

Distinction: a social judgement of taste
Lecture on the cultural sociology of Pierre Bourdieu
by Tore Slaatta

outline of lecture

- * Who was Pierre Bourdieu?
- * What makes his cultural sociology so special?
- * Why is he particularly relevant for studies on media and popular culture?
- * What are his main concepts and theoretical positions in *Distinctions*?
- *

Who was Pierre Bourdieu

- * life trajectory of a thinker, philosopher, writer, researcher, sociologist, intellectual, political activist
- * academic and intellectual life in France
- * publications
- * standing in present academia, impacts on others etc...

What makes his cultural sociology so special?

- * A grand theorist in the classic school: proposing to solve old questions and conflicts in sociology
- * France 1960 - 1980: the structuralists, poststructuralists, the linguistic turn...
- * a strong empiricist, analyst and stylistic writer

Relevance for media studies and popular culture analysis

- * particularly concerned with cultural production and consumption in post 1960s France/Europe
- * taste cultures/generations induce changes/conflicts, but not revolutions: power/society is changed but maintained.
- * professionalisation: the field of cultural production
- * the oeuvre, the cultural artifact, object
- * esthetics part of political and social conflict, the role of the artist, the intellectual

Connections to the cultural studies tradition

- * Visiting Erving Goffman in the 70s
- * Translated into English in 1984 and immediately discussed in *Media, Culture Society*
- * In Norway mostly seen as sociologist concerned with social mobility studies
- * More recent reception

Bourdieu on the media

- * On Photography (1965/1995)
- * Distinction (1979/1984)
- * The Field of Cultural Production (1980s/1993)
- * Language and Symbolic Power (1980s/1991)
- * The Rules of Art (1990-/1996)
- * On Television (1996)

Recent adaptations of Bourdieu in media studies

- ✳ Bourdieus colleagues in Paris, Patrick Champagne, Nick Couldry, Philip Marliere
- ✳ Rodney Benson: Field Theory as a particular approach to media studies
- ✳ Tore Slaatta: Den norske medieorden, Gyldendal Akademisk, 2003, mevit 4334
- ✳ Jostein Gripsrud, Jan Fredrik Hovden, Gunnar Sæbø, ...

La Distinction; Critique Social du Jugement

- ✳ the aim of the book: present theoretical arguments, and use empirical methods, in order to critically analyse power structures in society
- ✳ the format of the book: an academic text, several layers of texts, images, sections, clippings, etc.,
- ✳ presenting research results, proving theory

The research work

- ✳ quantitative surveys: 1962 and 1968
- ✳ adaption of official survey statistics: leisure activities, family based media consumption and newspaper use + 15 other data-sources.
- ✳ qualitative studies: case studies of all kinds, photography, texts, cultural objects, ads, interviews etc..

Doing the basic research

- ✳ The new methodology: Correspondance Analysis
- ✳ values, not variables
- ✳ dimensions and space, not categories
- ✳ positions and clusters, not varians/effect
- ✳ tendencies of homology, not causes
- ✳ Reading the maps and constructing theory

Writing the text

- ✳ academic positioning; against marxism, against structuralism, against psychology, etc...
- ✳ promoting theory and method
- ✳ critiquing present trends in French society
- ✳ inventing new forms of sociological writing
- ✳ establishing a new position for the academic/intellectual

Reading the text

- ✳ Enjoy the prose, pictures, stories etc...
- ✳ Look for the systematic, structuralist argument
- ✳ Get used to terminology
- ✳ Remember this is the breaking study from the 60s and 70s. Much is now "common sense".

Basic terminology

- ✳ fields, orders, spaces, poles, forces, power
- ✳ positions, clusters, classes
- ✳ structured, organised, hierarchised, order, logics of distribution

- * forms of capital, price, worth, value
- * logics of distribution in space, over time, habitus, capital accumulation, trajectory, dynamics

Next lecture:

- * Is it possible to do a Bourdieu-inspired analysis in the lecture room: who are we?
- * Looking at the various parts of the text: Structure, style, main arguments.
- * Discussing, critiquing Bourdieu: What is the problem? Is there a problem?