

Traditional  
(Instrumental)  
Marxism

Role

The role of the media is to ensure the views and interests of a ruling class are presented to the rest of the population in such a way as to ensure people accept things like inequality as "normal and right".

Mass Society

Ross (1995): A mass society is one where "the masses" (as opposed to the small ruling elite) have certain characteristics:

Characteristics

Dispersal

Most people are not in daily face-to-face contact with each other because they are widely dispersed across a geographic area.

Isolation

People have little or no meaningful contact or social interaction. What interaction there is (work, for example) is largely *instrumental*. And people lack strong social ties binding them together in communities.

Anonymity



People rarely feel they are part of a functioning social group, community or society - which is where the media enters the picture because it can be used by powerful groups to create a (false) sense of community and culture.

Mass Culture

The "culture of the masses" (sometimes called *popular* or *low* culture to distinguish it from the *high* culture of the social elite) is the *social glue* that binds mass society. It provides the "things in common" (such as values and beliefs) socially-isolated individuals can share to create the *illusion* of a common culture.

Artificial

This culture is artificial, in the sense of not being created by the people who consume it.

Mass Produced

Fiske (1995): "The cultural commodities of mass culture - films, TV shows, CDs, etc. are produced and distributed by an industrialized system whose aim is to maximize profit for the producers and distributors by appealing to as many consumers as possible".

Simple



Mass culture appeals to the **lowest common denominator** - to appeal to "the masses" cultural products have to be safe, not intellectually demanding and predictable. To sell to "as many consumers as possible" mass culture has to be bland, inoffensive and simple to understand.

