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 particular 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 immiedaetely discussed in Media, Culture Society
✶ In Norway mostly seen as sociologist concerned with social mobility studies
✶ More recent reception

Bourdieu on the media
✶ 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
- Bourdieu’s colleagues in Paris, Patrick Champagne, Nick Couldry, Philip Marliere
- Rodney Benson: Field Theory as a particular approach to media studies
- Tore Slatta: 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 variances/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?