

Course Ideologies and Conceptual Maps

Culture, the Media and the
'Ideological Effect'
(Stuart Hall, 1977)

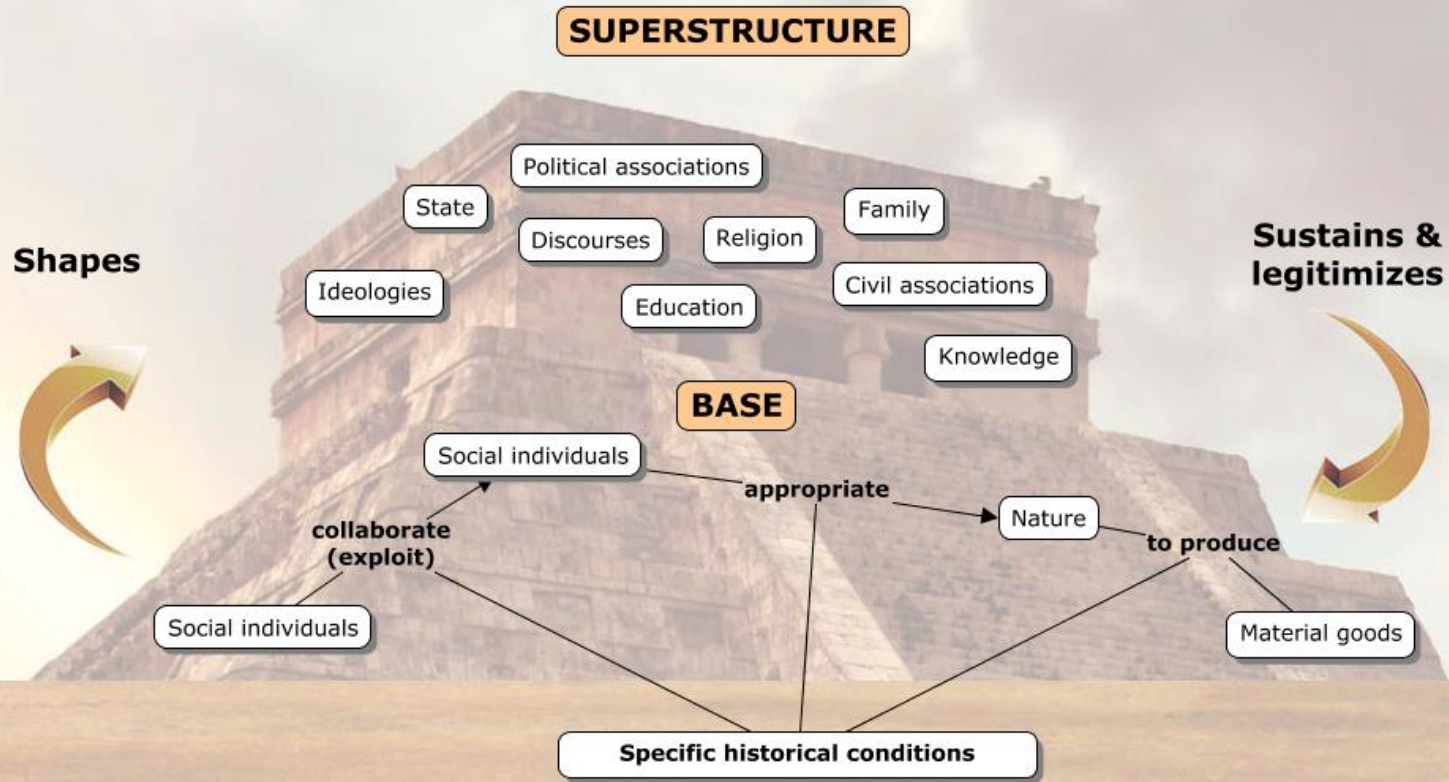
PART 1

Historical Materialist Conception of Society (Marx) and Culture (Hall)

- According to Marx, the type of collaboration that humans favor to appropriate nature and produce material goods shapes a society/culture's ideologies, discourses, knowledge and institutions.
- In return, these ideologies, discourses, knowledge, and institutions sustain this society/culture's mode of production.
- In a capitalist system, this collaboration and mode of production revolve around the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class within specific historical conditions.

(Ref. Hall, 1977, pp. 315-319)

Historical Materialist Conception of Society (Marx) and Culture (Hall)

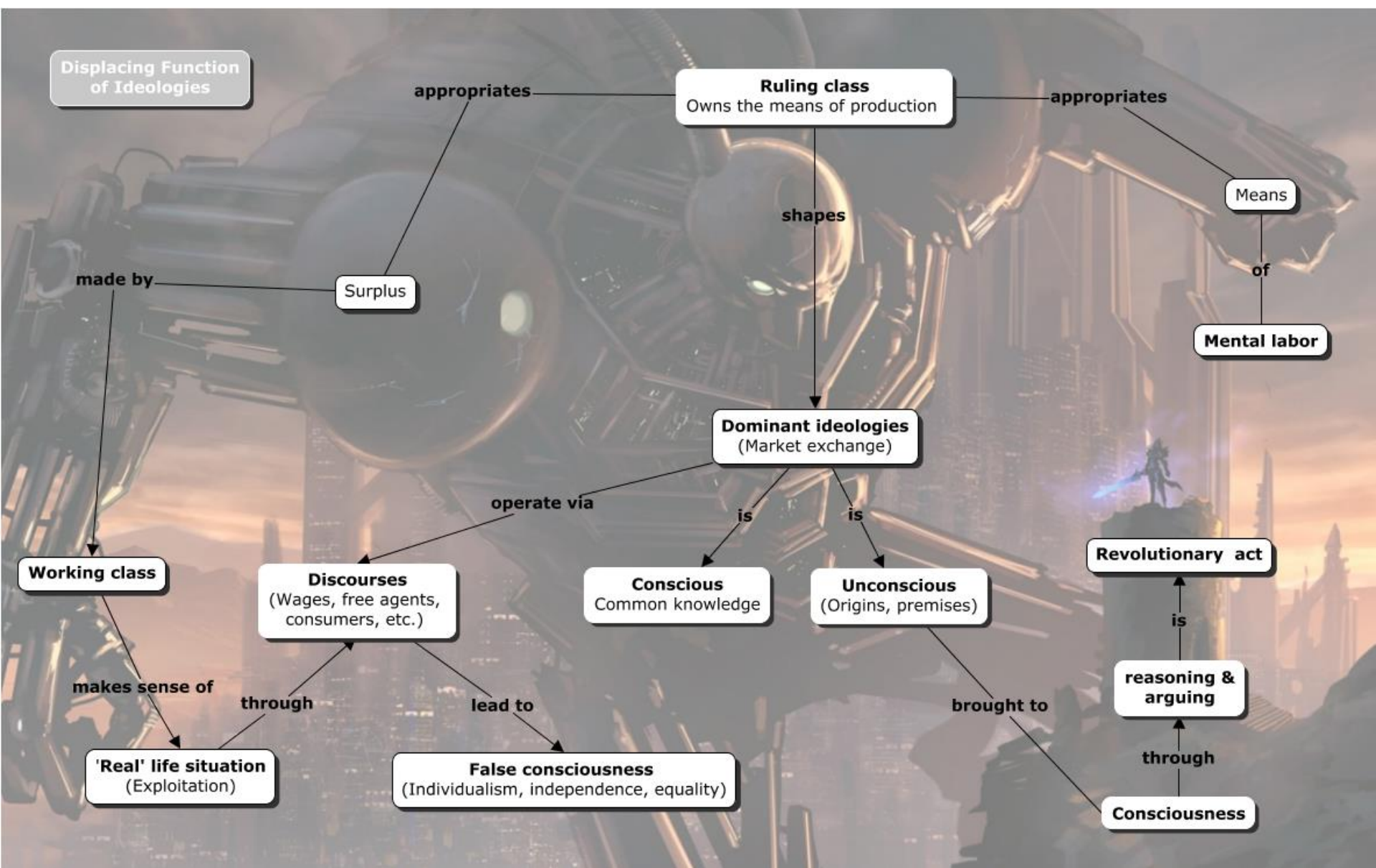


PART 2

Displacing Function of Ideology and False Consciousness

- Social subjects can have a false consciousness of the conditions in which they live because of the displacing function of dominant ideologies.
- In a capitalist system, social subjects make sense of their life situation through the lens of the market ideology, which operates via discourses about wages, contracts, bargains, consumers, democracy, etc. that:
 - make one kind of relation (exploitation) appear as the opposite kind of relation (individualism, independence and equality) (Camera Obscura)
 - make one aspect of the relation (negotiation of wages) stand for the whole relation (equality between managers and workers) (Fetichism)
 - mask the foundations of common ideas (Concealment)
- Bringing to consciousness common ideas' hidden premises, by reasoning and arguing, is a revolutionary act in itself.

(Ref. Hall, 1977, pp. 321-327)



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PART 3

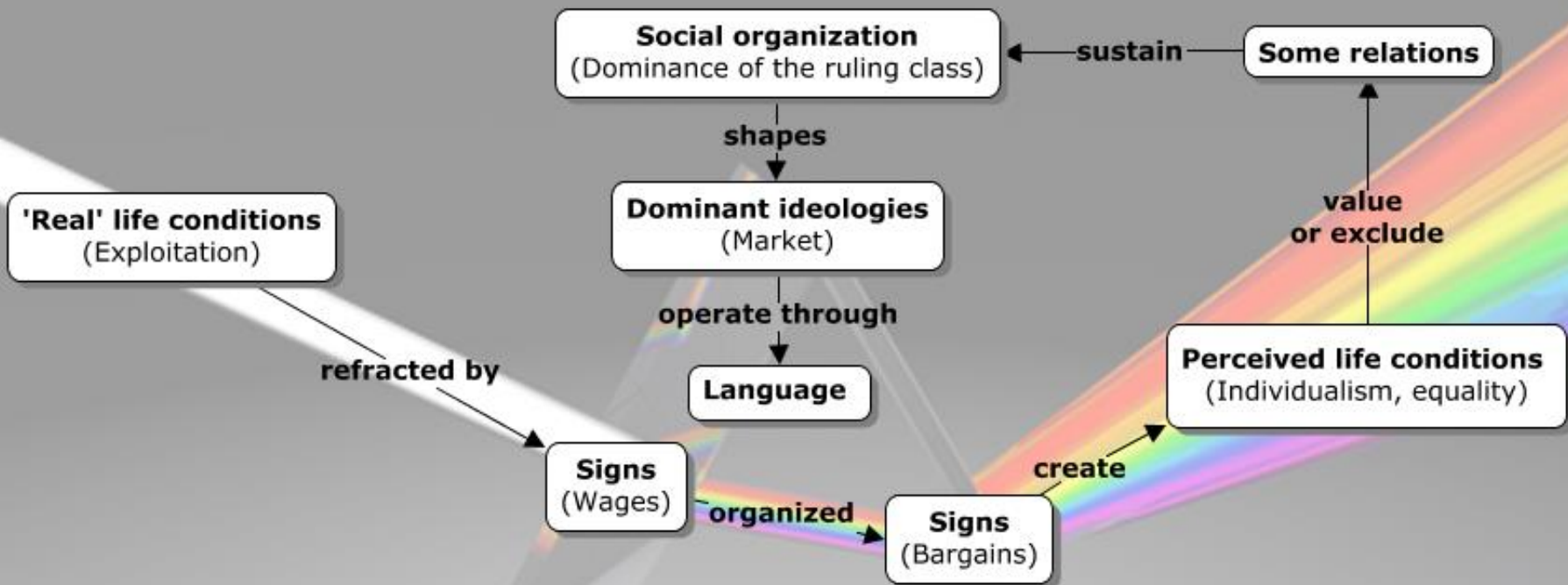
Ideological Role of Language

Dominant ideologies operate through language, which is a socially-constructed system of signs that:

- mediates our thinking process
- allows things to mean something
- refracts 'reality' and distorts it to varying degrees.

In the capitalist system, the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class is refracted by language and appears as an equal relationship legitimizing social inequalities.

(Ref. Hall, 1977, pp. 327-331)



Ideological Role of Language

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PART 4

Three Concepts of Domination

- 1) **William:** There is more than one ideology in a society. The dominance of some ideologies is determined by who controls the “process of incorporation,” that is to say the selection of ideas that are valued and the interpretation of dissident ideas as deviances.
- 2) **Gramsci:** The ruling class cannot achieve dominance and hegemony only through coercion (police, laws, army). Rulers also have to win the consent of subordinate classes through ideologies and achieve a complex alliance of class fractions.

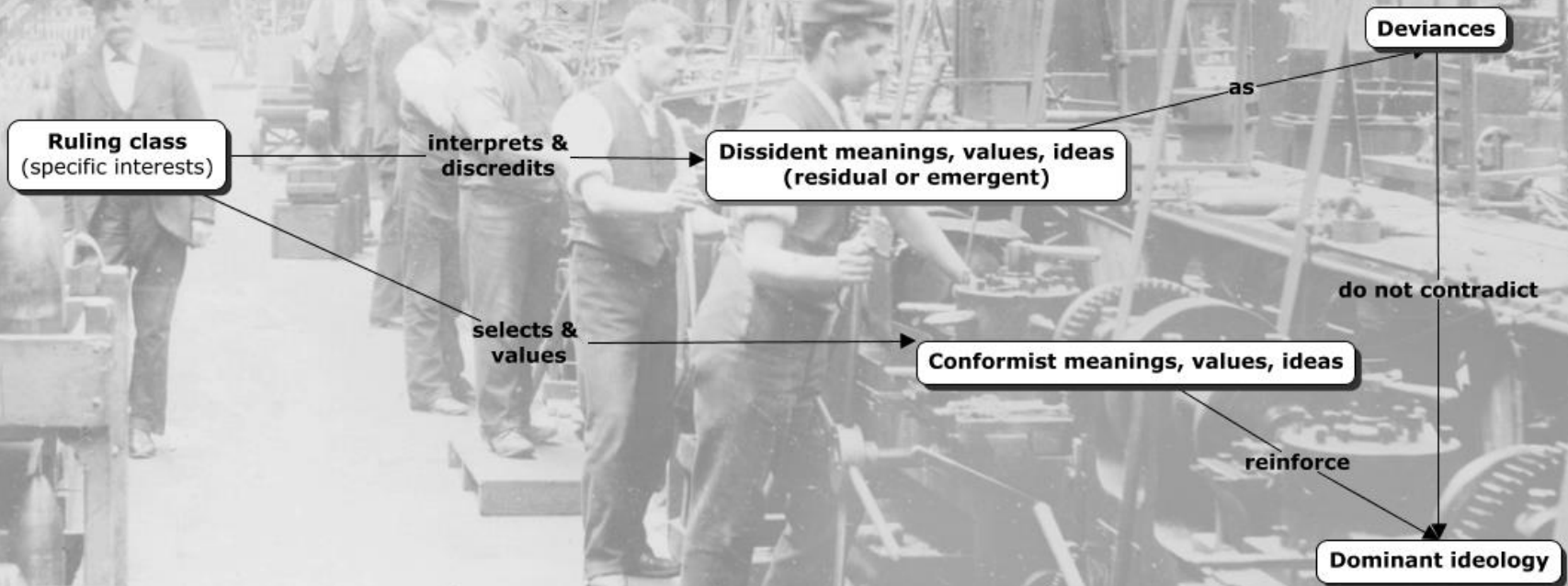
Hegemony is not given and permanent: it can be lost and has to be constantly secured with the preservation of an unstable equilibrium. The ruling class has to make concessions to win consent and legitimacy.

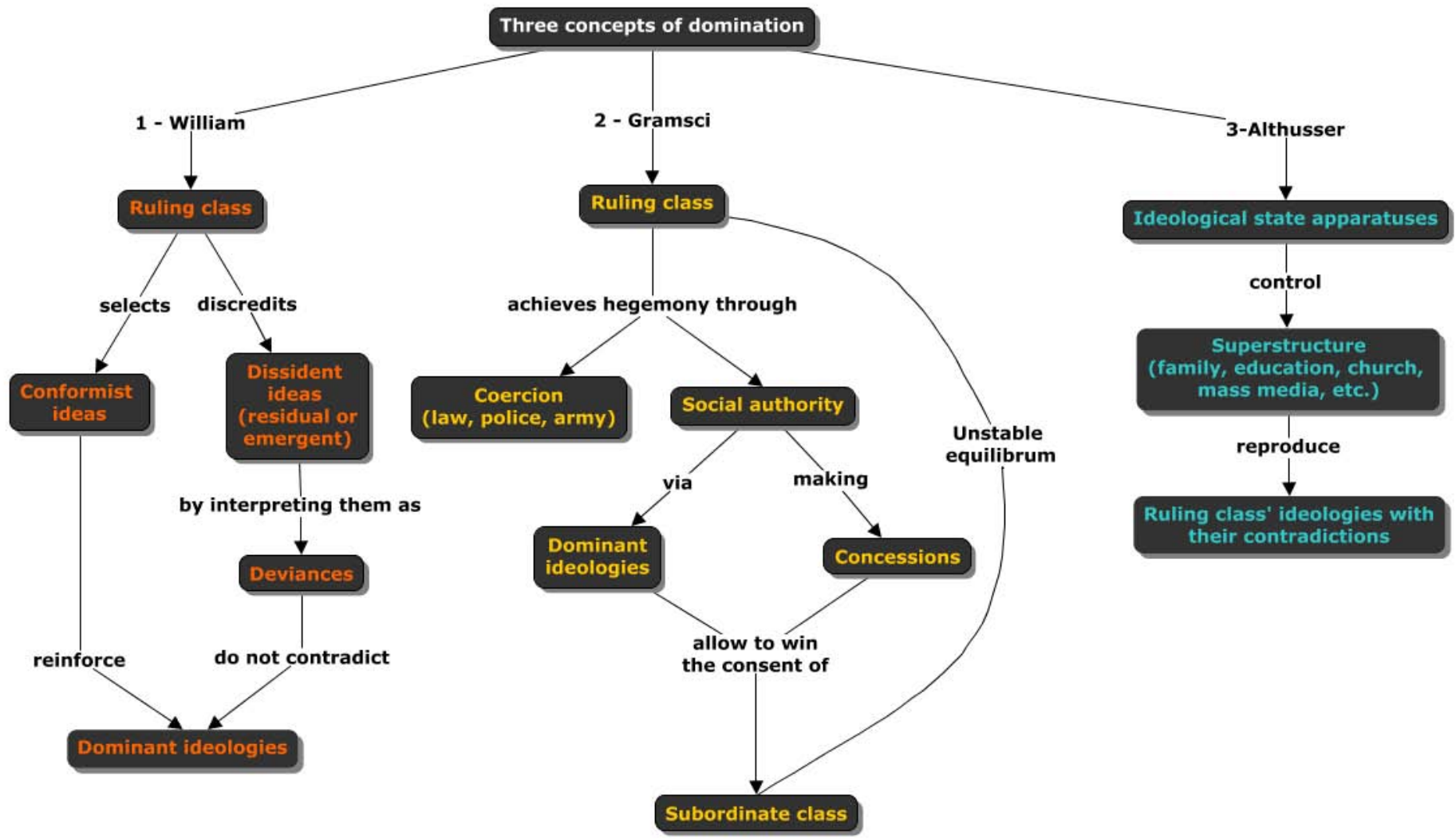
Dissident ideas are easily contained when opposing groups are not organized and strong enough to act as a counter-hegemonic forces and intervene in the process of incorporation.

- 3) **Althusser:** Unlike coercive states, the ideological state apparatuses rule by reproducing the ideology of the ruling class, which is not simple and unified, but a complex set of contradictory ideas that reflect class struggles.

(Ref. Hall, 1977, pp. 331-336)

Process of Incorporation





PART 5

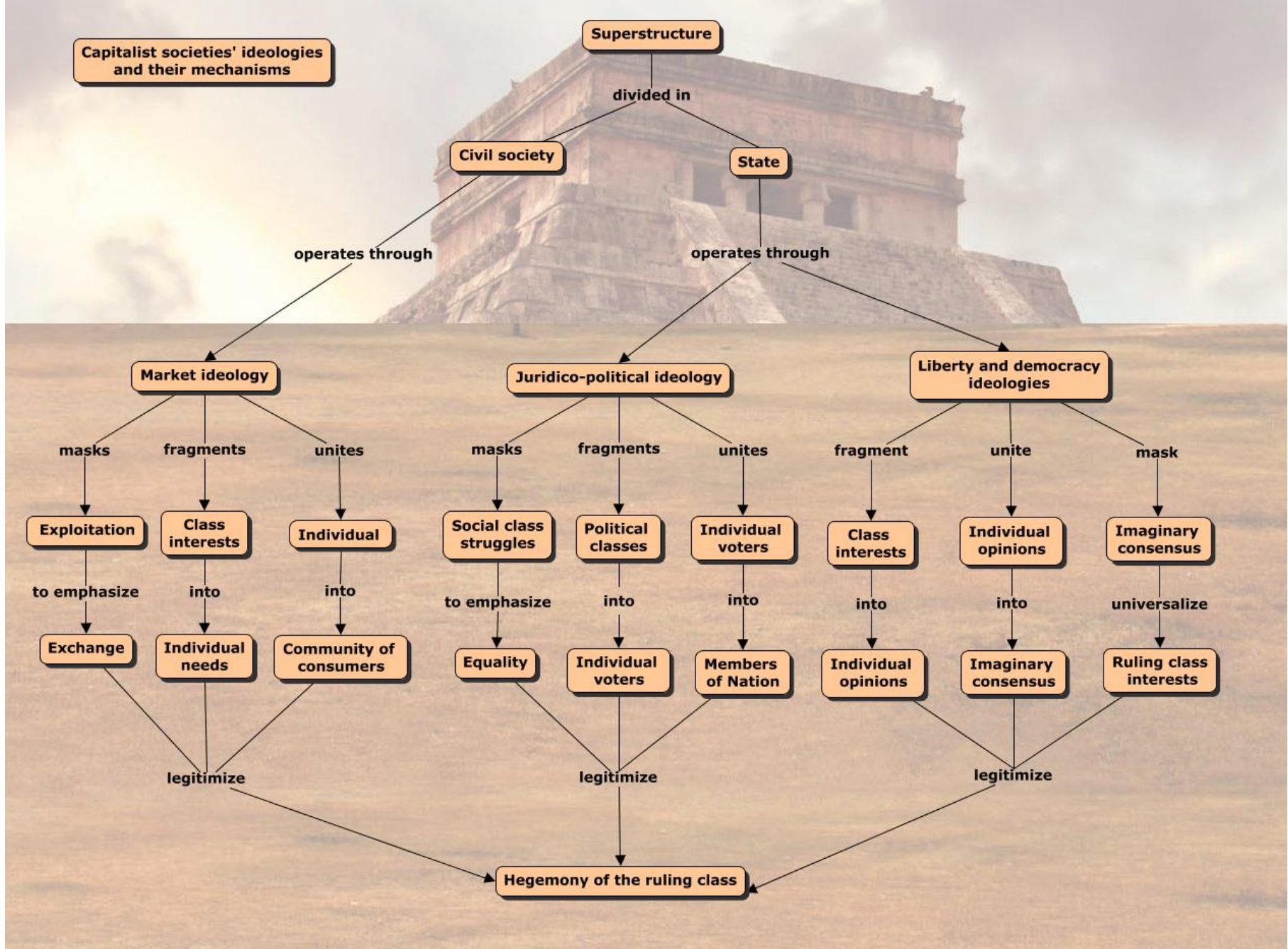
Capitalist Societies Ideologies and Their Mechanism

The ruling class does not exert control over society directly, but through the civil society's market ideology, as well as through the state's ideologies of justice, democracy, and freedom, which all operate through three mechanisms:

- fragmenting
- uniting
- masking

These ideologies legitimate the hegemony of the ruling class and create the illusion of a consensus.

(Ref. Hall, 1977, pp. 336-341)

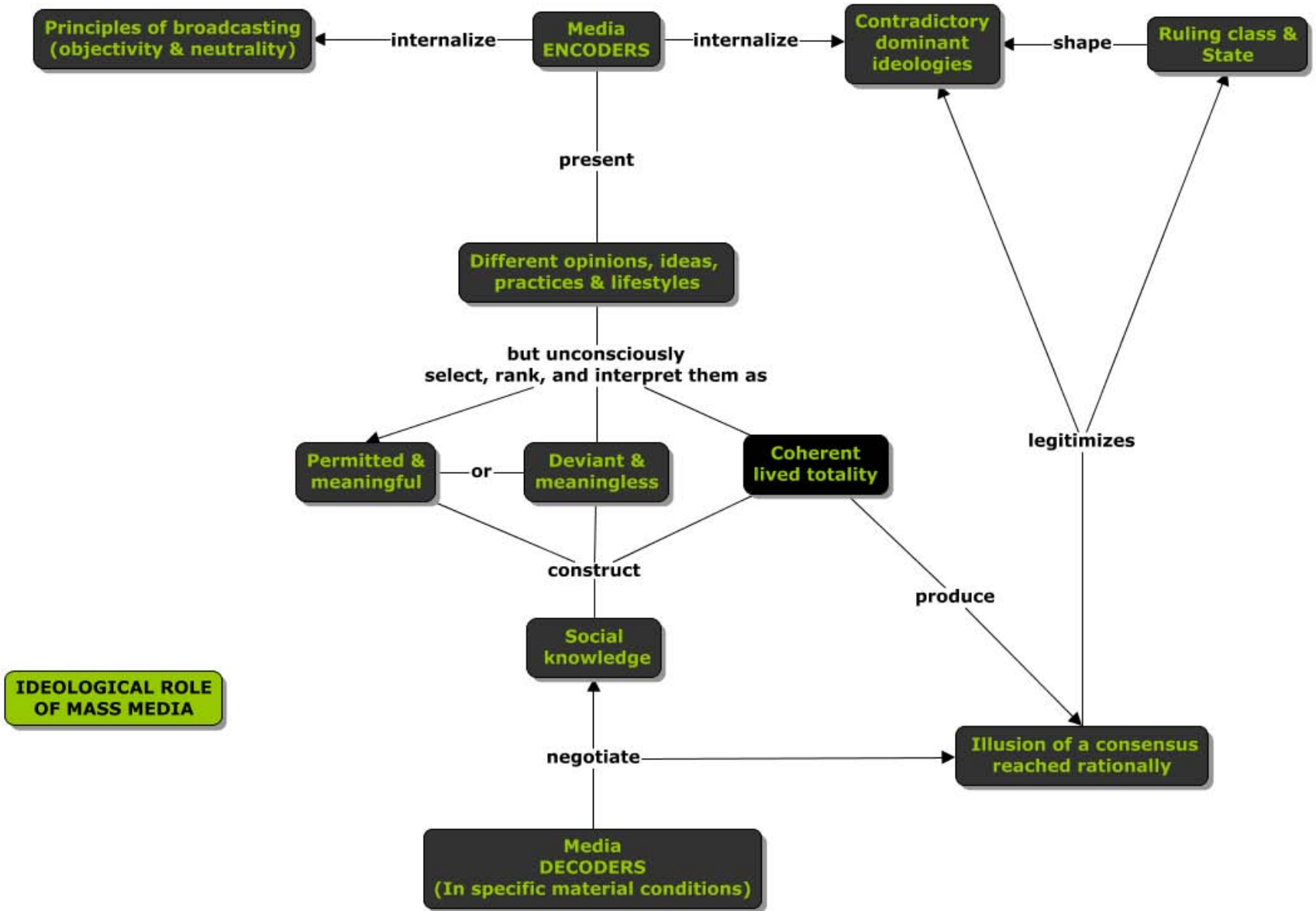


PART 6

Ideological Role of Mass Media

- In the context of monopoly capitalism, mass media become the main producers and distributors of culture, as well as the most influential ideological apparatus.
- The state and the ruling class do not control the media directly, but rather through dominant ideologies. This allows media to gain legitimacy.
- The broadcasting principles of objectivity and neutrality encourage encoders to present different ideas, opinions, practices, and lifestyles.
- However, encoders internalize dominant ideologies and unconsciously select, rank, and interpret these different ideas as either as permitted and meaningful or as deviant and meaningless.
- Encoders also present these different ideas, opinions, practices and lifestyles as part of a coherent society that makes room for minorities and in which different opinions can be debated. This produces the illusion of a consensus that has been reached rationally.
- Decoders are free to negotiate the meanings of mass media messages and interpret them in counter-hegemonic ways, but they are strongly encouraged, by visual and verbal techniques, to interpret mass media messages within the limits of dominant ideologies.
- Moreover, the possibility of negotiating meanings legitimizes mass media by producing the illusion of a consensus that has been reached rationally.

(Ref. Hall, 1977, pp. 342-346)



References

Hall, Stuart. 1979. "Culture, the Media and the 'Ideological Effect'". Chap in. J. Curran, M. Gurevitch, and J. Woollacott (eds) *Mass Communication and Society*, pp. 315-348. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

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CMS.701 / CMS.901 Current Debates in Media
Spring 2015

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