

Part 2: Language and mass communication

Overall the materials studied in this part of the course should examine different forms of communication within the media, show the potential of the media to influence ideas, politics, education, etc., and to show how media uses language and image to inform, persuade, and entertain. I would start this unit with a look at "mass" communication as it appeared prior to the printing press. I am also hoping to tie in to ideas established in the first part of the course and to explore those concepts in a manner that leads to an understanding of the changes media has made to the concept of mass communication.

A. Mass communication prior to the printing press.

I would open this unit with a study of Sophocles' *Antigone* with focus on gender roles and conflict of religion and the state, and how theatre was used to communicate these views to the populace. This is also a good time to establish context for Greek theatre and its conventions which will come in handy in the second year of the course. Viewing a good stage production or two would be useful for analysis here as well. A variety of oral work would lend itself well in this unit.

This text would then be followed by a look at oratory (building on the rhetorical devices already discovered in Part 1) and its impact on the populace:

- Pericles' Funeral Oration, from Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*.
- Cicero's speech "In Defense of Aulus Licinius Archias the Poet"
- Pope Urban II's speech at the Council of Clermont which began the Crusades. There are five eye-witness accounts of this speech which can be compared and contrasted.

B. Next I would consider the invention of the printing press (1439) exploring a few aspects of the democratizing of knowledge and the shift to vernacular language. (In 1999 the A&E Network ranked Gutenberg number 1 on their "People of the Millennium" countdown.) This would be a good place for a brief student exploration of texts and articles that made an enormous impact on the thinking of the times, such as the printed edition of Martin Luther's 95 Theses of which 300,000 copies were disseminated in two years. Focus could be made on the use of electronic media which enables such research, together with a discussion of reliability: fact, bias, impact of translation, interpretation, sources used, censorship, etc. Students could also look at modern mass influences (as in going viral) perhaps through FOAs.

C. The next unit would be a study of newspapers and their role in communication. Here it would be possible to do several comparative studies on the nature of newspapers in different times and places. Starting with the first newspapers (1609 Germany) a comparison could be made of first pages, techniques and positions held on conveying news, and eventually a look at comics, editorials, advertisements, etc. as these appear over time and vary from place to place. Students would be asked to look closely at these various elements of the newspaper to determine **how** they are constructed so as to impact the audience. Comparing the coverage of current events from paper to paper (especially a "world worthy" news item) would be useful as well to show how papers establish or reflect political or ideological influences. A consideration of magazines would build from this discussion and add elements of graphics, formats, etc. beyond just the newspaper. As a segue to a look at television, a study could be made of newscasts

in that media and a discussion of how television news differs from that of newsprint and to what effect.

D. Finally I would shift focus to television and film. I would narrow the focus to one or two aspects, such as depictions of "family," "work environments," "privacy," etc. And explore the interrelationship of media maker, audience, and the media itself. For example, students could view three episodes from television shows depicting families from three different decades, and observe the shifts in ideology, presentation, tone and attitude. Students could then offer their own depictions of "family" in a text type of their choice.

For film, it might be interesting to view a modern film of Antigone, such as the 1961 Greek film starring Irene Papas and directed by Javellas (with subtitles) and compare it to Theban Plays: Antigone, 1984 TV version with Juliet Stevenson. A close look at staging, interpretation of characters, film devices, etc. could then be compared to the earlier theatrical presentations studied, and considerations of time, place, culture, intended audience, and other aspects of context could then be made. FOAs could explore the differences between the written word, the spoken word, and visuals. (A side study could be made of the impact of media "stars" and of the texts generated from this phenomenon.)

E. Finally close attention can be paid to the electronic media that enabled so much of our discussion and communication throughout the year. Students could, as a culminating activity, generate a report on the risks and benefits of electronic communication, perhaps generating their own attitudes to e-media in a text type of their choice.

