SOCIETY AND POLITICS IN POPULAR CULTURE

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES IN POPULAR CULTURE INTRODUCTION

Wojciech Lewandowski, PhD, DSc
Department of Political Theory and Political Thought
Faculty of Political Science and International Studies
University of Warsaw

POPULAR CULTURE

What is popular culture?

POPULAR CULTURE

- multiple definitions
- Dick Hebdige:

popular culture – the sum of easily accessible works – films, recordings, attires, TV programmes, means of transport etc.

POPULAR CULTURE (1)

- *widely favoured or well liked by many people*
- easily accessible / available on various media

POPULAR CULTURE (2)

- *left over after we have decided what is high culture*
- popular culture as inferior one
- lack of formal complexity
- class divisions

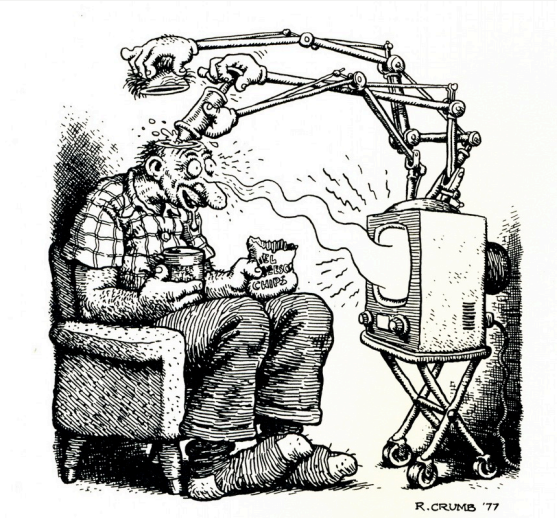
POPULAR CULTURE (2)

- 31 July 1991
- Hyde Park, London
- Luciano Pavarotti’s live performance
- 250 000 spectators

POPULAR CULTURE (2)

Popular culture as ‘inferior’ culture	
Popular press	Quality press
Popular cinema	Art cinema
Popular entertaintment	Art

POPULAR CULTURE (3)



- popular culture as mass culture
- commercial culture
- mass consumption
- American culture

MASS CULTURE

DOMINIC STRINATI

Mass culture is popular culture created by mass industrial technology and sold for gain to mass audiences / consumers

MASS CULTURE

DWIGHT MACDONALDS

- standardisation
- formalisation
- repeatability
- superficiality
- false (trivial) pleasures
- lack of authenticity (like in folk culture)

HIGH CULTURE vs LOW CULTURE

- quality matter
- criterion of the split: aesthetic value
- institutionalisation and hierarchization of taste
- what is a work of art?

WORK OF ART?

RUSKIN vs WHISTLER

I have seen, and heard, much of Cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face.

WHAT IS ART?

- John Ruskin on James McNeill Whistler's *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* (1875)
- it ended up in court
- Whistler won
- extension of the borders of what is considered art

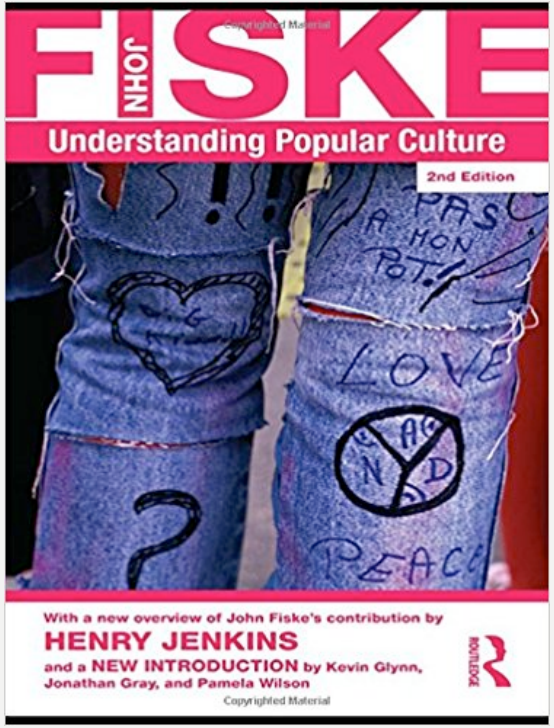
POPULAR CULTURE (4)

- *culture that originates from 'the people'*
- folk culture
- authenticity
- non-commercial

POPULAR CULTURE (5)

- popular culture as a tool of ‘hegemony’
- *a site of struggle between the ‘resistance’ of subordinate groups and the forces of ‘incorporation’ operating in the interests of dominant groups*

POPULAR CULTURE (5)



- Antonio Gramsci: source of hegemony, the "tuba" of the dominant ideology
- John Fiske: strategy of resistance against the hegemony of the privileged classes

POPULAR CULTURE (6)

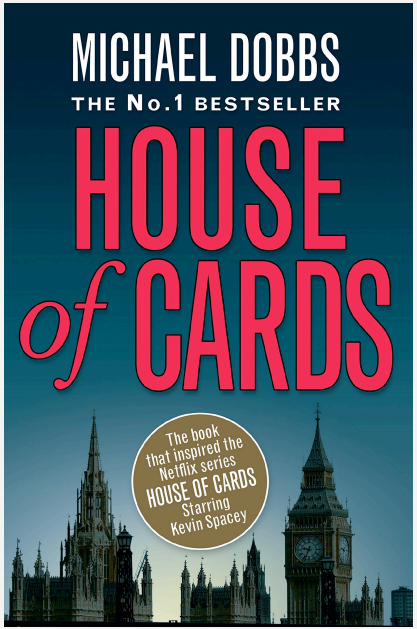
- postmodernism
- *no longer recognizes the distinction between high and popular culture*
- end of elitism, victory of commercial culture, or the end of any culture?

CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION

CULTURE
COUNTER-CULTURE

Expresses beliefs, values, norms and lifestyles that are evidently contrary to what the general public obeys

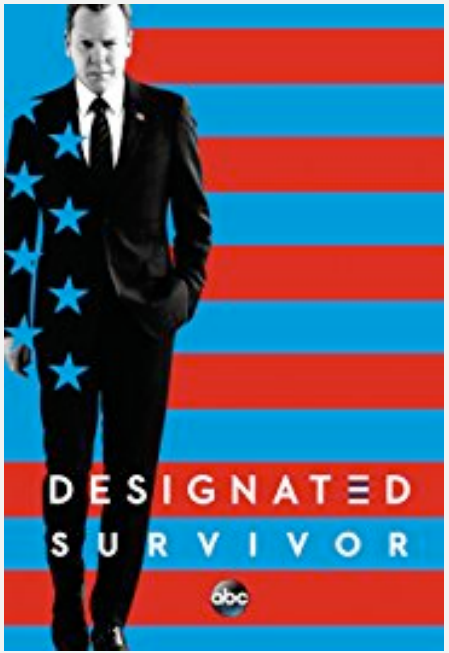
POLITICAL FICTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF POLITICS



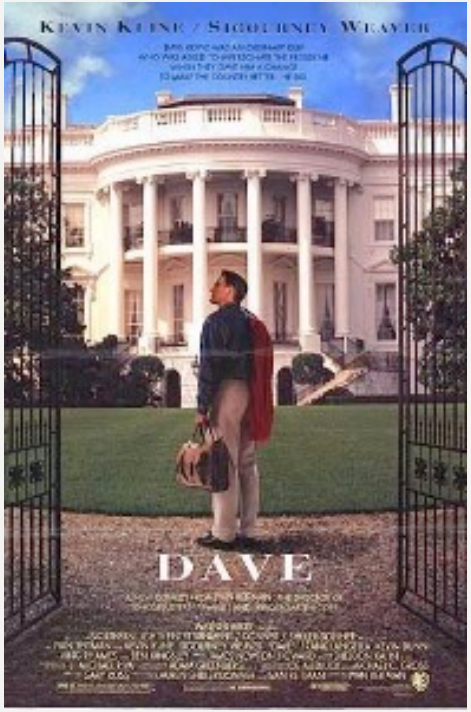
- unique perspective
- creative imagination important for *areas of study where experimental verification is impossible or of doubtful reliability*

POLITICAL FICTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF POLITICS

- political analysis should not be confused with literary criticism
- opinion data
- teaching aid
- degree of political realism



POLITICAL FICTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF POLITICS



- expectations vs reality
- politics vs popular culture or politics using the popular culture
- the sign of the times