



11 The Media

Chapter Outline

- “The Pictures in our Heads”
- What Do the Media Produce?
 - Television and Radio
 - Print Media
 - Film
 - Advertisement
- What Determines the Mass Media Product?
 - The Economic Filter
 - The Legal/Regulatory Filter
 - The Technological Filter
 - The Organizational Filter
 - Newsworthiness
 - Predictability
 - Visual Appeal
 - The Ideological Filter
- The Media and Democracy
- Summary

Learning Objectives

After reading Chapter 11 in *Canadian Democracy*, you should be able to do the following:

- Discuss the importance of the media as agents for social learning.
- Explain how entertainment and commercial advertising can have consequences for political life.
- Identify the various “filters” that influence what the media produce, briefly summarizing the effects of each.
- Outline the criteria used by regulators to determine Canadian content.
- Compose one or two paragraphs that use as many key terms (listed below) as possible.

Key Concepts

Economic filter Media outlets must be able to sell a product that will attract enough subscribers, advertisers, buyers, or patrons to cover production costs and to make a profit (p. 404)

Ideological filter It is argued that those who report the news have liberal-left and anti-business biases, and that they favour stories and groups that challenge established authority. (p. 415)

Legal/regulatory filter Radio and television broadcasters are regulated by government. Print media essentially regulate themselves through press councils created and operated by the industry. (p. 408)

Organizational filter The needs and procedures of the organizations that gather and report news influence the content of the news, both what is reported and how it is covered. In the case of television, three criteria make the news credible to the public: newsworthiness, predictability, and visual appeal (p. 413)

Propaganda The dissemination of selected information and/or misinformation to the public as a means of spreading a particular ideology or doctrine (p. 395)

Social learning The process of acquiring knowledge, values, and beliefs about the world and ourselves. (394)

Technological filter We expect that the media will communicate what is happening now, but stories must be edited down to a length suitable for inclusion in a 30-minute news program or the pages of a newspaper (p. 412)

Critical Thinking Questions

1. According to Cooper, the CBC has adopted a left-wing stance. Watch or listen to CBC news and, over a period of time, try to detect instances of left-wing bias. Do the same with the other major, private-sector networks. Is Cooper’s argument validated by your observations? Is it more acceptable if private-sector networks adopt a right-wing stance?
2. What is meant by the expression “the media do not determine *what we think* so much as *what we think about*”? Do you agree with this assessment?

3. Make a list of the major Canadian newspapers and take a look at their content. Can you identify any ideological differences between them?
4. Review a news item from various different news sources. How can you tell the difference between fake news and real news? What sort of indicators determine the validity of a news item?
5. Allen Ginsberg famously quoted that “Whoever controls the media, the images, controls the culture.” How does this apply in Canada? Do the media really control how Canadians perceive each other, and their cultural biases?

Additional Resources

Darin, B. (2005). *Communications Technology*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Brewer, P., Godlwaihe Young, D. & Morreale, M. (2013). The impact of real news about “fake news”: Intertextual processes and political satire. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 25(3)

Holmes, H., & Taras, D. (Eds.) (1996). *Seeing Ourselves: Media Power and Policy in Canada* (2nd ed.). Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada.

Nesbitt-Larking, P. (2001). *Politics, Society, and the Media: Canadian Perspectives*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press.

Taras, D. (2001). *Power and Betrayal in the Canadian Media*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press.

Trimble, L., & Sampert, S. (2009). *Mediating Canadian Politics*. Toronto: Pearson Education Canada.