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.

About the Professor: Ethan Thompson (Ph.D., University of Southern California) is the producer and director of TV Family, a feature-length documentary, the author of Parody and Taste in Post-War American Television Culture, and the co-editor of the books How to Watch Television and Satire TV: Politics and Comedy in the Post-Network Era. He spent the fall 2015 semester as a research and teaching fellow with the Peabody Awards program in Athens, Georgia.

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 Course Texts & Materials:


How to Watch Television, Ethan Thompson & Jason Mittell, editors. NYU Press, 2013.

Subscription to Netflix.
**Evaluation:** Since this is a criticism course, grades are primarily based on written assignments and a group presentation, rather than exams. Detailed descriptions of the assignments will be given during the semester.

- **Columns:** 5 @ 100 points each; 500 total points total, 50% of grade. About 700 - 1000 words each, with specific instructions for each.
- **Online Discussions:** 10 points each; 100 points total, 10% of grade.
- **In-Class Participation:** 100 points total, 10% of grade.
- **Quizzes:** 10 points each: 100 points total, 10% of grade.
- **Group presentation (100 points) and Group paper (100 points);** 200 points total, 20% of grade.

**Course Point Totals and Grades**

- 900 - 1000 points = A
- 800 - 899 = B
- 700 - 799 = C
- 600 - 699 = D
- 599 and under = F

Blackboard will keep a running total of your percentage of points so you will know where you stand during the course. The same basic grade scale applies: A = 100-90%, B = 89-80%, C = 79-70%, D = 69-60%, F = 59% and under.

**E-Communication Policy:**

- CONTACT ME THROUGH BLACKBOARD MESSAGES FOR THIS COURSE.
- I will respond to messages within 24 hours (usually sooner), except for Friday at 3 pm until Monday at 9 am.
- I will be happy to talk on the phone with you during my office hours.
- I am also happy to meet with you in person during office hours or some other time arranged in advance!

**Attendance**

- Attendance is mandatory. Two unexcused absences are acceptable, but any additional unexcused absences will cause 2 point reduction from your final grade. Excused absences require official documentation. Two “lates” (or leaving early) equal an absence.

**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. **Complete readings and assignments as assigned.** All assignments must be turned in on time; exceptions will be made only for extraordinary cases and official documentation is needed.
2. **Proofread all work before turning it in.** Really.
3. **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.tamucc.edu.
4. **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.
5. **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 discuss their grades (good or bad) inside my classroom.
6. **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.

Course Schedule
For each week:

- All first comments on discussion forums due by Wednesday 12 noon.
- All final comments on discussion forums due Friday before midnight.
- All quizzes due Friday before midnight.
- Columns due on Friday before midnight unless otherwise noted.
- Other assignments as noted.

**WEEK 1 Introduction**
8/24 First day of class.
Assessment: Syllabus Quiz

**WEEK 2 TV History and Structure**
Assessments: Discussion: TV Auteurs; Quiz: Mittell Ch. 1.

**WEEK 3 Programming Strategies**
9/5 READ: Mittell, Ch. 2; *How to Watch Television*: Sandler.
Assessments: Discussion: Blurred Boundaries; Quiz: Mittell Ch. 2.

**WEEK 4 Cultural Criticism**
9/12 READ: Mittell, Ch. 7; WATCH: *Law & Order SUV*: “Selfish” on Hulu
Assessments: Discussion: TV as Cultural Forum. **COLUMN 1 DUE**

**WEEK 5 Nonfiction Part 1**
9/19: READ: Mittell: Ch. 3; *How to Watch Television*: Baym & Gottert
Assessments: Quiz: Mittell Ch. 3; Discussion: Monday Night Football

**WEEK 6 Nonfiction Part 2**
9/26: READ: Mittell: Ch. 4. *How to Watch Television*: Jones.
9/28: READ: *How to Watch Television*: Gray
Assessments: Quiz: Mittell Ch. 4.; **COLUMN 2 DUE**

**Week 7 Narrative Strategies (Pilot)**
10/3 READ: Mittell, Ch. 6 to page 234; Sconce, “Repetition with Difference” PDF
10/5 WATCH: *Orange is the New Black*, Pilot. Also, review your group’s pilot.
Assessments: Quiz: Mittell, Ch. 6 part one; Discussion: Building a Series
WEEK 8 Narrative Strategies (Drama Series)
10/10 READ: *How to Watch Television*: 1. Lotz, 2. O’Sullivan
10/12 WATCH: *Master of None* through episode 8, “Old People” if you haven’t already.
Assessments: Discussion: Complex Dramas; COLUMN 3 DUE

WEEK 9 Narrative Strategies (Comedy)
10/17 READ: Mittell, Ch. 6, pp. 234-267; *How to Watch Television*: Mittell
10/19 READ: *How to Watch Television*: 1. Marcus, 2. Sconce
Assessments: Quiz: Mittell Ch. 6 part two; Discussion: Stupid Comedy

WEEK 10 Modes of Production and Meaning
10/24 READ: Mittell: Ch. 5; *How to Watch Television*: Butler
Assessments: Quiz: Mittell, Ch. 5; Discussion: TV Style.

WEEK 11 Race and Nation
10/31 READ: Mittell, Ch. 8, pp. 305-329
11/2 READ: *How to Watch Television*: 1. Acham, 2. Asultany
Assessments: Quiz: Mittell, Ch. 8 part 1; Discussion: Limits of Representation; COLUMN 4 DUE

WEEK 12 Gender
11/7 READ: Mittell: Ch. 8, 329-344; *How to Watch Television*: Levine
Assessments: Discussion: TV Fantasies

WEEK 13 Sexuality
11/14 READ: Mittell, Ch. 8, pp. 345-353; *How to Watch Television*: Becker
Assessments: Quiz: Mittell Ch. 8 part 2; Discussion: Sexuality Problems

THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 14 NETFLIX ORIGINALS GROUP PRESENTATIONS
11/28: GROUP PRESENTATIONS
11/30: GROUP PRESENTATIONS
Assessments: Presentations

WEEK 15 Fans & Cult TV
Assessments: Discussion: Fans and TV; **COLUMN 5 DUE by Wednesday midnight.**

**GROUP PAPER DUE AT TIME OF FINAL**

*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, Room #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.

**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.

**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, [http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html](http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.