

Theatre 367.03 Syllabus
Criticizing Television
U / 5 Credits
Spring 2006

CLASS TIME: Tuesdays and Thursdays
2:30 PM – 4:30 PM
LOCATION: [Classroom Pool]

INSTRUCTOR: TBA
OFFICE:
OFFICE EMAIL:
OFFICE PHONE:
OFFICE HOURS:

This course fulfills section 1B, “Writing and Related Skills: Second Course,” of the General Education Curriculum requirements.

Course Description:

In this course we will critically examine television, in all its aspects, by viewing it, reading about it, writing about it, and making short TV segments of our own. We will consider all program types, including news, sports, weather, "reality TV," movies made for TV, advertising, talk shows, comedy, drama, and other modes of programming. We will employ a variety of critical methodologies.

Course Objectives:

- To enjoy critically viewing television in an informed way.
- To become a more thoughtful, responsible, and articulate citizen by attending critically (positively and negatively) to television.
- To become better readers by carefully reading and responding to writing on television.
- To become better writers by thoughtfully writing about television.
- To increase articulateness in orally responding to issues raised by television.

Required Texts:

Jonathan Bignell, *An Introduction to Television Studies*, London: Routledge, 2004.
(Chapters 2 & 6 are not required, but are optional readings.)

Andrea Lunsford, *The Everyday Writer*, 3rd ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005.
(This is a reference book on how to write. Readings will not be assigned in it, but you are responsible for a demonstrated working knowledge of its contents.)

Occasional topical articles to be distributed in class (via the course web page), for example:

Jon Gertner, "Our Ratings, Our Selves," (In Houston, a couple of thousand paid volunteers will soon start wearing Portable People Meters. Along with other advances in measuring what we watch and listen to, they may finally answer the question: Does advertising really work?), *The New York Times Magazine*, April 10, 2005, pp. 34-41.

Joy Press, "Full of Grace" (Court TV's secret weapon brings her flaring nostrils and female rage to CNN Headline News), *Village Voice*, April 11, 2005.

Course Assignments:

Readings: Respond to each of the assigned readings in two sections:

- 1) Objective Summary. In about 50-100 words (minimum), summarize what you think to be the most important points of the reading. Do not comment on them, but report them accurately.
- 2) Personal Response. Pick one sentence from the reading that is particularly important to you, for whatever reason, quote the sentence, and tell your classmates what this sentence means to you and why it is significant to your life.

Short Papers: There will be four (4) short papers (about 5 double-spaced pages) on topics that will be assigned in class. Generally, the assignments will ask you to write critically (positively or negatively) about some aspect of television. The papers will be spaced throughout the quarter, with at least one-week to complete a paper.

Sample possible paper assignments:

- 1) Metacriticism. Search the Web, or a library, for three critical reviews of the same television show newly or still on the air. You may use either or both academic journals and the popular press. Compare the television critics. Where do they agree? Where do they disagree? What does each conclude? Who has the most persuasive position? With whom do you most agree? Why?
- 2) Place yourself in a racial and ethnic group. Chose one episode of one program now on television, and explain how the program's representations of your group affect the sense of who you are.
- 3) Which two television programs made in the United States and currently on view are the *most* and *least* suitable for international distribution? Why is this?

In-class Activities: We will reflectively discuss readings, beginning with what topics you bring up in your Personal Responses to weekly reading assignments.

We will experience the making of television by producing, directing, and acting in short programs of our own.

We will watch and critique, positively and negatively, excerpts from television programs by applying different critical methodologies.

Grading:

Because this is a writing course (Level II), all written assignments will be graded by two criteria:

- 1) the quality of the writing, and
- 2) the content of the writing.

Reading Responses	30% (One may be rewritten for a higher grade.)
Short Papers	40% (One may be rewritten for a higher grade.)
In-class Participation	10%
Mid-term	10%
Final	10%

Prompt attendance is mandatory. Tardiness and absences will result in a lower grade.

Late assignments will be penalized by one grade point (that is, from a C to a D, for example).

Course Policies:

All written assignments must be word-processed, double-spaced, and printed on only one side of the paper.

There are no make-up exams for a missed mid-term or final exam.

"Incompletes" for the course will not be given without serious cause, to be determined by the instructor and the student.

Any suspected cases of academic misconduct will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. The University's rules on academic misconduct can be found on the Web at <http://acs.ohio-state.edu/offices/oa/procedures.1.0.html>. The most common form of misconduct is plagiarism. Remember that any time you use the ideas or the statements of someone else, you must acknowledge that source in a citation. This includes material you have found on the Web. The University provides guidelines for research on the Web at <http://gateway.lib.ohio-state.edu/tutor>.

Students with disabilities: If anyone needs an accommodation based on a disability, you should contact the Office of Disability Services to verify the need and to authorize the necessary accommodation. Students with disabilities are encouraged to view the office of Disability Services' website <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu> and to call the office for an appointment.

Tentative Course Calendar

Week 1 Introduction

Class 1 Read and Respond: Bignell, Ch. 1 Studying Television

Class 2 Introductory discussion

Week 2 Cultural Imperialism

Class 3 Read and Respond: Bignell, Ch. 3 Television Cultures

Class 4 Critical viewing of TV – the News

Week 3 Narrative Structures

Class 5 Read and Respond: Bignell, Ch. 4 Television Texts & Narratives

Class 6 Critical viewing of TV – TV Commercials

Week 4 Television Genres

Class 7 Read and Respond: Bignell, Ch. 5 Television and Genre

Class 8 Critical viewing of TV – Reality TV

Week 5 Postmodernism and Globalization

Class 9 Read and Respond: Bignell, Ch. 7 Postmodern Television

Class 10 Mid-Term Exam on Readings

Week 6 Realism and Ideology

Class 11 Read and Respond: Bignell, Ch. 8, Television Realities

Class 12 Producing TV "programs" in class - News

Week 7 Gender and Ethnicity

Class 13 Read and Respond: Bignell, Ch. 9 Television Representation

Class 14 Producing TV "programs" in class – A Feminist Approach

Week 8 Free Speech and Regulation

Class 15 Read and Respond: Bignell, Ch. 10 Television You Can't See

Class 16 Producing TV "programs" in class – Reality TV

Week 9 Children and Television

Class 17 Read and Respond: Bignell, Ch. 11 Shaping Audiences

Class 18 Critical viewing of TV—Programming for Kids

Week 10 Summary of Key Points

Class 19 Read and Respond: Bignell, Ch. 12 Television in Everyday Life

Class 20 Concluding discussion

Final Exam on Readings since the Midterm