Social Effects of Electronic Media
Two major, competing forces in broadcasting:

• Providing a public service (FCC requires broadcasters to serve “the public interest, convenience and necessity”).
• Making a profit (high ratings = high advertising rates).
• Cable, satellite and online communications are not required to provide public service.
“To poison a nation, poison its stories. A demoralised nation tells demoralised stories to itself. Beware of the storytellers who are not fully conscious of the importance of their gifts, and who are irresponsible in the application of their art.”

Ben Okri, Nigerian author
A parable: “The Blind Men and the Elephant”
To what extent does TV/media influence real life?

TV viewing statistics
TV viewing at all-time high

Does media make young people (such as yourselves) into narcissists?

Narcissists?
Media Violence

Cultivation Theory – TV “cultivates” viewers’ perception of reality (George Gerbner; click image).

Television (media) take the place of family, school, church.

Social learning theory – learning takes place from observing and modeling behavior of others. Applied to TV violence (Bandura).
Well-established theories of communication

Agenda setting – media (TV) tells us what to think about. What’s on TV (or other media) become the issues we care about (click on image).

Agenda setting

Framing – “angle” from which the story is viewed.

Framing (relates to finance)

Gatekeepers – those who must decide what makes it on TV. News directors, editors, program directors.

Unless the “gatekeepers” put a story on TV (or other media), and it becomes part of the “agenda,” we are unlikely to know about it.
Opinion leaders – media influences opinion leaders first, then followers (two-step flow). Do you know an opinion leader?

Opinion leaders - music

It is not easy to change a person’s mind via electronic media because of:

Selective exposure – people pay attention to messages that fit their opinions. Users use media to reinforce their views.

Selective perception – users interpret media messages based on their already formed opinions and attitudes.
Statistics/research: “A grain of salt”

“Lies, damned lies and statistics” – Mark Twain.

Correlation between drowning and ice-cream cones. As one goes up, so does the other. What explains it?