

**COM 118: Introduction to Television Studies****Instructor: Dr. Susan Ryan****Tues./Friday 12:30-1:50****Office Hours (Kendall 223) Wed. 10-12, Tues./Fri. 2-3****Contact: ryan@tcnj.edu or x2256****Note: Please email me before coming to my office hours if you have something specific you would like to discuss.**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Why study television? Is broadcast television a dying form or are we in a new “golden age”? What are the possibilities and challenges of representation in the post-network era? This course will examine the diverse ways that television has been conceptualized, theorized, and analyzed by media scholars in the discipline of television studies. We will use different critical perspectives to examine television as an industry, a mode of entertainment, and a site of textual meaning by exploring how economic and political forces, technological innovation, advertisers, creative producers, and audiences have interacted to shape how these cultural products, narratives and processes have become part of our social history.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:** Jason Mittell, *Television and American Culture* (New York: NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009) (Television)

Ethan Thompson and Jason Mittell, eds. *How to Watch Television* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2014) HTWT (on syllabus)

Readings on Canvas (C) on syllabus

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:****By the end of the course, students should be able to do the following:**

- Understand how television both shapes and is shaped by American culture and society
- Understand how different methodologies (e.g. genre, formal analysis, ideological,, etc.) are used in television studies
- Develop the vocabulary and skills to analyze television's industrial, formal and technological characteristics
- Be familiar with key developments in the history of television in the network and post-network eras

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:** Students are required to attend classes and participate in the discussions. There is a lot of assigned reading from the two texts and articles on Canvas. Students are expected to complete all reading assignments **before** the week that they are listed on the syllabus. Unless a due date for an assignment is changed, students should follow the syllabus and plan accordingly to ensure that assignments meet the deadlines. Only in exceptional circumstances (requiring some kind of documentation), will the deadline be extended.

**4<sup>th</sup> hour:** Outside of class meetings, students will also be responsible for screening television programs and documentaries about television online or in their entirety in media center of the library during their **4<sup>th</sup> hour** in order to prepare for discussion of excerpts in class. These screenings are listed on the syllabus. In addition, you will be expected to use the 4<sup>th</sup> hour to arrange meetings with your group in order to complete the assigned group project.

**Course assignments are as follows:**

- Two exams on the readings, screenings and classroom discussions
- Journal with description and analysis of a week of your television viewing
- A short (4-5) page paper critically analyzing an essay from HTWTV
- Group project on a methodology used in television studies with oral presentation
- Final research paper on a television program of your own selection
- Participation –both in class and on-line when discussion prompts are posted

**Grading:**

Midterm	15%
Final	20%
Article analysis	10%
Stylistic Analysis	10%
Group project with presentation	15%
Final Research paper	20%
Participation	10%

***Participation means coming to class and actively participating in the discussion based on the readings and the outside screenings. When an online discussion posting is assigned, you will be expected to post a meaningful comment during the time specified.***

## **ATTENDANCE**

**Please review the college's** Absence and Attendance Policy if you have any questions.:

<http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=9134>

### **Academic integrity:**

I expect everyone to turn in their own work and adhere to TCNJ's academic integrity policies. The policies are quite explicit about what constitutes plagiarism and can be found at <http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=7642>.

**Students with Disabilities:** Please discuss any accommodations that you will need and I will make every attempt to comply. You should present a letter from the Office of Differing Abilities during the first two weeks of class. For more information on your rights and responsibilities, please consult the following:

Disability Support Services:

<http://differingabilities.pages.tcnj.edu>

Americans with Disability Act Policy:

<http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=8082>

**NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to change screenings and due dates for assignments, depending on the progress of the class.**

## SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, READINGS, SCREENINGS

### Week 1

#### Topic: Why Study Television?/Television History

1/27 Reading: "Why Television," Television 1-11  
Brundson, "What is the Television in Television Studies" ©

1/30 Sarnoff, "Possible Social Effects of Television" (C)  
**Class will meet at the Sarnoff Collection in the old Library.**  
Screenings; excerpts classic television, commercials

Outside Screening: "*Advertising and The End of the World*" available on NJVID.  
Should be completed before 2/3

### Week 2

#### Topic: Television Industries: Advertising

2/3 Reading: "Exchanging Programming", Television Ch. 1  
"Introduction" in HTWTV pp. 1-7  
Butler, "The Television Commercial" ©

2/6 Reading: Sandler, "Modern Family: Product Placement" in HTWTV  
Thompson, "Onion News: Flow" in HTWTV  
Screenings: *Commercials, Modern Family, 30 Rock*

### Week 3

#### Topic: Television Programming

2/10 Reading: "Exchanging Audiences," Television, Ch. 2  
2/13 Reading: Banks, "I Love Lucy: The Writer Producer" HTWTV  
Haggins, "Homicide: Realism" HTWTV

Screening: excerpts *I Love Lucy, Homicide, Law and Order*  
DUE: Assignment #1 - Analysis of article

### Week 4

#### Topic: Making Meaning

2/17 Reading: "Making Meaning," Television Chapter 5  
Hall, "Encoding and Decoding" ©  
Butler, "*Mad Men*: Visual Style" in HTWTV

2/20 Reading: Gitlin, "*Hill Street Blues*: Make It Look Messy" in HTWTV  
Lucas, "*Golden Age of Television (Cinematography)*"  
<http://flowtv.org/2014/10/the-golden-age-of-television-cinematography-christopher-lucas-trinity-university/>  
Screening: *Mad Men, Hill Street Blues, Breaking Bad*

OUTSIDE SCREENING: ***Electronic Storyteller: Television and the Cultivation of Values*** available through NJVID

### Week 5

**Topic: Modes of Production/Television as a Cultural Forum**

2/25 Reading: Caldwell, "Modes of Production: The Televisual Apparatus" ©  
Aslinger, "*Nip/Tuck*: Popular Music" in *HTWTV*

2/27 Reading: Newcomb and Hirsch, "Television as a Cultural Forum" ©  
Hendershot, "*Parks & Recreation*: The Cultural Forum" in *HTWTV*

Screening: excerpts *West Wing*, *Parks & Recreation*, *The Office*

**DUE: Assignment #2 - Close Textual Analysis**

### Week 6

**Topic: Television Narrative/Quality Television**

3/3 Reading: "Telling Television Stories" **Television**, Chapter 6  
Anderson, "Producing an Aristocracy of Culture in American Television" ©  
Nussbaum, "When TV Became Art"  
<http://nymag.com/arts/all/aughts/62513/>

3/6 Reading: Lotz, "House: Narrative Complexity" in *HTWTV*  
O'Sullivan, "*The Sopranos*: Episodic Storytelling" in *HTWTV*

**Screening:** *House*, *The Sopranos*, *The Wire*

### Week 7

3/10 Midterm Exam

3/13 Group project discussion

### Week 8

**3/17 + 3/20 SPRING BREAK**

**Outside Screening: Independent Media in a Time of War on NJVID**

### Week 9

**Topic: Television News and Fake News**

3/24 Reading: "Serving the Public Interest" **Television**, Chapter 3  
Stam, "Television News and Its Spectator"

**3/25 Outside Screening: *A Face In The Crowd* (Essentials Film Series in Kendall Screening Room)**

3/27 Reading: "Televised Citizenship" **Television**, Chapter 4  
Baym, "The Daily Show and the Reinvention of Political Journalism" ©

Screenings: Excerpts from network and cable news, *the Daily Show*

**Week 10****Topic: Television Genres: Reality TV**

3/31 reading: "Screening America" **Television**, Ch. 5

Ouelette: "America's Next Top Model: Neoliberal Labor in HTWTV

Douglass, "Jersey Shore: Ironic Viewing" HTWTV

4/1 Outside Screening: **Network (Lumet, 1976)** (Kendall Screening 10 a.m.)

4/3 Reading: Jenkins, "Buying into American Idol" ©

Baym + Gottert, "30 Days: Social Engagement" in HTWTV

Screening: *Jersey Shore, Undercover Boss, 30 Days*

**OUTSIDE SCREENING: Class Dismissed on NJVID to be viewed before 4/7**

**Week 11****Topic: Representing Identities**

4/7 Readings: "Representing Identity," **Television**, Ch. 8

Alsultany, "24: Challenging Stereotypes" in *HTWTV*

Gray, "*The Amazing Race*: Global Othering" in *HTWTV*

Acham, "*The Cosby Show*: Representing Race" in *HTWTV*

**4/10 Television and Gender**

*Reading:* Levine, "*Grey's Anatomy*: Feminism" in *HTWTV*

**Screening: Excerpts from *All in the Family, Cosby Show, Grey's Anatomy***

*Due: Proposal for final research paper with bibliography of at least 4 sources*

**Week 12****TOPIC: Television Audiences**

4/14 Readings: "Viewing Television," **Television**, Ch. 9

4/17 Readings: Scott, "*Battlestar Galactica*: Fans and Ancillary Content" in *HTWTV*

Jenkins, "*The Walking Dead*: Adapting Comics" in *HTWTV*

Pearson, "*Star Trek*: Serialized Ideology" in *HTWTV*

Screenings: *Glee, X Files, Star Trek*

**Week 13**

4/21 & 4/24

**TOPIC: Group Presentations**

## Week 14

### TOPIC: Television's Future: Globalization

4/28 **Readings:** American Television in a Global Context", Television Ch. 11  
Bochanty-Aguero, "We Are the World: *American Idol's* Global Self-Posturing" ©

5/1 **Reading:** "Life on Mars: Transnational Adaptations" in *HTWTV*  
Ahn, "Samurai Champloo: Transnational Viewing" in *HTWTV*  
Amaya, "Eva Luna: Latino/a Audiences" in *HTWTV*

**Screening:** *Eva Luna, Afghan Star*

**DUE: Final Research Paper**

## Week 15

### TOPIC: Technological Change

5/5: **Reading:** Television's Transforming Technologies", Television, Ch. 11  
5/8 Review for Final

**Screening:** *Screening: House of Cards, Transparent, Broad City*

*The Final will be held during the Finals period*

## USEFUL RESOURCES AND WEBSITES

<http://emmytvlegends.org> Archive of American Television  
Features interviews with directors, producers, and actors on their work in well-known television programs.

<http://flowtv.org> Online journal of television and media studies

<http://www.tv.com/> Current news about television programs.

[www.broadcastingcable.com](http://www.broadcastingcable.com) Broadcasting and Cable magazine website

<http://www.worldtvpc.com> News about streaming websites.

<http://guides.library.upenn.edu/content.php?pid=479116&sid=3925312>  
UPenn's Annenberg School's website of different resources available to television and media researchers

## **INTRO TO TELEVISION STUDIES - ASSIGNMENTS**

### **ASSIGNMENT #1 CRITICAL REVIEW OF ARTICLE**

Write a 3-4 page critical review of an an essay from *How to Watch Television*. Preferably, this essay is not one you are already assigned for class. The review should contain a summary of the key points or arguments of the article with a limited number of examples. Most of the review should be a critique of the article with an evaluation of the strengths, weaknesses, and notable features of the text. If possible, relate the article to others on a similar topic or critical approach to television that you have read for this class.

### **ASSIGNMENT #2 STYLISTIC ANALYSIS**

Write a 4-5 page critical analysis of a television program not screened in class. Your essay should focus on the way television program creates meaning. What genre is it part of, what is its narrative style, how does it use dialogue, setting, visual style (lighting, camera techniques, etc.) to create meaning for the audience? You should refer to at least one outside source to support your ideas.

**GROUP PROJECT** - This will involve developing a pitch and proposal for a new television utilizing research into possible formats, production practices, distribution, and potential viewers. To be explained more in class.

**FINAL RESEARCH PAPER** Pick a television program or genra involving television that interests you and write an 8-10 page paper using primary and secondary sources.. In all cases, please be sure to use scholarly sources (books and articles) whenever possible, and primary sources (e.g. original newspaper and newspaper reviews, trade publications, etc.) All sources should be cited properly using MLA or APA style. Please schedule an appointment to see me if you are having trouble coming up with a topic. Also see me if you need to narrow down a broad topic.

### **Mid-term and Final Exams**

There will be two short answer/essay examinations testing your ability to understand and synthesize course material, not your ability to memorize facts. Students who keep up with the readings, attend class meetings and screenings, and think about the material should do well on these exams.



### **RUBRIC FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

**A** –The argument for your writing is scholarly, genuinely debatable, and specific. The organization is clear and logical and connected with effective transitions. The paper is well researched with multiple, reliable sources as evidence to support every debatable assertion. The writing shows exact control of language with effective word choice and superior facility with language.

**B** – The argument for your writing is clear and debatable by may have shifting focus and specificity. The organization is generally clear and relates most ideas together effectively. The paper uses multiple resources that are not always assessed critically. The writing shows effective control of language and competence with conventions of grammar.

**C** – The argument is unclear and shifts in focus and specificity. The paper shows some organization and logic but transitions are sketchy and some ideas may seem illogical or not relevant to argument. The paper uses sources that are not always reliable and assessed critically. The paper shows intermittent control of language in terms of word choice and grammar.

**D** - The argument is vague or lacking in substance. The ideas are not developed with any kind of logical organization. The paper uses weak evidence that is incorrectly cited. The paper contains major errors in grammar and sentence variety.

**F** - Lacking in all of the above areas: non-existent claim, little or no research, illogical structure, poor control of language.

### **Rubric for Presentations**

**A** -- Extremely well organized. Introduces the purpose of the presentation clearly and creatively. Information presented in logical, interesting sequence which class can follow. Thorough research of relevant literature with references to sources beyond those mentioned in class. Well-prepared visual aids used creatively to support presentation. Demonstrates extensive knowledge of the topic by responding confidently and appropriately to all audience questions.

**B** -- Generally well organized.. Introduces the purpose of the presentation clearly. Most information presented in logical sequence; A few minor points may be confusing. Some research into literature beyond those mentioned in class. Visual ads support main points. Demonstrates knowledge of the topic by responding accurately and appropriately addressing questions . At ease with answers to all questions but fails to elaborate.

**C** - Somewhat organized. Introduces the purpose of the presentation but jumps around topics. Several points are confusing. Research is adequate but very little beyond what was assigned in class. Basic power point and generally and familiar examples. Demonstrates some knowledge of rudimentary questions by responding accurately to questions

**D** - Poor or confusing organization. Does not clearly introduce the purpose of the presentation. Presentation is choppy and disjointed with no apparent logical order. Poor choice of material for visual aids. participation. Demonstrates incomplete knowledge of the topic by responding inaccurately and inappropriately to questions.

**F** – Non-existent organization. No research beyond materials assigned in class. Poorly chosen or lacking in visual aids. Unable to answer questions because poorly prepared.