CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Research Background

Health is a precious thing and it is also the part of basic human needs. Health is primary human needs like shelters, clothes, and foods. Indeed health is the right to gain a life as human. Health is determined as a human right and then the government is ethically required to act for providing healthcare services. Consequently, the United States of America as the great country in the world should guarantee the rights of the citizen even the right to gain a better life. It could be depicted from the part of the Declaration of Independence “…We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness…” (www.ushistory.org).

Ideally, according to the Declaration of Independence, the government should accommodate the basic human rights, especially the right to gain the pursuit of happiness. Later, it is paralleled with dominant ideology “American Dream” which concerns with America as “Garden of Eden.” The myth of America as “Garden of Eden” is very contradictory to the reality on the aspects of economy, politics, cultures, and American pattern of life. Specifically, the contradiction also occurs on the healthcare that has been planned to gain a better
life among American. Then, so what is the problem, the “American Dream” or the awful condition of it?

Healthcare is related to a fundamental human right. Thus, the United States should aware about it and the government should be responsible for this right. Healthcare is a medical treatment system to the people that is emphasized with the good health system. The healthcare system can be called as good system if it could emphasize three aspects “(1) Universal Coverage; (2) Effective Cost Control; and (3) Thoroughly Responsibility” (www.pnhp.org). The further explain that Universal Coverage is everyone should have universal healthcare coverage no matter what the life background, sex, gender, age, health status or other factors. Then government should take a role in regulating, providing, and financing health care. The second aspect is Effective Cost Control; the healthcare cost could be reached by everyone. The third aspect is Thoroughly Responsibility. It means that the good health care system should be regulated for long time and not for short time.

Out of many criticisms criticize against the healthcare system in the United States. The criticisms come from various media, such as films, newspapers, television shows, journals, magazines and many others. Film is viewed as the most effective weapon to shape people’s mindset. Film is also the battleground to deliver ideology. Douglas Kellner emphasizes that film can represent the social struggles and also transcodes the political discourse of the era (Kellner, 2010, p. 2). Through film or cinema, people can express their ideas, beliefs, or political side. The films like Rambo, Rocky, or Star Wars are created as medium of
transcoding the political discourse. Generally, film is divided into two, fiction film and non-fiction film. Fiction film or Hollywood film is the genre of film which expressing fictional characteristic. There should be script, editing, and aesthetic. Otherwise, documentary film is known as cinematic work containing factual data. Factual means something real occurs and it is close to reality. Berger and Luckmann argue that reality which occurs in the society is constructed by human (see Kelly, 1967). So, documentary film could be manipulated and constructed as the manifestation of the human to share the political discourse.

In 2007, a critical film entitled SICKO was released. Directed by Michael Moore, SICKO took attention from many people. After succeeding with Fahrenheit 9/11, a film which emphasized the Bush’s policy after tragic tragedy 9/11, Moore tries to create another critical film that is very close to American major issue, healthcare. In SICKO, he presents a sociological and cultural analysis of the U.S. healthcare system. SICKO documents the healthcare experience of various people, such as labors, housewife, rich man, poor man, even health care personnel. The film also presents the contradiction between the U.S. healthcare system and the other countries, such as the United Kingdom, Canada, France, even Cuba. Moore also emphasizes the corrupt system of HMO (Health Maintenance Organization).

This thesis is organized to trace the meaning of the irony of American healthcare which is constructed by documentary. Then many questions arise after watching SICKO; Do the film transcode the political discourse? Is this form of
propaganda? And how the film constructs American healthcare? Those questions led me to conduct a research about this movie.

B. Research Questions
1. How does the movie construct the irony of American healthcare?
2. How does the movie construct the derivation of political discourse in the United States?

C. Objectives of Study
1. To explain how the movie constructs the irony of American healthcare.
2. To explain the movie constructs the derivation of political discourse in the United States.

D. Scope of Study
This thesis will primarily discuss the construction of the irony of American healthcare through media in United States under the umbrella of American Studies. Further examination is to examine the way the movie to construct the derivation of political discourse. The scope of study as the basic background of this research is determined in the scope of American Media Studies which is still classified in the area of American Studies. It primarily discusses the documentary’s construction and relates to the contextual issue of healthcare in the presidential campaign for 2008.
E. Benefits of Study

Today there is no much analysis about documentary film, especially among American Studies student in this department. Therefore, this research will show that through film people can criticize and depict the social condition in the society. This research will be expected to give understanding that documentary film can construct people’s mindset, even can be propaganda toward society. Specially, this research is expected to be beneficial toward:

1. Students of English Department: to give them new topic about documentary film analysis.
2. Other researchers: to provide information and reference for studying more about American healthcare and the documentary film analysis.

F. Research Methodology

1. Type of Research

This research is descriptive qualitative research. In this type of research, the data will be examined qualitatively. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical material such as case study, personal experience, life story, interview, observation, cultural text and visual text (Denzin & Lincoln, 1969, p.3). So, it uses description of words in particular context.

2. Data and Source of Data

The data of the research will be divided into two types. They are primary data and the secondary data. The primary data are collected from the primary
source of data. The primary source of data is the DVD of SICKO produced by Dog Eats Dog Film (2007) which is downloaded from http://www.alluc.to/movies/watch-sicko-2007-online/124416.html. Since the data is a documentary film, the primary data were montage, voiceover narration, and the other important aspects related to documentary film’s elements. The data is deployed to know the construction of the irony of American healthcare and the derivation of political discourse in United States.

The secondary data is needed to support this research. The data relates to the major topic of work analysis (Healthcare). They are articles, books, newspapers, dissertations, journals, magazines, comments and the other references.

3. Technique of Collecting Data

The first action to get the appropriate data, the movie was watched repeatedly to find deeper perspectives of the issue. Nevertheless, this research report did not choose all parts of the movie and only certain part were analyzed, especially the voiceover and the montage footage which is served in the movie. Therefore, this research report only chose certain part which has correlation with the research.

4. Technique of Analyzing Data

The research takes the descriptive qualitative method, as the technique to analyze the data since the source of the data is a movie. Later, the analysis will be conducted using interdisciplinary approaches. The research will use the
documentary theory, semiotic approach, and socio cultural approach as the way to analyze the data.

G. Theoretical Approach

The research will be conducted under the framework of American Studies. In the first emergence, American Studies was defined as the Cultural Studies. In brief explanation, American Studies is a study of American culture or American things. Culture is the way of life. “Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups” (Stykes, 1963, p. 256). C. Kluckhohn and W.H. Kelly (1945) emphasize that culture is a shape of life which is created in the history that are explicit, implicit, rational, and irrational in every time as the guidance of human (Kluckhohn and Kelly, 1945, p. 97). On the other hand, Koentjaraningrat gave a limitation of culture as the whole of ideas, acts, and human’s products as the way of life which is owned by human and it can be learned (see Kusumaharyono, 2000, p. 2). In easy words, culture is patterns of human behavior and encompasses through the values, meaning, norms, acts, beliefs etc.

Since the development of science, American Studies does not only concern with culture, American Studies broads into many fields, such as anthropology, sociology, media, even politics. Later, American Studies is known as Interdisciplinary Subject. To know American Studies as interdisciplinary subject, we should concern with the history of American Studies first. The emergence of
American Studies in the early 1950s was developed from history, cultural studies, and literature basically. Before American Studies stood as a discipline, it brought the idea from American Historical Studies, Cultural Studies, and American Literature within myth, symbol, folklore, and artifact as the core of it. In brief, American Studies is understood as a discipline of understanding the American Culture, American Identity, and American Society.

In the early emergence, American Studies was influenced by Structuralism. “The concept of structuralism is the concept of binary opposition as basic of thought on any subject, the primary emphasis on synchronous functioning of systems as opposed to diachronic unfolding through time, the final importance of paradigms over syntagms” (Blair, 1978, p. 261). In short, Structuralism is similar to structural analysis. “Structuralists have demonstrated that if cultural systems are treated as languages and are systematically analyzed through methods borrowed from linguistic, then the covert meaning of systems may be explicit.” (Pace, 1978, p. 283). So, it represents that concept of structuralism has been used to trace the cultural system in society. Structuralism also becomes major part of the development cultural studies because it has been successfully codified culture.

The idea of structuralism supported many American Studies scholar to develop their ideas in American Studies. The scholar thought by the understanding the cultural systems, they could understand the implicit thing in the American society. This concept is brought by the concept of structural anthropology which is created by Claude Levi Strauss in the late 1950s. Levi Strauss viewed that cultural system of all kinds could be viewed as the languages
and every aspect of culture was not only a functional role, but also a sign. (ibid, p. 286). Then, what is the correlation between American Studies and Sign?

Ferdinand Saussure argues that all human activities might be understood as system of sign (as cited in Lechte, 1994, p. 150). In brief the society is demonstrated by the sign. Society manifests the sign as their pattern of life. Sign is produced by the society. Indirectly, the sign which is produced by the society influences the society and then becomes their pattern of life. In the beginning, the pattern of Western Culture is established by the Cartesian way of thinking that everything is in binary opposition, such as low/high, good/evil, north/south, men/women, and day/night (Svehla, 2008, p. 224). Cartesian is brought by a philosopher named Rene Descartes. It is taken from Latin word “Cartesius” which is the form of the name Descartes. The core of his concept is the relationship between human mind or soul and physical body, Rene Descartes calls it “dualism.” Through dualism he has placed a clear foundation of pattern life for human through his famous words, “cogito ergo sum,” I reflect therefore I am.” He has related between immaterial mind and material body of human. This dualism concept helps the American to develop the concept of binary opposition and now they know the opposition, such as low/high, god/evil, day/night, etc.

The Cartesian way of thinking shapes the American people to create myth and symbol. Myth is something that fixed, stable, satisfying, singular, and tell again and again by one generation to another generation (Kelly, 1994). To look American Studies, we should be looking for American myth. In the early period, American people were bounded by myth of Puritan and myth of frontier. The
myth concern that America is “Garden of Eden” and the American is the chosen people who are the torch of the darkness. Indeed, American Studies scholar push the confrontation between myth and the reality of American society because American Studies is discipline which concerns on “text” and “context.” Therefore to look American Studies is to look American myth since the myth which shapes the American society could be hurt by the reality that is influenced by rhetoric.

Second the relationship between Structuralism and American Studies in the development of American Studies, Structuralism helped the American Studies Scholar to develop their ideas. David Hall argued that American Studies should apply the Structuralism as their foundation and Anthropology as the basic of idea. Structuralism makes the American Studies more flexible, even though it contains much explicitness (as cited in Pace, 1978, p.283). It also composes the understanding that American Studies decide on text and context. American Studies views Structuralism as valuable ways since the flexibility and the concept which is brought by the Structuralists can encompass the American Studies to know sign or code on the form of culture text.

Media is one of most popular the areas of American Studies. The word of media comes from the Latin words medium meaning “middle.” In short, media is also meant as the way to link something. The media is also defined as the deliverers of a message. Media is also recognized as medium. The medium is basically physical or technical means converting message into a signal capable of being transmitted along channel (Fiske, 1990, p. 18). Therefore, the form of media is various. When we say about media, we will connect it with television,
newspaper, magazine, film, internet, and many others. The object of this research is American Media, e.g. film, especially documentary film. Therefore, the research will use semiotic film as the one of the approach.

Semiotic is needed because film which becomes the data of this research reflects the contextual condition of the society and nears with cultural system in the society. Levi Strauss viewed that system of all kinds could be viewed as the languages and every aspect of culture was not only a functional role, but also a sign (Pace, 1978, p. 286). Ferdinand De Saussure argued that language has become a key term to know everything in the world. The approach that is used in the research is the semiotic approach that is argued by Charles Sander Pierce. He argued that the sign has synchronization with culture. He urged that representative, object, and interpretative are material which creates a sign and those all are synchronized with cultural system of the society (Zaimar, 2008, p. 4). In “Introduction to Communication Studies,” John Fiske (1990) said that sign is physical, perceivable by our sense; and it refers to something other than itself; it depends upon recognition by its users that it is a sign.

Semiotics is study of sign and it is called as semiology. This study concerns on three main areas studies, (1) the sign itself; (2) the codes or systems into which signs are organized; and (3) the culture within which these signs operates (Fiske, 1990, p. 40). This structure of semiotics raises a relationship between the system of signs and the culture system of society. Primarily semiotics focuses on the text. However it does not only focus on the text but also the context of the sign. The reader, the person who receive the sign, always bringing his
experience, attitude, and emotion when creates the meaning of the text. It is called as context. Therefore, semiotics focuses both of the text and the context.

Before we go any further, we should take a moment to consider the definition of meaning. C.S. Peirce has linked the sign and meaning. He claims that meaning is the result of dynamic process of sign system. He argues that signs consist of three terms (1) sign, (2) object, and (3) interpretant. A sign refers to something other than itself-the object and is understood by somebody that is, it has an effect in the mind of the user, the interpretant (Fiske, 1990, p. 42). Thus meaning is a result of that dynamic process. Meaning has many variations, such as denotative, connotative, and contextual meaning. Everything has contextual meaning. Film is a text which contain context. Simply defined, the film has contextual meaning. Contextual meaning is defined as a meaning related to the context of situation and condition of the society. Documentary film usually serves the denotative meaning because it shows the factual condition in the society. However, it is possible that documentary film also uses the connotative meaning to show the reality in the society. The meaning can be denotative or connotative, it depends on the context of its.

The idea of SICKO tells about unsynchronized of myth and rhetoric in the United States, especially the myth which contains on the declaration of independence and the reality which occurs in the society. There is missing link between the American myth and reality. According to Kelly A. Moulton, myth is singular and rhetoric is plural (Moulton, 1994). Myth is inherent, stable and very close with social life. Otherwise, rhetoric is uncertain, dynamic, and distinct from
ideology. Rhetoric is always developed from the situation that occurs in the society and it always derives from fact. Levi-Strauss argues that there is no “true” or “original” version of any myth because myth itself is always betrayed by fact which is the implication of rhetoric.

The constructions of the reality become suitable formula in this research. The reality which occurs in the everyday life is constructed. “The objects” of everyday life are designated in particularly language (Kelly, p.51). SICKO is near with the construction of reality because the idea of the production is to criticize the context of situation in the society. Moreover the abundant rhetoric is attempted in this film. SICKO places the controversy between “texts” and “contexts,” the film breaks the myth which develops in the society. Myth of equality is broken by rhetoric of SICKO.

In understanding of SICKO as the documentary, documentary theory will be used to answer this topic, the construction of irony. Documentary is a cinematic work containing factual data and it serves of as source of information to the audience as the basic concept. Documentary is different from tradition of documentary governed. Documentary is governed by ideals of objectivity and non-partisanship (Kellner, 2010, p.155). Documentary seems like combination between director-detective. Error Morris, a filmmaker, urges that documentary is investigation, interrogation, and appreciation. Morris considers the documentary is to interrogate between language and reality, to investigate the explicit truth, and to appreciate how people reveal themselves through how they speak, lies at the fore of his art. (Conomos, Errol Morris and the New Documentary)
Simply understanding, documentary theory is suitable for SICKO as the knife to analyze it. This analysis employs Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane’s theory on documentary to read subject, purpose, forms, and particular experience provided by SICKO which seeks the construction of the irony of American healthcare. According to Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane (2006) documentary can be read from (1) Subjects; (2) Purposes, viewpoints, or approach; (3) Forms; (4) Production methods and technique; and (5) particular experience. This structural analysis helps the researcher to examine the documentary works easily.

Finally, socio cultural approach will be added to support the other theories. It will be understood as the historical point of view and the background of the problems. Under the concept of Lev Vygotsky in Steiner and Mahn (1996) that socio cultural approach is based on the concept that human activities take place in cultural context, are mediated by language and other symbol systems and can be understood in their historical development (p. 191). Socio cultural approach will cope understanding of historical that refers to the cultural convention. It will answer how the society accepts the healthcare system and then it will use to express the negation of the society toward the health care system in the United States. Socio cultural is needed to find the influence of historical cultural convention perpetuates toward the society.

H. Thesis Organization

This research is conducted into four chapters. Chapter one provides information as the background issue of healthcare and also the documentary
movie entitled SICKO as the object of this research. Then, there are research questions, objectives of the study, scope of study, research benefits, and research methodology. This research also provides theoretical approach as background theory.

Chapter two involves the literature review. It provides the social background of American healthcare such as the brief history of American healthcare during 1800s until presents. Then it also serves the healthcare issue in the presidential campaign for 2008. In this chapter can also be found about the myth of American dream. Then, it also provides the review of the irony and SICKO as the key elements of this research. This chapter also provides documentary theory, montage and voiceover, and semiotics theory. Those all would be medium to encompass this research.

Chapter three provides the analysis of this research. This analysis is conducted into two subchapters. The first subchapter analyses of the construction of the irony of American healthcare. The second subchapter analyses the construction of derivation of political discourse based on SICKO’s viewpoints.

Chapter four, the last chapter, provides conclusion and recommendation.