

DIPLOMA IN MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

MCG 204 MASS MEDIA & SOCIETY

WEEK 9 Regulating the Media

REGULATING THE MEDIA - INTRODUCTION

- Communication is too important to the process of social cooperation to remain uncontrolled.
- Communication is regulated by the rules of language, the culturally determined categories to describe the world – grandpa/grandma?
- Communication reflects status & power difference in society – thus we speak differently to our boss, friends & family.

REGULATING THE MEDIA (CONT'D)

- As humans are social beings, communication is never entirely unregulated – it's constrained by social rules.
- As societies become more complex, communication is regulated formally through laws & other written regulations.
- Laws may exist to protect individuals or groups from defamation – to protect a person's good name & regulations from false assertions.
- Most countries with broadcasting technology – creation of broadcast goods are treated differently from the creation of other goods like automobiles & microwaves.

REGULATING THE MEDIA (CONT'D)

Government Regulation – Freedom of the Press

- Of all the media, the print media are the most free of government regulation. The First Amendment (1971) of the U.S Constitution guarantees freedom of the press, “Congress shall make no law...abridging freedom of speech or of the press”

REGULATING THE MEDIA (CONT'D)

- Freedom of the press means the right to gather & publish information or to write opinion without government control or fear of punishment.
- The right to press freedom, while not absolute, applies to all forms of printed material, not just newspapers.
- Broadcast media, although coming under the First Amendment, tends to be more regulated. Broadcast audiences are seen as having less absolute control over what is being broadcast into their homes.

REGULATING THE MEDIA (CONT'D)

- Freedom of Press does not apply to obscenity & pornography or in cases of overriding national security when publication would create a “clear & present danger.”
- When press freedom is not strong, the press is controlled by censorship or used by the government as an organ of propaganda.
- Despite its protection by the law, press publishers are influenced by the public, business, government & editorial policies of the publisher.

Regulating the Spectrum:

- Broadcasting is more regulated than print due to the broadcast spectrum being limited, but an exceptionally valuable but scarce resource.
- It is scarce because, without proper controls, one broadcasting signal can easily interfere with another.
- Congress passed the Radio Act of 1927 – created the Federal Radio Commission with the licensing & regulatory powers established the important principles of public over private ownership of spectrum. This paved the way for the more comprehensive Communication Act of 1934.