Television Criticism

**Course Description**
Exploration of how TV communicates through the study of programming content, production practices, and audiences. Includes a laboratory for screening assigned programs.

**Learning Objectives**
Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:
- Understand the vocabulary of television aesthetics
- Identify, assess, and employ primary concepts and methods of televisual analysis and criticism
- Apply these concepts to various narrative television programs
- Utilize critical observations to create competent written criticism

**Major Course Requirements:**
- Attendance & Participation – 20%
- Midterm Exam (on March 7) – 20%
- Group Pitch Project – 20%
- Final Paper Abstract (due April 2) – 10%
- Final Paper (due May 9) – 30%

**Grade Scale:**
- A – 90%-100%
- B – 80%-89%
- C – 70%-79%
- D – 60%-69%
- F – 0%-59%

**Required or Recommended Readings**
All readings will be available on the course BlackBoard page and are all required, unless indicated otherwise.

**Course Policies:**
- **Attendance is required** for this course and is an important part of your participation grade. After all, you must be present and engaged to participate in class discussion. You are allowed three free absences (whether excused or unexcused) across the semester. For every additional excessive absence, the class participation grade will be lowered by a point at the instructor’s discretion. Participation
- **Complete readings and assignments as assigned.** Late assignments will receive a one-point deduction for every day that it is late. After ten days, assignments will receive a zero and will not be accepted. Exceptions will be made only for extraordinary cases and official documentation is needed.
- **Class screenings** will be done during our lab time on Monday and Wednesday. I will list possible
streaming outlets for the episode at the time of this syllabus’s writing. However, streaming services do update their content constantly and it is not guaranteed that the content will still be available through that service. If this is the case and you miss screening, it is your responsibility to find and watch a copy of the episode.

- **Exams may not be rescheduled** except in extraordinary cases with official documentation. Do not make travel plans that conflict with the midterm.

- **Silence and put away cell phones during class.**

- **You may use laptops or tablets to take notes,** but please do not abuse this privilege. Your surrounding classmates may be distracted by your potential in-class extracurricular activities and could disrupt the class. If any such disruptions occur, I will ask you to put away your laptop or tablet and your day’s participation grade will be deducted.

- **Be responsible for any information and materials missed when absent.** You should ask your classmates for this information.

- **Respect the privacy and opinions of fellow students.** I expect students to participate in class discussion respectfully and I expect students to respect each other’s opinions, even if you may disagree.

- **Grades will not be discussed in the classroom** as they are considered personal information, but I will be happy to discuss your course performance with you in office hours.

**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.)

I treat plagiarism very seriously in my class. One incident of academic misconduct will result in an automatic zero for the assignment and an official misconduct report filed with the university. Two incidents of academic misconduct will result in an automatic “F” in the course and potential further disciplinary action.

**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.

**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 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. **April 6** 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.

Statement of Civility (can be in place of classroom/professional behavior)
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Grade Appeals*
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, 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 Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures (available at http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C2.01_student_grade_appeal_procedure.pdf). 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. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.

Disabilities Accommodations*
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.

*Required by SACS or HB2504

Statement of Academic Continuity
In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of
Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

**Course Schedule**

*(with reading assignments to be completed by the day it is assigned)*

*(screenings will be discussed and applied to the topics in the following class session)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading(s)</th>
<th>Screenings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/17</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course</td>
<td>Mittell, “Why Television?”</td>
<td><em>I Love Lucy</em>, “Vitameatavegamin” (#1.30); <em>The Office</em>, “Business School” (#3.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/24</td>
<td>Introduction to TV Style</td>
<td>Butler, “<em>Mad Men</em>: Visual Style”</td>
<td><em>Seinfeld</em>, “The Marine Biologist” (#5.14); <em>How I Met Your Mother</em>, “Slap Bet” (#2.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/7</td>
<td>Teen TV &amp; Network Branding</td>
<td>Wee, “Teen Television and the WB Television Network”</td>
<td><em>The West Wing</em>, “In Excelsis Deo” (#1.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>TV Authorship</td>
<td>McGrath, “The Triumph of the Prime-Time Novel”</td>
<td><em>The Newsroom</em>, “We Just Decided To” (#1.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/14</td>
<td>TV Authorship Pt. II</td>
<td>Newman and Levine, “The Showrunner as <em>Auteur</em>”</td>
<td><em>Hill Street Blues</em>, “Freedom’s Last Stand” (#2.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/19</td>
<td>“Quality” TV</td>
<td>Gitlin, “Make It Look Messy” or Thompson, “From ‘The Golden Age of Television’ to ‘Quality TV’”</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Screening: *Game of Thrones*, “Baelor” (#1.09)

2/21

**“Quality” and Cable Television**
Reading: Feuer, “HBO and the Concept of Quality TV”
Screening: *The Real World*, “This is the True Story…” (#1.01); *Laguna Beach*, “A Black & White Affair” (#1.01)

2/26

**Reality TV Aesthetics**
Reading: Holmes and Jermyn, “Understanding Reality TV”
Screening: *Survivor*, “Going Down in Flames” (#20.10)

2/28

**Reality TV Aesthetics, Pt. II**
Reading: Poniewozik & McDowell, “How Reality TV Fakes It”

3/5

**Midterm Preparation**

3/7

**MIDTERM**

3/12-3/16

**SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS**

3/19

**TV as Cultural Forum**
Reading: Newcomb and Hirsch, “Television as a Cultural Forum”
Screening (during 12:00-1:00pm hour): *All in the Family*, “Judging Books by Covers” (#1.04); *Black-ish*, “Hope” (#2.16)

3/21

**TV as Cultural Forum, Pt. II**
Reading: TBD
Screening: *That Girl*, episode TBD; *Roseanne*, “Sweet Dreams” (#2.08)

3/19

**Television and Gender Representation**
Reading: Rowe, “Roseanne: The Unruly Woman as Domestic Goddess”
Screening: *30 Rock*, “Rosemary’s Baby” (#2.04); *Parks and Recreation*, “Pawnee Rangers” (#4.04)

3/21

**Television and Gender Representation, Pt. II**
Reading: Mizejewski, “Feminism, Postfeminism, Liz Lemonism”
Screening: *Laverne & Shirley*, episode TBD; other show TBD

3/26

**Queer TV**
Reading: Doty, “I Love *Laverne and Shirley*: Lesbian Narratives, Queer Pleasures, and Television Sitcoms”
Screening: *Scrubs*, episode TBD; other show TBD

3/28

**Queer TV in the ’90s**
Reading: Becker, “Gay-Themed Television and the Slumpy Class”
Screening: *Grey’s Anatomy*, episode TBD

4/2

**Casting and Representation**
Reading: Warner, “‘I’m glad no one was hung up on the race thing’: *Grey’s Anatomy* and the Innovation of Blindcasting in a Post-Racial Era”
Screening: *Modern Family*, “Pilot” (#1.01); DVD featurette on casting
4/4 **Casting, Race, and Sexuality**
Reading: Martin
Skype Visit from Dr. Alfred Martin – have questions prepared!
Screening: *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, “A Nude Scary Garcia: Jim B.” (#3.06)

4/9 **Reality TV and Representation**
Reading: Weber, “Trash Talk: Gender as an Analytic on Reality Television”
Screening: *Jersey Shore*, “The Letter” (#2.05)

4/11 **Reality TV and Representation, Pt. II**
Reading: Klein, “Abject Femininity and Compulsory Masculinity on *Jersey Shore*”
Screening: *Ugly Betty*, episode TBD

4/16 **Transnational Television**
Reading: TBD
Screening: *Jane the Virgin*, episode TBD

4/18 **Transnational Television, Pt. II**
Reading: TBD
Screening: *Quarterlife*, episode TBD; *Broad City*, episode TBD

4/23 **Streaming and the Future of TV**
Reading: TBD
Screening: *Orange is the New Black*

4/25 **Netflix and Streaming Services**
Reading: TBD

4/30 **IN-CLASS PITCH PROJECTS**

5/9 **FINAL PAPER DROPPED OFF TO MY OFFICE BY 2:00 SHARP**