

The Present and Future of Democracy and Civic Engagement in the Age of Mass Communications

Final discussion paper

Due November 11 (last day of class)

We have examined different views of the role of the mass media in modern democracies that have seen their levels of political participation and civic engagement decline in recent decades. Some of these views argue that the media play a positive role, while others note that there are some flaws in the work of the media and that as a consequence our civic and political life are impoverished.

Whatever side one takes in an academic debate, the ideas that we are discussing can only be helpful if we learn to translate them into our everyday reality. This is the task of your final discussion paper.

Identify one episode, or typical situation, or political and social event, in which the media did or do a *good* job from a democratic standpoint. Motivate your argument on the basis of the readings and the discussion we had in the class.

Then identify one episode, or typical situation, or political and social event, in which the media did or do a *bad* job from a democratic standpoint. Again, use the readings and the class discussion to support your choice and your arguments.

The examples can be taken from the US, or Italian, or world political and social affairs. If you are discussing events or situations that are not widely known, make sure you are giving the reader all the information that are required to understand your argument. If you are discussing events or issues that are widely known, please do not choose Watergate or Monicagate!

Answer the questions in approximately **5 pages**.

Use your readings and notes to answer the questions. You can also take a look at my lecture notes on my Web site: www.critsianvaccari.it. When you quote the readings, make it clear to the reader. Try not to quote too much, and to express the authors' ideas with your own words.

In answering the questions, feel free to express your own opinions, even if they do not coincide with what is in the readings or what was said in the class. However, make sure to support your arguments with appropriate data and to organize what you want to say in a way that is persuasive.

Please turn in your paper in the November 11 class or email it to me before that day at c.vaccari@email.it.

Please be on time with the delivery! Late delivery penalties will be assigned.