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**JC GP Essays – Term 4 2014 – Lesson 3 – Mass Media**

1. ‘Objective Reporting is dead.’ Is this true of today’s mass media?
2. Have we made mass media scapegoats for the social problem we are experiencing?
3. Is censorship becoming increasingly necessary in today's world?

**Q1. ‘Objective Reporting is dead.’ Is this true of today’s mass media?**

Introduction

* Overview of the issue
  + - The omnipresent influence of the mass media – we depend on the mass media for information
    - We expect the mass media to provide objective reporting
    - Meaning of objective reporting
* Perspectives of discussion
  + - Those who share a normative perception believes that such reporting can exist
    - Those who are skeptical and empirical in their perception who disagree

Stand – agree with the latter that objective reporting is indeed dead.

Main body

* State the opposing view

For those who are more idealistic about the media industry, their reasons for the belief that objective reporting does prevail in the modern society stems from the fact that

* The mass media upholds journalistic integrity
  + presence of civic responsibility
  + understand the imperative of being objective – it can undermine social instability
* Prevalence of freedom of speech advocated in a democratic society will provide a wider perspectives of discussion for individual to review – more comprehensive understanding of the issues – a form of self censorship advocated by journalistic practices in India
* Develop the rebuttal

However, such a perception is utopian or idealistic.

* Journalistic integrity cannot exist as it is subjected to political pressures and economic constraints imposed by the society
* Press freedom does not act in the interest of the society but the press owner. This usually means that the press owner values profit much more than the interest of society.
* Supporting Views
* The mass media is means for the government – ‘an explicit branch of the government’ – propagate the interests of the society – use the information to shape the audience with intended messages.
* Mass media serves as the means for the diverse communities to extend their interests – manipulative by political, social, economic entities
* Commercial exploitation adopted by the mass media to promote their economic concerns
* Difficulties in verifying the source of information – information can be fictitious and untrue – information is misused and considered true – the speed and convenience in the provision of information provided by technological advancement

Conclusion

The influence of mass media over the lives of individuals in contemporary society is omnipresent and undeniable as we depend greatly on the mass media for the extensive information it can provide to help us conduct our lives and interact with the society. This has shaped the expectation for the modern mass media to be an institution that provides objective reporting whereby non-biased, independent account or reports are made. For those who hold a more normative perception about the mass media, they believe that an objective reporting can exist.

**Q3. Is censorship becoming increasingly necessary in today's world?**

**(Avoid a debate on the need of censorship/ focus on the need of censorship in the modern era)**

**Introduction**

Censorship has always been criticized by liberals as the violation of the rights of the individuals as it is seen as a measure that undermines freedom of speech. However, as our society becomes more complex, the result of higher degree of institutionalization and integration of diverse communities while the modern media technology advances, there is a call for the re-examination of the requirement of censorship to ensure that the detrimental effects of the mass media will not occur to undermine the development of a civil society. Therefore, it is indisputable to agree that censorship has become increasingly necessary in today’s world.

**Main Body**

For detractors who are against censorship, they would not agree that censorship is needed in the modern society despite the growing negative influences it imposes on the society as it is seen as a restriction of the freedom of speech. To them, it is imperative for the society to uphold freedom of speech as it is the fundamental right of any individuals in a democratic nation. Furthermore, the imposition of censorship is a complex notion to introduce due to the complexity in setting the yardstick as there are diverse opinions on this matter, especially in modern societies where multiculturalism is the explanation for the complexity.

Nonetheless, such an argument is questionable. In reality, the notion of freedom of speech we uphold faithfully does not benefit the interests of the masses, but only for the interest of the owners and operators of the media industry. As for the difficulty in setting the yardstick, it is often resolved with the yardstick set by the consensus of the majority. It is reasonable for the individuals to agree to the values of the majority as ‘the will of all’ as noted by John Jacque Rousseau is the social norm to be respected and accepted if one chooses to live in the society that advocates this value. Moreover, if we examine the complexity of the influence the mass media would impose on the modern society and various phenomenon that occur in this era, we will demand the imposition of censorship to prevent such negative development.

One such complication that demands the imposition of censorship is the commonality of vices and morally degrading behaviours seen in our society made prevalent by the use of internet. Pornography and internet gaming has intoxicated the minds of many, especially the youths who are immature and are easily susceptible to temptations of undesirable values. Without censorship to regulate the accessibility of this information, the youths are likely to get addicted to the vices and fall preys to syndicate crimes as internet gaming are appealing to the young people. In a recent article in the Strait Times, there are reports of syndicate criminals in China using internet as a way to get youngsters to get addicted to gambling and made them indebted to loan-sharking activities subsequently. Thus, the need to stamp out rampant rise of syndicate crime and its adverse impact on youth would make censorship increasingly necessary.

The imposition of censorship is also deemed necessary when we consider the negative impact on social harmony and stability if freedom of speech is not made accountable. Deleterious and offensive remarks are often made through new media technology like Facebook, tweeters and blogs as they have made it very accessible and convenient for individuals to voice out their opinions. On a bright side, this technological development in the media industry empowers the individuals but on a dark side, the technological empowerment is abused as individuals are not held accountable for biased and defaming remarks. Consequently, we can observe the rise of many cyber bullies among the young users of the internet whose behavoiurs are considered anti-social. From a wider observation, we can see how these remarks can incite racial tensions as seen by a recent Youtube upload of the racist remark made by a student in Berkley. The charges brought against three youngsters for their racist remarks over the internet under the Sedition Act by the courts in Singapore show how serious the government in regulation of freedom of speech as there is disastrous impact on the social fabrics of the nation, given its vulnerability as a multicultural society.

But the most pressing reason for the imposition of censorship is seen from how the new media technology is being used for ill political motive that threatens the political stability and security of the nations. Many of the infamous terrorist groups like Jammah Islamiyah and Al-Qaeda are known to exploit the use of internet to spread their cause and recruit new members to implement their terrorist acts. With the use of modern media technology, these groups are able to indoctrinate their values in their new recruits as the exposure is invasive and persistent through this personal and private form of interaction. From the arrest of the JI cell group in Singapore, it is noted that some of these members are recruited through the internet. Besides this perilous threat, the recent remarks made about the new People’s Action Party candidates, Tin Pei Lin over the new media platforms has drawn concerns from Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong that this will hurt the political leadership renewal for the country in the future. Thus, from both the imminent and future point of view, the lack of censorship can create dire consequence on the political front of a nation.

**Conclusion**

In retrospect, we can understand why censorship is not desired by the liberals but the complex development in the contemporary era will demand us to ponder over the need of censorship. These adverse developments that are realistically tearing down our social fabrics, undermining the civility and threatening our political security and stability and it is only through an effective regulation of the modern media technology that will ensure us from succumbing to the adverse impacts. However, there is a need to develop an effective institution to perform this imperative task to ensure that the new media is made accountable to reap the benefit of freedom of speech without making it an adversary of the society.

**Q4. Have we made mass media scapegoats for the social problem we are experiencing?**

## A) Introduction

1. Depict that the influence of the mass media is immense and how it stretches the limits of all aspects of our society.
2. Set Perspectives
   1. Many academics and educators have conveniently linked the rampant of our social problem to the negative influence of mass media.
   2. However, those who feel strongly that the mass media have positive roles to play in the maintenance of our civic society think otherwise.
3. Set your stand

In view of these contrasting perceptions, I agree with the latter that we have indeed made mass media scapegoat for the social problems we are experiencing.

## B) Main Body

1. **Explain the opposing view – the rampant of social problems is due to the negative influence of mass media.**
2. **The negative contents in the mass media are very disruptive and damaging to the development of our society.** 
   1. Explicit sexual and violent scene dominates our movies, TV and reading so to attract the audience and viewers.
   2. Promotions of undesirable values like consumerism and materialism
   3. Irrepressible media reporting like the insensitive cartoon publication ignited by Flemming Rose editor of Jsyllands- Posten
      * Create social conflicts, destabilizing social cohesion
      * Though it is done in the name of freedom of speech, it has led to clash of values. Undeniable, this incident is a classic example of the negative role the mass media played in destabilizing our society.

**3) Present arguments against the opposing view (rebuttal)**

1. As social institutions have imposed censorship over the media industry, the negative influence from the media industry can be nullified.
2. The mass media is a mirror of our action, values and behaviours. It merely reflects the negative development of our society.

**4) Explain why the mass media cannot resume full responsibility for our social problems.**

* 1. **Other social institutions have to assume the responsibility of the proliferation of social problems.**
* The religious institution must act as the moral compass for the society to guide us to behave ethically and morally.
* The school has the responsibility to educate the young.
* The family must serve to support to its members.

**b) These social institutions have collective responsibility and the moral obligation to impose control over the mass media and if they cannot improve control, they must serve as the guard of our civic society, maintaining its social order and stability.**

Conclusion