

English 216: notes for Chapter 10

The Politics of the Popular

thesis: criticism must include both political economy and cultural analysis

McGuigan: critiques cultural studies

- **new revisionism:** hegemony made it “uncritically optimistic” about consumption
- i.e., hegemony focuses on consumption as resistance, ignores political economy

John Fiske: McGuigan’s example of the above, but Storey argues he gets Fiske wrong

- **financial economy:** selling products for money (aka, Marx’s “exchange value”)
 - tends to side with homogenization and domination
- **cultural economy:** how people make meaning (akin to Marx’s “use value”)
 - tends to side with heterogeneity and resistance
- **social resistance:** actions
- **semiotic resistance:** symbols

Pierre Bordieu: Fiske uses his theory of cultural fields to make his case

- **cultural fields:** all cultural groups (classes) reproduce their own values (i.e., ideology)
 - **capitalists:** high financial capital + low cultural capital = power to naturalize ideology
 - **intellectuals & artists:** low financial capital + high cultural capital = pure gaze (below)
 - **pure gaze:** aesthetic tendency towards formalism: how it’s made

- **formalism:** form determines meaning; thus, ahistorical & decontextualized
- **naïve gaze:** opposite of pure gaze; functional interpretation, what it means
- **grounded aesthetic** (Willis): meaning derives from how texts/commodities are used
- **poaching** (de Certeau): use texts we don't own to circulate unauthorized interpretations

Henry Jenkins: his study of fan cultures is a prime example of poaching

- **fans:** special kind of consumption, integrate texts into their lives (not vice-versa)
- **rereading:** shift attention from what (plot) to how (meaning)
- **fanfic:** produce & circulate in order to create new meanings that fans need and/or want
- **mundania:** everyday/mainstream culture against which they compare themselves
- critique (Grossberg): this is just a new kind of élitism; fans ≈ academics / critics

Storey's Solution: hegemony still works!

- **common culture** (Willis): profit motive creates contradictions within the culture industry
 - desire for profit (exchange value) can create spaces for resistance (use value)
- **hegemony:** integrates structure (political economy) and agency (subjectivity of consumers)
 - **first instance:** economics determine form/content of pop culture objects
 - second instance: "**production in use,**" meaning is produced in the act of consumption