

Unit 43: Radio Studies

Unit code:	F/600/6667
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

This unit aims to develop learners' critical awareness of textual and contextual issues in radio, across a range of genres. Learners will examine the wider implications of radio for society, how it is organised, produced and received, as well as its prospects for the future.

● Unit introduction

From its early beginnings at the start of the last century, radio has developed into a modern and exciting medium that is every bit as relevant to us today as it was to generations before us. It was radio that first enabled ordinary people to experience live public events in their own homes, to get information while on the move, and to hear celebrities talking as if just to them, person to person. Embracing the latest digital technology has meant huge strides forward in terms of both production and distribution, and whether beamed across huge areas by powerful transmitters, accessed through podcasts over the internet or downloaded to mobile devices, radio programming can sound as engaging and original today as it did to previous generations.

It is not absolutely vital to have a knowledge of the history of radio or to be able to analyse radio output from an intellectual or academic perspective in order to work effectively in the industry. However, most of those who do work in it find that this sort of knowledge and understanding helps to inform their work and deepen the pleasure they take in the work of others. Media theory is also a key component of foundation or honours degrees in this field.

In studying the theory of radio, key issues of media studies will be explored in a number of radio contexts.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Understand the development and institutional contexts of radio
- 2 Understand the use of codes and conventions in a range of radio genres
- 3 Understand the use of narrative structures in radio
- 4 Understand the main theories of ideology and audience that relate to radio.

Unit content

1 Understand the development and institutional contexts of radio

Development: transmission and reception technology (Marconi, military communication, domestic radio sets, transistors, AM, FM, stereo, Radio Data System (RDS), Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB), Digital Radio Mondiale (DRM), customisable digital radio services, through television, internet, podcasting, mobile devices); programming (Marconi Company, BBC, Sarnoff, full service, thematic, international broadcasting, continental stations aimed at UK); regulatory (British Broadcasting Company, Sykes and Crawford committees, British Broadcasting Corporation, offshore pirates, independent local radio, national and regional commercial radio, community radio, internet radio); production and post-production technology (migration to digital, automation, syndication, co-location)

Institutional contexts: regulation (Ofcom, BBC, land-based pirates); content issues (taste and decency, scheduling, impartiality); ownership (state, private, independent stations, full-time community radio, group management, takeovers and mergers); employment (staff, freelance, independent producers, volunteers)

2 Understand the use of codes and conventions in a range of radio genres

Genres: in news, music and speech programming, commercials, drama, commentary, phone-ins; built programmes and sequences; sequence formats, eg zoo, shock jock

Codes: acoustics (indoor, outdoor, reverb, echo, acoustic treatment, studio acoustic, dead zone); atmosphere (to create action, location, mood or era); spot effects (to create action, change of mood); white noise; noise pollution; processing; editing; sound effects; structure; content; style; use of levels to change scene in drama

Conventions: structural (for punctuation, for recognition, for branding); semantic (meaning in tone, pace, combination with other elements)

3 Understand the use of narrative structures in radio

Open and closed structures: in journalism; in interviews; in continuity announcing; in commercials; in drama (single plays, series, serials); voiceovers; commentary

Multi-strand narrative: drama (continuity of multiple storylines, character, cliff-hangers); real and fictional time

Alternative narrative structures: non-narrative; non-linear; surreal; impressionistic

4 Understand the main theories of ideology and audience that relate to radio

Ideology: social and capital models (Reith and the public broadcasting ethos, development of commercial radio, decentralisation of broadcasting, liberalisation since 1973, community radio for social gain); imperialism (BBC Empire Service and World Service); impartiality and objectivity (balance and bias); censorship and self-censorship; representation (race, class, age, disability, gender); participation (texts, phone-ins, emails, chat rooms, blogs)

Audience: models of passive and active responses related to radio texts (hypodermic needle, stimulus-response, uses and gratifications models)

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 describe the key historical and institutional contexts for radio [IE]	M1 explain the key historical and institutional contexts for radio with reference to detailed illustrative examples	D1 critically evaluate the key historical and institutional contexts for radio with supporting arguments and elucidated examples
P2 describe the use of codes and conventions of radio genres with some appropriate use of subject terminology [IE]	M2 explain the use of codes and conventions of radio genres with reference to detailed illustrative examples and with generally correct use of subject terminology	D2 critically evaluate the use of codes and conventions of radio genres with supporting arguments and elucidated examples, consistently using subject terminology correctly
P3 describe the narrative structures of radio texts with some appropriate use of subject terminology [IE]	M3 explain the narrative structures of radio texts expressing ideas with reference to detailed illustrative examples and with generally correct use of subject terminology	D3 critically evaluate the narrative structures of radio texts with supporting arguments and elucidated examples, consistently using subject terminology correctly
P4 describe the main theories of ideology and audience in radio contexts with some appropriate use of subject terminology. [IE]	M4 explain the main theories of ideology and audience in radio contexts with reference to detailed illustrative examples and with generally correct use of subject terminology.	D4 critically evaluate the main theories of ideology and audience in radio contexts with supporting arguments and elucidated examples, consistently using subject terminology correctly.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers	RL – reflective learners	SM – self-managers
	CT – creative thinkers	TW – team workers	EP – effective participators

Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

This unit is likely to be taught through a variety of lectures, tutorials, listening workshops and seminars. Both teaching and learning in this unit can be stimulating and rewarding, as there is plenty of scope for bringing the subject alive through imaginative use of audio playbacks. Today, it is easier than ever to assemble a collection of examples of historical and contemporary clips and extracts, illustrating key stages in the development of the medium, genres, common codes and conventions and the impact of ideology on institutions and broadcasters alike.

A systematic approach to the use of these examples would most effectively promote learning. Learners should be encouraged to conduct their own guided investigations to find examples of their own before presenting their findings in an open forum. They should then collate evidence of their achievement, showing how they have met the assessment criteria for the unit.

It is important to note that the most rewarding approaches to understanding radio (and to achieving the better grades) result from covering a range of examples of different genres and styles. Therefore, tutors and learners should investigate and work on different genres and theories, rather than picking a single topic at a time, which is often rather limiting in the development of systematic knowledge and understanding. Learners should cover at least two genres for learning outcome 2, and at least two theories for learning outcome 4, but in each case the best work will consider a wider range than that while concentrating in depth on at least two.

As well as relating their investigations to conventional sources, learners should be encouraged to carry out their own research among different age groups. They may have relatives or other contacts who remember crucial eras in the development of radio, for example, and can describe what it was like to experience some of the key developments first hand.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way of planning the teaching and assessment of this unit.

Topics and suggested assignments and activities
Introduction to unit and unit assessment.
History of radio – whole-class lectures and playback of examples.
Institutional contexts for radio – whole-class lectures and playback of examples.

Topics and suggested assignments and activities

Assignment 1 – Historical Developments and Institutional Contexts

Learners are to prepare and deliver a briefing for an investor considering investing in the radio industry – either in commercial radio or in an independent production company intending to make programmes.

Learners will:

- receive an assignment brief
- research the history of radio and focus on key events and historical developments
- research the institutional contexts of radio and focus on key elements within the industry today
- prepare materials for assessment
- present their findings for assessment.

Codes and conventions – whole-class lectures and playback of examples.

Assignment 2 – Briefing an Investor: Codes and Conventions

Learners are to prepare and deliver a briefing for the investor, focusing on codes and conventions in radio genres.

Learners will:

- receive an assignment brief
- research the codes and conventions in radio genres
- prepare materials for assessment
- present their findings for assessment.

Narrative structures – whole-class lectures and playback of examples.

Assignment 3 – Briefing an Investor: Narrative Structures in Radio

Learners are to prepare and deliver a briefing for the investor, focusing on narrative structures in radio.

Learners will:

- receive an assignment brief
- research narrative structures in radio
- prepare materials for assessment
- present their findings for assessment.

Ideology and audience – whole-class lectures and playback of examples.

Assignment 4 – Ideology and Audience

Learners are to prepare and deliver a briefing for the investor, focusing on ideology and audience in radio.

Learners will:

- receive an assignment brief
- research ideology and audience in radio
- prepare materials for assessment
- present their findings for assessment.

Assessment

Evidence for assessment

Evidence for all the learning outcomes in this unit will include a combination of evaluative and critical comment, which does not necessarily have to be provided by the learner exclusively in written form. Some evidence for learning outcome 1 might be compiled through production of an audio commentary containing different examples, or as an oral presentation. Learners should be encouraged to sample, investigate and evaluate key developments in radio broadcasting, as well as its current nature. Presentations must be recorded for the purposes of internal and external verification.

The study of codes, conventions and narrative structure for learning outcomes 2 and 3 could usefully focus on a small number of individual texts across at least two different genres. Again, the essay is but one method of presenting findings, and for many learners other methods will be more appropriate.

Learning outcome 4 presents another opportunity for learners to submit their work in alternative formats. Work on ideology might focus on principles and trends, while that on audience could usefully concentrate on selected examples of behaviour.

For some elements of this unit, and for some learners, a formal viva voce assessment might be appropriate. When more than one learner in a cohort is assessed in this way, care must be taken to ensure that all learners are asked equivalent questions, and that all are given equal opportunities to expand or clarify their answers. Interviewers must also ensure that questions are not phrased in such a way as to provide or suggest an answer. Formal vivas should be recorded for the purposes of internal and external verification and at least 50 per cent of such assessments must be internally verified.

Application of grading criteria

When applying the grading criteria, tutors should follow the advice given below. Please note that any examples of evidence given here are indicative only. This advice is not exhaustive and the examples need not specifically be included in a learner's work in order for that learner to achieve the exemplified grade.

Pass

To achieve a pass grade, learners must achieve all the criteria at pass level. For each of the criteria learners must present evidence that addresses each italicised sub-heading of the content for the learning outcome.

P1: learners will describe the key developmental and institutional contexts for radio. Historical detail will not be extensive but will be accurate. If any simple conclusions are drawn, they will lack breadth of research and depth of understanding. Learners will give a correct outline of the most significant ways in which the main contextual issues have impacted on radio production.

P2: learners will accurately describe a number of codes and conventions in at least two radio genres but the selection of material for inclusion will lack clear justification. Ideas will be simple and often derivative.

P3: learners will describe common usages of narrative structures in at least two radio genres, relying heavily on found material. There will be only limited evidence of research and investigation, and any conclusions drawn will be unsophisticated, being unsupported by relevant details from illustrative examples.

P2, P3 and P4: evidence will show a basic understanding of technical terminology but learners will generally be unsure about this vocabulary and will make fairly frequent mistakes when they do use it.

P4: learners will describe some of the main theories of ideology and audience, but in terms that show only a basic awareness of their relationship to radio. Points made will be straightforward and will not be supported by relevant details from illustrative examples.

Merit

To achieve a merit grade, learners must achieve all the pass and all the merit grade criteria. For each of the criteria learners must present evidence that addresses each italicised sub-heading of the content for the learning outcome.

M1, M2, M3 and M4: learners' work will be characterised by a thoughtful, explanatory approach to all subjects covered. Learners will offer discussions of the content defined in the criteria in such a way as to show, for example, why radio developed as it did, how codes, conventions and narrative structures are used in radio texts, how ideological factors have impacted upon and have helped to define radio as an institution, and how audiences and their relationships to radio have been theorised. Relevant examples will be given to support what is said, but the learner will not elucidate these examples to show how they illustrate the points they support.

M2, M3 and M4: learners will use technical vocabulary for the most part correctly, but may make mistakes or be unsure about usage at times.

Distinction

To achieve a distinction grade, learners must achieve all the pass, all the merit and all the distinction grade criteria. For each of the criteria learners must present evidence that addresses each italicised sub-heading of the content for the learning outcome.

D1, D2, D3 and D4: learners' work will be characterised by a thorough engagement with and understanding of all the content of the unit. Learners will be able to justify all points made through the appropriate use of supporting arguments and elucidated examples. Examples will be precisely focused, will clearly exemplify the points made, and will be elucidated to show how they illustrate the points made. Learners should be able to critically analyse their findings, making well-reasoned connections between a wide range of phenomena. Analysis will clearly predominate over description.

D2, D3 and D4: technical vocabulary will be secure and used correctly and confidently at all times.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Pearson assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1	Assignment 1 – Historical Developments and Institutional Contexts	Prepare and deliver a briefing for an investor considering investing in the radio industry – either in commercial radio or in an independent production company intending to make programmes for the BBC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collated research data and conclusions. Presentation slides and notes. Presentation (recorded).
P2, M2, D2	Assignment 2 – Briefing an Investor: Codes and Conventions	As above.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collated research data and conclusions. Presentation slides and notes. Presentation (recorded).
P3, M3, D3	Assignment 3 – Briefing an Investor: Narrative Structures	As above.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collated research data and conclusions. Presentation slides and notes. Presentation (recorded).
P4, M4, D4	Assignment 4 – Ideology and Audience	As above.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collated research data and conclusions. Presentation slides and notes. Presentation (recorded).

Links to other BTEC units

This unit forms part of the BTEC Creative Media Production suite. This unit has particular links with the following units in the BTEC Creative Media Production suite:

Level 2	Level 3
	Critical Approaches to Creative Media Products
	Film Studies
	Television and Video Studies

Essential resources

Learners will need access to radio or audio production and post-production facilities if they wish to illustrate their work with examples.

Listening to broadcasts may be done in class or individually via conventional or digital radio receivers, through digital television platforms or over the internet.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Although busy, many radio professionals will give up time to give a talk and a tour round their facilities.

ScreenSkills, the Sector Skills Council for the creative media sector, has a substantial section of its website dedicated to careers, including job descriptions.

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	planning and carrying out research on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• key historical and institutional contexts for radio• codes and conventions of radio genres• narrative structures of radio texts• main theories of ideology and audience in radio contexts• and analysing and evaluating information gathered from that research• supporting conclusions, using reasoned arguments and evidence in written or oral presentations of research.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Creative thinkers	connecting their own and others' ideas when studying radio forms
Reflective learners	communicating their learning about radio in relevant ways for different audiences setting goals with success criteria for their work, reviewing progress, and acting on the outcomes
Self-managers	organising time and resources, prioritising actions in order to complete assignments on time.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs	researching and presenting data and conclusions
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	researching and presenting data and conclusions
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	researching radio broadcasts
Access, search for, select and use ICT-based information and evaluate its fitness for purpose	finding archive radio material
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Bring together information to suit content and purpose	researching and presenting data and conclusions
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	researching and presenting data and conclusions
Select and use ICT to communicate and exchange information safely, responsibly and effectively including storage of messages and contact lists	researching and presenting data and conclusions
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	presenting research findings and conclusions
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	researching radio theory and examples of radio broadcasts
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	presenting research findings and conclusions.