

Book Review

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JULIAN McDOUGALL. *Media studies : The basics*.
New Delhi: Routledge, 2015 (Special Indian Reprint), pp: i-ix+215,
Price: INR Rs. 595.00, ISBN : 978-0-415-68125-4.

Julian McDougall's *Media Studies: The Basics* is an ideal book for someone who is interested to learn the basics of the world of journalism. In fact, this book would serve as a practical guide to beginners in the field of media and communication.

The book is divided into six chapters with each chapter dealing with certain aspects of media- Studying Media, Reading Media, Powerful Media, Global Media, Changing Media and Making Media. While there is some form of overlapping between some of these chapters, the emphasis for each is clear and unique, with the second and sixth chapter more concerned with the creative and technical aspects and the third and fourth chapter focusing very much on the political aspects.

The author has done a fabulous job in explaining how to interpret media. In the first chapter, the author has given a brief overview of the different range of approaches to studying media, a brief history of media and some of the important theoretical concepts related to the field of mass media. He has said that the world of media is central to our lives and as such one needs to have a fair bit of understanding of what constitutes media. He refers to the different filters or approaches or ways of talking about media as 'discourses'. The three discourses are – The Powerful Media Discourse, Economic Discourse and Media Literacy Discourse. The Powerful Media Discourse analyses the various effects and influence that media have in our contemporary lives. The Economic Discourse exists to equip its students with creative skills that can help them in the job markets on graduating. Under the Media Literacy Discourses, media students are better equipped to communicate in the modern world if they have the analytical skills to critically interpret media texts. The author also focused on the theories of how to interpret/study media. He specifically discussed about Textual Deconstruction, Audience Theories, Theories of Ideology, Theories

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of Identity and Theories of Creativity. In other words, in this chapter, he has explored the debates around media and their importance to people and in society. Finally he has looked to the future to anticipate where the study of media might take us in the next few years.

In the second chapter, the author has introduced us to ‘Micro’ textual analysis for still and moving images, approaches to critical media literacy for time and space based texts and new conceptual models for deconstructing contemporary media forms. While stating that media texts are a combination of a lot of signs, creators of texts make decisions about settings, objects, costume, appearance, dialogue, sound and lighting – all of which are signifiers. Media is also governed by power politics and that has been widely discussed in the third chapter of the book. Some of the key theoretical ideas for studying power in media like Marxism, cultural imperialism, political economy, feminism, postmodernism and the most recent idea of ‘Politics 2.0. The concept of free media which is often looked upon as the fourth pillar of democracy can be rarely seen in a democratic set-up. Thus, the author has said that it is imperative for the common masses to ask questions about the accountability of media owners and producers.

The fourth chapter of the book dwells on the different international approaches to studying media, theories of globalization and global media. While focusing on the Cuban media in the context of globalization, it has been observed that most of the soap operas in the electronic media focuses on issues concerning violence, lesbian sexuality, alcoholism etc. In other words, Cuban media demonstrates the dynamic interplay between media, technology, control, freedom and identity.

The fifth chapter of the book has focused on a range of arguments and counter-arguments about the degree to which changes to media production and exchange in the context of online and social media developments require a ‘paradigm shift’ for media studies. The concept of Media Studies 2.0 as put forward by Will Merrin in 2007 and expanded by David Gauntlett later on was discussed at length in this particular chapter. Basically, it exemplified the fact that media landscape has undergone significant changes in the last 15 years with most of the traditional forms of media becoming redundant in the face of online media.

The last and the final chapter had focused on the key approaches to critical and reflexive practical learning. The ideas and examples covered in this chapter focuses on how creative media production work is a process of praxis- combining theory and practice.

Overall this book is highly recommended specially for the students of media who have a penchant for making a career in the field of media industry. The book's real strength, and what makes it unique among media education publications, are the sections which are more focused on the power structure of the contemporary media, with fantastic overviews of theory, context and case studies- with the different chapters complementing one another sufficiently to ensure that many topics are re-visited from different angles.
