Welcome to Media Studies!

Media Studies has been somewhat misunderstood over the past decade and deemed irrelevant to academic study. Ironically, the media industry has become more and more prevalent in our lives from our day-to-day communication, entertainment, news, lifestyle and routines and also in most workplaces, as the media departments are often a driving force for success and reaching target audiences. When we study media, we explore how products both reflect and challenge the values of society. We consider how developments in technology and the globalisation of media not only revolutionises the products we are seeing but, in turn, begins to shape the way we view each other and the world.

Media studies is the study of creating, writing, marketing, psychology, business and industry, sociolinguistics, politics, culture, history and technology.

If you choose to study Media Studies, you will be taught by Ms Evers and Mrs Goodwin-Bates. There will be a mixture of practical lessons and theoretical lessons. 30% of the course is a coursework-based production of products (magazines, websites, podcasts, trailers, adverts etc). The other 70% of the course is essay-based theoretical arguments about different aspects of the media industry and it's impact on society.

In the first term of the course we will be exploring the 4 key concepts of Media Studies and how we can apply these to products we engage with every day. We will start to explore some of the theory; we will debate some of the current issues and opinions around media production and regulation; and we will begin to identify how fast-changing technology and globalisation is impacting our own consumption.

Task 1:

Watching the following video, make notes for each example Mr Hunter gives to introduce you to the 4 key concepts of Media Studies. Notes may be presented as key words and definitions, explanations with examples, images/ screen grabs, annotations etc. Be creative under each heading:

What is Media Studies? Key Concepts explained!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qE-B_XkoAgQ

- Media Language
- Representation
- Audiences
- Institutions

During your A-Level Media Studies course, you will explore 17 Close Study Products (CSPs) set by AQA. These will be the main focus of your exam questions and you will explore these, alongside media products that interest us, during our lessons to develop your analytical skills and theoretical knowledge. With that in mind, the following task asks you to explore a product of your choice!

Consider patterns you notice in media products. For example, in films, action genre films tend to have a male hero; Disney princesses have traditionally been represented as white and slim; in horror films, people of colour tend to be the first characters to be 'killed off'. These stereotypes reflect values of the time however they also serve to re-enforce limiting representations of people in society and change the way people view each other.

Research a type of media product (magazines, music industry, TV presenters, TV or film characters in a specific genre etc) and try to unpick patterns that have existed or have been expected over time.

   A) What pattern did you notice?
   B) Can you see these stereotypes being challenged anywhere?
   C) Why might this be?
   D) Do you think it is important that media producers challenge stereotypes?
   E) Consider what reason media producers might have for repeating the patterns audiences expect of this media product.

Task 3:

What is your favourite TV show or Film?

Create your own research profile for this media text. Research the product covering the following details and consider the text in a way you may not have appreciated it before! You can present this information as a podcast, a vlog, a video, a written portfolio, posters, a song(?!) – again, be creative. We want to see your practical skills and at the same time you get the opportunity to explore a media text you already like in more depth than you usually would!

What you need to consider:
   • Why did you pick this text?
   • What is it? (Product type? Genre?)
   • Who made it and how much did it cost?
   • Who was the target audience?
   • What is interesting about the narrative & characters?
   • What is interesting about the setting or location?
   • What is interesting about the sound?
   • How influential has it been? (Do any other media products reference this? Has It changed anything in media or society? Has it inspired new products?)
   • Any fun facts or trivia surrounding your chosen Media text?

Task 4:
A literary critic, named Vladimir Propp, studied folk stories and the character types that appear across hundreds of different tales. He suggests that every story has the following archetype characters:
   1) The Hero
   2) The Villain
   3) The Donor
   4) The Helper
   5) The Princess

6) The False Hero
7) The Dispatcher

Research Propp's descriptions and then create a poster for a film/ story of your choice, identifying each of these character roles. Sometimes, a character may present as more than one thing. Something the 'princess' is in an interesting role as, in more modern stories, it isn't always a woman waiting to be saved (thank goodness – but this is second-wave feminism talking… more on this later!).

Summer Media Challenges (totally optional and fun!):

-   Listen to at least 3 episodes of a media podcast (e.g. https://soundcloud.com/bbfc/tracks or https://www.themediapodcast.com/listen/ or any other you find engaging which looks critically at different aspects of the media)

-   Watch a foreign language film (I would highly recommend The City of Lost Children or Pan's Labyrinth)

-   Explore 'The Big 6' – find out what I mean by this in terms of Media Institution and how did 'The Big 6' become 'The Big 5'? What are the issues with this?

-   Consider your online profiles: - How do people represent themselves on various social media platforms? Consider why this might be. Are there particular social rules we have created about what is appropriate for each medium? What is likely to be found on Instagram but not on TikTok? What might someone post on Snapchat but not on YouTube?

-   Make your own 'trailer' for your summer. Consider the genre – would your summer be presented as a horror, as an adventure, as a romance? This will change everything about the way you put it together. Consider the music, the lighting, the 'costume' and setting, the pace of the editing and the camera angles! Have fun with it and we will share them when we get back!