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COM 421 Chapter 12

1. Why is it important to tell the story about the world before mass communication?
In today's society, we tend to automatically associate mass media with the media because that's how we communicate and connect with people all over the world. Additionally, we are used to the Internet in a way that has become unavoidable. However, in order to understand how people lived long ago, even before the term mass communication existed, it is necessary to tell the story of mass communication before the invention of the media to convey that we nowadays live in a luxurious world but also to honor the immense progress technology has made over the past century. According to the textbook, people depended upon another to share important information thousands of years ago, without any form of recorded information. Living in close-knit tribal communities that facilitated face-to face exchanges of information, people also found joy in singing, storytelling and frequent social gatherings which played a central role in preserving a record of these tribal cultures. Additionally, those were the methods of learning about new births, sharing community resources as well as teaching society about culture and religion. As these tribal societies enlarged and civilization arose, it became more difficult to exchange information in the tribe, which is why crude media forms including store tablets and scrolls began to take place of the rudimentary oral forms of preservation. By thinking about the society represented by tribal cultures and their methods of oral communication, we are able to better understand and appreciate various forms of mass media influence individual and social behavior in our world today. Thinking about oral cultures inspires us to be acquisitive and, thus, ask more questions and consider answers that shape, define and maintain the culture we share today. Moreover, studying the history of mass communication helps us to be more discerning about what we really know about our world other than just assuming. Therefore, learning about the history of mass communication and media research helps us become more critical thinkers in regards to the information we know as well as raising our awareness for important responsibilities in shaping society.

2. Given Lippmann's account of media as a window on the world, how might this change your perspective of the importance of professionalism in the journalistic profession?

According to Lippmann, there is an anecdote used to emphasize the importance of media in shaping our lives. Lippmann described a small island where a small group of French, English, and German people lived just before World War 1. A British mail ship offered the only link between these people and the outside world. The people on this island lived and worked together in friendly and peaceful situations, being unaware that the French and English had gone to war against Germany until the mail ship reported the news six weeks after the fighting had started. Lippmann's message is that media accounts of the world beyond out experience play a meaningful role in defining our attitudes and actions as the media are our eyes to the world beyond our reach. Additionally, Lippmann distinguished between the "world outside" and the pictures that the media help us create in our own minds. At this point, Lippmann was concerned that media representations inaccurately portrayed events in the real world. He pointed out that public relations strategists working for individuals or for corporations make available a one-sided view of the world and, therefore, influence journalists who lack time, contacts and other resources to conduct their own research before reaching their story deadlines. Besides, Lippmann

elaborated on the fact that issues of privacy and the lack of basic access to the point at which news occurs prevent the media from reporting much potential information at all. Thus, because of the very nature of the news process, audiences invariably receive incomplete and distorted information.

3. Describe the theories of agenda setting, media system dependency, and uses and gratifications in terms of microscopic versus macroscopic approaches.

In one of the earliest attempts to prove a direct effect of mass media on audiences, Bernard Cohen found that media may not be able to tell audiences "what to think" but instead it could tell them "what to think about". This new idea became known as the so-called agenda setting theory, which said that at a macroscopic level, the issues people think are important for America to deal with will be correlated with the issues the media most often presents as problems for the society. In terms of media system dependency, a third theory said that the media might have powerful effects in limited situations which was developed by Sandra Ball-Kokeach (1976). Developing media system dependency theory, she found that media was the most influential when people could not rely upon personal sources of information. In cases such as natural disasters or plane crashes, the media provided the best source of information because few people have direct experiences of these kinds of events to share reliable information with their friends and families. However, Ball-Rokeach acknowledged the important role that interpersonal relationships played in gathering and interpreting information indicating that people do not have to rely on the media as much as long as adequate information is available through personal contact. These qualifying conditions explain why the media sometimes appears to have very powerful effects, while at other times they only have little effects on people's opinions. Alongside the limited but powerful effects model is a theory that describes how we use the media to satisfy needs and wants based on our own cognitive activity rather than asking how the media affects us. Originally formulated by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch, uses and gratifications theory recognized the important role of individuals' motives in selecting media products. This line of research figured that people decided which media messages interested them most, which then caused individual members of an audience to have different motivations toward processing the same mass media message. As people come to a media setting with different motives for being there, they naturally receive different results from the same message. This view focuses upon individual reasoning and goals as a direct influence on how media affects an individual. By examining people's motives for using media messages, researchers have found that many of the weak media findings from the limited effects tradition may be better explained by differences in the media consumption goals of individual audience members.

4. Which of your personal characteristics lead you to selectively use media in a different way than some of your friends?

Being a Communications major, while having a film for writing and film has made me think critically and question information I am receiving, while only dealing with credible sources. This year I am also doing an internship with the school radio and this has helped me process information more adequately, since I was trying to convey something meaningful to the audience. I think what sets me apart from others around me is not only the fact that I selectively use the media for a different purpose such as broadcasting and creativity, I think the biggest difference is that I analyze topics that really interest me in order to inspire and encourage others around me. Living in a world where we are bombarded with the media, it is very easy to get

overwhelmed and lost in anxiety. It's easy to follow what everyone else is doing because the media can challenge us to compare ourselves to others. I want people to know that they are not alone and that perfection is overrated.