Art Education 2367.03 Criticizing Television Online

Spring Semester 2019



**Instructor and course information**

**Instructor:** Dr. Shari Savage

**Email:** savage.12@osu.edu

**Class Meetings**: Our weekly discussions will be held from Mondays at noon to Wednesdays at noon. You’re expected to be active *daily* on our course’s Carmen website during these periods.

**Communication**:

* OSU email is the most effective way to communication with me one-on-one. Email me during regular business hours for the timeliest response.
* When I have an announcement for the entire class I will post it in the “announcement” section of our Carmen site, you should be receiving announcement notifications.

**Office hours**: Mondays and Wednesdays, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sullivant Hall, Office 231D

**Texts and readings**

* Subscriptions to **Netflix** and **Hulu** are required.
* ***Television Criticism* (Victoria O’Donnell, third edition) bundledwith *Easy Guide to APA Style* (Schwartz, Landrum and Gurung, third edition)** is the required textbook. You can find this at OSU’s Barnes & Noble Bookstore, or on Amazon. Plenty of used copies with and without the APA Guide are available, just be sure it’s the **Third Edition**, which has updated content and newer TV shows. You can always use another APA stylebook.
* **Additional required readings** are posted on the course calendar and in Carmen.
	+ These additional readings include news articles you will be asked to access on various news outlets’ websites. Many news outlets enforce pay walls, which require readers to pay for subscriptions after reading so many articles a month. This means you may have to pay for a temporary subscription to access this content.
* We’ll use **APA formatting** in the course, so in addition to the APA style manual you get bundled with your textbook, you might also find Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab helpful for using APA format: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/>.

**Privacy Policies for required third-party resources**

**Netflix:** <https://www.whats-on-netflix.com/privacy-policy/>

**Hulu:** <https://www.hulu.com/privacy.txt>

**Privacy policies for digital news resources can be accessed here:**

**News website:** <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/06/18/why-do-we-care-so-much-about-privacy>

**News website:** <https://www.washingtonpost.com/privacy-policy/2011/11/18/gIQASIiaiN_story.html>

**News website:** <https://help.nytimes.com/hc/en-us/articles/115014892108-Privacy-policy>

Please contact me if you experience a “pay” fire wall for the links I’ve included in the homework assignments and readings calendar. Generally, you can access these digital news sites free 10 times before being asked to pay. I’ve not had this happen with a student, but if you are an avid digital news consumer it could. Shoot me an email if this occurs.

## Course description

Welcome! In this course we’ll critically examine television by viewing it, discussing it, reading about it, and writing about it. Our specific focus will be the ways in which **social and cultural issues** **are constructed/presented on American television*.*** This means we’ll take television seriously, recognizing the significant influence this medium has on our individual and social experiences. We’ll consider all program types, including news, sports, reality TV, advertising, talk shows, comedies, and dramas, exploring how each is “used” both by viewers and producers. You’ll learn how to **write persuasively** in order to convince people to believe your analysis of TV shows.We’ll focus on **social diversity**, **persuasive writing**, and **cultural criticism** this semester because those are the general education (GE) skills this class was designed to fulfill. Continue reading for a description of the GE skills this class will help you cultivate.

**GE Second Writing Course Goals and Objectives**

*Criticizing Television* is a GE second writing course designed to extend and refine your persuasive writing, critical thinking, research skills, and analytical abilities by exploring a topic that relates to contemporary American culture. This course also fulfills a social diversity requirement. Goals and outcomes per current OSU GE Guidelines are as follows:

**1) Writing and Communication**

Goals: Students are skilled in written communication and expression, reading, critical thinking, oral expression, and visual expression.

**Expected Learning Outcomes:**

1. Through critical analysis, discussion, and writing, students demonstrate the ability to read

carefully and express ideas effectively.

2. Students apply written, oral, and visual communication skills and conventions of academic

discourse to the challenges of a specific discipline.

3. Students access and use information critically and analytically.

**2) Social Diversity in the United States**

Goals: Courses in social diversity will foster students’ understanding of the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture in the United States.

**Expected Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students describe and evaluate the roles of such categories as race, gender and sexuality,

disability, class, ethnicity, and religion in the pluralistic institutions and cultures of the United

States.

2. Students recognize the role of social diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values regarding appreciation, tolerance, and equality of others.

**Course Objectives**

Based on the GE requirements explained above, at the completion of this course successful students will be able to:

1. Engage in informed television criticism built upon the understanding, explanation, and appreciation of a program’s unique attributes and its social-historical context.
2. Critically analyze a variety of television texts, exploring their visual and rhetorical strategies and their theoretical assumptions.
3. Apply television criticism methodology to persuasively communicate your ideas about television in American culture.
4. Locate, evaluate, and use written and visual sources (both print and on-line) for your television criticism research and writing.
5. Explore and problematize a diversity of perspectives on television in American life, placing your personal experiences with television within a broader social and scholarly context.

**Course structure**

This course is organized around reading about, writing about, and discussing cultural diversity as it’s presented on American TV. You will display your mastery of these skills by writing three critical and research-based essays, and by contributing to class discussions. There will be some lessons/readings on writing skills, theories for performing cultural criticism, and the history of television. However, the emphasis in this course is for you to engage with ideas through discussion and the critical inquiries that make up your essays. You’ll have the opportunity to wrestle with ideas, philosophical theories, and viewpoints. Because we’re dealing with subjective subject matter, doing well in this course means that you thoughtfully and professionally communicate your ideas — not that you present the “correct” answers.

***How will this work in action? My role as Instructor and your role as Student …***

The first few weeks of the semester you’ll be assigned lessons to read on research and writing themes. You should work to adopt/incorporate those lessons in all of your formal writing

assignments for this course. Every week you’ll also be assigned articles and viewings on a social-cultural theme. It’s your job to read and watch these, and then write a “blog post” that responds to the Discussion Prompts provided for that week. You’ll also respond to your classmates’ blog posts. I’ll be notified of each new posting and will be monitoring discussions during that period. In addition, I will be posting video lectures, video check-in’s and reminders, provide feedback on discussions and postings, and I am always available to video chat by appointment. Please know that I can “see” if you have engaged with the content presented in this course, and have metrics that quantify the amount of time spent working within the course.

Course Technology and Other Support Services

This fully online course will be delivered entirely through Ohio State University’s learning

management system, Carmen. You will use your OSU ID credentials to log into the site from

Carmen Home page (<https://carmen.osu.edu>). Within Carmen you will find and access all online lessons, course materials, and resources, the only exception being the course text book. For help with your password, university e-mail, Carmen, or any other technology issues,

questions, or requests, contact the OSU IT Service Desk.

Standard support hours are available at <https://ocio.osu.edu/help/hours> , and support for urgent issues is available 24x7.

Self-Service and Chat support: <http://ocio.osu.edu/selfservice>

Carmen support: <https://odee.osu.edu/resourcecenter/carmen>

Phone: 614-688-HELP (4357)

Email: 8help@osu.edu

TDD: 614-688-8743

* Baseline technical skills necessary for online courses
* Basic computer and web-browsing skills
* Navigating Carmen

Technology skills necessary for this specific course:

* CarmenConnect text, audio, and video chat
* Collaborating in CarmenWiki

Necessary equipment:

* Computer: current Mac (OS X) or PC (Windows 7+) with high-speed internet connection

**Academic Support Services:**

Streaming audio and video

**University Student Services**

Student academic services offered on the OSU main campus can be found at

<http://advising.osu.edu/welcome.shtml>

Other student services offered on the OSU main campus can be found at <http://ssc.osu.edu>

<http://artsandsciences.osu.edu/academics/current-students>

**Overview: Assignments and Scoring**

**Your grade in *Criticizing Television* is based on the number of points earned out of 100 possible points.**

Blog posts and discussions 35

“Mini criticism” essay 15

Mid-term essay 20

Proposal for final essay 5

Final essay 25

**Total possible points 100**

**Grading scale**

 A 100-93 A- 92-90

B+ 89-87 B 86-83 B- 82-80

C+ 79-77 C 76-73 C- 72-70

D+ 69-67 D 66-63 E (Fail) 62-0

**Assignment Descriptions**

***Weekly lessons, readings, and viewings***

Every week you’ll be assigned grammar/research lessons to study, articles to read, and/or TV shows or videos to view. Some of the readings are academic articles from journals that use critical lenses to analyze broadcast media and can be difficult to get through. Our text book assists in explaining some of the theories you will encounter. I will also help explain some of the more dense readings, and feel free to email me if you need more clarity on an issue or topic. You should “consume” them all by approximately the Sunday of the week they are assigned. This will allow you ample time to craft and proofread a stellar blog post that answers the week’s discussion prompt by Monday at noon.

***Blog Posts and Discussion Contributions***

After reading and viewing all of the assigned content for the week, you should craft a blog post. Post your blog entry by *Monday at noon* in the Discussion section on Carmen. From *noon on Monday until noon on Wednesday* you should comment on your classmates’ blog posts, creating the class-wide discussion for the week.

Discussion prompts are posted within the Course Calendar on this syllabus and in the discussion section of Carmen. You can directly answer one of the discussion prompts to complete your blog post, or you can feel free to discuss points about the weeks’ viewings and readings that are different from the “food for thought” I provide in the discussion prompts. Whether you use my discussion prompt or craft your own focus, doing well on blog posts means that you’ve shown a deep consideration of the week’s readings and viewings. *You should cite detailed examples from*

*the assigned readings and viewings often in your weekly posts.* (Simply writing about the week’s general discussion topic will not earn you a high score.)

For more detailed information on what to include in your blog posts and discussion contributions, see the direction documents posted in Carmen.

***Mini-criticism: Persuasion 101***

With this essay you’ll write your first piece of television criticism. Writing television criticism is an act of persuasion, and while persuasive writing is similar to classic essay-writing, it differs in key ways. This assignment is short (two pages) and low-stakes (only 15 points) so that you can practice persuasive writing within a low-pressure assignment before being assessed more formally in your midterm and final essays.

Your essay will be on a hotly debated episode of *South Park*. For detailed information on the Mini-criticism paper, see the direction documents posted in Carmen.

***Midterm and Final Essays***

The midterm and final essays are your major writing assignments for the semester. They require you to formally engage in the act of research-supported cultural criticism. You’ll write your midterm on reality TV. You’ll write your final essay on any television programming other than reality TV and the TV show you wrote about for the mini criticism.

These are the major assignments I’ll use to “test” your writing and research skills. In other words, these are the assignments through which you’re expected to apply the specific grammar, APA, researching, and composition lessons we cover week-by-week. The best essays will show a mastery of the various skills covered by all of the lessons.For detailed information on the midterm and final essay, see the direction documents posted in Carmen.

***Final Essay Proposal***

You’ll submit a proposal for your final essay, which I’ll review, to help ensure you’re on the right track. For detailed information on the final essay proposal, see the direction documents posted in Carmen.

**Course Policies**

**Late submissions**

All assignments are accepted for full credit only if they’re submitted before the posted deadline.

Assignments that are posted *any time* (no matter how short) after the posted deadline will be considered late. A late submission will result in a deduction of one full letter grade (10 percent) for each day (24-hour period) past the posted deadline.

Group-based activities like discussions cannot be made up once they’ve ended.

**Excuses for late work**

Technological difficulties will *not* excuse a late submission. Get in the habit of submitting all assignments early enough to deal with an unforeseen computer problem.

I will consider excusing late submissions for illness, family emergencies, and other unforeseen issues. Such instances require written documentation to be considered for exemption.

**Incomplete grades and final grading**

Incomplete grades for the course will not be given without serious cause, to be determined by the instructor.

Extra credit will not be offered. Final grades will not be rounded up.

**Conduct**

Although our class is conducted on the Internet, you should apply the same manners and professionalism to all communications for this course (emails to your instructor, discussion contributions, etc.) that you would if we were meeting face-to-face.

Simply put: be polite and communicate in grammatically-correct sentences. Inappropriate behavior will adversely impact your grade and can get you kicked out of the course.

**Important Resources**

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Accommodations and Accessibility Resources

http://ada.osu.edu/resources/Links.htm

**Requesting Accommodations; Disability Services**

Students with disabilities (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions) that have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue; telephone 614- 292-3307, <http://slds@osu.edu> or <http://slds.osu.edu>

**Ohio State’s Academic Integrity Policy**

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in

teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State

University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have

read and understand the University’s Code of Student Conduct, and that all students will

complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must

recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University’s Code of

Student Conduct and this syllabus may constitute “Academic Misconduct.” The Ohio State University’s Code of Student Conduct (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic

misconduct as: “Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University,

or subvert the educational process.” Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not

limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another

student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the

University’s Code of Student Conduct is never considered an “excuse” for academic misconduct,

so I recommend that you review the Code of Student Conduct and, specifically, the sections

dealing with academic misconduct.

If I suspect\*\* that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated

by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If

COAM determines that you have violated the University’s Code of Student Conduct (i.e.,

committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing

grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University. If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me. Other sources of information on academic misconduct (integrity) to which you can refer

include:

The Committee on Academic Misconduct web pages (COAM Home)

Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity (Ten Suggestions)

Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity ([www.northwestern.edu/uacc/8cards.htm](http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/8cards.htm))

**\*\*Please be aware that every assignment you submit for this course will be run through software that checks for plagiarism.**

**Writing resources**

The OSU Writing Center offers free professional consultations and/or tutoring sessions for students at all stages of the writing process. You may set up an appointment by calling 614-688-4291 or you can meet with a writing consultant at the Younkin Success Center. The OSU Writing Center website is: cstw.osu.edu/writing-center.

This is a second-level writing class, which means students are expected to enter the course having mastered various basic composition and researching skills. *If you find you haven’t mastered those basic composition and researching skills, you will likely need to work with the Writing Center to succeed in this course.*

**General academic resources**

Many general academic resources are offered on OSU’s main campus, including advising and tutoring. Please visit the following website for more information: <http://advising.osu.edu/welcome.shtml>

**Student services**

Student services are offered on OSU’s main campus. For more information visit <http://ssc.osu.edu>

**Health resources**

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student’s ability to participate in daily activities.

The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life’s Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu/) or calling 614­-292-­5766.

CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at 614­-292-­5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-­800­-273-­TALK or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/)

**Statement on diversity**

Our differing classes, races, gender identities, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations, and life experiences can enhance classroom learning in ways that no textbook can. Please know that I am always open to discussing issues of diversity and how I can better recognize them in our classroom and in my classroom policies.

***Course Calendar***

Please note that this schedule is subject to change. If you notice a show I’ve assigned is no longer streaming, please email me ASAP so I can assign an alternative show.

I’ve assigned an eclectic mix of readings and viewings to make the course as interesting as possible. But that means you’ll need to access the readings and viewings from various places. If I don’t provide a link to the source I’m asking you to read/view on the course calendar itself, you can find it in the Files section of Carmen, on Netflix, or on Hulu. If you can’t find something you’ve been assigned, simply email me.

**Week One — January 7-11: Welcome Week**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignments and Tasks Due** | **Readings and Viewings for Discussion** | **Writing and Research Lessons** |
| 1. **Wednesday at noon**: post your “welcome video” in the appropriate discussion forum on Carmen. See discussion forum for more instructions.

*\*Note that our usual weekly schedule for assignment and discussions runs Monday to Wednesday.* | **None**  | 1. Choosing Sources
2. Using Sources (APA style)
3. Read O’Donnell chapter 1

*\*You can find documents for writing and research lessons and assigned readings (that are not textbook chapters) in the Files section of Carmen. Each week of the semester has a folder in the Files section. This week’s lessons can be found in the folder titled “Week 1.”* |

**Week Two — January 14-18: Women on TV**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignments and Tasks Due** | **Readings and Viewings for Discussion** | **Writing and Research Lessons** |
| 1. **Monday at noon**: blog post
2. **Wednesday at noon**: Discussion replies
 | 1. **Read**: “Feminism, Postfeminism, Liz Lemonism: Picturing Tina Fey” from the book *Pretty/Funny* (Mizejewski, 2014)
2. **Read**: “I Don’t Care if You Like it” (Fey, 2011)
3. **Watch** Weekend Update: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3vAVhaIEIk&nohtml5=False
4. **Watch**: Season 5, Episode 16 of *30 Rock*: *TGS Hates Women* (Hulu)

*\*Find the links to writing/research lessons, assigned readings, etc. for this week in the Files section of Carmen in the folder titled “Week 2.”* | 1. “Essay Skeleton” (Classic essay organization)
 |

**Discussion Prompts**:

Tina Fey is one of the most popular and critically-acclaimed women to ever write for and perform on TV. As we read in Mizejewski’s article, Fey resists the categorization of her work as straight-up feminist, and we see her making fun of women in the assigned *SNL* viewing. Yet in her own memoir, *Bossy Pants*, we see that she does indeed make pro-women/feminist statements.

**Let’s consider what Fey’s success and popularity mean:**

* Why might Fey resist the term “feminist?” Is it possible for a TV writer/producer/celebrity like Fey to label herself a feminist and remain successful? Why or why not?
* Have TV representations of women evolved so much that they don’t need to be “worked on” anymore? (We’ve gone from stereotypical housewives on *I Love Lucy* in the 1950s to Fey’s decidedly un-feminine Liz Lemon.)
* How do other women who have written for and/or performed on TV (Mindy Kaling, Amy Poehler, Amy Schumer, Shonda Rhimes, etc.) compare to Fey? Do they have a more overt pro-woman or feminist message on their TV shows than Fey, and what’s the significance of that?
* Think of older shows staring/produced by women (like *I Love Lucy*, *Mary Tyler Moore*, and the *Carol Burnett Show*). Are we doing a disservice to them by assuming they didn’t have “pro-women” messages?

*\*Remember, to complete your blog post for the week pick one of these questions — or come up with your own question inspired by week’s readings and viewing — and write a 400-word mini-argument to answer it. Read the Blog Post/Discussion Directions document on Carmen for more information.*

*\*Also remember: when writing your blog post you can bring in your own examples from shows other than the one I assigned for this week. Do you watch* Inside Amy Schumer*,* Parks and Rec*,* Gossip Girl, Game of Thrones, *or another show that “says” interesting things about women in American society and/or feminism? If so, tell us about them!*

**Week Three — January 21-25: Class(less) on TV**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignments and Tasks Due** | **Readings and Viewings for Discussion** | **Writing and Research Lessons** |
| 1. **Tuesday at noon**: blog post
2. **Thursday at noon**: Discussion replies

*\* Monday is Martin Luther King Jr. Day. In observance of the holiday, your blog post and replies due dates are altered this week. For the rest of the semester, they are due on a Monday-Wednesday schedule.* | 1. **Watch**: *Class Dismissed* (documentary on OSU Secured Media Library) Log in here: **go.osu.edu/SecuredMediaLibrary**
	* Watch first five sections: Class Matters, Dream Machine, Margins, Women, Class Clowns.
2. **Read**: *TV’s Dwindling Middle Class*: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/01/magazine/tvs-dwindling-middle-class.html?_r=0>
3. **Watch**: Your choice viewing. Pick any current TV show that allows you to analyze class as it’s presented on that show. (Suggestions: a general-audience sitcom like *Modern Family, Black-ish*, *Two Broke Girls*, *The Middle, or The Conner’s.* More biting and niche shows like *Schitt’s Creek* and *Trailer Park Boys*. *The Simpsons* or another cartoon-sitcom starring a working-class “doofus dad” character discussed in the documentary we watched this week.)
 | 1. Tips for searching for resources
2. Mining sources for information
 |

**Discussion Prompts**:

This week we watched a 10-year-old documentary and a recently-written newspaper article on the ways class — particularly the working and middle class — is presented on TV. Both share the same general thesis: while American TV once presented more nuanced depictions of the working and middle class, during the last 25 years issues of class have vanished from TV. Characters on TV have become vaguely upper-middle class, and don’t outwardly worry about issues of work and money.

**For this week’s discussion I want you to base your blog post on the “your choice viewing” that you pick. Analyze the way class is presented on that show.**

**Start by considering whether or not (and *why* or *why* *not*) “your choice viewing” supports the thesis presented by this week’s reading and documentary viewing. You can also address any other relevant points about class that are present in the show you analyze, including:**

* If/how finances are talked about.
* If/how work is talked about.
* What the show’s set and props (including clothes, furniture, technology, etc.) say about class and wealth.
* How the show’s presentation of class, wealth, and work compare to “real life.”
* Does the network a show is created for (network TV **versus** cable channels, and streaming platforms **versus** regular TV) make the show more or less likely to accurately address issues of class? Why?

**Week Four — January 28 - February 1: Mini-criticism due**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignments and Tasks Due** | **Readings and Viewings for Discussion** | **Writing and Research Lessons** |
| 1. **Monday at noon**: Mini-criticism essay
2. **Monday at noon**: Summary of mini-criticism and writing/research experience in discussion forum
3. **Wednesday**: Discussion replies
 | **None**  | **None** |

**Week Five — February 4-8: Postmodern TV**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignments and Tasks Due** | **Readings and Viewings for Discussion** | **Writing and Research Lessons** |
| 1. **Monday at noon**: blog post
2. **Wednesday at noon**: discussion replies
 | 1. **Read**: O’Donnell chapter 8
2. **Watch**: Is *Community* a Postmodern Masterpiece?: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YanhEVEgkYI>
3. **Watch**: Your choice viewing: Choose a highly postmodern show. (Suggestions: *Community, Arrested Development, The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt,* any show with an anti-hero as a protagonist,like *Breaking Bad* and *Mad Men.)*
 | 1. Fifteen Common Writing Mistakes
2. Cutting Clutter
 |

**Discussion Prompts**:

In the 1990s *Seinfeld* was the first TV show to contain many subtle postmodern elements, but *Arrested Development* is widely regarded as the first truly and entirely postmodern show when it aired on Fox from 2003 to 2006. Interestingly, *Arrested Development* didn’t get good ratings because it’s postmodern style was too avant garde for the general public at that time. It wasn’t until *The Office*, which was much less experimental,introduced obviously postmodern elements (like its mockumentary style) to the general public that the postmodern style became a mainstay of sitcoms and TV in general.

**Using Your Choice Viewing for this week as a prime example**, consider these questions as you’re drafting your blog post:

* Is postmodern television sophisticated art, silly gobbledygook, or both? If you argue both, explain how it’s possible for a show to be sophisticated and silly at the same time, using “your choice viewing” as an example.
* Why do people like the postmodern aesthetic so much? Refer to O’Donnell’s and PBS Idea Channel’s definitions of postmodern TV when constructing your answer.
* What’s the shelf life of postmodern TV? For example, *Arrested Development* makes references to Patriot Act — would college-age-kids (most, if not all, of you) get those jokes? Will people 30 years from now “get” what was funny about the mockumentary style of *The Office*? Do these shelf lives of shows matter at all?
* Based on what you know about postmodernism now (after having completed this week’s readings and viewings), what show would *you* call *the* postmodern masterpiece? Would it be the show you chose to watch? Would it be a scripted show at all, or maybe a different genre, like TV news satire shows like *The Daily Show*?

**Week Six — February 11-15: Reality TV**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignments and Tasks Due** | **Readings and Viewings for Discussion** | **Writing and Research Lessons** |
| 1. **Monday at noon:** blog post
2. **Wednesday at noon**: discussion replies
 | 1. **Read***: Reality TV* (Haggerty, 2010). *This is a long article. The upside of wading through it: it should provide you with ideas for your midterm essay, and it can be used as an academic source for that assignment.*
2. **Watch**: Season 1, episode 8 of *I am Cait: A New Beginning*. (Hulu)
 | **None**  |

**Discussion Prompt:**

*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* is the most notorious reality TV show of all time, having created the world’s most recognizable people who are “famous for being famous.” An original star of the show, Bruce Jenner, made history in 2015 when she debuted as Caitlyn Jenner, a transgender woman.

**Transgender issues are significant cultural issues. But reality TV is, as we read about this week, largely regarded as unserious, trashy, and inauthentic. So what do we make of the fact that such a prominent transgender woman tackles the serious issue of being transgender in America on the trivial genre of reality TV on the show *I am Cait*?** Here are some ideas to consider as you begin drafting your blog post:

* Does the fact that *I am Cait* is a reality TV show cheapen what could be a more high-minded look into an important issue of our contemporary times? Have the producers managed to make *I am Cait* different than *the Kardashians*, *Jersey Shore*, *My 600-lb Life,* and other “trashy” and/or sensationalist reality TV shows?
* *I am Cait* has been cancelled, reportedly due to lack of viewers. Based on our viewing and reading for the week, what argument would you build for why? Is there something about the show that is different than other popular and successful reality TV? Is the content somehow different than the most successful reality TV shows? Do you think perhaps the target audience for *I am Cait* is different than the general audience for reality TV?
* Why do we watch reality TV even though we know it’s so often inauthentic (it can be staged, the editing can manipulate what actually happened, etc.)?
* Is there a such thing as “good” reality TV? If so, define it and provide examples (even if they’re hypothetical). How does *I am Cait* compare to that definition of “good” reality TV?

**Week Seven — February 18-22: Ethnicity and Immigration**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignments and Tasks Due** | **Readings and Viewings for Discussion** | **Writing and Research Lessons** |
| 1. **Monday at noon:** blog post
2. **Wednesday at noon**: discussion replies
 | 1. **Read**: *New Yorker* on *Fresh off the Boat*: (only read the first half of the article) <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/03/09/home-cooking-television-emily-nussbaum>
2. **Read**: South Asian Characterizations in Popular Media (Thakore, 2014)
3. **Read**: *Master of None* episode “Parents” is the most talked-about episode of TV in 2015: http://www.ew.com/article/2015/11/11/master-of-none-aziz-ansari-parents
4. **Watch**: Season 1, Episode 2 of *Master of None: Parents* (Netflix)
 | **None**  |

**Discussion Prompts**:

This week we explore issues of ethnicity and immigration on TV. More specifically, we look at people of non-white ethnicities and how representations of them have changed on TV during the past 10 years. Are these representations changing for the better? If these representations aren’t entirely positive, are they a step in the right direction? What even *is* “the right direction” for representations of a variety of ethnicities?

Here are some specific questions to consider when writing your blog post for this week:

* In his article Thakore talks a lot of hyphenated-American identities on TV. Are such characters a stepping-stone for TV representations of people of non-white ethnicities, as *New Yorker* article suggests about *Fresh Off the Boat* (in its last line of the article)? Why or why not? Should “stepping-stone” characters be forgiven what they lack (nuance, etc.) since they create exposure for non-white ethnicities — why or why not?
* Why do you think Aziz Ansari’s “Parents” episode of his show *Master of None* was such a hit? Why was he applauded for the way he told a story about immigration and ethnicity in the United States? Why was Ansari’s way of story-telling about ethnicity in America so crowd-pleasing? What other shows have you seen that do as good a job as “Parents” did telling meaningful stories of immigration and ethnicity in America — explain your answer in detail.

**Week Eight — February 25 - March 1: Midterm due**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignments and Tasks Due** | **Readings and Viewings for Discussion** | **Writing and Research Lessons** |
| 1. **Monday at noon**: Midterm essay
2. **Monday at noon**: Summary of midterm and writing/research experience in discussion forum
3. **Wednesday**: Discussion replies
 | **None**  | **None**  |

**Week Nine — March 4-8: Televised Sports**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignments and Tasks Due** | **Readings and Viewings for Discussion** | **Writing and Research Lessons** |
| 1. **Monday at noon:** blog post
2. **Wednesday at noon**: discussion replies
 | 1. **Read**: Sports and Patriotism: http://www.espn.com/espn/story/\_/id/9449554/sports-patriotism
2. **Watch**: *Not Just a Game: Power, Politics, & American Sports.* (Documentary on OSU’s Secured Media Library.)
	* You’re only required to watch the introduction and the first chapter: “In the arena.”
 | **None**  |

**Discussion prompt:**

Sports are supposedly part of our leisure time — watching a game on TV is regarded as a fun way to spend our weekends. Why is it, then, that when a sports player, sports team, and sports issues creates civic controversy, that issue catapults to national attention and everyone wants to weigh in? The documentary and the ESPN piece argue that sports and patriotism are very much intertwined. Can that be a pathway to explaining why sporting events often turn into a stage for messages of political debate and social justice?

* Why is it treated as so notable and newsworthy when a sports player or team — like Colin Kaepernick or the Mizzou football team — takes a political stance? Do you think such occurrences are indeed as notable and newsworthy as society treats them? Why or why not? (To read more about these examples, visit the following links: **http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2016/09/economist-explains-13?zid=319&ah=17af09b0281b01505c226b1e574f5cc1** and **http://www.si.com/college-football/2016/11/08/how-missouri-football-has-changed-1-year-after-boycott**)
* If sports and patriotism are so intertwined, should we be surprised that sports act as a platform for protest? Does the connection between sports and patriotism legitimize the political acts of sports players and teams?
* Did you know that our own rivalry with the state that shall remain unnamed likely stems from the political episode that was the Toledo War? (Refer to this article for more info: **http://www.history.com/news/the-toledo-war-when-michigan-and-ohio-nearly-came-to-blows**) Are sports actually in large part an outlet for our (political) aggressions? Does that problematize out treatment of sports a simple way to spend our leisure time?

**Week Ten — March 11-15: No class. Spring Break.**

**Week Eleven — March 18-22: New TV Technologies and Business Models**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignments and Tasks Due** | **Readings and Viewings for Discussion** | **Writing and Research Lessons** |
| 1. **Monday at noon:** blog post
2. **Wednesday at noon**: discussion replies
 | 1. **Read**: O’Donnell Chapter 2
2. **Read**: *Glee Fandom and Twitter* (Wood & Baughman, 2012)
3. **Read**: Outside the box: Netflix and the future of TV: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/02/03/outside-the-box-2>
4. **Read/Watch**: Your choice viewing and/or supporting readings. Find and document a current show, set of shows, TV phenomenon (like live Tweeting during a popular show), or TV technology, that couldn’t have existed 15 years ago. See discussion prompt for more guidance.
 | **None**  |

**Discussion Prompt**:

This week’s readings guided you through a recent history of TV and TV technology, explaining what the business of TV was like 15 years ago and showing the dramatic and significant changes it’s been through since then.

**Pick a current TV show or TV phenomenon that couldn’t have existed 15 years ago, but exists today because of changes/innovations in TV technology. Use it as an example and explanation of how and why the content of TV is changing. Here are examples of the type of focus I’m asking you to take this week in your blog post:**

* The 2012 NBC show *Smash* was one of the most expensive and highly-produced shows of this decade. But “the Internet” (fans on social media, professional critics, etc.) tore it apart with gusto, and it infamously flamed out within a year and a half. Some call it the first major example of hate-watching. You could build an argument explaining why people hate-watch, and also argue generally about how TV has changed in the advent of social media, etc.
* Conversely, Wood & Baughman’s article discusses one of the first instances of fans from across the country building community over live Tweet sessions of their favorite show. How has social media helped people bond over TV content, and is that social bonding as meaningful/useful as, for example, traditional clubs (like softball leagues) that meet in person?
* We’re said to be living in The Golden Age of Television. Sitcoms have gone from formulaic and 30-minutes of easy laughs to works of art with complex humor. You could use *Parks and Rec*, for example, to explain how and why TV sitcoms have grown into sophistication thanks to new TV technology, cultural changes, and other developments.
* Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon original series: How are they different than traditional TV shows (i.e., shows that are produced by traditional TV networks and aired on traditional network or cable TV)? How are these differences culturally significant? You could compare and contrast a traditional network TV show focusing on friendship like *How I Met Your Mother* with a streaming series about friendship like Hulu’s *Difficult People*.

**Week Twelve — March 25-29: LGBTQ representations on TV**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignments and Tasks Due** | **Readings and Viewings for Discussion** | **Writing and Research Lessons** |
| 1. **Monday at noon:** blog post
2. **Wednesday at noon**: discussion replies
 | 1. **Read**: O’Donnell Chapter 7
2. **Read:** *Will and Grace Changed Nothing***:** https://www.salon.com/2012/10/03/will\_grace\_changed\_nothing/
3. **Watch**: Season 4, Episode 16 of the original *Will & Grace*: *A Chorus Lie*. (Hulu)
4. **Watch**: Season 2, Episode 3 of the revived *Will & Grace: Tex and the City*. (Hulu)
 | **None**  |

**Discussion Prompts**:

This week I want us to consider the ways in which representations of LGBTQ people have changed on TV from the start of the post-AIDS era (beginning in the mid-1990s with sitcoms like *Ellen* and *Will & Grace*) through our current day. More specifically, we’re focusing on representations of gay men and identity politics on the blockbuster sitcom *Will & Grace*.

**In his article *Will and Grace Changed Nothing*, Christopher Kelly argues that the original sitcom did not accurately represent the “complexity and diversity of gay lives being lived in contemporary America.” You’ll watch an episode of the original series and compare it to a 2018 episode of the revived series in order to see if you agree with Kelly, and to consider whether or not the revived series gets right what Kelly argues the original got wrong.** Consider the following questions when deciding what to talk about in your blog post:

* Three of the criticisms Kelly assigns the original *Will & Grace* are as follows: that the show compartmentalizes gay people, asks gay people to be complicit in their own marginalization, and had a “deeply conservative, heterosexist mindset.” Do you agree — why or why not? Do you think the revived *Will & Grace* is also “guilty” of these criticism — why or why not? Use examples from both assigned episodes to support your answers.
* The revived *Will & Grace* makes numerous overt references to timely and contentious social-political issues/topics; the original series does not. Does this make the revived series better than the original? Why or why not? Use examples from both assigned episodes to support your answer.
* Kelly admits that it may be unfair to ask a sitcom like *Will & Grace* to advance the identity politics and social representation of a group of people because it is a form of entertainment “whose characters are *always* defined by one or two traits.” Do you agree or disagree; explain why.

**Week Thirteen — April 1-5: Health, doctors, and illness on TV**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignments and Tasks Due** | **Readings and Viewings for Discussion** | **Writing and Research Lessons** |
| 1. **Monday at noon:** final essay proposal
2. **Monday at noon:** blog post
3. **Wednesday at noon**: discussion replies
 | 1. **Read**: *Dr. Phil, Medical Theatre, and Talking Couches* (Eisenhower & Richardson, 2014)
2. **Read**: *The Operator: Is the most trusted doctor in America doing more harm than good*?: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/02/04/the-operator>
3. **Watch**: Your choice viewing: a current TV show of any genre other than talk shows that deals with issues of illness, medicine, or medical advice. See discussion prompt for more guidance.
 | **None**  |

**Discussion prompt:**

It’s long been the consensus among academics and social critics that talk show doctors are deeply problematic. We read two articles this week explaining such positions. **In this week’s discussion I want you to weigh in on the issue:**

**Is it possible for issues of illness, medicine, and disabilities to be presented on TV meaningfully and responsibly? Why or why not? What does it even mean to present issues of illness/medicine/disabilities to be presented “meaningfully” or “responsibly?” To what extent should we even care if such issues are presented meaningfully and responsibly? Use ideas and examples from this week’s assigned articles to help build your definition of “meaningful” and “responsible.” (Also, if you’ve never seen episodes of *Dr. Phil* and *Dr. Oz,* you may find it helpful to Google a few clips of each to watch.)**

**Base your blog post on arguing your answer to that question. Pick a show to watch and use it as an example to support your position.** Here are some examples of shows you might watch: *House*, *My 600-lb Life, Grey’s Anatomy*, and the spring 2016 season of *Dancing with the Stars*, which featured a contestant who was deaf (and became the season champion).

**Week Fourteen — April 8-12: Black families on TV**

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| **Assignments and Tasks Due** | **Readings and Viewings for Discussion** | **Writing and Research Lessons** |
| 1. **Monday at noon:** blog post
2. **Wednesday at noon**: discussion replies
 | 1. **Read**: The Cosby Show: The View from the Black Middle Class (Inniss & Feagin, 1995)
2. **Read**: *Ebony* Cosby Article (Taylor, 2015)
3. **Read**: Reaction to *Ebony* article: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/10/22/ebonys-cracked-cosby-show-cover-reveals-fractures-in-shows-legacy-for-black-community/
4. **Watch**: Season 3, episode 4 of *Black-ish: Who’s Afraid of the Big Black Man* (Hulu)
5. **Watch**: Clips of *The Cosby Show*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRB1PT-okaI (Thanks for dealing with the low quality clips!)
 | **None**  |

**Discussion Prompts**:

*The Cosby Show* presented a counter-narrative to 1980s gang violence that the public found positive when it originally aired. But even while it was still on the air scholars (like the Inniss & Feagin article) pointed out that counter-narrative’s lack of validity, and explained why it was problematic.

Fast forward to today: Bill Cosby’s criminal behavior has come to light, which has prompted cultural critics to ask more questions about the show’s legacy. One such critic wrote the *Ebony* article we read for this week.

**I’d like you to weigh in on the importance of *The Cosby Show’s* legacy and compare *The Cosby Show* to current representations of black families on TV like *Black-ish*. Here are some questions to consider as you draft your blog post for this week:**

* Do you agree with Inniss and Feagin and the *Ebony* piece, both of which argue that the overall message of *The Cosby Show* was problematic from the start and continues to be problematic today? Why or why not?
* As the *Ebony* reading makes clear, Bill Cosby earned himself a seriously problematic reputation since his blockbuster sitcom aired. (In 2018 Cosby was convicted of assault and designated a “sexually violent predator.”) In light of this, weigh in on the question the *Washington Post* article focuses on: Is it now necessary to throw out the show with the comedian who made it? Can we ever appreciate *The Cosby Show* for what it did right (whatever an individual personally thinks those things are) in light of Cosby’s new status as a convicted criminal?
* Compare the discussions of *The Cosby Show* we read this week to the show we watched – *Black-ish*. Does *Black-ish* succeed where many critics like Feagin and Innis said *The Cosby Show* failed: in tackling real-world issues and public narratives relevant to black families? If yes, how so? If not, why?

**Week Fifteen — April 15-19: Final essay**

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| **Assignments and Tasks Due** | **Readings and Viewings for Discussion** | **Writing and Research Lessons** |
| 1. **Monday at noon**: Final essay.
2. **Monday at noon**: Summary of final essay and writing/research experience in discussion forum
3. **Wednesday**: Discussion replies
 | **None**  | **None**  |