Ideology, Gender and Representation
Overview of Presentation

Introduction: What is Ideology

Althusser: Ideology and the State

de Lauretis: The Technology of Gender
Introduction: What is Ideology

Ideology has come to mean four general things:

1. Ideology is a **worldview** (western ideology) A very general definition.

2. Ideology is a specific **set of political ideas** such as liberalism, or conservatism.

3. Marxist sense of ideology. It is the **ideas of the ruling class**, which then become the ideas we hold in our heads.
   A strict Marxist analysis would contend that class is the key and most important variable… (we are essentially defined by how we work; where we work;)

4. Ideology is this form of **false consciousness** as opposed to a science, or a form of knowledge, which can break free of ideology.
Introduction: What is Ideology

Ideology: how does it differ from a Foucauldian idea of discourse?

Discourse is not confined to class but all relations of subordination… and power (sexuality and gender; race; who is sane and mad; who is imprisoned or not)...

It differs from Althusser because A. believed in Marx: that there could be a science that would in a sense make you outside of ideology: for Foucualt there is no outside of discourse…
Louis Althusser (1918-1990)

Marxist philosopher; Teacher at Ecole Normale Superior, France.

He lived for most of his academic career at ENS. Periodically mentally ill and often in poor health.

_Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses_ is one of his most famous essays.
“The ultimate condition of production is the reproduction of conditions of production” (123).

What gets reproduced?

1) The productive forces.
2) The existing relations of production.

Productive Forces:
- Reproduction of the **means of production**.
- Reproduction of **labour power**.
  a) through **wages** (material condition): a wage system allows the worker to continue working and to reproduce himself.
  b) reproduction of **skills** and **submission**: through education, the proletariat becomes diversely skilled and also is conditioned to observe and respect “the socio-technical division of labour and the rules of the order established by class domination” (127).
Ideology and the State

“...it is in the forms and under the forms of ideological subjection that provision is made for the reproduction of the skills of labour power” (128).

Marxian view of society:

*Infrastructure* – economic base: productive forces and the relations of production.

*Superstructure* – 2 levels:

1) politico-legal (law and the state)
2) ideology

The State Apparatus (Marx, Lenin) – repressive of the proletariat to serve the interests of the ruling class (132). It contains Government, the administration, the army, the police, the courts, the prisons, etc.

In Althusser’s theory, this becomes **Repressive State Apparatus (RSA)**, while he adds the **Ideological State Apparatus (ISA)**, “which present themselves...in the form of distinct and specialized institutions” (religious, educational, family, legal, political, trade-union, communications, cultural) (136).
Ideology and the State

How is the reproduction of the relations of production secured?

By the contribution of all SAs:
RSA – secures them by force (relations of exploitation)
– secures the political conditions for the action of the ISAs
ISAs – reproduce these relations behind the “shield” of the RSA

The ruling ideology ensures harmony between RSA and between ISAs
Althusser explains that Education is the dominant ISA in capitalist social formations; it operates unnoticed because it is seen as an apolitical, un-ideological environment (148).

It creates 4 types (based on when one exits the system):
1) Exploited
2) Agent of exploitation
3) Agent of repression
4) Professional ideologist
Ideology and the State

Ideology:

1. “...represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (153).

2. “...has a material existence” (155) “An ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. This existence is material” (156).

On the individual as a subject: “his ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of the subject” (158).
Ideology and the State

Interpellation – constitution.

Obviousness (without appearance) is the basic ideological effect. We are always “practicing rituals of ideological recognition” (161).

Ideology turns concrete *individuals* into concrete *subjects* by recruiting them, in other words, *interpelling* them (hailing). “Hey, you there!” (163).

Ideology remains hidden as the always-alreadyness of subjects amounts to how obvious our social relations of production, and ideological apparatuses that reproduce them, seem to us:

“*Ideology never says, ‘I am ideological’”* (164).
The Technology of Gender

Teresa de Lauretis

Professor at the University of California in Santa Cruz

Her text, *The Technology of Gender*, corresponds to the first chapter of a book, titled *Technologies of Gender*.

In her text, she explores the notion of gender and attempts to show how gender is constructed and believed to be reality.
The idea of gender as sexual difference has been at the heart of women's studies and spaces, and practices have been constructed around this notion. But this has now become a liability to feminist thought. This oppositional structure between men and women limits us in two ways:

It makes it difficult to articulate the differences of women to Woman (or differences within women)

It also refuses to conceive of social subjects constituted in gender and by their relationship to language and culture.

Gender can not be derived from sexual difference, nor is it merely something that is absent or abstracted from the real conditions of our lives. (and some of these will indeed be about our biology; but biology isn’t the sole determinant)
The Technology of Gender

What is gender?
The sex-gender system (which exists in popular wisdom) consists of the cultural conceptions of male and female as two complementary yet mutually exclusive categories into which all human beings are placed.

However, de Lauretis argues that...
Gender is a representation and a self-representation that is the product of various social technologies, such as the media system, and of various institutionalized discourses (ways of talking and speaking in these public arenas) and critical practices (our research practices) as well as in our practices of daily life. (2)
de Lauretis notes four propositions.

1. Gender is a representation
2. The representation of gender is its construction
3. Goes on in institutions and their practices
4. Is affected by its critiques and deconstructions
“We do not need to talk about sexual division as ‘always already there’; we can explore the historical construction of categories of masculinity and femininity without being obliged to deny that, historically specific as they are, they nevertheless exist today in systematic and even predictable terms” (8)
The Technology of Gender

Following Foucault’s thought, de Lauretis proposes that gender is the result of various social technologies.

From the first time we but a check in the “F” box, “we have officially entered the sex-gender system, the social relations of gender and have become en-gendered as women.” Other people consider us females and we represent ourselves as females.
De Lauretis notes that Althusser’s description of ideology can contribute to our understanding of the functioning of gender.

“ideology represents not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live’ and which govern their existence.” (6)

According to Althusser, “ideology has the function [...] of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects”. Similarly, gender has the function of constituting concrete individuals as men and women.

To deny the existence of a sex – gender system “is to deny the existence of current ideologies which create those differences.” (15)
The Technology of Gender

The case of Hedwig

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhjU0aNbtCE