

Midterm Examination Review

The midterm is worth 100 points or 10% of your final grade this semester. Please bring a blank blue book or blank loose-leaf paper for your answers. You may not use your books or your notes. There will be two parts to the exam.

Part I (50 points). This question will appear on the midterm exam, though the list of terms (or pairs or trios of terms) will be reduced from twenty-five to ten. Define five of the concepts listed below as they have been used by the critics or theorists studied in this course and/or appeared in our discussions of the theory and practice of cultural studies. In defining each term, please:

- Explain what the term means.
- Briefly identify the term's source or origin (as it appeared in our course) and/or the theorist(s) who used the term. If the term has been relevant to multiple theorists, you do not need to cite each theorist who used it, but please try to identify the theorist or theorists for whom the term was most important.
- Briefly explain the term's significance to cultural studies.

Each definition should be about a paragraph long. Here is the list of concepts from which I will draw the ten that will appear on the midterm:

propaganda	subculture
spectacle	culture industry
critical/empirical	symbol/icon/index
encoding/decoding	connotation/denotation
hegemonic/negotiated/oppositional	ideology
intertextuality	hegemony
interpellation	public sphere
signifier/signified	base/superstructure
semiotic triangle	aura
semiotics	ISA's/RSA's
empty signifier	medium/message
paradigmatic/syntagmatic	sign
myth	

Part II (50 points). You will write an essay in response to the following question.

In "The Culture Industry," Horkheimer and Adorno claim that the commodification of culture has created an administered and homogenized world in which resistance has been all but eliminated. Other Marxist students of culture—Raymond Williams, for example, in "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory"—argue nearly the opposite. In Williams' view, culture seems always mixed, always varied, always complex, never without resistance and confrontation between opposed ways of life.

So, who is right? Explain which position most closely resembles your own approach to the study of culture and explain your reservations about the other position. Feel free to take a strong position on either side, carve out a middle-ground, or deconstruct the no resistance/always resistance binary.

In addition to Williams and Horkheimer & Adorno, please make at least one specific reference to your own work (done for this class) and/or to the work of some other cultural theorist (studied in this class)—such as Marx and Engels, Benjamin, Gramsci, Habermas, Althusser, Hebdige, Barthes, McLuhan, Hall, Bourdieu, Herman & Chomsky, Debord, Dorfman & Mattelart, or Ang.