Discussion Questions for Norman Fairclough's *Analysing Discourse*

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Q1. Norman Fairclough (NF) writes that social science researchers 'are often confronted with questions about language, and are often working with language materials [= words]' (1B).
(a) Do you think studying language is *important* or *useful* for Media Studies researchers? Why, or why not (W/WN)?
(b) Are you, personally, interested in studying the *language* of the media? W/WN?
(c) Can you think of some *reasons* why Media Studies researchers should study media language?
(d) Can you think of some *reasons* why Media Studies researchers might NOT want to study media language?
(e) Can you think of some *methods* with which Media Studies researchers might study media language?

Social analysis, discourse analysis, text analysis

Q2. NF writes that his approach is based on the *assumption* 'that language is an irreducible (= essential) part of social life, [that is] dialectically (= mutually) interconnected with other elements of social life [such as people (their actions and relationships, values, attitudes and beliefs); economic systems (e.g. capitalism), technology, and the natural/physical world] so that [= therefore] social analysis and research always has to [= must] take account of language' (2C).
(a) Do you think this is a reasonable assumption?
(b) Do you think his conclusion [from 'so that …'] logically follows from his assumption?

Terminology: text, discourse, language

Q3. Do you think it is a good idea to extend the meaning of the word 'text' to include media products with images and sounds such as TV programmes? W/WN?

Q4. What is the best way to translate 'discourse' into Japanese for (i) the *general* meaning and (ii) the *particular* meaning?

Language in the new capitalism

Q5. Can you give some examples of the way in which the changes associated with the 'new capitalism' have impacted on media texts themselves, or their production or reception, in Japan or another country?

The approach to text analysis

Q6. In many fields of study these days, research approaches described as 'interdisciplinary' (or, as

NF prefers to say, 'transdisciplinary') have become very popular. Do you think this sort of approach is suitable for studying the media? W/WN?

Q7. Which traditional disciplines should be combined for doing interdisciplinary research on the media? For example, philosophy? history? mathematics???

Q8. Which kind of research are you most interested in: *quantitative* or *qualitative*? Why? What are the merits and demerits of each approach?

Social research themes
Q9. Which (if any!) of the themes listed in paragraph 7A are especially closely related to the media, media texts and media discourses?

Social effects of texts
Q10. What sort of effects do media texts have on people and society? Are they generally good or bad? Are they getting better or worse?

Ideologies
Q11. Do you think Japanese media texts are very ideological?

Q12. How can we decide if a particular statement in a media text is ideological or not?

Texts, meanings and interpretations
Q13. Which of the three aspects of meaning-making do you think is most important for media texts? Production, the Text itself, or Reception?

Texts and authors
Q14. How can we decide who is the 'author' of a typical TV news report?

Forms, meanings and effects
Q15. Can you think of any Japanese grammatical forms which might have ideological significance?

Critical analysis and 'objectivity'
Q16. NF writes in 14C that 'There is no such thing as an 'objective' analysis of a text.' Do you agree?

The limits of textual analysis
Q17. How do you think we should link 'micro' analysis of texts with 'macro' analysis of power relations in society?

END