Television Criticism
COMM 3301.001
Fall 2011
Class Meets: TR 2-3:15, T 3:30-4:45
Location: CI 102

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Course Description:
This course presents an introduction to the industrial, political, aesthetic, and cultural analysis of American television. Students will read a variety of critical, theoretical, and historical essays about television in order to engage a range of issues and debates concerning the industry, programming, and the audience.

Course Objectives:
After taking this course, the student will be able to:
1. Demonstrate understanding of television history and critical approaches to the study of television.
2. Apply critical models to past and current TV programs and genres.
3. Examine the cultural role and impact of television.
4. Create critical commentary about TV content and style.

Required Course Texts:
Available in the bookstore and through online booksellers such as Amazon.

Additional readings will be made available online via Blackboard at http://iol.tamucc.edu.

Course Blog: http://tvcrit1.blogspot.com

Evaluation:

- **Paper One**: Television Autobiography (About 3 pages): 5%. The first paper is a reflection on your past and current TV viewing practices. Specific instructions to come.
- **Paper Two**: Television Programming (About 5 pages): 15%. The first paper examines TV programming strategies. Specific instructions to come.
- **Paper Three**: Close Analysis. In this paper you will analyze a program in-depth using the critical tools and approaches discussed over the semester. You will be required to watch a significant amount of television outside of class for this paper. Specific instructions to come. (About 5 - 7 pages): 20%.
- **Article Blog**: 5%. Students will be paired up and assigned a particular reading that they will present as a blog post that will summarize the article’s key points, as well as embed representative video clips. Specific instructions to come.
- **Weekly Quizzes/Responses** on readings and class topics: 10%. 11 given during semester, highest 10 grades taken. Some of these will be in-class multiple-choice quizzes, some individual written responses, some group
exercises, some responses to the article blog. Instructions will be given on a weekly basis and you will have to be present in order to get them.

- **Midterm Exam**: 20% (Multiple choice and Essay)
- **Final Exam**: 25% (Multiple choice and Essay)

Grade Scale: A = 100-90, B = 89-80, C = 79-70, D = 69-60, F = 59 and under.

**Course Policies**

**Attendance Policy**
Attendance is mandatory. Two absences are acceptable, but any additional unexcused absence will cause a five-point deduction from your final overall grade, and you may not make up any missed work. Excused absences require official documentation.

**Academic Integrity/Plagiarism**
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in an automatic zero on the assignment and further disciplinary action.

**Dropping a Class**
Events sometimes occur that make dropping a course seem necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class.
Classroom/Professional behavior
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor's ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Additionally, students are expected to:

1. **Silence and put away cell phones. Texting (including the reading of texts!) is not allowed in class.** Your social life will survive until the break, I promise.
2. **Come to class on-time.** Do not get up and leave early.
3. **Participate in class discussions.** In addition to the enlightening lectures, our goal during each class will be to have a lively, informed discussion. You will not get an "A" if you do not regularly contribute to class discussion in a productive manner.
4. **Be responsible for any information and materials missed when absent.**
5. **Complete readings and assignments as assigned.** All assignments must be handed in on time; exceptions will be made only for extraordinary cases and official documentation is needed. Exams may not be rescheduled. Do not make travel plans that conflict with exams.
6. **Type and proofread all written work before turning it in.** Really.
7. **Seek help with writing if necessary.** The Writing Center of TAMU-CC, located in GSSC 112, provides free help for students at any stage in the writing process. More information is available at the Center for Academic Student Achievement website, casa.tamu.cc.edu.
8. **Properly cite sources.** Plagiarism will not be tolerated in any form, and will result in an automatic zero for the assignment and further disciplinary action. A useful guide to citing references in APA style is located at http://library.nmu.edu/guides/userguides/style_apa.htm.
9. **Respect the privacy and opinions of fellow students.** I expect students to participate in discussion, and I expect students to respect each other's (hopefully well-informed) opinions. Grades and course performance are considered private information. Students are not to openly to discuss their grades (good or bad) inside my classroom.
10. **Meet with the instructor during office hours.** I will not discuss individual student grades in the classroom. I will, however, be happy to discuss grades on papers, exams, course performance, etc. during office hours. I also do not allow the following topics to be openly discussed in the classroom: student opinions about other faculty, student opinions about other students, student grades in other classes.

*Notice to Students with Disabilities: *Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the
Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

**Academic Advising:** The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

*** Grade Appeal Process. As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.
Course Schedule

You are expected to have done the readings by the first day of the week they are assigned. Alternative screenings may be shown in addition or in place of those listed below.

**Week 1, 8/25:** Why TV?: An Introduction to the Course

Week 2: TV History, Style, and Industry Structure
8/30: Reading: Mittell, Chapters 1 & 2; Screenings: *Texaco Star Theater*, *Tales from Tomorrow*, *Ernie Kovacs*
9/1: Reading: Watts, "Melancholy, Merit, and Merchandise"

**Paper 1 Due**

Week 3: Programming & New TV Structures
9/6: Readings: Brooker, “Living on Dawson’s Creek”
Screening: *Tosh.0, Skins*
9/8: Caldwell, “Convergence Television”;

Week 4: Public Interest and Television Citizenship
9/13: Readings: Mittell, Chapters 3
9/15: Readings: Mittell, Chapters 4
Screening: *Good Night and Good Luck*

Week 5: Modes of Production
9/20: Readings: Mittell, Chapter 5
Screening: *All in the Family, I Love Lucy, Louie*

**9/22: PAPER 2 DUE**

Week 6: Comedy & Genre
9/27: Readings: Thompson, “Comedy Verite?”
Screenings: *Watch What Happens Live, Curb Your Enthusiasm, Onion News Network*
9/29: Discussion

Week 7: Narrative Structure
10/4: Readings: Mittell, Chapter 6
Screenings: *Mad Men, Northern Exposure*
10/6: Discussion

Week 8: MIDTERM & Narrative Structure, cont.

**10/11 MIDTERM**
Screenings: *Arrested Development, Freaks & Geeks*

Week 9: TV “Politics”
10/18: Readings: Mittell, Chapter 7

Week 10: Representing Identity
Screenings: Boondocks, The Sarah Silverman Program

Week 11: Representing Identity, cont.
11/1: Readings: Mittell, Chapter 8, pp. 329-353.
Screenings: Maude, Mary Tyler Moore

Week 12: Cult TV
11/8: Readings: Mittell, Chapter 9
Screenings: Star Wars Holiday Special, Slash Tapes, Glee

Week 13: Children’s TV
Screenings: Degrassi: The Next Generation, iCarly

11/17 PAPER 3 DUE

Week 14: TV Technologies
11/22: Mittell, Chapter 11
Screenings: Breaking Bad
11/24 Holiday

Week 15: TV & Taste
11/29: Readings: Thompson, “Good Demo, Bad Taste”; Rowe, “Roseanne: Unruly Woman as Domestic Goddess”
Screenings: Tim & Eric’s Awesome Show, Great Job!, Eastbound and Down
12/1: Discussion
Week 16: 12/6 The End of Television (Criticism)
Parting thoughts, Review

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, 12/8, 1:45 – 4:15 pm.