

TELEVISION GENRES – FALL 2013

DC 229 (Section 401, 410 – **There is both an online section and an in-class section for this course**).

Thursdays: 1:30pm to 4:45pm

Room: 14 East Jackson, LL105 (CDM Theater)

Instructor: Nathan DeWitt, MFA

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:00am to 11:50am, Wednesdays 2:00pm to 5:00pm, Thursdays 10:00am to 11:50am. (I am in and out of my office frequently during office hours so please let me know if you will be stopping by).

Office: CDM 616

ndewitt@cdm.depaul.edu

Course Description:

The purpose of this class is to enable you to study scripted television from the professional's point of view. The course involves critical analysis of successful scripted television shows, their narrative structures and themes. Programs of various genres and eras will be examined. Students will learn how to recognize basic structural elements in finished episodes. Students will develop a language with which to discuss television as well as a toolbox of techniques to use when creating television. Key concepts to be discussed include: basic structure, types of shows, genres of shows, character tropes, means of creating and sustaining tension, themes and advancements in form.

“More than jazz or musical theatre or morbid obesity, television is the true American art form.”

- Kenneth Parcell, 30 ROCK

We'll take a 'nerd's eye' view of the TV landscape over the last two decades. From THE X FILES to LOUIE we're going to analyze and discuss 20 of the most important and influential shows in television history. You'll learn all about the writer-centric art form of scripted television, where it's been and where it's heading. From the basic structure of FRIENDS to the ornate themes of MAD MEN, we study serials and procedurals, network and cable shows, principal leads, partnerships and ensembles, comedy and drama, prevalent themes, innovations in content and form, the impact of DVR, the impact of the internet and why there are SO many shows about lawyers, doctors and cops. You'll laugh, you'll learn and you'll never look at television the same way again.

Prerequisites:

None.

Homework:

All assignments for this course must be typed and submitted on ColWeb by 1:30pm THURSDAYS.

NO LATE WORK IS ACCEPTED!

Online Course Management System:

ColWeb: <https://col.cdm.depaul.edu> Here you will find lecture slides, lecture videos, links to streams of the episodes for this course and any other relevant information you may need. This is where you will upload your assignments for this course. Login with your Campus Connect information.

Reading:

The Revolution Was Televised by Alan Sepinwall. What's Alan Watching? 2012.

ISBN-10: 0615718299, **ISBN-13:** 978-0615718293

Viewing:

You may find it helpful to view the episodes we are going to watch in class beforehand. Streaming copies of all episodes will be available on ColWeb and ColTube.

Pop Quizzes:

Pop Quizzes will be given periodically to make sure In-class Students are staying current with the reading and Online Students are keeping current with both the lectures and the reading. **These quizzes may happen at the start of class or part of the way through. They will not be mentioned on ColWeb and the only way to get the Quiz is to watch the lectures or be present in class.** These quizzes will be five questions directly related to the readings. If you have read the pages, you should have no problems passing the quizzes. Online Students have ONE WEEK from the date of the quiz to email their answers. After that, no late work will be accepted.

Grading:

Homework: 30% (Breakdown, Character Paper, Theme Paper).

Midterm: 25%

Final Paper: 35%

Participation/ Pop Quizzes: 10%

THE SCHEDULE**September 12**

Class 1:

Lecture: The Basics. Situation Comedy, The Police Series.

In-class viewing: NEWSRADIO “The Public Domain” & LAW & ORDER: SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT “Raw”

READING AT HOME: Sepinwall: Prologue “Let's be careful out there...” (You may be quizzed on this material next class).

September 19

Class 2:

Lecture: Types of Shows: The Principal Lead. The Unruly Woman Sitcom, The Hospital Drama.

In-class viewing: 30 ROCK “Pilot” & HOUSE “Pilot”

Homework: Breakdown a NETWORK show of your choosing. NO PREMIUM SHOWS. A handout will be provided. Due on ColWeb: Thursday, September 26 by 1:30pm.

September 26

Class 3:

Lecture: Types of Shows: Partnerships, The “Gay” and “Queer” Sitcom, Science Fiction.

In-class viewing: WILL & GRACE “Pilot” & THE X FILES “Pilot”

October 3

Class 4:

Lecture: Types of Shows: Ensembles

In-class viewing: FRIENDS “The One With Two Parties,” “The One with the Embryos” & SIX FEET UNDER “Pilot” GIRLS (maybe).

Homework: Character Paper. Write a Three Page Paper on the characters of a show of your choosing. What are the basic elements of the show? Who are the main characters, how are they characterized and how do they relate to one another? Due on ColWeb: Thursday, October 10 by 1:30pm.

October 10

Class 5:

Lecture: Tension: Intersecting Storylines

In-class viewing: SEINFELD “The Opposite,” “The Slicer” & THE WIRE “Old Cases”

READING AT HOME: Sepinwall: Chapter 3 “All the pieces matter...” (You may be quizzed on this material next class).

October 17

Class 6: Tension: Non-linear narrative. Looking for Audiences.

In-class viewing: ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT “Pilot” & DAMAGES “Pilot”

Homework: Take home MIDTERM. Due on ColWeb: Thursday, October 24 by 1:30pm

October 24

Class 7:

Lecture: Theme: Family. Adult Animation.

In-class viewing: THE SIMPSONS “Lisa on Ice” & THE SOPRANOS “Pilot”

READING AT HOME: Sepinwall: Chapter 2 “All due respect...” (You may be quizzed on this material next class).

October 31

Class 8:

Lecture: Theme: Gender Roles. The Costume Drama.

In-Class viewing: LOUIE (TBD) & MAD MEN “Maidenform”

READING AT HOME: Sepinwall: Chapter 11 “It's a time machine...” (You may be quizzed on this material next class).

Homework: Theme Paper. Watch an episode of a TV show. Talk about the themes of that episode. 3 pages. Due on ColWeb: Thursday, November 7 by 1:30pm.

November 7

Class 9:

Lecture: Innovations in Form. The Action Drama.

In-class viewing: MODERN FAMILY “Fizbo” & LOST “Walkabout”

READING AT HOME: Sepinwall: Chapter 6 “Do you want to know a secret?...”, Chapter 12 “I am the one who knocks!...” Epilogue “Don't stop believing...” (You may be quizzed on this material next class).

November 14

Class 10:

Lecture: Taking Risks. Post-modern Drama.

In-class viewing: COMMUNITY “Remedial Chaos Theory” & BREAKING BAD “Pilot”

Final Paper:

Watch and discuss a TV show we have not covered. Talk about its genre, structure, its tensions, the type of characters and architecture the show employs and what themes the show explores. 6-10 pages.

Due on ColWeb November 21, 2013 at 5:00pm.

SCHOOL POLICIES:

Online Instructor Evaluation

Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over two weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online at <https://mycti.cti.depaul.edu/mycti>

Email

Email is the primary means of communication between faculty and students enrolled in this course outside of class time. Students should be sure their email listed under "demographic information" at [CampusConnect](#) is correct.

Academic Integrity Policy

This course will be subject to the academic integrity policy passed by faculty. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>

Plagiarism

The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course should be aware of the strong sanctions that can be imposed against someone guilty of plagiarism. If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic F in the course and possible expulsion. The strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her own work any assignment which has been prepared by someone else. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials be sure to consult the instructor.

Incomplete

An incomplete grade is given only for an exceptional reason such as a death in the family, a serious illness, etc. Any such reason must be documented. Any incomplete request must be made at least two weeks before the final, and approved by the Dean of the College of Computing and Digital Media. Any consequences resulting from a poor grade for the course will not be considered as valid reasons for such a request.

Resources for Students with Disabilities

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted either the PLuS Program (for LD, AD/HD) or The Office for Students with Disabilities (for all other disabilities) at:

Student Center, LPC, Suite #370 Phone number: (773)325.1677 Fax: (773)325.3720 TTY: (773)325.7296