

CONTROL ROOM

prepared by A. Plummer

Director: Jehane Noujaim
Writers: Julia Bacha, Jehane Noujaim
Release Date: June 2004
Language: Arabic, English
Country: USA

Synopsis: A chronicle which provides a rare window into the international perception of the Iraq War, courtesy of Al Jazeera, the Arab world's most popular news outlet. Roundly criticized by Cabinet members and Pentagon officials for reporting with a pro-Iraqi bias, and strongly condemned for frequently airing civilian casualties as well as footage of American POWs, the station has revealed (and continues to show the world) everything about the Iraq War that the Bush administration did not want it to see. *Written by [Sujit R. Varma](#) ([imdb.com](#))*

More information:

<http://www.noujaimfilms.com/>
<http://imdb.com/title/tt0391024/>
<http://english.aljazeera.net/English>

People to watch:

Lt. Josh Rushing, Central Command, Press Officer
Samir Khader, Al Jazeera, Senior Producer
Tom Mintier, CNN, Journalist
Hassan Ibrahim, Al Jazeera, Journalist
David Shuster, MSNBC, Journalist
Deema Khatib, Al Jazeera, Producer
Tarek Ayyoub, Al Jazeera, Correspondent in Baghdad
General Brooks, US Military
Abdallah Schleifer, Media Analyst

What to do with your cue cards:

Watch for this person and note their:

- name
- job
- nationality
- agenda
- culture
- changes

Vocabulary:

propaganda	patriotism	context
spin	terrorism	values
democracy	perception	misinformation

Some thoughts:

This documentary is about all news sources. No matter what your news source is, there are people in between you and the event. People who, no matter how hard they try at objectivity, have a lens, a perspective, a bias that will necessarily color their report. Americans have been told that Al Jazeera is a mouthpiece for Osama Bin Laden, that the station is not a real news source but only a propaganda machine. This documentary does not overtly address this claim, yet answers it all the same. Remember that no matter what you are watching or reading, it reflects someone's perspective.

It's hard to do, but as you watch try not to get bogged down in the events. Instead, watch the people. Watch how the people communicate with each other and try to explain their points of view. Look beyond the specific accounts of the events of war at the portrayal of cultures clashing. If you are paying attention, you will also see cultures clash in the news rooms.

Watch for:

- Shifting perceptions
- How does change happen?
- The Al Jazeera interview producer
- The Most Wanted deck of cards
- Ideas about the history of journalism
- The War of 1967

Some questions:

1. How does audience shape the news?
2. Merging images leads to misperceptions. Hassan Ibrahim talks about this in relation to the muddying of Palestinian and Iraqi issues. Explain how misperception happens. Is it only a cultural problem? Once misperception has taken place or is occurring, how can you correct it?
3. Are people defined by their leadership?
4. Both the military and the journalists in the film repeatedly talk about the power of images. What roles do you see images taking in this film? How does the documentary use images? Is this different from the ways the news sources in the documentary use images?
5. Why is it important to understand foreign cultures?
6. How do reality and perception vary? How do the people in the film address these?
7. What questions does this film ask you to ask?