

I want to use this comprehensive exam to explore the relationship between mass media, the public sphere and civil society. The three categories are often confused or considered synonymous in popular discussions. One of the presuppositions of this exam, following Calhoun (1995), will be that the media, public sphere and civil society are separate analytic concepts which, in the context of the late twentieth-century, are inextricably tied to any assessment of the potential for democratic politics in large-scale modern societies. The media cannot be considered *the* public sphere, nor should we allow civil society to be collapsed into the public sphere. To do so would elide important distinctions and debates. Instead, the tensions between the three categories need to be explored so as to understand their dynamic interrelationships. My principle focus, however, will be the relationship between mass media and the public sphere and the potential for democratic political communication - defined as the construction and dissemination and/or exchange of meanings related to social relations of power

A starting point for the exam is Jürgen Habermas's early work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Habermas's historical and empirical study of the rise and fall of the bourgeois public sphere has sparked a useful debate concerning differing conceptions of democratic media institutions, the normative values and practices which should guide them and the preconditions required within civil society that would allow free actors to participate in a discussion about themselves.

First, a wave of deregulation in the 1980s led to renewed interest by scholars in public service media. Work in this field - even among fierce critics of Habermas (Keane 1991) - can be seen as an attempt to preserve the democratic promise of the bourgeois-public sphere and its use of publicity to hold state power accountable. The studies explore the tendency of privately-owned media toward monopolization, corporate concentration and cross ownership while positing the role of state sponsored public-service media (with differing emphasis) as a potential bulwark against the ravages of the market (Aufderheide (1991), Curran 1991, Keane 1991, Garnham 1992, Hoynes 1994, Scannell 1989).

Secondly, there are differing views of what kinds of media representations are compatible with a democratic public sphere. Central to this discussion is Habermas's insistence that public discussion be based on rational-critical discourse free from status claims, rhetoric or aesthetic modes of communication. Habermas argues the issue is a choice between uncoerced rational discourse and communication embedded in forms of power relations. Habermas's grounding of the concept has changed from his early historical work to a more abstract normative conception, but this transition has not stopped his many critics. Feminist scholars (Fraser 1989, 1993, McLaughlin 1993) have argued that Habermas's rational-critical discourse is a gendered concept predicated on patriarchal authority in the private sphere. This critique has been taken up in the feminist tradition by Behabib (1992) who argues that Habermas's project can be revived by reorienting communicative ethics around a moral understanding of concrete, historically situated individuals. Scholars have also argued that there is a role for more aesthetic or "arational" forms of discourse which open up opportunities for motivating democratic participation (Dalhgren 1995, Peters 1993).

Thirdly, clashing definitions of publicity challenge Habermas's assumption, similar to that of liberal theory, that subjects enter the public sphere as fully formed independent actors after having developed the requisite skills and subjective positions within the private sphere. Critics

argue that Habermas's conception of the public sphere includes a strict separation of public and private which elides potential subject matter for political discussion - a distinction which is itself based on unequal social relations (Benhabib 1992, Fraser 1992, 1993, McLaughlin 1993). Instead of viewing the public sphere as a space in which disinterested subjects debate their common interest the public sphere is seen as a clash between a multiplicity of irreducible interests (Curran 1991, Dalhgren 1995, Keane 1991). Subjectivity, the basis of political participation, is here thought to be achieved through the process of interaction between various elements of civil society in public (Calhoun 1995).

Fourthly, there is, as Robbins (1993) has suggested "an unresolved and perhaps unresolvable tension, between a tight, authoritative singleness (the public as object of a quest for a universal collective subject or a privileged arena of struggle) and a more relaxed, decentered pluralism (publicness as something spread liberally through many irreducibly different collectivities)." The tension between these competing views of public life produces a debate over the location of politics. Garnham (1992, 1995) emphasizes the need for a media system that occupies the same social space as other institutionalized forms of power such as the market, while Keane (1991, 1995) argues this is an oppressive goal.

- Alejandro, Roberto (1993). Hermeneutics, Citizenship, and the Public Sphere, New York, State University of New York Press.
- Arendt, Hannah (1958). "The Public and the Private Realm," The Human Condition, Hannah Arendt, University of Chicago Press.
- Aufderheide, Patricia (1991). "Public Television and the Public Sphere," Critical Studies in Mass Communication, Vol. 8, pp. 168-183.
- Benhabib, Seyla (1992). Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics, London and New York, Routledge.
- Calhoun, Craig (1992). Habermas and the Public Sphere, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press.
- Calhoun, Craig (1993). "Civil Society and the Public Sphere," Public Culture, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 267-280.
- Carey, James (1987). "The Press and Public Discourse," Center Magazine, March/April, Vol. 20, No. 2, 4-16.
- Dahlgren, Peter and Colin Sparks (1991). Communication and Citizenship: Journalism and the Public Sphere, Ed. Peter Dahlgren and Colin Sparks, London and New York, Routledge.
- Dahlgren, Peter (1995). Television and the Public Sphere, London, Sage.
- Fraser, Nancy (1989). "What's So Critical About Critical Theory?: The Case of Habermas and Gender," Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Fraser, Nancy (1992). "Sex, Lies and the Public Sphere: Some Reflections on the Confirmation of Clarence Thomas," Critical Inquiry, Spring, Vol. 18, pp. 595-612.
- Garnham, Nicholas (1995). "Comments on John Keane's Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere," The Communication Review, Vol. 1, No. 1, 23-25.
- Habermas, Jürgen (1970). Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science and Politics, Trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro, Boston, Beacon Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen (1987). "An Alternative Way out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative versus Subject-Centered Reason," The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, Cambridge, MIT Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen (1989). The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, Trans. Thomas Burger, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press.
- Hallin, Daniel (1994). We Keep America on Top of the World: Television Journalism and the Public Sphere, London, Routledge, Introduction and Chap 8.
- Hoynes, William (1994). Public Television for Sale: Media, the Market, and the Public Sphere, Boulder, Westview Press.
- Keane, John (1991). The Media and Democracy, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Keane, John (1995). "Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere," The Communication Review, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1-22.
- McGuigan, Jim (1996). Culture and the Public Sphere, London, Routledge.
- McLaughlin, Lisa (1993). "Feminism, the Public Sphere, Media and Democracy," Media, Culture & Society, Vol. 15, pp. 599-620.
- Merritt Jr., Davis (1994). "Public Journalism: What It Means, How It Works," Public Journalism: Theory and Practice, Dayton, Ohio, The Kettering Foundation.

- Peters, John Durham and Kenneth Cmiel (1991). "Media Ethics and the Public Sphere," Communication, Vol. 12, pp. 197-215.
- Peters, John Durham (1993). "Distrust of Representation: Habermas on the Public Sphere," Media Culture and Society, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 541-571.
- Raboy, Marc (1990). "Conclusion," Missed Opportunities: The Story of Canada's Broadcasting Policy, Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's Press.
- Raboy, Marc (1995). "Influencing Public Policy on Canadian Broadcasting," Canadian Public Administration, Vol. 38, No. 3, pp. 411-432.
- Robbins, Bruce (1993). The Phantom Public Sphere, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Rosen, Jay (1991). "Making Journalism More Public," Communication, Vol. 12, 267-284.
- Scannell, Paddy (1989). "Public Service Broadcasting and Modern Public Life," Media Culture and Society, Vol. 11, No. 2, 135-166.
- Schudson, Michael (1994). "The Public Sphere and Its Problems: Bringing the State Back In," Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics and Public Policy, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 529-546.
- Sennett, Richard (1978). The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism, New York, Vintage.
- Sparks, Colin (1989). "Broadcasting and the public sphere: editorial" Media, Culture & Society, April, Vol., 11, pp. 131-4
- Thompson, John (1993). "The Theory of the Public Sphere," Media, Culture and Society, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 173-189.
- Villa, Dana R. (1992). "Postmodernism and the Public Sphere". American Political Science Review., Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 712-720.