

SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

To:

From: Kusum Singh

Date: Jan. 5, '93

Re:

Dear George,
Thanks for the material on Cultural environment. Looking forward to our discussions on matters of mutual interest.

Since you will be arriving on Jan. 14th so close to our class time, it might save time not to check in any baggage and not to stop at the hotel on your way to SMC. Hope this does not cause too much inconvenience. Let's hope your plane gets here on time!

Regards,

Kusum

Saint Mary's College of California, January 1993

A FUTURE WITHOUT TV TYRANNY?

Kusum Singh and Bertram Gross

M, T, W, Th 12 noon-2:30

Tyranny is an ancient idea. It meant one thing for the ancient Greeks. It meant something else for the author of the inscription on the ceiling of the Jefferson Memorial "On the altar of God, I have sworn eternal hostility toward every form of tyranny over the mind of man." He knew that some forms could come slowly or silently. "I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people," wrote James Madison, "by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations."

Today, "tyranny" is used in referring to the centralized controls exercised by authoritarian, militaristic, dictatorial, or totalitarian regimes.

By our usage, there are less obvious forms of tyranny even within countries of constitutional democracy. Some of these are obvious--as in the case of a tyrannical parent, doctor, teacher, coach, or employer. Others are more subtle--as with the tyranny of sexism, racism, homophobia, militarism, etc.

What about TV? Many critics and communication students believe that TV (together with film and video tapes) has become a new and dangerous form of tyranny.

- a) Some point out that TV in most of its forms (and particularly drama and news) has given many millions of people false views of reality. They charge that this is done through both direct messages and meta-messages.
- b) Others have argued that the widespread scenes of violence on the monitor and the screen tend to legitimate use of violence as a way of handling conflict.
- c) Others have shown that the expansion of mass audience displaces other forms of human communication and activity.

We tend to agree with all of the above. But in this seminar, we hope to go much further. We expect that the classroom discussions and the term papers will all contribute toward the demystification of TV tyranny and more positively toward the theory and practice of democratic communication.

Readings:

Jerry Mander, Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television. Morrow Quill Paperbacks, 1978. Before the author visits our class, we expect to deal with all four arguments against TV.

Frances Moore Lappe and Family, What to do after you turn off the TV: Fresh ideas for enjoying family time. Ballantine Books,

A FUTURE WITHOUT TV TYRANNY?-2

1985. This book as a whole provides just one of the many approaches toward what can be done to displace too much TV viewing. It may inspire students to invent similar approaches or do better than Lappe.

A Future without TV Tyranny, a brief reader prepared by Kusum Singh and Bertram Gross.

Current news reports brought by students and any material brought to class by visitors.

Calendar

First Week Topic

- M 4 Plan of this course
Preliminary Questions on the
Expansion of TV and its Audiences

Open discussion of the questions.
- T 5 Video: "TV Explosion" Mander, p.1-47
Waters, "Life According to TV," p.130-140b
- W 6 Molly Roth Hamaker, Associate Director,
Institute for the Arts of Democracy
Charles Hamaker. SMC Mathematics Professor
"family Life without TV"

Tori Gibbs. SMC B.A.
in communications "Too Much TV: America's
Hidden Addiction." p.1-32
- Th 7 Mander, Argument One: "The Mediation of experience,"
p.53-112
Mander, Argument Two: "The Colonization of Experience,"
p.115-153

Second Week

- M 11 **Typed submission of first thoughts on term paper**

Video: Wrestling Mania III
Fooling people Gross, "Managing Information & Minds."
- T 12 Video: "TV News" Lippman, "Global TV"

The media's war in the
Persian Gulf Gerbner, "Persian Gulf War, the
Movie."
- W 13 Demystifying TV Gerbner, "Cultural Indicators."

A FUTURE WITHOUT TV TYRANNY?-3

Th 14 Visitor, Prof. George Gerbner, Dean Emeritus, Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania.

Third Week

Typed submission of detailed outline of term paper, with questions to be asked and preliminary answers, plus bibliography. At this stage you may include in your bibliography references to articles or books that you have not yet read.

As needed, you can get bibliographic help from one of the research librarians in the library.

M 18 Video: "Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr."

Mander, Argument Three: "Effects of Television on Human Being," p.157-260

T 19 Visitor, Jerry Mander Argument Four, p.263-343

W 20 Lappe, "Is There Life After TV?" p.3-17
Class Debate--focus to be determined

Th 21 TV Addiction
Two scenarios
Larry Gross, "Thoughts on Visual Communication . . ."
Neuman, "Two Theories. . ."

Fourth Week

Submission of first draft of term paper (including bibliography), with 1 page summary (or abstract)

Student Presentations: Each student is to submit a well developed preliminary summary of the final paper for all members of the class. **Maximum length: one double-spaced page with no more than 250 words.** These will be presented orally during the course of this week.

M 25 Presentation and discussion of student abstracts

T 26 Presentation and discussion of student abstracts

W 27 Presentation and discussion of student abstracts

Th 28 Presentation and summary discussion

Final papers due no later than ^{Feb} January 1, 1993

At this stage you should not include in your bibliography any articles or books that you have not yet read.

A FUTURE WITHOUT TV TYRANNY?-4

Basis for Final Grade:

- 1) Prompt attendance (no lateness or absences);
- 2) Preparation of typed question concerning each of the required readings,
- 3) Participation and initiation of discussion (overcoming of timidity, command of facts, defense of your views, courtesy in dealing with opposing views, etc.), and
- 4) Final paper. Criteria for grading:
 - a) Creativity, depth and breadth of analysis or interpretation and quality of research. Writing errors will definitely lower your score.
 - b) The classroom presentation should last at least 10 to 15 minutes plus 5 minutes for questions and answers and will be graded in terms of scholarly worth and contribution to our course. You may want to avoid repeating what is written in the paper and instead illustrate or expand upon ideas that encourage discussion.

The SMC grading systems is as follows:

- A Outstanding (honors)
- B Very Good
- C Satisfactory
- D Barely passing
- F Failed

Absences (particularly on Thursdays or during last week) may lead to serious downgrading. . .

December, 1992

Saint Mary's College of California, January 1993

A WORLD FUTURE WITHOUT TV TYRANNY

Kusum Singh and Bertram Gross M, T, W, Th 12 noon-2:30

Last name

First name

Feel free to exchange views with others in the class

If necessary, use the back of the page. . .

SOME QUESTIONS ON TELEVISION

1. How many hours per week do you watch TV or videotapes?
2. How is your viewing time distributed among the various types of programs? Give roughly estimated percentages.
 - A. sports
 - B. news
 - C. drama
 - D. video tapes
 - E. other (specify)Total: 100
3. What do you think is the average TV viewing time for people in the country as a whole?
 - A. Hours per day
 - B. Hours per week
4. Do you think that the time spent watching TV or videotapes takes time away from direct personal communication....
 - A. In your own case?
 - B. In the case of other students?
 - C. In your family back home?
 - D. In the country generally?

You may answer with such words as "a little," "a lot," "too much," etc.

5. To what extent does TV viewing give an accurate picture of reality? Explain
6. To the extent that people are addicted to TV, video tapes and films, what could be done to
 - A. prevent addiction?
 - B. cure addicts
7. What would be the obstacles to any of the actions you suggest in 6 above.

Saint Mary's College of California, January 1993

A FUTURE WITHOUT TV TYRANY

Kusum Singh and Bertram Gross

M, T, W, Th 12 noon-2:30

READER

Gerbner, George. "Persian Gulf War, the Movie," Triumph of the Image. Editors et al. Westview Press, 1992, p.243-265.

_____, et al. "Cultural Indicators," Project of The Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, 1992, p.1-8.

Gibbs, Tori. "Children: The Silent Sufferers of the Loudest Injustice". A senior student paper with an invaluable set of abstracts and references. p.1-10

Gross, Bertram. "Managing Information and Minds," Friendly Fascism, South End Press, 1982, p.255-270.

Gross, Larry. "Thoughts on Visual Communication in a Media-addicted and Image-promiscuous Society," AEJMC convention, Montreal, August 6, 1992, p.1-4

Hopkins, John C. "Wrestling plays up minority stereotypes," Oakland Tribune, November 2, 1992

Lippman, John. "Global TV: Television hasn't just found its place in history -- it's making it," Los Angeles Times, December 6, 1992, p. 1-2

Neuman, Russel W. "Two Theories of the Communications Revolution," The Future of the Mass Audience. Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.22-47

Singh, Kusum. "Elitist vs. Democratic Communication: Ronald Reagan and Mohandas Gandhi," Janet Wasko and Vincent Mosco, Eds. Democratic Communications in the Information Age, Ablex, 1992. p. 42-57.

----- and Bertram Gross, "Demystifying Tyranny," 19 p.

Soloman, Norman. "Introduction," The Power of Babble. Laurel, 1992, p.1-3

US Bureau of the Census. "Communications," Statistical Abstract of the United States 1992. p. 546-560.

Waters, Harry F. "Life According to TV," Newsweek, December 6, 1982.