Bringing teaching, learning, and research to life

Media, Communication, & Cultural Studies

Teaching with Case Study Video
Content Type

Case Study videos are relatively brief videos of around 10–20 minutes in length and provide more in-depth information and examples around a topic. Examples include Digital Inclusion, and Media, Ideology and Struggles over Hegemony. Case Studies begin by providing the broader context to help understand the subject being discussed and why it is important. They then provide key concepts drawing upon recent and relevant literature to showcase key ideas. Case Studies often end with a suggestion from the presenter on where to go for further information, such as journal articles or books. Case Studies are useful in the classroom because they pair up tangible examples to key concepts which should help students’ understanding and provide further places to go for more information. In addition, some of the key concepts or examples raised in the Case Study can be used to spark class discussion and group activities or be used in assignments (such as setting essay questions or presentation ideas).

Media Representations of Poor People and Poor Places

In this Case Study video, presenter Eoin Devereux, Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Limerick, talks about how the media either underrepresents poor people and poor places, or stigmatizes them as a threat to moral and social order. He argues this is problematic because it can have real-life implications for how policy makers and society in general attempt to redress social justice and inequality. He also points out the ways in which many representations of the working class are linked with gender and race—for example, young, poor, single women or “chav mums” which lead to “class disgust.” In the video, Devereux explains key concepts such as “God’s poor” and “Devil’s poor,” the latter of which either need to be controlled or punished. Devereux finishes by talking about the ways in which poor people’s lives become stigmatized, which in turn can have material consequences on the ability of those residents to form communities, lead to fewer employment opportunities, low self-esteem, and the general provision of services for those areas.

Suggested Courses or Topics

This case study can be used in many courses where students are learning about the importance and power of media in our world, including its ability to shape policy and people’s perceptions of “others.” Course examples might include:

- media, identity and representation,
- critical media studies, or
- several sociology courses on media and society.

Classroom Clips

Listed below are a few examples of clips that focus on key concepts:

- This clip explains why representations in the media matter. Clip 00:38 – 2:17.
- The term “chav” here is discussed, particularly in relation to gender. Clip 7:24 – 7:51.
- Beverly Skegg’s concept of class disgust is discussed here. Clip 7:52 – 9:05.
- Processes of class making are discussed here, particularly in relation to the rise of neo-liberalism. Clip 9:06 – 10:54.
- The ways communities and specific places become stigmatized is discussed here. Clip 11:50 – 13:47.
- Places to go for further reading are suggested here. Clip 17:02 – 18:27.
Research Assignment

See below for example assignments which you might use for students.

1. Dr. Devereux discusses the idea of the Devil's Poor and class disgust, noting that poor and working class people are presented as a threat to social and moral order and must be controlled and/or punished. Engage with academic literature on these concepts and discuss the extent to which these stigmatized representations continue to circulate. Feel free to draw upon (non)fictional documentaries, TV series, or films. Examples might include *Educating Yorkshire* (2013), *Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away* (2014–2016), *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* (2011–2012), *Trouble on the Estate* (2012), or *Shameless* (2004–2013).

2. Dr. Devereaux noted the ways that representation of the working class and poor are often highly gendered and often racialized. Find, read, and summarize three key studies that explore media representations of the intersection between class and either race or gender.

3. Read one of the following articles and summarize the ways class disgust is evoked and, in some cases, challenged:


4. Although scholars like Dr. Devereux discuss the ways in which the poor are stigmatized in the media, find and discuss academic literature which highlights points of resistance, e.g., where working class and the poor are able to challenge and resist dominant tropes.

Classroom Discussion

Here are some examples of questions which might be used for in-class discussion.

1. The video discusses the concept of class disgust (Clip 7:52 – 9:05). How does Dr. Devereux define class disgust, and thinking about media representations, what are some contemporary examples?

2. What role does Dr. Devereaux say that neo-liberalism (Clip 9:06 – 10:54), with its focus on individualism and personal responsibility, have to play in the stigmatization of the poor?

3. Dr. Devereaux stated that a number of “media panics” arise around the underclass. What are some contemporary “panics” that come to mind, and what, if any, possible solutions or causes have been offered by the media? (Hint: Think about drugs, crime, pregnancy, employment, etc.)

4. The video talks about the stigmatization of places (Clip 13:48 – 15:02). Drawing from contemporary media, can you think of examples of the ways certain places (such as council estates) are stigmatized?