

MC & S NEWS

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'Public Intellectuals and the News Media' Chosen as Theme of Special Call for Papers

Head Note:
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The theme, "Public Intellectuals and the News Media," has been chosen as the theme for 2004 of the MC&S Division's annual special call for papers for the AEJMC Convention. Because some MC&S members will be unfamiliar with the term, "public intellectuals," and there otherwise might be disagreements about its definition, allow me to introduce the theme to members in some detail.

Russell Jacoby, in his 1987 book, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe*, apparently was the first to use the phrase "public intellectual." But he defined it only indirectly, through the contexts in which he used the term, including examples; generally, he used the term to describe intellectuals who wrote for the general public. Jacoby asserted that an entire generation of Americans was devoid of public intellectuals (i.e., almost no new nationally known, nationally respected intellectuals emerged between the early 1960s and the late 1980s). Potential new faces during the 1960–1986 period—on a par approaching Lewis Mumford, Dwight Macdonald, Edmund Wilson, Alfred Kazin, Daniel Bell, Irving Howe, and so on—ended up getting "lost in the universities," he wrote. This wouldn't be so bad, Jacoby implied, except that universities already were not conducive to (and often even discouraged) the development of traditional public intellectuals. Universities increasingly have demanded specialization (which traditional public intellectuals have resisted), he wrote, even charging that once-leftists such as Todd Gitlin essentially sold out to university life. In 2000, Jacoby wrote a new "Introduction" for his book when it was republished, but he used it only to deny being a "hopeless romantic" (i.e., essentially arguing that sometimes the past really was better), to complain that academic life continues to be increasingly specialized and segregated from society, and to simultaneously express enthusiasm about the "new black public intellectuals" and a "group of science writers [who have] more or less filled the space vacated by humanists."

Judge Richard A. Posner's book, *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline*, published in 2001, cannot properly be described as a study of the news media's role in U.S. intellectual history, because it admittedly does "not emphasize history," nor can it be the authoritative study on public intellectuals in the news media, because media are treated superficially and thus not completely accurately. Other scholars, especially book reviewers, also have detailed the problems with his method (starting with the selection of indexes and databases as a way to weight public intellectuals and ending with the biases and omissions of the sources he chose), and so I won't belabor those points. Suffice it to say here that considering so much of *Public Intellectuals* is about news media, it is peculiar that none of the databases used by Posner, to determine the importance or popularity of public intellectuals, index the major scholarly publications in mass communication. (Thus, there was extremely little chance that a journalism professor, even one who recently was or still is also a journalist, would make Posner's list of public intellectuals—unless he/she has written important books for a general audience.)

But unlike so many scholars who de-emphasize or ignore the role of the mass media in American society, something like a fish ignoring the water, Posner understands that the primary—if not only—way in which an American public intellectual can be "public" is through news media. In other words, although he recognizes public intellectuals' other outlets—such as teaching, lecturing, consulting, testifying, letter writing, meeting, and so on—he knows they reach relatively few people. "My interest is in the expressive dimension of public-intellectual work, that is, in communication with the public on intellectual themes by means of books, magazine articles, op-ed pieces, open letters, public lectures, and appearances on radio or television," he writes.

Posner's definition of public intellectual is limited to a "person who, drawing on his intellectual resources, addresses a broad though educated public on issues with a political or ideological dimension." Thus, he excludes, for example, Carl Sagan, who probably was the greatest American popularizer of science from the mid-1960s until the late 1990s (I would include Sagan on the basis, at least, that his work was not strictly apolitical or nonideological).

Posner's list includes *some* journalists: "William Buckley, Andrew Sullivan, George Will,

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Christopher Hitchens, Gregg Easterbrook, and Leon Wieseltier.” He observes that some public intellectuals’ fame is demand-driven by television and radio, and apparently to a lesser degree in his view, “magazine editors..., editors of newspaper op-ed pages, book publishers..., [and] reporters seeing quotable commentary,” because of “their insatiable demand for expert commentary on matters of public concern.” He also knows that individuals seeking the modern American public intellectual’s role are highly likely to pursue an academic career and unlikely to pursue journalism—both because generally “journalists are not in a good position to acquire specialized knowledge” and, Posner seems to believe, because public intellectuals are too specialized to work in most journalism jobs. He reasonably points out the “sheer impracticability of creating a corps of journalists who know enough about the range of academic disciplines that produce knowledge or opinion...to be able to write competently about them,” although he obviously doesn’t realize that if public intellectuals’ work were in higher public demand, such a “corps” *could* be assembled by organizations such as the Associated Press. Posner appreciates journalists who are knowledgeable specialists (clearly he doesn’t want to give the media a free pass to employ uneducated and unintelligent journalists) and does not argue that unspecialized reporters be stopped from writing on scientific, social scientific, legal, artistic, or other developments.

Posner’s evidence collection by database, though a flawed methodology, produced results that at least ring true: news media tend to quote the same public intellectuals over and over again, like a herd instinct; non-academics are mentioned more than academics; liberals and conservatives get about the same number of citations; news media mention academics with little regard to their scholarly standing; academics who have served in government are mentioned more often; and living public intellectuals are mentioned more often than dead ones. And again, few journalists are public intellectuals because so few journalists’ work display them as intellectuals, even if all journalists are by definition “public.”

The “media’s demand for public intellectuals is derived from the demand of the educated general public for intellectual information *best supplied by public intellectuals* concerning issues of a broadly political character” (emphasis in original),” Posner observed later. He “suppose[s]” that a “reputable journalist...might...be the greater expert in communicating [economics] experts’ findings to the public than an academic economist would” although, for example, it seems to me that a slightly jargony story by an economist probably would serve the audience better than an inaccurate and incomplete television report. Much later, Posner observes that “as specialization increases, we can expect more and more of the responsibility for translating academic ideas for the general public to devolve on journalists, as specialists in communication”; this may be logical, but I note that he doesn’t address whether journalists are willing, in addition to the uncertainty over being able, to assume

that responsibility.

Posner also has some confidence—still too much, to me—that the media, on behalf of the public—“pay close attention to the quality of the inputs, that is, of the public intellectuals themselves,” later calling it “some screening, but not much” (perhaps because if journalists were educated enough to scrutinize public intellectuals, *they* would or could be public intellectuals). Again, scholarly literature on the sociology of news and the imperatives of objectivity, of which Posner apparently is unaware, has informed us that sources—not only public intellectuals, and perhaps especially public intellectuals—are quoted by news media for a lot of reasons besides their intrinsic “quality.”

Ultimately, Posner’s book tells us a lot less about the relationships between public intellectuals and the news media (and, for that matter, about the relationships between public intellectuals and higher education, and between the news media and higher education) than it could or claims to. One need look no farther than his economics-based conclusion: that the American public doesn’t pay much attention to public intellectuals in the news media because the quality of their work is relatively poor and is declining. I suggest that Posner overlooks, among other facts, that many experts interviewed by news media don’t have any true expertise in what they are interviewed about, and that the anti-intellectual American culture tends to devalue the ideas and knowledge of public intellectuals even while news media gatekeepers keep them on the air and in print.

This special call for papers in the MC&S Division may also be an opportunity for papers that link the work traditionally done in the MC&S Division with work traditionally done in the Cultural & Critical Studies Division. For example, the late Italian, Antonio Gramsci, who notably elaborated the concept of “hegemony,” believed that the “press” and the education system are the only two institutions in modern societies capable of favorably transforming the cultures and politics within which they operate. Thus, his writings discussed the importance of the press and the involvement of intellectuals with it (including detailed histories of several intellectuals’ media involvement). His writings suggest to us today questions such as what intellectuals’ role is in today’s mass media, and whether and how media cover what he prescribed they cover: “all intellectual centres and movements.”

Steven Best and Douglas Kellner have charged the late French theorist Michel Foucault with a “neglect” of “media power.” They summarized (without necessarily endorsing) Baudrillard’s argument that Foucault simultaneously underestimated media’s historical significance by failing to consider mass media in his work, and indirectly overestimated media’s role by continuing to locate power in institutions, one of which is the media. Nonetheless, Best and Kellner and other scholars do not dismiss Foucault from relevance or usefulness in media studies, and his writing on intellectuals was extensive. Jürgen Habermas, like Gramsci, also believes that a country’s education and media sys-

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Professor and student discuss 'spectrum scarcity' and other vexing imponderables

By George Albert Gladney,
University of Wyoming

I want in this little essay to share highlights of a recent visit to my office by a student in my Mass Communication Law course at the University of Wyoming, in Laramie. But first I must explain that I have been considering changing the name of the course to The Media and the First Amendment. That's because there is no part of mass media law that isn't permeated by the First Amendment. It is for that reason that early in the course I put on the overhead screen the key text and allow time to let the words sink in: "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press." We then examine a number of theoretical approaches the courts use to interpret the meaning of those words. I point out that while in the past there have been a few members of the U.S. Supreme Court who take those words literally—the so-called absolutist position—currently no member of the U.S. Supreme Court does. Instead, the justices today insert what ethicists would call a "mental reservation." After the word "abridging," they add, silently in their collective head, the words "the obviously limited." Later in the course we talk about how the print media's freedom is not in any way limited, at least for the owners of the print media, but that the electronic media's freedom is obviously limited. My students always want to know why that is. Why should broadcasters' speech be limited just because it is speech disseminated over the air, or by cable, to vast audiences? I explain that size of audience has nothing to do with it since both print and broadcast reach massive audiences. And so then we discuss the government's rationale for regulation of broadcast.

The other day I was sitting comfortably in the easy chair in the corner of my office when one of my media law students came to visit and somehow we got onto this subject. I had just returned from lunch and was feeling a little sluggish, thinking to myself I should not have eaten so much pasta. I wasn't in the mood to discuss media law, but this student was exceptionally dedicated and bright, and she got my attention right away when she announced, "I completely reject the government's rationale. It is absurd and inconsistent and shows how so out of whack things can get in Washington, D.C." I conceded she had a point.

She then went on to tell me, impressively, that the Radio Act of 1927 was a move in the right direction, providing for technical regulation of broadcast—assignment and policing of use of frequencies—and prohibiting any sort of government censorship of programming content, except obscene or indecent content. But, she said, the legislation was wrong to require broadcasters to operate in the "public interest, convenience, and necessity," which we have referred to in class by the acronym PICON. "How could the government enforce PICON without the power to censor?" she asked me. She reminded me that as early as 1929 the Federal Radio Commission was punishing a station because the FRC deemed the content not to be in the public interest, and then in the early 1930s the agency denied some licenses based on a review of programming content that had nothing to do with indecency.

My student had done her homework and was deserving of my admiration. She pointed out how inconsistent the government can be, noting that in 1941 with its *Mayflower* decision the FRC's successor, the Federal Communications Commission, granted a license to a station on the condition that it not editorialize or be an advocate. Then, in 1949, with promulgation of the Fairness Doctrine, the FCC did an about-face. The agency said that to serve the PICON, stations now had to editorialize except without seeming to have a prejudicial view. "That a neat trick, isn't it?" she asked.

Yes, I replied, telling her that broadcasters were supposed to accomplish that trick by covering important local issues in a fair and balanced way, which meant presenting all contrasting views. My student understands that concept because in class we talk about how USA Today avoids accusations of being unfair by always pairing up the newspaper's editorial with an accompanying opposite viewpoint, even if the newspaper has to search outside the country for someone to articulate that opposite position.

My student then mentioned the *Miami Herald vs. Tornillo* case from 1974, obviously bothered by the U.S. Supreme Court's court's reasoning, or its lack of consistency in reasoning. In that case the Florida Supreme Court had unanimously upheld the state's so-called "equal space" response law, ruling that the newspaper had to allow school board candidate Tornillo the opportunity to respond to the paper's editorial attack. "The Florida Supreme Court was unanimous," my student said. "They had no doubt. It was clear. All they had to do was look to the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Red Lion Broadcasting Co. vs. FCC*

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case of 1969. Hadn't the nation's highest court made it clear that when a candidate is editorially attacked by a media outlet, the candidate should have access to that outlet to respond to the attack?" I agreed the student had a point, noting as I did in class that the U.S. Supreme Court didn't even mention the *Red Lion* case in *Miami Herald vs. Tornillo*. I said, "They were hung up on 'scarcity of outlets,' the same rationale they used to uphold the old *Mayflower* decision."

"Scarcity theory!" my student exclaimed disdainfully. "I started to have doubts about that after you showed us that list, that table, on the overhead in class. What was it called?" I told her she was referring to the government frequency assignment data contained in the Government Master File. It showed that more than 90 percent of the government's spectrum allocation was taken by defense, public safety, resource management, and transportation. The rest of the master file was for "other," with less than one half of one percent set aside for FCC frequency assignments.

"You'd think if commercial and public radio and television were important to the government they could find spectrum space to give the FCC more frequencies to assign," my student said. I told her spectrum scarcity rivals Western water law in complexity and confusion, that those kind of technical issues glaze the eyes and, thankfully, exceed the scope of my course.

"Back in the first week of classes, Dr. Gladney, you said courts are supposed to consider changing conditions in society as they consider modifying, distinguishing or overturning precedent. Well, don't the courts know that scarcity of channels isn't a problem any more? I mean, wow, rabbit-ears antennas went out with disco. My brother in California has more than 200 channels on his cable, and look at what we have with the Internet. Seems to me the problem is channel overload!"

"Well, everywhere except at the hometown level," I added.

Suddenly, my student jostled her daypack, pulled out her textbook, and quickly thumbed through to an earmarked page. "Remember you told the class how the government did away with the Fairness Doctrine in the 1980s—can't they make up their mind!—and is continuing to do away with content regulation? Well, I noticed here, on page 104, that this judge really put his finger on the situation." She was referring to Judge Robert Bork's opinion in *Telecommunication and Research Action Center vs. the FCC*, the 1986 case where the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia gave the go-ahead for the FCC to abolish the Fairness Doctrine. She then read an excerpt from Bork's opinion: "[I]t is unclear why [scarcity] justifies content regulation of broadcasting in a way that would be intolerable if applied to the editorial process of the print media. All economic goods are scarce, not least the newsprint, ink, delivery trucks, computers, and other

resources that go into the production and dissemination of print journalism. Not everyone who wishes to publish a newspaper, or even a pamphlet, may do so. Since scarcity is a universal fact, it can hardly explain regulation in one context and not another." She looked up from the book and exclaimed, "That's powerful!"

"Yes, well," I said, "it reminds me a little of A. J. Liebling's remark that freedom of the press is for people who own printing presses, and Harold Innis's comment that freedom of the press is freedom for people like you and me to be on the dumb end of a one-way conversation dominated by powerful elites." My student sighed, "Wow, that's really cynical, Dr. Gladney. I love it."

I told her Bork raised a crucial point about spectrum scarcity, and that his opinion makes us think of other relevant scarcities. For one, as far as broadcasters are concerned, there's a finite amount of advertisers' dollars, so who needs more channels? And it's fine to talk about the 500- or 1,000-channel future, for cable at least, but where is the content to be found?

"But, you know," I continued, "even if scarcity theory were thrown out the window, the government would still have other, though perhaps weaker, rationales for regulating broadcasters. They've always said, for example, that because broadcasters send their signals through the air, a publicly owned resource, broadcasters have a duty to serve the PICON. And they argue that radio and TV are too pervasive—too easy for kids to access."

My student whispered sarcastically, "Oh, yeah, right." Then she added: "But you could make the same arguments about print media, couldn't you? Newspapers are delivered by trucks that use publicly owned streets, and newspapers are pervasive—they're in most homes and schools and offices, and their vending machines are on most street corners."

I said, "Let's not forget another scarcity, and it is the worst, most insidious, scarcity of all. It's the one that affects the print medium. With rare exception, there are no competing hometown newspapers in the United States."

"Yes, Dr. Gladney, and you told us there's only one town in the whole state of Wyoming with competing newspapers. Two weeklies in Pinedale. And that the situation isn't much different in other states."

I told her when you have a local monopoly paper, especially in a small town, it can be hard on people who like to write letters to the editor.

"How's that?" she asked.

I explained that until a few years ago, with the arrival of a new publisher, the monopoly daily in Laramie routinely discarded letters that someone at the newspaper didn't like. And the paper routinely ignored news that might reflect negatively on the town or trigger angry phone calls from readers. I recalled the time it failed to assign a reporter to cover an inci-

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dent in which an elementary schoolteacher committed suicide just hours before authorities closed in on him as the result of an FBI sting operation targeting an Internet porno ring. "Luckily for the people of Laramie, the Denver Post, 150 miles away, covered it," I said.

My student reminded me that in my first lecture on regulation of broadcast, I had said that today the study of broadcast regulation has been reduced mostly to the study of regulation that used to be. I had said that under deregulation of the past two decades, almost all of the content restrictions and regulations have disappeared. The PICON is a relic, though still on the books. The guiding philosophy now, I had said, is that a free and unfettered market will sort out things automatically and somehow the PICON will be served.

"So why doesn't the FCC just give it up?" my student asked. "It seems the only thing the agency does anymore, besides the technical monitoring, is loosen ownership rules. Isn't that the sort of thing the Justice Department is supposed to handle, you know, anti-trust?"

"Well, you're into an area where I don't have any answers, Fantasia," I said. "My best guess is the FCC does what it does today because of inertia. That seems to be a big thing with giant, entrenched bureaucracies."

My student jostled her daypack once more and got up from her chair. "I'd better hurry along. I'm going to a campus-wide debate titled 'Does God Exist?'"

"Do you expect an answer to that question?" I asked.

"Hey," she replied, laughing, "after studying broadcast regulation, I'm used to more questions than answers."

I stirred in my easy chair and suddenly snapped to. A midday reverie, I thought. Too much pasta.

Pember, D.R. (2003/2004). *Mass media law*. Boston: McGraw-Hill

Smith, C.R. & Hunsaker, D.M. (2004). *The four freedoms of the First Amendment*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

Sterling, C.H. & Kittross, J.M. (2002). *Stay tuned: A history of American broadcasting*. (3rd edition). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

She said that a few years later, when NBC challenged the decision, the U.S. Supreme Court (which in class we refer to as "The Supremes," with no lack of respect intended) raised the "scarcity of outlets rationale," which, she confessed, "I don't understand at all." The Supremes, she noted, said that frequencies to be allotted on the electromagnetic spectrum are so limited and precious that the government must ensure that what few stations are allowed must use radio with maximum beneficial effect for all—the PICON.

Polling and Journalism - A Question of Education?

By Dietram A. Scheufele
MC&S Paper Chair

Media coverage of public opinion polls is a contentious issue, not only among pollsters but also among media professionals and journalism educators. Many studies have shown that the public has very little understanding of the potential biases that plague public opinion polls and of the criteria necessary for judging the quality of surveys. Unfortunately, however, journalists are not necessarily a lot more knowledge-

able about the technical aspects of public opinion polling than the general public. Media coverage of polls is therefore an issue that is directly relevant to MC&S and also to the Professional Freedom & Responsibility (PF&R) mission of AEJMC.

Toward this end, MC&S is currently developing strategies for working together with other organizations to improve public understanding and media coverage of polls. We would like to expand our collaborations with academics and polling professionals all

over the world. At the upcoming annual convention of the World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR), for example, we will co-sponsor a panel on public understanding and media coverage of polls. If you are interested in participating in this panel or have suggestions for similar activities, please contact Dietram A. Scheufele, Paper Chair, Department of Communication, Cornell University, 308 Kennedy Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853, E-mail: dietram.scheufele@cornell.edu.

Teaching Tools, Techniques and Courage ... Great Ideas for Teachers

By Diana Knott
Teaching Standards Co-chair

During last summer's AEJMC Promising Professors Workshop, Andrea Miller, one of our graduate student winners, mentioned a couple of books during her presentation as having been significant to her life as a young teacher. One of them, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (Jossey-Bass, Inc.) by Parker J. Palmer, happened to be the first teaching book I was ever given, a gift from a fellow academic as I began my journey into the academy. In *The Courage to Teach*, Palmer says that good teachers share a singular trait: They are "truly present in the classroom, deeply engaged with their students and their subject." Parker speaks of neither the teacher nor the students as being at the center of education, but instead of the subject as being so. In addition, says Parker, good teachers are "able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students, so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves."

The second book our Promising Professor mentioned in her talk also discusses the importance of helping students understand connections between academia and their life beyond. Gerald Graff's *Clueless in Academe: How Schooling Obscures the Life of the Mind* (Yale University Press) argues that with our esoteric research and language, we alienate students from academe rather than drawing them in to and engaging them in it. As a result, students often view their subjects as disparate, mysterious segments of knowledge, without relevance to current social, cultural and political debate.

Richard Paul and Linda Elder of the Foundation for Critical Thinking (www.criticalthinking.org) have produced a number of resources, including books, videos, workshops, a mini-guide series and library to help teachers get students to "think through the content they are learning in a deep and substantive way. ..." Only then, say Paul and Elder, can students apply what they are learning in their lives.

Certainly, as scholars and teachers of communication, we want to help our students become critical media consumers, and we are fortunate that examples of communication principles can be found daily in our lives, in the media and in popular culture. Remembering to take the time to mention current examples in our classes helps us reinforce in practical terms the concepts, theories and practices of our professions. Reinforcing key ideas through practical examples also is useful to help ourselves remain sharp teachers. After a few years of teaching similar or the same subjects, it's far too easy to get comfortable with our notions of students and what works in our classrooms. The tendency to experiment so often prevalent in the first couple of years tends to wane as we settle into our routines.

One way to guard against becoming complacent in our teaching is to review the basics and open ourselves up to learning again. If your institution offers teaching seminars, these are terrific ways to reenergize and to hear colleagues voice their classroom challenges and triumphs. If on-site seminars or workshops aren't possible, two books you might want to keep on hand are *Mastering the Techniques of Teaching* (Jossey-Bass, Inc.) by Joseph Lowman and *Tools for Teaching* (Jossey-Bass, Inc.) by Barbara Gross Davis. These texts were required for a graduate-level pedagogy course taught by Tom Bowers (recognized as our Distinguished Educator at last year's workshop) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and they're wonderful books to periodically skim or review. In addition, AEJMC's Great Ideas for Teachers (GIFT) Program, established in 2000 by the Community College Journalism Association and Small Programs Interest Group to help recognize outstanding teaching methods and ideas, is an inspiring AEJMC national conference session that is also available each year in booklet form for only a few dollars.

Another learning opportunity for teachers is to volunteer to be a Promising Professor judge. As a judge, you'll be asked to review several copies of Promising Professor entrant packets and to rate them according to a score sheet of various criteria. As such, you'll be exposed to some of our field's best young teachers and their courses. The packets are yours to keep.

If you'd like to volunteer to become a judge, or if you have a favorite teaching resource, please contact me at knott@ohio.edu. Meanwhile, watch for the next newsletter and for an announcement on the AEJMC MC&S Web site page (www.aejmc-mcs.org) for more details about the 2004 Promising Professor competition.

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tems are the only two institutions capable of facilitating its transformation. Furthermore, unlike Foucault, Habermas has written extensively about media, but like Foucault, has also written much about intellectuals. (I return to Foucault, Habermas, and the news media below.)

Edward Said, the recently deceased author of *Representations of the Intellectual*, wrote there that one of the twentieth century's most pressing theoretical questions for education policy and other public policy was, "Are intellectuals a very large or an extremely small and highly selective group of people?"—which in turn required a definition of the term, "intellectuals" as a sort of prerequisite for defining "public intellectual." Gramsci, Foucault, and others have met the second challenge with differing definitions, but all have had in common the idea of two types: a traditional or ideal type, and a modern type in business, law, science, education, and/or mass media distinguished primarily by advanced education. Thus the answer to Said's question would be "both."

Said pointed out that Gramsci was among the first, and eventually the most influential, to point out that intellectuals (not social classes) are "pivotal" to the workings of modern society. (In his early writings, Gramsci tended to claim that intellectuals were necessary for a successful socialist movement and intellectuals were useless in a non-socialist society, but later discussed roles in society for what he believed were two major types.) Said reported this approvingly, explaining, "There has been no major revolution in modern history without intellectuals; conversely there has been no major counterrevolutionary movement without intellectuals." Writing in pre-World War II Italy, Gramsci theorized two types of intellectuals: traditional (sometimes "great") intellectuals: teachers, priests, and administrators (who he believed perform the same functions across generations and across class lines); and organic (sometimes "pure") intellectuals, who come from any social group and are actively involved in business, politics, and other

spheres of society, on behalf of their social group. While clearly neither Gramsci's traditional or organic intellectuals are necessarily public intellectuals, nor do children necessarily follow their parents in career choices, Said was correct when (contrasting Gramsci's intellectuals with Julien Benda's "crusty, eloquent, fantastically courageous and angry individual") he wrote:

"Gramsci's social analysis of the intellectual as a person who fulfills a particular set of functions in the society is much closer to the reality than anything Benda gives us, particularly in the late twentieth century when so many new professions—*broadcasters, academic professionals*, computer analysts, sports and *media lawyers*, management consultants, policy experts, government advisers, authors of specialized market reports, and indeed the *whole field of modern mass journalism itself*—have vindicated Gramsci's vision" [emphasis added].

Habermas characteristically has mixed realism and idealism in his writings on intellectuals: idealism about how intellectuals should act, realism about how intellectuals are marginalized in a late capitalist economy. In a market driven state, he asserted, democratic processes move toward private negotiations, and intellectuals begin to be discredited as unproductive in society; eventually, "intellectuals...ha[ve] been culturally neutralized by the impact of a triumphant positivism." Habermas concluded that today, the social sciences, "especially legal positivism, neoclassical economics, and recent political theory," are proof that bourgeois consciousness has been "thoroughly emptied of binding normative concerns." Habermas rarely has used the word "intellectual" as a noun, but has advocated "experts" reconstructing democracy through "communicative action," critiquing modernity without advocating postmodernism, and ultimately leading the preservation of modernity.

Foucault also theorized two types of intellectuals: the universal intellectual, who is interested, knowledgeable, and active in a variety of social, cultural, political activities and subjects; and the specific intellectual, who is narrowly trained but whose expertise secures

him or her a powerful role in society. Foucault thought both types should have their work published in the mass media (lacking that, he probably would have settled for intellectuals' work being reported). Importantly in studying the United States, Hofstadter's intellectual is similar to Foucault's universal intellectual as well as to Habermas's and Said's ideal types.

Foucault believed that universal intellectuals (Said noted that Foucault considered Jean-Paul Sartre an example) are a dying if not extinct class, and that the universal intellectual has had his/her place taken by specific intellectuals. For Foucault, the political problem for intellectuals is not science nor even ideology, but how to interact with the truth and what kind of philosophies to hold, and decisions to make, with regard to power. Foucault lamented, contrary to what Gramsci predicted, an absence of universal intellectuals because of the status quo's need for, and ability to enforce, hegemony. (He commented that critics are tolerated only because of a "simple relaxation on the part of the system which, aware of its own solidity, can afford to accept at its margins something which after all poses absolutely no threat to it.") But both despite and because of universal intellectuals' absence, Foucault did not oppose specific intellectuals. He understood their value to a society, as long as that society was aware of the knowledge/power axis that specific intellectuals exploit, and attempts by political parties or labor unions to manipulate them were recognized and/or resisted.

Said conceded that Gramsci's vision of intellectuals, particularly the growth in numbers of his "organic" type and the idea that an intellectual "fulfills a particular set of functions in the society," has been "vindicated." However, he was more interested in appealing to the responsibilities and possibilities of universal or traditional intellectuals, who he believes are more necessary than ever. Said was impatient that too many scholars are writing about traditional/universal intellectuals and far too few actually acting as such: "In the outpouring of studies about intellectuals there has been far too much

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defining of the intellectual, and not enough stock taken of the image, the signature, the actual intervention and performance, all of which taken together constitute the very lifeblood of every real intellectual.”

To begin with, Said balked at postmodern views of intellectuals (such as suggested by Lyotard in 1984) and sneered that “postmodern intellectuals now prize competence” alone, neither searching for truth nor advocating democracy. Instead, he called for intellectuals who are:

representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public...raise[s] embarrassing questions...confronts orthodoxy and dogma (rather than produce them), to be someone who cannot be easily co-opted by governments or corporations...Least of all should an intellectual be there to make his/her audiences feel good: the whole point is to be embarrassing, contrary, even unpleasant... [They are] of a quite peculiar, even abrasive style of life and social performance that is uniquely theirs.

Perhaps in response to Jacoby, Said added, “To accuse all intellectuals of being sellouts just because they earn their living working in a university or for a newspaper is a coarse and finally meaningless charge.” But he agreed with Jacoby that in the United States, essentially no intellectuals remain outside the academy, and that many professors are not intellectuals. The greatest threat to intellectuals as a class is their “professionalism,” by which he meant “thinking of your work as something you do for a living, between the hours of nine and five with one eye on the clock, and another cocked at what is considered to be proper, professional behavior.” Said wrote that four “pressures” lead to professionalism and “challenge the intellectual’s ingenuity and will”: specialization; “expertise and the cult of the certified expert”; the “inevitable drift toward power and authority in [professionalism’s] adherents, toward the requirements and prerogatives of power, and towards being directly employed by it; and the “system that rewards intellectual conformity, as well as willing participation in goals that have been set not by science but by the government.”

Said was well aware of the strength required of his intellectual; for example, to him, intellectuals are more likely today than ever to be accused of being “disloyal” or “unpatriotic”—not only when they analyze a country’s politics or economics, but even its corporately created culture. (Said’s suspicions were graphically confirmed immediately after September 11, 2001.) In fact, he wrote that many intellectuals (by choice or circumstance) are exiles of one sort or another—literally or metaphorically. Intellectuals usually

are reconciled with their feelings of “restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled and unsettling others...The intellectual as exile tends to be happy with the idea of unhappiness.” He noted that one “privilege” of being an intellectual in exile is that “of being surprised, of never taking anything for granted, of learning to make do in circumstances of shaky instability that would confound or terrify most people.” Said argued that this intellectual in exile is “necessarily ironic, skeptical, even playful—but not cynical.”

Finally, whereas U.S. scholars (one notable exception being Hanno Hardt) have been virtually silent on the nexus of mass communication research, news media, and intellectuals, European researchers have not. For example, in 1995 Nicholas Garnham wrote in *Media, Culture & Society* that a “focus on intellectuals enables us to place the system of education in its proper place at the centre of media studies...” He added that such an analysis also “shifts that focus from the consumers, the overwhelmingly dominant concern of recent media and cultural studies, on to the producers, thus striking a more appropriate balance between the autonomy of the reader and authorial intention.” This, in turn, Garnham wrote, allows scholars and others to ask who the culture producers are (authors, reporters, playwrights, directors, fine artists, and so on) and what their goals, thoughts, actions, and decisions are, and whether they can be influenced by means other than audience ratings and other feedback. After noting criticisms of intellectuals by Gramsci, Foucault, Lyotard, Rorty, and others, Garnham grimly explained that,

“This widespread defenestration of the intellectual—at least in her or his amateur mode, the professional intellectuals, of course, proliferated regardless—has four linked results within the media and cultural studies. First, it leaves no ground for critical judgement of media performance on the basis of either truth, beauty or right. Second, while it allows agency to audiences, for what is resistance but agency, it tends, since the notion of authorial intention and its effect is suspect, not to allow it to cultural producers and thus has no interest in studying intellectuals, who they are, what they think, how and why they act. Third, because of the above, it provides no ground for policy intervention in the processes and institutions of cultural production and tends increasingly to evacuate the field of established national representative democracy in favour of identity politics and communitarianism. Fourth, it leaves little if any room for a pedagogy, whether critical or not.”

Much of this “Head Note” was adapted from parts of Chapters 2 and 3 of Claussen’s latest book, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Media: Magazines and Higher Education* (Peter Lang Publishing). Copyright ©2004 by Dane S. Claussen. All rights reserved.

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Program Set for 2004 AEJMC Convention

By Denis Wu, Louisiana State University
Vice-Head/Program Chair

Dane Claussen and I represented MC&S to participate in the 2004 AEJMC chip "auction" in Atlanta. The meeting was successful and MC&S has some great programming planned for the August 2004 convention in Toronto. I'd like to thank all of you for your great ideas about panels and events.

At the auction we were trying to balance our division's interests in research, PF&R, and teaching. In order to get more panels of our division into the program we sought other divisions' co-sponsorship. In the end, I think most of our important panels got in and our sessions are spread out quite evenly across the four days of the convention--starting our pre-convention workshops on Tuesday afternoon and finished up with a teaching panel on Saturday afternoon. Even though Toronto has a lot of interesting places to see, I hope you'll find our sessions equally or even more attractive! You may take a look at the following preliminary program and decide your itinerary. Also, if you have any suggestion of suitable panelists for any of the topic sessions, please let me know.

The preliminary program for our division is as follows:

10:15-11:45 p.m.—MC&S Executive Meeting

TUESDAY, August 3

1:00-5:00 p.m.—"Fulfilling the Requirement of 'Sexual Orientation' in the AEJMC Curriculum" co-sponsored by GLBT Interest Group, Graduate Education Interest Group

5:30-7:30 p.m.—"Promising Professors Workshop" co-sponsored by Graduate Education Interest Group

WEDNESDAY, August 4

8:15-9:45 a.m.—Competitive research session

10:00-11:30 a.m.—"Media polarization of the masses" co-sponsored by Radio-TV Journalism Division and Civic Journalism Interest Group

11:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m.—Competitive research session

1:30 -3:00 p.m.—"Getting published in AEJMC divisional journals" co-sponsored by Law Division

5:00-6:30 p.m.—Competitive research session

THURSDAY, August 5

8:15-9:45 a.m.—Competitive research session

11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.—MTV Museum of Television Tour (contact Stacey Cone)

3:15-4:45 p.m.—"International network for cultural diversity: A global NGO" co-sponsored by International Communication Division

8:30-10:00 p.m.—MC&S Members Meeting, Dane S. Claussen, presiding

FRIDAY, August 6

8:15-9:45 a.m.—"Public intellectuals: Perspectives by and for AEJMC educators" (tentative title) co-sponsored by Critical and Culture Studies Division

11:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m. Scholar-to-scholar session (MC&S will have a group of eight research papers presented in the session)

3:15-4:45 p.m. Poster session of MC&S research papers, co-sponsored by Media Management & Economics and Communication Theory & Methodology Divisions

5-6:30 p.m.—"Trends in research on the political economy of the media" co-sponsored by Media Management and Economics Division

6:45-8:15 p.m.—"How media cover new immigrants in communities across Canada and the United States" co-sponsored by Newspaper Division

SATURDAY, August 7

8:15-9:45 a.m. AEJMC new officers training

8:15-9:45 p.m.—Competitive research session

10-11:30 a.m.—"Diagnosing the economic health of minority media" co-sponsored by GLBT Interest Group

1:30-3 p.m.—Competitive research session

3:15-4:45 p.m.—"Serving the public interest or serving the corporate brass: Media concentration and its ethical implications in the newsroom" co-sponsored by Media Management and Economics Division

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