115學年度台灣聯合大學系統

亞際文化研究國際碩士學位學程

(國立中央大學、國立政治大學、國立清華大學、國立陽明交通大學交大校區)

甄試入學考試考題

考試時間：114年11月10日，11:00-12:00

考試科目：英文閱讀

***作答前，請先核對試題、答案卷(試卷)與准考證上之所組別與考試科目是否相符!!**

English Reading

This is a test of your English reading comprehension. You must answer the required question as well as the question written for your chosen area of specialization. As you have only one hour to finish two questions, your answers should be short but to the point; each will be worth 50 points. Answers could be in either Chinese or English.

I. Required Question

The following paragraphs are excerpted from *Filterworld: How Algorithms Flattened Culture* by Kyle Chayka (pages 241–242). Please read them carefully and then respond to the following questions:

1. From your perspective, what is the original meaning of the term “curation”?
2. What are the differences between “the rise of the curator as creator” in the late 20th century and early 21st century, and the idea that “curation is replacing creation as a mode of self-expression” from the early 2010s to the present?
3. Do you agree or disagree with the author’s perspective? Explain your reasoning and provide supporting arguments.

Those decades saw "the rise of the curator as creator," as the museum-studies scholar Bruce Altshuler put it in his 1994 book *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition.* In the late twentieth century and the early twenty-first, we have seen a set of celebrity curators emerge, including Hans Ulrich Obrist and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev. They operate on an international scale, like diplomats without portfolio, and work across different institutions, alighting at a museum or gallery to organize exhibitions that reflect both their personal sensibilities and the current moment. Curatorial practice became a strategy for asserting and restoring visibility on an international scale. The Nigerian curator Okwui Enwezor organized major exhibitions like the 1989 *Magicians de la Terre* and 2002 Documenta, a German survey of contemporary art that happens every five years. In those exhibitions, Enwezor placed artists from overlooked countries and backgrounds alongside already famous names from the Western art world, making a powerful argument for contemporary art as a global exchange of ideas—the German Anselm Kiefer next to the Chinese Huang Yong Ping and the Australian indigenous artist John Mawurndjul.

In a sense, the individual star curators are the opposite of recommendation algorithms: they utilize all of their knowledge, expertise, and experience in order to determine what to show us and how to do it, with utmost sensitivity and humanity. Given the scope of their careers—truly one of the world's coolest jobs—it is no wonder that the figure of the curator has become a glamorous archetype and a label that others want to latch on to. Even machines are trying to become curators.

Beginning in the early 2010s and extending over the course of the decade, with no sign of stopping today, the word *curated* became ubiquitous. Once an arcane term used only by specialists and academics, it is now applied wantonly to grids of Instagram posts, cosmetics color palettes, and fashion brand accessories. Here are

only a few of the excessive usages of curation that I've observed: An influencer "curates" the companies she creates sponsored content for, or curates the guest list of an event. A restaurateur curates a bar menu, or a food market curates the vendors occupying its stalls. A hotel curates its selection of rooms, as if each one were its own unique experience. A streaming service curates the content it offers. A musician even "curates an unconventional career," according to NPR. In the social network era, we've all had to curate our identities, in the sense of selecting which pieces of content best represent us on a profile page. In a 2012 lecture, the Internet artist Jonathan Harris summarized the shift: "Curation is replacing creation as a mode of self-expression." Rather than a form of committed caretaking, it more appears as an act of narcissism.

The aura of the word is aspirational, meant to impart a sense of significance and quality, like a "Very Special" designation on a bottle of cognac. Wouldn't you want something that is curated over something that is not? Lately, the word simply indicates a choice between a group of options, a decision that was made by a human with some semblance of expertise and intention. Yet algorithmic recommendations are also often described as "curating" a feed, even though there is no consciousness behind them. As I write this, my phone offers an automatically "curated" library of the photos I've taken, sorting them into theoretically meaningful and attractive highlights. (By what metric, it doesn't say.) The semantic satiation of the word has happened because the prevalence of algorithms has turned choices between things into a novelty. When we don't have to make a selection, doing so, or knowing that someone else did, becomes a kind of luxury, albeit a pathetic one. If we extrapolate from that contemporary definition, before the era of feeds, everything must have been curated, from the television shows on cable to the songs on the radio.

II. Specialization Question

a. Critical Theory and Asian Modernity

Cultural identity is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark. It is not once-and-for-all. It is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute Return. Of course, it is not a mere phantasm either. It is something - not a mere trick of the imagination. It has its histories - and histories have their real, material and symbolic effects. The past continues to speak to us. But it no longer addresses us as a simple, factual 'past', since our relation to it, like the child's relation to the mother, is always-already 'after the break'. It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning. Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic, transcendental 'law of origin'.
— Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”

In this passage, Stuart Hall challenges the essentialist notion of cultural identity.
Discuss how you think about the relationship between identity, history, and power. You may draw on examples from cultural experiences, literature, or social activism to support your argument.

b. Contemporary Thought-trends and Social Movements

Please read the paragraphs below, and then answer the following questions:

1. What is the “structure of feeling”?
2. What are its implications for social research and cultural studies?
3. What might be the structure of feeling in Taiwan in the 2020s? How is this structure of feeling reflected in cultural phenomena?

You may answer the questions in either English or Chinese.

Such changes can be defined as changes in structures of feeling. The term is difficult, but ‘feeling’ is chosen to emphasize a distinction from more formal concepts of ‘world-view’ or

‘ideology’. (…) We are talking about characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; especially affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity. We are then defining these elements as a ‘structure’: as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension. Yet we are also defining a social experience which is still in process. Often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies. These are often more recognizable at a later stage, when they have been (as often happens) formalized, classified, and in many cases built into institutions and formations. By that time the case is different; a new structure of feeling will usually already have begun to form, in the true social present.

Methodologically, then, a ‘structure of feeling’ is a cultural hypothesis, actually derived from attempts to understand such elements and their connections in a generation or period, and needing always to be returned, interactively, to such evidence. It is initially less simple than more formally structured hypotheses of the social, but it is more adequate in the actual range of cultural evidence: historically certainly, but even more (where it matters more) in our present cultural process. The hypothesis has a special relevance to art and literature, where the true social content is in a significant number of cases of this present and affective kind, which cannot without loss be reduced to belief-systems, institutions, or explicit general relationships, though it may include all these as lived and experienced, with or without tension, as it also evidently includes elements of social and material experience which may lie beyond.

Excerpted from: Williams, Raymond. 1977. “Structures of Feeling.” Pp. 132-133 in *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

c. Gender/Sexuality Studies

Carefully read the following excerpt from “Interstices: A Small Drama of Words” (Hortense Spillers, first published in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole Vance, London: Routledge, 1984). Briefly summarize and explain the passage. Give an example from your readings or experience of what Spillers is referring to by “a first-order naming,” “a second-order naming” and “a third-order naming.” Why and to what effect does she stress using “another” rather than “higher” in getting at differences in function between these orders of naming?

Whether we are talking about sexuality, or some other theme, we would identify this process of categorical aligning with prior acts of the text as the subtle component of power that bars black women, indeed, women of color, as a proper subject of inquiry from the various topics of contemporary feminist discourse. Such exclusion is neither deliberate, perhaps, nor inevitable, for sure, but moves through phases of symbolic *value* that conform precisely to equations of political power: the first order of symbolic "business" within a community is the articulation of what we would call a first-order naming, words that express the experience of a community in diachronic time, in daily social relationships, in economic well-being, in subject identity. A second order of naming, or words about the first order, would articulate another level of symbolic responses. I would be careful not to say a "higher," but "another" in order to get at differences of function. The literature (and the range of the arts) of African-Americans and the criticism of it, for example, constitute a second and third order of naming, with the potential power to become a first order, to the extent that the community and the artist sustain a mutual engagement that might lead to seeing anew in both. Since the content concerning the actual life experiences of black women is barely articulated, to say nothing of exhausted,[31] we are in the incredible position of having either to create a first-order discourse on black women's community and/or speak immediately into the void left by its absence and the next phase of meaning, that stage at which contemporary feminist discourse is situated. The relationship in orders of naming that I suggest here is not as static as the explanation sounds since orders and degrees of naming are simultaneously active and dynamic and can travel among each other with great ease in the life of a community. I do insist, however, on identifying careers of words that do different things with regard to a common point of reference. Essentially, the distinction that I mean here is quite similar to the one that the editors of *New French Feminisms* imply about analyses that "relate discourse to discourse and divorce it from experience."[32] The discourse of sexuality elaborates a logological status, on the pre-eminence of Freud, wherein the writer produces discourse in response to other discourse. In the case of French feminists, the father-text is Lacan. (We note with great interest, by the way, that the term "sexuality" did not enter the English lexis until c. 1800, according to the OED.) It is no use trying to decide whether or not discourse about discourse, or the impure good of theory, is "good" or "bad." The apparent reality is that it is, as the prose disciplines seem fated, for good or ill, to reflect the paucity or sufficiency of a cultural GNP. Symbolic power, like the genetic parent, begets symbolic power, takes pleasure in proliferation. Feminist discourse, to extend the figure, keeps talking, or reproducing itself, tending to do so in its own image, on the bases of initiating symbolic gestures, against which it might struggle, or with which it tacitly seeks alignment by way of various conceptual regimes.

d. Visual Culture

The following excerpt is taken from Despina Kakoudaki's "Representing Politics in Disaster Films." According to the author, what seems to be the considerations that go into in the making of a disaster film? Why are these considerations political? (You may write in English or Chinese)

After the events of September 11, the narrative tendencies and heroic resolutions of the 1990s quickly become limited and problematic, while the exaggerated rhetoric and violence of the genre seem irrelevant to the current state of the world. Destructions, explosions and endangered crowds evoke different meanings in a post-9/11 world, and their depiction cannot hold the vicarious joyride feel of similar images from the 1990s.
Responding to this need for seriousness, *The Day After Tomorrow* makes a case for political relevance by centring its narrative on a realistic scientific premise. Although the film accelerates the processes of climate change radically, bringing on a new Ice Age for the northern hemisphere in a matter of months, it utilizes current scientific insights and debates. In the process, the film engages the spectacles of destruction necessary to the vicarious pleasures of the genre, but without rendering such pleasures purely voyeuristic. The film is also able to obliquely refer to the visual landscape of 9/11, to destroyed cities and office buildings, and includes scenes of people running in panic and office papers flying in the air, even if it moves these sights from the Financial District to Midtown Manhattan. The environmentalist message and implicit call to political action evinced in *The Day After Tomorrow* indeed have had an indirect after-effect, by partly inspiring the production of *An Inconvenient Truth* (Davis Guggenheim, 2006). Indeed *The Day After Tomorrow* mirrors an audience's concerns over pollution and habitat destruction, the melting of the polar ice caps, the depletion of the ozone layer, and the devaluation of air, water and soil conditions worldwide. The film thus balances the notions of response and responsibility, since, despite the text's narrative and visual exaggerations, a contemporary audience connects the premise of environmental disaster in the fiction to its possibility in the real world (Murray and Heumann 2009).

e. Media and Cultural Governance

The following excerpts are from "McLuhan's Tetrad as a Tool to Interpret the Impact of Online Studio Education on Design Studio Pedagogy" by Mehmet Sarper Takkeci.

Marshall McLuhan's tetrad is useful as a framework for a comprehensive understanding of the media's effects on our daily lives. This framework accentuates the interaction between technology and society, exploring how each affects the other. By closely examining the devices we use and how they mold us, we can better comprehend a medium's influence on our lives.

McLuhan offers a new scheme/a tetrad of properties or effects that describes the operation of not only media but all human processes, artifacts, and creations. According to McLuhan, a tetrad functions as a theoretical device to examine the effects on society of any technology/medium (put another way: a means of explaining the social processes underlying the adoption of a technology/medium) by dividing its effects into four categories and displaying them simultaneously.

The tetrad is a concept/metaphor developed by McLuhan to describe the four laws of media, which exist simultaneously and allow the questioner to explore the existence of the emergent media holistically. These laws are not meant to be viewed successively or chronologically but rather as a whole. When applied to any artifact/system/media constructed by human effects, it describes the ways in which media affect society and how society, in turn, affects media simultaneously.

As referred to in this paper, the functionality of the tetrad is not based on theoretical grounds, but revolves around four questions based on empirical observation:

- What does the medium enhance, referring to the way in which a new medium enhances or amplifies an existing medium?
- What does the new medium make obsolete, or in other terms, does the new medium eventually render an existing medium obsolete?
- What does the medium retrieve that had been obsolesced earlier, referring to how a new medium can bring back something that was previously lost or forgotten?
- What does the medium reverse or flip into when pushed to extremes, describing how a new medium can eventually be used in a way that is opposite to its original intended purpose?

Now, the question is—

In your own words, explain the concept of the tetrad as proposed by Marshall McLuhan. Then, select a contemporary medium or emerging technology and critically analyze how the principles of the tetrad can be applied to understand its cultural and communicative impact.