COMM-3301.001 Television Criticism & COMM-3301.101 Television Criticism Lab
Fall 2015
MW Noon-12:50pm (Class)
MW 1-1:50pm (Lab/Screening)
O’Conner Building, Rm. 130

Professor David Gurney
Office: Bay Hall Rm. 326
Phone: 361-825-5991
Email: david.gurney@tamucc.edu

Office Hours: T 9am-noon, MW 2-3pm, & by appointment

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.

Student Learning Outcomes:
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. Analyze critical essays and identify argument, use of evidence, and stylistic strategies.
3. Create critical commentary about TV content and style.

Required Materials:
» How to Watch Television, Ethan Thompson & Jason Mittell, editors. NYU Press, 2013.
» Netflix subscription (www.netflix.com): Much of the television content screened for this class are available to stream instantly on Netflix, so the subscription will be essential for viewing the films and very helpful when analyzing them.
» All additional readings and screenings will be made available via links on Blackboard

Course Policies:
» Attendance is required – both physically and mentally. Unexcused absences will have a direct effect on your final grade for this course, with each one equaling a 25-point deduction (out of a possible total of 1000 points). Attendance will be taken starting exactly at noon. Arrivals after that time will be considered late. Late arrivals and departures prior to the finish of the class period will count as half-absences, meaning that two of either type will be counted as a full absence.
» You are allowed two fully excused absences throughout the semester. These are to be employed at your discretion but should be used to cover illness, a religious holiday observance, or most any other event or circumstance that causes you to miss class. Only extreme hardship with back-up documentation (e.g., a doctor’s note) will allow for consideration of any additional absences being excused. Classes missed due to university-approved activities (athletic teams, student government, etc.) will also be considered excused. For those absences, please make me aware, and, in addition, I will need official TAMUCC documentation. If appropriate, you may arrange to make up quizzes or exams missed due to excused absences, but it will be your responsibility to get any information from a missed class lecture from one of your classmates.
» All absences not fitting into the excused categories described immediately above, will be considered unexcused. Any work missed due to an unexcused absence cannot be made up. 
» Late work will be penalized by a deduction in points equaling ten-percent of the points possible for the assignment for each day it is late. Late work will not be accepted more than 4 days past the original due date.
» While in class, please make sure your cell phone is off and stowed away, even during screenings.
» A note on competing media devices: Laptops are permitted for note taking and reference purposes during lecture only, but please do not abuse this privilege. While you may personally feel capable of multitasking during class while still paying attention to lecture and discussion, your surrounding classmates will more likely find your in-class extracurricular activities distracting, so please, for the sake of your peers, respect this restriction. No laptop use will be permitted during screenings.
» A note on media content: Various works screened for this course contain strong language, nudity, sexual situations, violence, controversial subjects, and complex philosophical ideas that might be disturbing to you. While I think there is great value to experiencing new (to you) media content with fresh eyes and ears, if you feel that you may be adversely impacted by certain types of content, it may be helpful to read story synopses available on the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com), Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org), or other review websites in order to prepare yourself. If there are particularly acute reactions that you feel you may have, I encourage you to let me know so that I can advise you about any potential trouble spots and, if necessary, arrange for alternative screenings.
» Please remember to check your Islander email account regularly during the week and monitor the course Blackboard site for any course updates.
» If you would like to discuss any course readings, lectures, screenings, or assignments outside of class, you should feel free to contact me via email or by arranging to visit me during my office hours. If you need to schedule a time to meet outside of office hours, please let me know.
» All writing for this course must be composed using a standard, 12-point font size, and with standard 1" margins.

**Academic Integrity:**
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. For a more expansive definition of plagiarism please see [the relevant passage from the University's student handbook](http://) ) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a failing grade (F) for the assignment, at the very least, or a report to the Chair of the Department of Communication and Media, the Dean of the School of Arts, Media, and Communication, and the Office of Student Affairs.
» For the purposes of citation, please follow American Psychological Association (APA) Style Guide. For reference, see: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/]
Dropping a Class:
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course 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 class be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop 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. November 6, 2015, is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

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.

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. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

Notice to Students with Disabilities
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Grade Appeal Process:
Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office.
Grade Scale:
A  900-1000 points
B  800-899 points
C  700-799 points
D  600-699 points
F  599 points and below

Grade Distribution:
Since this is a criticism course, grades are primarily based on written assignments and discussion and analysis of critical essays. Detailed descriptions of the assignments are included in the individual units.

- Columns: 5 @ 100 points each (500 total points total, 50% of grade). About 700-1000 words each, with instructions on each in the units. You will be allowed to rewrite one column to turn in at the end of the semester for regrading. (However, you can't “rewrite” a column that you didn’t turn in when it was originally due.)
- Discussions (10 points each, 140 points total, 14% of grade)
- In-Class Attendance & Participation (100 points total, 10% of grade)
- Quizzes: 10 points each (100 points total, 10% of grade)
- Close-Reading Quizzes: 25 points each (100 points total, 10% of grade)
- Peer Review Participation (60 points total, 6% of grade)
Course Schedule:
Required readings are to be completed prior to the first class meeting in the week under which they are listed. This schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

Note on Weekly Due Dates:
• Quizzes are always due before class on Monday.
• Discussions and columns are due by Friday at noon.
• These are all submitted via Blackboard. Check the calendar if you are unsure of due dates.

Week 1 (August 26)
Unit X: Introduction Read the Introduction to How to Watch Television
Assessments:
• Syllabus Quiz (Blackboard)

Week 2 (August 31 & September 1)
Unit 1: TV History and Structure
MON: Read: Mittell: Chapter One; How to Watch Television: 1. Banks, I Love Lucy; 2. Kompare, The Twilight Zone
Assessments:
• Quiz on Chapter 1 (Blackboard)
• Discussion: TV Auteurs

Week 3 (September 9)
Unit 2: Programming Strategies “On TV”
MON: Read: Mittell, Chapter Two
WED: Read How to Watch Television: 1. Holt, NYPD Blue; 2. Johnson, Monday Night Football
Assessments:
• Quiz on Chapter 2 (Blackboard)
• Discussion: TV Boundaries

No class meeting on September 7 for Labor Day

Week 4 (September 14 & 16)
Unit 3: Programming Strategies “Post TV”
MON: Read: How to Watch Television: Thompson, Onion News Network
WED: Read: How to Watch Television: Sandler, Modern Family
Assessments:
• Discussion: Blurred Lines
• COLUMN DUE BY FRIDAY 12 NOON: State of Fall TV

Week 5 (September 21 & 23)
Unit 4: Nonfiction Transformations
MON: Read: Mittell: Chapter Three
WED: Read: How to Watch Television: 1. Baym & Gottert, 30 Days; 2. Ouellette, America’s Next Top Model
Assessments:
• Quiz on Chapter 3(Blackboard)
• Discussion: “True” Stories
Week 6 (September 28 & 30)
Unit 5: News
MON: Read: Mittell: Chapter Four
WED: Read: How to Watch Television: Jones, Fox & Friends
Assessments:
• Quiz on Chapter 4 (Blackboard)
• Discussion: Jones on Fox
• COLUMN DUE BY FRIDAY 12 NOON: 30 Days

Week 7 (October 5 & 7)
Unit 6: Cultural Criticism
MON: Read: Mittell, Chapter Seven, How to Watch Television: Hendershot, Parks and Recreation
WED: Read: How to Watch Television: 1. Pearson, Star Trek, 2. Gray, Amazing Race
Assessments:
• Close Reading Quiz: Hendershot (Blackboard)
• Discussion: TV as Cultural Forum

Week 8 (October 12 & 14)
Unit 7.1: Narrative Strategies (Pilot)
MON: Read: Mittell, Chapter 6 to page 234; Peer Review: 30 Days
WED: Read: Blackboard Reserve: Sconce, “Repetition with Difference”
Assessments:
• Quiz on Chapter 6 part one (Blackboard)
• Discussion: Building a Series

Week 9 (October 19 & 21)
Unit 7.2: Narrative Strategies (Drama Series)
MON: Read: How to Watch Television: 1. Lotz, House
WED: Read: How to Watch Television: 1. Haggins, Homicide; 2. O'Sullivan, Sopranos
Assessments:
• Discussion: Complex Dramas
• COLUMN DUE BY FRIDAY 12 NOON: Drama Pilot

Week 10 (October 26 & 28)
Unit 8: Narrative Strategies (Comedy)
MON: Read: Mittell, Chapter 6, pp. 234-267; How to Watch Television: Mittell, Phineas & Ferb
WED: Read: How to Watch Television: 1. Marcus, The Wonder Years; 2. Sconce, Tim & Eric;
Peer Review: Drama Pilot
Assessments:
• Quiz on Chapter 6 part two (Blackboard)
• Discussion: Stupid Comedy
• Close-Reading Quiz: Marcus (Blackboard)
Week 11 (November 2 & 4)
Unit 9: Modes of Production and Meaning
MON: Read: Mittell: Chapter Five; How to Watch Television: Butler, Mad Men
Assessments:
• Quiz on Chapter 5 (Blackboard)
• Discussion: TV Style
• Close-Reading Quiz: Butler on Visual Style (Blackboard)

Week 12 (November 9 & 11)
Unit 10: Race and Nation
MON: Read: Mittell, Chapter 8, pp. 305-329; How to Watch Television: Acham, The Cosby Show
WED: Read: How to Watch Television: Asultany, 24
Assessments:
• Quiz on chapter 8 part one (Blackboard)
• Close-Reading Quiz: Acham on Cosby Show (Blackboard)
• Discussion: Limits of Representation
• COLUMN DUE BY FRIDAY 12 NOON: TV Series, Style, Theme

Week 13 (November 16 & 18)
Unit 11: Gender
MON: Read: Mittell: Chapter 8, 329-344; How to Watch Television: Levine, Grey's Anatomy
Assessment:
• Discussion: TV Fantasies (Douglas, Levine, Amaya)

Week 14 (November 23 & 25)
Unit 12: Sexuality
MON: Read: Mittell, Chapter 8, pp. 345-353; How to Watch Television: Becker, Glee/House Hunters
WED: Read: How to Watch Television: Miller, The Dick Van Dyke Show
Assessment:
• Quiz on chapter 8 part two (Blackboard)
• Discussion: Freaks and Geeks
• COLUMN DUE BY FRIDAY 12 NOON: Cultural Criticism

Week 15 (November 30)
Unit 13: Fans & Cult TV
Assessment:
• Discussion: Fans and TV

COLUMN REWRITES DUE 12/2 AT NOON