

Your answer is correct if and only if you write down the correct letter (A to H).

9.

- (i) Recommender systems are an element of enlightenment as they help people to find the information that is important to them in the wealth of information that is currently available on the net.
- (ii) While traditional mass media usually transport hegemonic meanings, one advantage of communication via the new digital media and social networks is that the high participation of a large number of users in communication prevents manipulations of the net public.
- (iii) The enhanced usage of computer-mediated media in communication and decision making within a social organization now leads to quicker decision making than in the past.

Correct answer:

10.

- (i) Two central aspects of an emancipatory use of media are the content production by specialists and that each recipient is also a potential sender.
- (ii) Since humans act towards the elements of their surrounding world on the basis of the meaning these have for them, humans are controlled by the elements of their surrounding world in a deterministic way.
- (iii) Iconic signs are natural signs, since they are an exact representation of an object.

Correct answer:

The End
