advanced visual journalism
J446
Prof Webb

guided reflection #1: uses and gratification theory

Uses & Gratifications is a way to understand and apply one of the **theoretical approaches** to the web. Blumler and Katz's uses and gratification theory suggests that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media. Users take an active part in the communication process and are goal-oriented in their media use. The theorists say that a media user seeks out a media source that best fulfills the needs of the user. Uses and gratifications assumes that users have alternate choices to satisfy their needs.

Note: Uses and Gratifications, which focuses on the "why" rather than content, is called the "optimist's view of media" as it takes out the possibility that the media can have an unconscious influence over our lives and how we view the world. The idea that we simply use the media to satisfy a given need does not seem to fully recognize the power of the media in today's society. However, the Uses & Gratifications approach is still extremely valid as technology moves communication into the electronic information age. People have more options now, and they will continue to have a pick of the media to satisfy their specific needs.

Objective: Consider if the Uses & Gratifications Theory is a useful approach to understand how people understand and use the web. This will be a starting point to community partner needs and audience analysis.

Benefits: This assignment is designed to give you the chance to apply an influential mass communication theory to your own web use and content and to consider how to apply your reflections to your community partner project.

I. The **Theory** sets out to do 3 things:
1) explain how we use media;
2) try to understand our motives;
3) identify the functions or consequences of that use.

II. There are **5 underlying assumptions** to the theory:
1) we are goal-oriented;
2) we seek communication as individuals;
3) we decide how to select and respond to media;
4) each medium competes with other forms;
5) interpersonal communication is usually a more powerful influence than a media form.

Based on these points, please do the following:

1) Identify the website you use the most.
2) Consider your use of that website in terms of both I and II and address them each in a 1-page paper.
3) Consider how you might apply the theory to your community partner project in a second page of 2-3 paragraphs.