

MECM90009 Global Crisis Reporting

Essay Titles

- 1) 'Contemporary news media occupy a key position in the public definition and elaboration of global crises and are often far more than just conduits for their wider public recognition...global crises become variously *constituted within* news media as much as *communicated by* them.' (Cottle, 2009: 2). Using this statement as a starting point, and referring to at least one example or area of crisis reporting, develop an argument that critically reflects on how media are implicated in the social production of crisis.
- 2) Far from enabling serious engagement with the causes and impacts of humanitarian crises, media coverage actually contributes to the perpetuation of endemic crisis. Discuss this statement, providing an argument for why you agree and/or disagree with it.
- 3) 'Certainly the media communicate harrowing representations of others, but the more the face of the other is communicated and reproduced in this way the more it is denuded of any moral authority it might otherwise possess' (Tester, 1994: 130). Using this statement as a starting point, develop an argument that critically evaluates the media's potential and capacity to foster cosmopolitan awareness and action. Refer to one or more examples to support your argument.
- 4) Using examples to support your argument, discuss the extent to which Roger Silverstone's idea of 'proper distance', and the concept of the 'mediapolis', provides a helpful or inadequate basis for considering the role and responsibilities of journalists and media outlets in the reporting of global crises.
- 5) 'Let the atrocious images haunt us. Even if they are only tokens, and cannot possibly encompass most of the reality to which they refer, they still perform a vital function. The images say: "This is what human beings are capable of doing – may volunteer to do, enthusiastically, self-righteously. Don't forget"' (Sontag, 2003: 102). Taking this statement as a starting point, and referring to one or more examples, develop an argument that assesses the importance and/or limitations of media imagery of human suffering.

- 6) While much media coverage of asylum seekers and refugees has been found to focus on negative discourses such as deviancy, threat, and invasion, other coverage has sought to show a more human face to the refugee crisis. Drawing on examples, develop an argument that critically evaluates the significance of framing for media representations of asylum seekers and refugees, and reflects on the implications for wider public understanding and action on this issue.
- 7) In the wake of the death of Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi, many media outlets around the world were united in offering sympathetic accounts of the tragic loss of life on the Mediterranean Sea and the hardships faced by refugees fleeing civil war in Syria. Should such instances be celebrated, or do they serve only to highlight that such coverage remains the exception rather than the rule when it comes to media coverage of asylum seekers and refugees?
- 8) Despite the well-documented limitations of crisis reporting, it remains the case that an understanding of the 'media logic' through which public knowledge of humanitarian issues is largely constituted is central to any efforts to addressing those issues.' Using this statement as a starting point, discuss the question of how far humanitarian campaigners should incorporate 'media logics', taking into consideration both their potential contribution and shortcomings for achieving humanitarian goals.
- 9) Using examples to support your argument, discuss the extent to which Martin Bell's idea of a 'journalism of attachment', and a journalistic ethics of 'bearing witness', provides a helpful or inadequate basis for considering the role and responsibilities of journalists in the reporting of global crises?
- 10) While it is easy to morally denounce journalists and point to problematic forms of coverage, confronting the challenges of crisis reporting requires a deeper analysis. Referring to examples, develop an argument that identifies logistical, ethical, professional and personal issues confronting journalists reporting crises and discusses how these are, or might be, addressed.
- 11) '[T]he problem of images and perception cannot be separated from the methodology of intervention' (Nash and van der Gaag 1987: 77). Referring to a particular area of, and/or one or more examples of, either crisis reporting or humanitarian campaigning, develop an argument that evaluates the significance of representation for humanitarian outcomes.

- 12) Referring to one or more examples in developing your response, develop an argument that critically evaluates the value and/or problems of 'celebrity humanitarianism' as a means for increasing awareness of, and addressing, human suffering and/or global issues.
- 13) In an age of 'selfie humanitarianism', helping others 'is increasingly figured less in terms of redistribution or justice than in terms of a makeover of subjectivity for all concerned' (Koffman, Orgad and Gill, 2015: 157). Taking this statement as a starting point, develop an argument that critically evaluates the value and/or problems of 'selfie humanitarianism' as a means for increasing awareness of, and addressing, human suffering and/or global crises.
- 14) Referring to one or more examples, develop an argument that critically evaluates how far innovative forms of media activism, facilitated by the affordances of mobile and digital media, may be seen to effectively challenge the power relations that have been historically characteristic of crisis reporting?
- 15) Communication is often seen as a means to achieving an end goal such as raising awareness or funds, but Livia Hinegardner (2009) argues that communication can be an end in itself. Explain what Hinegardner means by this, and develop an argument that critically reflects on what this shift in perception might mean for the way we evaluate the 'success' or 'effectiveness' of humanitarian campaigns or global crisis reporting more generally.

Note: Please consult the essay guidance notes on LMS and in the subject reader.