

## COURSE SYLLABUS

**Art Education 367.03** *Criticizing Television*  
**Theatre 367.03** *Criticizing Television*

### Course Description:

In this course we will critically examine American popular television and its relationship to issues of social diversity. Recognizing the significant influence this technology has on our individual and social experiences, 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'll explore the phenomenon of television in American culture by viewing it, discussing it, reading about it, and writing about it. Some key questions we'll consider include:

- How does television programming empower (or disempower) people? Is television a site of opposition, or an instrument of oppression?
- Whose presence is missing and whose voices are silenced in popular television programming?
- What are the aesthetic, creative, and persuasive strategies of television programming, and how do these strategies affect perceptions of social diversity?
- What does television provide to individuals and society: Information? Entertainment? Education? Social cohesiveness? Pleasure? Companionship? Distraction?
- Whose values are reflected in television programming?
- Does television represent realities? Construct realities? Refute realities?
- What is reality? Who decides what reality is? How can we discern what is real or fantasy, fact or fiction in television programming?
- How is it decided that a particular program or genre is "good," or "bad?" How are these values determined? How are these values communicated to, and internalized by, viewers?
- How can theoretical perspectives and television criticism methods be used to understand social diversity as it relates to television in American life? What are the underlying assumptions of theoretical perspectives and research methods? What are their strengths and limitations?

### GEC Second Writing and Social Diversity Course

*Criticizing Television* is a GEC second writing and social diversity course designed to extend and refine your expository writing and analytic reading skills by exploring the pluralistic nature of American society through a critical analysis of American popular television. In our study of popular television, we'll gain an appreciation of the significance of diversity in American society and an informed understanding of how the values of tolerance and equality are expressed (or not) through television programming and in television viewers' behaviors.

Through the activities of viewing, reading about, and writing about popular television in America we will encounter and critically examine issues of social diversity including, but not limited to: race, ethnicity, gender, and class. We will gain an understanding and appreciation of television as a social institution that reflects and influences, yet also is shaped by, society's desires, hopes, and fears. Ultimately, by exploring the ways in which television advances or limits the agency of individuals and groups, students will develop an understanding of television's significance for attitudes and beliefs regarding diversity in our society.

## Teaching and Learning Philosophy

**Thoughtful questioning and independent thinking are encouraged and expected in this course!** My teaching is guided by a philosophy of hermeneutics. From the Greek word *hermeneia*, meaning an utterance or explication of thought, hermeneutics has deep ties to the concept of interpretation. Learning in a hermeneutic spirit means turning an interpretive lens upon both the object of study and oneself. A hermeneutic approach to Television Studies invites us to not only ask and answer questions about TV and social diversity but also to examine our questions and answers for insight into our personal constructions of reality. Most importantly, a hermeneutic approach to the study of television and social diversity promotes an acceptance that one's inquiries will not yield final, definitive statements, but instead will lead to more questions, more conversations, and greater possibilities for deeper understandings in the future.

## Structure of the Course

This course is organized around reading and writing about the phenomenon of television and its relationship to social diversity issues. There will be lectures drawn from concepts in the assigned readings, however the emphasis in this course is on engaging with ideas through **discussion** and **writing**.

**Discussions** about the readings and in-class program viewings are a vital part of your learning experience. You'll have the opportunity to wrestle with ideas, theories, and viewpoints in television criticism, and you'll develop an awareness of how these ideas are relevant to our social worlds and everyday life. Your goal this quarter is to think critically, creatively, and most of all, think for yourself and question the world you are in. I urge students to ask questions, make comments, and offer informed, thoughtful opinions. We will learn a lot from one another this quarter!

**Writing instruction** will occur throughout the quarter, and will be geared toward building upon and advancing your skills in producing writing characterized by:

- a clear sense of purpose
- effectively ordered and fully supported ideas
- style appropriate to purpose and audience
- control of grammatical and mechanical elements

Writing instruction will take place through class lectures, class discussion, in-class writing activities, instructor-written feedback on papers, informal peer writing review activities, a research and writing project that entails a proposal, drafts, formal peer review and paper revision, and individual writing consultations.

## In-Class Activities

- We will reflectively discuss readings, beginning with topics you bring up in your Personal Responses to reading assignments.
- We will watch and critique, positively and negatively, excerpts from television programs by applying different critical methodologies.
- We will engage in brief, informal in-class writing exercises to demonstrate comprehension of readings and to facilitate discussions.

## Assignments

**Readings:**

There is a significant amount of reading in this course. The materials are drawn from both academic and popular writings about television; the readings are carefully chosen to introduce you to general concepts in Television Studies and to help you grapple with key theoretical perspectives in television criticism. The readings will provide a strong foundation for your essay and oral presentation assignments. I realize that the concepts and theories may be unfamiliar; some of the material may seem challenging, but do your best to complete each reading so you are prepared to contribute to the class discussion and/or express the ideas during the in-class writing activities.

**Reading responses:**

Brief written responses to the assigned readings will be required where indicated on the course calendar. The phrase “**Read and respond in writing**” precedes all reading assignments that have a required response.

Unless you are given a specific writing prompt to follow for a particular reading, please use the format below, including both sections in your response:

**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 or idea from the reading that is particularly important to you, for whatever reason. Quote the sentence or explain the idea, and write about what this sentence means to you and why it is significant to your life.

Each reading response will be graded using a system of check+ (5 pts.), check (3 pts.), check- (1 pt.). Reading responses will be evaluated on depth of engagement with the material, demonstration of your understanding of the topic and concepts, quality of connections you make with the material, and/or questions you raise about the reading.

**Essays:**

You will write 2 critical analysis papers, one mid-term project (paper & presentation), one postmodern television paper, and one final research paper. To widen your exposure to a variety of ideas and experiences, you should not write your midterm essay or final essay about programs or commercials that we have previously given substantial discussion in the class. If you have any questions about this, please see me.

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

All essays must follow either APA or MLA citation format. The OSU Libraries website offers helpful guidance for formatting citations in a variety of different styles. Visit <http://library.osu.edu/sites/guides/index.php#apaguide> and follow the links.

**Writing Process and Development: Grading, Feedback, and Revision**

**All written assignments will be graded by**

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

**Grading and Feedback:**

Writing feedback is intended to establish a dialogue between student and teacher, with the goal of supporting and furthering the student's development of writing skills and personal writing voice. Each essay (and presentation) assignment will be returned to students with a detailed grading rubric sheet that identifies strengths, areas where improvements may be needed, and suggestions for extending thinking on their topic.

**Revision:**

One of the Critical Analysis papers may be revised and resubmitted. The revised essay will be evaluated on changes made in response to feedback; the grade on the revised paper will stand as the final grade for the paper.

**Writing as Process:**

The last essay assignment of the quarter, the Final Paper, also serves as the final exam and is submitted during exam week. This assignment will give students the opportunity to develop their writing through a structured process. Students will choose a topic that links personal television experience with perspectives in Television Criticism, and will craft their writing through proposal, research, preliminary draft, peer review, and final draft stages. Students will receive feedback on their developing essay on three separate occasions before submitting their Final Paper:

1. Instructor's written feedback on proposal
2. A personal writing consultation with Instructor
3. Written and oral peer feedback in a student Peer Editing Workshop

**Required Texts**

Jonathan Bignell, *An Introduction to Television Studies*, London: Routledge, 2004.

Andrea Lunsford, *The Everyday Writer*, 3rd ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005.

Other required readings are available in PDF or Word format on the *Criticizing Television* website (Carmen) and you are responsible for having a means for accessing and printing them. On occasion, I will distribute readings and instructional handouts in class or by email attachment.

**Additional Requirements**

**Equipment access:** Students are expected to have access to a television and VCR or DVD player for the completion of assignments.

**Carmen website:** Required readings for the class are available at the Carmen website. In order to have access to our class's Carmen materials, you must activate your OSU email account and obtain your username and password. The course website can be accessed at <https://carmen.osu.edu/>. You will submit some of your papers via Carmen, and I will occasionally post handouts and related course materials at the Carmen website.

**Email:** A reliable email account (that you check on a regular basis) is a necessity.

**Course Policies****Attendance, Preparation, and Participation****Attendance:**

Attendance is vital to the success of this class and to your development as a writer. Attendance



is taken each day and an unexcused absence will count as a zero for class participation on that day. Excused absences, such as those for documented illness, family tragedy, religious observance, or travel for inter-collegiate athletics, will not affect your grade--however all excused absences require written documentation. You are expected to be present and punctual and you are expected to stay through the duration of each class. Arriving late or leaving early may be considered an unexcused absence unless arrangements have been made for it to be counted as an excused absence.

### About Preparation and Participation:

- Active participation on a daily basis is crucial for your success in this class, as well as the overall success of the class. I may, on occasion, collect and grade an in-class writing response to a reading assignment; this will be factored into the reading response and participation grade for the day.
- Participation means paying attention while instructor and classmates are speaking and responding appropriately.
- Participation means offering thoughtful comments and asking questions when a classmate gives an oral presentation.
- Participation means giving your full critical attention to the in-class television viewings and responding with questions or comments when the program is finished.
- Participation is graded on a daily basis. Active engagement in the course materials and quality of comments will assure you of receiving full participation credit for that class. Failing to pay attention, exhibiting distracted or distracting behavior in class, or consistently not contributing to discussions will negatively impact your participation grade.
- If there is a reason why you cannot fully participate in class discussions please see me as soon as possible so that we can discuss your options.
- And, last but not least, this class is based on discussion. Lack of student preparation and participation means dull, uninspiring discussions--which will make for a long, boring quarter for everyone! Come prepared to participate by having carefully read the assigned materials, and try to make a comment or two at every class meeting!

### Assessment

Your grade in *Criticizing Television* is based on the number of points achieved out of 400 possible points. The final letter grade will be determined by dividing the final accumulated point total by 100 and then using the Grade Scale. For example, if a student's final accumulated points are 356, the final quarter grade will be 3.56 or A-.

### Criticizing Television Point Scale

Attendance, Preparation, and Participation	50
Reading Responses	35
Critical Analysis Paper # 1	25
Critical Analysis Paper # 2	25
Postmodernism Paper	25
Mid-term Paper/Presentation	100
Proposal for Final paper	20
Draft (for peer editing session)	20
Final Paper	100
<b>Total possible points</b>	<b>400</b>

**Grade Scale**

A	3.85-4.00
A-	3.50-3.84
B+	3.15-3.49
B	2.85-3.14
B-	2.50-2.84
C+	2.15-2.49
C	1.85-2.14
C-	1.50-1.84
D+	1.15-1.49
D	1.00-1.14
E	0.00-0.99

**Late Submissions:**

Assignments must be completed and submitted on time. Assignments should be turned in during the class period when they are due. A late assignment will result in a deduction of one full letter grade for each day past the due date (for example, B+ to C+). The grade will not be affected if an assignment is late for reasons that would result in an excused absence and written documentation is required. If you know that you cannot attend class when an assignment is due, please contact me as soon as possible in advance of class to arrange for submission of your assignment.

**Incompletes:**

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

**Academic Honesty**

Academic honesty is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honestly acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest, whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards all academic dishonesty as an extremely serious matter, with serious consequences that range from probation to expulsion, as well as loss of credit for an assignment or a course. 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://library.osu.edu/sites/guides/index.php>. If in doubt about plagiarizing, paraphrasing, quoting, or collaboration, consult the instructor for guidance. Any suspected cases of academic misconduct will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct ([http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource\\_csc.asp](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp)).

**Resources**

The OSU Writing Center is a free service that provides professional consultation and/or tutoring to students and faculty at any stage of the writing process. They provide excellent service. You may set up an appointment by calling 688-4291 or you can meet with a writing consultant at either 475 Mendenhall Laboratory or at the Younkin Success Center. The OSU Writing Center website is <http://cstw.osu.edu/writingCenter/>

## Students With Special Needs

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. I will rely on the Office for Disability Services for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies. If you have not previously contacted the Office for Disability Services, I encourage you to do so. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>

### Essay Assignments

#### (2) Critical analysis papers:

There are two critical analysis papers. These papers are intended to give you experience in reading and responding to academic television criticism. For each critical analysis paper, you will write a brief, critical, and well-developed argument on an assigned article.

Your analysis should consist of a brief summary of the article, and then a thoughtful commentary on one or two issues either raised by the article or related ideas you thought of while reading the article. Your essay should demonstrate a strong grasp of the authors' argument(s) and the issues that support or illustrate the claims being made. Show both appreciation and criticism in your analysis by explaining what was effective or ineffective in the author's arguments, and point out specific examples in the article that support your assertions.

A successful Critical Analysis Paper will have well reasoned connections with course concepts as well as clear evidence of your own critical thinking. This means you will need to reach beyond simply summarizing the article and author's statements to explain how the text connects with your experience of television and your understanding of perspectives and issues in television criticism. Each essay should be a minimum of 4 pages. **(Each critical analysis paper: 25)**

#### **Purpose of Critical Analysis papers:**

- To practice and improve writing and reading skills.
- To develop critical thinking skills.
- To understand the development and function of a thesis statement or idea.
- To understand how thesis ideas are supported through argumentation and evidence.
- To identify and enter into conversation with an author's key issue(s).

**Midterm Paper & Presentation: Whose reality? What reality? Theorizing Reality in American Television**

**Midterm Paper:** For your midterm paper/presentation project, you will tape an episode of a “reality” TV show and analyze it using perspectives covered thus far in class (semiotics, narrative themes, genre) to create an argument for how this program does or does not construct social or individual realities in American life. You are not limited to shows that are already associated with the reality genre, therefore, you may choose a program that you believe would not typically be labeled as a reality TV show, but you are able to present a case for it being a program that constructs realities. This will open up many opportunities for you to think creatively and outside of the genre boundaries that often classify programming.

Some questions you might consider include:

- What narrative(s) are being used to convey a sense of reality in American life? Whose experiences are privileged and whose are excluded?
- What “hidden” assumptions help these narratives to function? Who benefits from this “reality”—or who is harmed by this “reality?”
- Are there binary oppositions at work in this construction of reality? If so, how might you problematize or challenge realities built on binary oppositions?
- Who is the intended audience(s) for this program? Why was this program (and particular view of reality) created? In other words, what purpose does it serve for American individuals and society?
- What production strategies (lighting, camera angles, sound, etc.) or textual strategies (*visual, verbal, acoustic* codes, or signs, connotations, genre recognition) are used to communicate to audiences and/or create a persuasive reality?
- How does this program work to reinforce (or resist) dominant social realities of class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, religion, and/or (dis)ability?

A successful paper/presentation will synthesize specific and focused examples from the program, concepts from our TV criticism readings and articles, and personal reflections to present a persuasive case for how American realities are constructed in/by the program. Minimum 5 pages, not including reference and title pages.

**Midterm Presentation:** In your presentation to the class, you’ll share an excerpt (approx. 3-5 minutes) of the program you wrote about. This excerpt should illustrate or support your argument for how the program does or does not construct social or individual realities. Be sure to point out how this program clip, or issues surrounding the concept of the program, relate to 1 or 2 course concepts covered thus far. Bring a few questions or statements to facilitate a brief, informal discussion about your program clip/topic. Presentations should be 10-15 minutes in length. **(Paper 50 & Presentation 50 for 100 possible points)**

Both written and oral presentation components are required for the Midterm project. Omission of either component will result in a failing grade for the entire Midterm project.

**Purpose of Midterm Paper/Presentation:**

- To develop your ability to examine a form of television programming and determine how it fits within the overall scheme of Television Criticism.
- To develop and extend your understanding of genre and how a program’s conventions, production choices, aesthetic qualities, create realities for individuals or cultures.
- To develop your research and critical thinking skills.
- To develop your oral presentation skills and verbal ability to describe and articulate the importance of a topic.
- To give you a start on your final paper if you choose to continue pursuing this topic.

### **Postmodern Television Paper**

Watch an episode of a TV show currently on the air that you believe is an example of postmodern television. How does this postmodern program connect with an audience? In writing your paper, you will want to draw upon terms and ideas in Bignell Ch. 7, the Simpsons article, and lectures. Some ideas to consider are reflexivity, intertextuality, fragmentation in the construction of subjectivity/identity.

Postmodernism is sometimes associated with blurring of boundaries and subversion of belief systems... Do you detect a blurring of boundaries in the program—if so, what boundaries are being disrupted and what are the effects on a viewer? Do you find evidence of a mixture or confusion of popular culture and elite culture? How are traditional notions of time and history challenged?

Who is the intended audience? What signs, codes, or connotations reinforce this audience or subject position? What assumptions are made about the audience? Think about *visual, verbal, acoustic* codes. What codes or signs support the representations and contribute to its postmodern qualities? How did this program fit into the programming “flow” at the time it was aired? Provide at least 3 specific examples from the program to support your argument about why or why not the program is an example of postmodern television and how it positions an audience. You are expected to synthesize readings, lectures, and discussions. 4 page minimum. **(Postmodernism Paper 25)**

#### **Purpose of Postmodern Paper:**

- To develop and strengthen your understanding of how gender, ethnicity, race, or class can be theorized through postmodernist and modernist perspectives on history and society.
- To expand your understanding of “texts,” “readings,” and how these terms apply to postmodern television experiences in society.
- To develop your understanding of subjectivity, particularly how subjectivity relates to one’s perception of self and others in the production and viewing of television.
- To develop and extend your critical thinking skills through the application of a key theoretical lens in Television Studies.

### **Final Paper: Connecting the Personal and the Social through the Study of TV**

\*Paper Topic Proposal – 20

\*Final Draft for Peer Edit Session - 20

\*Finished Paper, Draft, and Peer Edit notes –100

The final assignment for this course is to write a formal critical essay. This paper will be a capstone experience of personal and theoretical insights of this quarter because you will: *analyze your own way of watching television* through the theoretical lenses and methods experienced this quarter.

Your essay should address the ways in which your American identity is constructed from more than your individual experience and understanding. You will discuss how your personal identity has been shaped through the phenomenon of television and explain how your identity mirrors a larger trend or is influenced by ideologies in respect to social diversity.



You will use examples to illustrate your claims about identity and social diversity ideologies. You may write about your experience with television in general, or discuss a particular program or TV event that has made a significant impression upon you in respect to social diversity issues. You may choose to build upon and extend your midterm project topic for this Final Paper.

A distinguishing feature of the Final paper is the expectation that you will employ a television study method for the purpose of collecting data to support an argument or claim, or to answer a question. You may choose from semiotics, narrative analysis, or content analysis; you may decide to work with one method, or you may find it necessary to combine two methods.

To help you focus and develop your ideas and distribute the work for this paper, you will submit a paper topic proposal and annotated bibliography several weeks before the paper is due. You will receive written feedback on your proposal and you will have the opportunity to meet with the Instructor to discuss your paper's development and revise your proposal and/or preliminary draft. Later, there will be a required peer editing session where students exchange helpful, constructive written and oral feedback on their drafts. The final paper should be at least 5 pages, not including reference and title pages.

### **Purpose of Final Paper:**

- To create a capstone experience that draws upon and deepens your understanding of television criticism concepts and perspectives encountered throughout the quarter.
- To combine personal reflexivity with the analysis and research of a television phenomenon, with the purpose of understanding and articulating the social and contextual effects of TV in one's personal and social worlds.
- To engage in the progressive development of research and writing, including the development of a topic proposal, annotated bibliography, and essay draft(s).

## **CRITICIZING TELEVISION CALENDAR**

### **WEEK 1**

#### **Tuesday (first class)**

*The Personal is Political: Introduction to TV and Social Diversity Issues*

**Social Diversity Focus:** Race; Ethnicity; Gender; Class; LGBT (general introduction to issues of social diversity and their relationship to television programming and viewing in the United States)

#### **Class Activities:**

Introductions; go over syllabus, course requirements, etc.

**In-class Writing & Discussion:** Informal writing: your observations of diversity on TV, share and discuss in class

**In-class Viewing & Discussion:** *The Cosby Show* (What is social diversity? How does Television affect perceptions of social diversity? (Discuss television critics' divided views on The Cosby Show and diversity in America)

#### **Thursday**

*TV Criticism Methodology and the Study of Social Diversity Issues*

**Social Diversity Focus:** Class; Social construction of technology and "progress"

#### **Due Today:**

**Read:** Vande Berg, Gronbeck, & Wenner (pp. 3-10) & Vande Berg, Gronbeck, & Wenner (pp. 19-31)

**Read:** Williams, R. (1974/2003). *Television: Technology and cultural form* (pp. 1-25)

**Assignment:** Write a personal profile, post your profile/photo on the CARMEN website by midnight Monday, 4/3

Today's readings focus on the following topics:

- Purpose of television criticism?
- Forms of TV criticism; Qualities of academic television criticism; essential components of a TV criticism essay
- Why study television?
- History of television's development
- Technological determinism; social history and uses of TV

**Class Activities:**

**In-class Writing & Discussion:** Informal written responses to questions: Why Study Television? What is TV Criticism? What role does TV play in perceptions of Social Diversity?

**In-class Writing Instruction:** Strategies of Television Criticism; Characteristics of Popular and Academic criticism; Considering your audience

**WEEK 2**

**Tuesday**

*Economic and Socio-Historical Contexts of American TV Viewing:  
The blurring of public and private spaces*

**Social Diversity Focus:** Class; Race; Gender

**Due Today:**

**Read:** Bignell, Ch. 1 Studying Television (pp. 13-27)

**Read and respond in writing:** L. Spigel (2001), *The Suburban Home Companion*. pp. 31-59.

Today's readings focus on the following topics:

- Post-war changes in the social structure of suburban middle class
- How has TV both united and divided America?
- Blurring of public and private space; TV and the organization of social space, political space, public and private spaces
- TV's influence gender roles and assumptions about gender characteristics
- Historical contexts and characteristics of TV viewing
- Television's influence on the development of an imaginary social life

**Class Activities:**

**In-class Viewing & Discussion:** *Brady Bunch, Sons & Daughters*

**In-class Writing Instruction:** How to write a summary or abstract of an article or chapter

**Thursday**

*Semiotics and Audiences: Reading the Signs of Gender & Class*

**Social Diversity Focus:** Gender; Class

**Due Today:**

**Read:** Bignell, Ch. 4 Television Texts & Narratives

**Read:** Budd, Craig, and Steinman (1999). *The Cascade Commercial*—on narrative, style, and ideology

Today's readings focus on the following topics:

- Semiotics and the study of television
- Narratives and the construction of expectations about, and perceptions of, gender roles and class structures
- Narratives and their function in TV commercials
- Commercials and subtle messages or hidden assumptions about American culture
- Hegemony
- Identifying Verbal, Visual, and Acoustic Signs

**Class Activities:**

**In-class Viewing & Discussion:** *Verizon* commercial, *Automobile* commercial, *Gatorade* Commercial

**In-class Writing Instruction:** Planning your essay; Drafts; Review of 5 paragraph essay; Thesis statements; Identifying arguments; Examples and evidence

**WEEK 3**

**Tuesday**

*Gender, Class, and Ideology: Construction of the "Other" on Television Talk Shows*

**Social Diversity Focus:** Gender; Class; Social construction of "normal" / norms

**Due Today:**

**Read:** Birmingham, *Fearing the Freak: How talk TV articulates women and class*

**Due: Critical Analysis Paper #1**-(on Birmingham, *Fearing the Freak*)

Today's reading focuses on the following topics:

- Concept of "the Other"; Othering as exemplified in gender and class stereotypes on talk shows
- Talk shows as sites of anxiety production and anxiety relief
- Television Talk shows as freak shows or Bahktinian carnivals
- Construction and maintenance of social norms
- Contradictory views on talk shows and ideology: Talk shows that function as sites of resistance or as sites of exploitation where the powerful reinforce conservative ideologies by displaying consequences of social "transgressions"

**Class Activities:**

**In-class Viewing & Discussion:** *Dr. Phil* & *Jerry Springer*

**In-class Writing & Discussion Activity:** Personal television experiences with constructions of "Others" and "Othering"

**Thursday**

*Desire and Ideology: Beautiful People and Luxurious Spaces in the TV Makeover Program Genre*

**Social Diversity Focus:** Class; Race; Gender

**Due Today:**

**Read:** Bignell, Ch. 5 Television and Genre (pp. 114-133)

**Read and respond in writing:** Weber (2005). *Beauty, Desire, Anxiety*

Today's readings focus on the following topics:

- Structure and form of genre categories; genres and discourse
- How genre analysis is used in television criticism
- How programs resist neat genre categorizations
- Absence of racial diversity in makeover programs; race, ethnicity, and "acceptable roles" for people featured on makeover programs
- Transformation program genre and the cultivation of desire: body as social project; body transformations as fuel for capitalist consumption practices

**Class Activities:**

**In Class Viewing & Discussion:** *Extreme Makeover, What Not to Wear*

**In-class Writing Instruction:** The use of description, interpretation, and analysis in Television Criticism

**WEEK 4**

**Tuesday**

*A Laughing Matter? Comedic Representations of LGBT Issues on Television*

**Social Diversity Focus:** GLBT; Gender

**Due Today:**

**Read:** Bignell, Ch. 9 Television Representation

**Read and respond in writing:** Mitchell, D. (2005). *Producing containment: The rhetorical construction of difference in Will & Grace.*

**Read:** Hernandez-*The State of TV Diversity*

Today's readings focus on the following topics:

- Humor and apolitical stance in Will & Grace
- The normalization of oppressive ideologies of class, race, gender while appearing to advocate on behalf of a "gay Other"
- Representations of gay subjectivity; sexuality as a subject position
- Will and Grace as a site of contradiction where ideologies are challenged and negotiated.
- Content analysis as method for identifying/studying TV representations

**Class Activities:**

**In-class Viewing & Discussion:** *Will & Grace; Mad TV*

**In-class Writing Instruction:** Ways to create an engaging and informative visual presentation; Selecting your example clip and leading a discussion

**Thursday**

*"Angry," "Promiscuous," or "Ignorant": Race, Gender, and Stereotypes in Reality TV*

**Social Diversity Focus:** Race; Gender

**Due Today:**

**Read:** Orbe, M. P. (2004). *Constructions of Reality on MTV's Real World*

**Read:** Kin, L. S. (2006). *Trading races: Black. White. on the FX network*

**Due: Critical Analysis Paper # 2** –(on Orbe, *Constructions of Reality on MTV's Real World*)

Today's readings focus on the following topics:

- Racism in American culture
- Reality TV and stereotypical roles for men and women
- Reality TV and misrepresentation of challenging social issues
- "Trading races" as a televised sociological experiment
- The role of language in cultural understandings and misunderstandings
- Detecting cultural oppression and inequalities through television content analysis; objectivity, empiricism
- Researcher subjectivity, subjective positioning; reflexivity

**Class Activities:**

**In-class Viewing & Discussion:** The FX "reality" program *Black/White*

**WEEK 5****Tuesday**

*Life and Death in America: "Realities" of Gender and Violence in TV Drama*

**Social Diversity Focus:** Gender

**Due Today:**

**Read:** Bignell, Ch. 8 *Television Realities* (pp. 184-208)

**Read and respond in writing:** Tait, S. (2006). *Autoptic vision and the necrophilic imaginary in CSI*

**Read:** McKenzie (2005). *Death, The New Pornography*

Today's readings focus on the following topics:

- TV forensic dramas: themes, style, narrative structure
- Cultural studies and the signification potential of the corpse
- Gendered Death: The erotic, desiring gaze
- Fetishization of women's' death in TV imagery and narratives
- TV and the desensitization to death and violence

**Class Activities:**

**In-class Viewing & Discussion:** *CSI*

**In-class Writing Instruction:** Television research: Developing an effective thesis statement or question; Methods of television research; writing up your findings

\*Order of midterm presentations will be assigned

**Thursday**

*The MTV-ization of the News*

**Social Diversity Focus:** Race; Gender; Class

**Due Today:**

**Read:** J. Butler (1999). *Music Television*

**Read:** M. Budd, S. Craig, & C. Steinman (1999), *Television News: A Hierarchical Discourse*

Today's readings focus on the following topics:

- History and cultural significance of Music Television



- History and cultural significance of News
- Production characteristics and aesthetic qualities of News and MTV
- Appearance (gender, race, age, etc.) of news anchor and the influence perceptions of news story
- Cultural Imperialism; exporting values and ideologies to other nations
- Morals / values communicated through the News and Music Television

**Class Activities:**

**In-class Writing and Discussion:** Informal free-write response to R. Garrity (2005). *Classism: Why should we care?*

**In-class Viewing & Discussion:** MTV video, CBS news, *Da Ali G Show*

**WEEK 6****Tuesday**

*Midterm visual/oral presentations on Constructions of Reality*

**Due Today:**

**Midterm Paper/Project**

**Class Activities:**

**Midterm Presentations - Group #1**

**Thursday**

*Midterm visual/oral presentations on Constructions of Reality*

**Class Activities:**

**Midterm Presentations – Group #2**

**In-class Writing Instruction:** Choosing a Final Paper topic; Locating Sources; Annotated bibliographies; Developing the essay proposal

**WEEK 7****Tuesday**

*Television and the Postmodern Experience: Time, Space, and Subjectivity*

**Social Diversity Focus:** Subjectivity and Social Diversity

**Due Today:**

**Read:** Bignell, Ch. 7 Postmodern Television

**Read and respond in writing:** Anderson (2006). *TV Time is New Playtime*

Today's readings focus on the following topics:

- Definitions of postmodernism; applications of postmodern perspective in understanding new uses of TV
- Concepts of Intertextuality, Fragmentation, Reflexivity, Pastiche, Nostalgia and how they can be applied to study of television
- Subjectivity: Stable, unified, fragmented, decentered
- Simulation and Simulacra
- Hyperreality

**Class Activities:**

**In-class Viewing & Discussion:** *The Loop*

**In-class Writing Instruction:** What/who is an author? Writing about Postmodernism and Postmodern Writing; Texts, form, and content in postmodernist prose; Writing as “performance”

### Thursday

*Picturing Postmodern Families: Televisual Images of Social Diversity*

**Social Diversity Focus:** Gender, Race, Ethnicity

**Due Today:**

**Read:** W. T. Davis, Jr., et. al. (2001). *The Simpsons: Redefining the Family Sitcom*

**Due: Proposal for Final Paper**

Today’s readings focus on the following topics:

- Themes, symbolism, and ideologies identified in *The Simpsons*
- Satirizing and/or celebrating the concept of family life
- Gender roles in *The Simpsons*
- Portrayal of Race and Ethnicity in *The Simpsons*
- Intertextuality and pop culture

**Class Activities:**

**In-class Viewing & Discussion:** *The Simpsons; Family Guy*

**In-class Writing & Discussion:** Informal free-write on “How TV images have influenced your conceptualizations/definitions of *family*.”

## **WEEK 8**

### Tuesday

*At Any Price: Ratings, Class, and Consumption in America*

**Social Diversity Focus:** Class; Ethnicity

**Due Today:**

**Read:** Gertner, J. (2005). *Our ratings, ourselves*

**Due: Postmodern TV Paper**

Today’s reading focuses on the following topics:

- Passive versus active ratings measuring devices / P.P.M. and cable transmission signals
- Commercials and demographics: Class, ethnicity, and marketing to a “desirable audience”
- Neilson ratings, the economy, consumer choice
- Surveillance and privacy

**Class Activities:**

**In-class Viewing & Discussion:** Superbowl excerpt (view commercials), *Price is Right, Deal or No Deal*

**In-class Writing Instruction:** Persuasive images and persuasive prose; Visual rhetorics in advertising and commercials

### Thursday

*Education of the Masses: Television texts and Multi-Strand Narratives*

**Social Diversity Focus: Class****Due Today:****Read:** Johnson, S. (2005). *Watching TV Makes You Smarter***Read:** Jones, M. *Your TV is Lying to You***View website:** Daniel Chandler's *The Grammar of TV and Film* (website on camera shots)

Today's readings focus on the following topics:

- Multi-strand TV narratives and cognitive demands
- Television as education; implications of TV "education" for class awarenesses and sensitivities
- Camera angles, proximity, and gaze
- Feelings, emotions, and power effected through choice of camera angles
- Sound... the effects on the viewing experience

**Class Activities:****In-class Viewing & Discussion:** *ER, The Evidence***WEEK 9****Tuesday***Seeing is Believing: TV's Gendered, Sexualized, and Racialized Gaze***Social Diversity Focus: Race; Gender****Due Today:****Read:** DeRosia, M. (2002). *The Court of Last Resort* (pp. 236-255).**Read:** Poniewozick, J. (2005). *The Decency Police***Read and respond in writing:** selections from Foucault, M. (1978/1990). *The history of sexuality: Volume one* (pp. 3-13; 32-35; 103-107)

Today's readings focus on the following topics:

- Socio-historical constructions of sexuality, decency, and appropriate race and gender behaviors
- Court TV, Crime Dramas, and America's Most Wanted creating cultural fears based on race and gender stereotypes
- Censorship in contemporary TV
- Moral values in/on TV

**Class Activities:****In-class Viewing & Discussion:** *COPS; MTV Room Raiders***In-class Writing Instruction:** Introduction to Peer-editing; Peer-editing expectations, procedures**Thursday***Sports as Social Drama: Cultural Constructions of Sports Narratives***Social Diversity Focus: Race****Due Today:****Read:** Baran, S. (n.d.) *Sports and Television* (sports history on TV)**Read:** Rada, J. A. & Wulfemeyer, K. T. (2005). *Color coded: Racial descriptors in television coverage of intercollegiate sports*

**Read:** Cossar, H. (2005). *Televised Golf and the Creation of Narrative*

Today's readings focus on the following topics:

- History of sports on US television
- Subtle messages, biases encoded in TV sports language and broadcasting
- Packaging of sports "narratives, consumption of sports narratives
- Language and cultural constructions of difference, otherness
- Objectivity and fact in sports television

**Class Activities:**

**In-class Viewing & Discussion:** NASCAR and the social construction/consumption of a "racing culture"

**Meetings with Instructor:** Individual paper/proposal consultations, Q & A about Final Papers

**WEEK 10**

**Tuesday**

*Constructions of Youth (and Adulthood) in American Society*

**Social Diversity Focus:** Race; Class; Age

**Due Today:**

**Read and respond in writing:** Forman, M. (2004). *Freaks, aliens, and the social other: Representations of student stratification in U.S. television's first post-Columbine season.*

**Read:** Spigel (2001). *Seducing the Innocent: Childhood and television in post-war America*

**Read:** Meyrowitz (1985) *No Sense of Place*

Today's readings focus on the following topics:

- Genre and themes of "teen TV"
- Social construction of the characteristics childhood, teenagers, adults
- Teens and "subcultural ideologies" as depicted on TV
- Images and narratives of teens as "aliens" and transgressive others; Race, teen culture and otherness/difference
- Socio-historical view of technology; childhood access to cultural knowledges
- "Discourse of victimization"

**Class Activities:**

**In-class Viewing and Discussion:** *Boohbah, South Park, The O. C.*

**In-class Writing Instruction & Activity:** Crafting your writing: Difference between editing and proofreading; Peer Editing Workshop (day 1)

**Thursday**

*Convergence and Consumption: Trends in the Use of Television*

**Social Diversity Focus:** Class

**Due Today:**

**Read:** Wilson, T. (2004). Converging aspects of consumption. In T. Wilson, *The playful audience*

**Read:** Parks, L. (2004). *Flexible Microcasting: Gender, generation, and television internet convergence*

Today's readings focus on the following topics:

- Personalization of television/ changes in television functions: Class and access
- Influence of Internet on TV use and influence of TV on expectations of Internet
- Changes in aesthetic structures of screen based entertainments
- Pleasurable processes of interactive cognitive play in Internet and TV use

**Due: Final draft** for today's Peer Editing Workshop

**Class Activities:**

**Discussion (1):** TiVo and the sanitizing of vision and experience. If people can sanitize (edit out) undesirable imagery from their televisual experience will this lead to increased ignorance of inequalities in power, class, and human rights?

**Discussion (2):** Review & synthesis of course concepts

**In-class Writing Instruction & Activity:** Peer Editing Workshop (day 2)

**FINALS WEEK**

**Monday--Thursday**

**Final papers due** (email or dept mailbox) by noon on Thursday

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