

TELEVISION GENRES – Summer I 2014

DC 229 (Section 201, 210) (**This course has both an online and an in-class section**).

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00pm to 4:15pm, June 17 – July 17

Room: Lincoln Park Student Center, Room 330

Instructor: Nathan DeWitt, MFA

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:00pm to 1:00pm. (I am in and out of my office frequently during office hours so please let me know if you will be stopping by).

Office: Lincoln Park Student Center, Room 332

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Course Description:

Students will analyze and discuss some of the most important and influential shows in television history. Students will learn all about the writer-centric form of scripted television, where it's been and where it's heading. Students 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, and the impact of the internet.

The purpose of this class is to enable students 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

Prerequisites:

None.

Learning Domain Description:

DC 229 Television Genres is included in the Liberal Studies program as a course with credit in the Arts and Literature domain. Courses in the Arts and Literature domain ask students to extend their knowledge and experience of the arts by developing their critical and reflective abilities. In these courses, students interpret and analyze particular creative works, investigate the relations of form and meaning and through critical and/or creative activity to come to experience art with greater openness, insight, and enjoyment. These courses focus on works of literature, art, theatre, or music as such, though the process of analysis may also include social and cultural issues. Students who take course in this domain choose three courses from such choices as literature, the visual arts, media arts, music, and theater. No more than two courses can be chosen from one department or program.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will be able to explain, in well-written prose, what a television episode is about and or how it was produced. In addition to learning how to analyze and interpret narrative scripted television, students also gain an understanding of how the development process affects the final content. Students will not only watch and analyze television, they will learn the socioeconomic and technological factors impacting the genre and industry. The papers in this class focus on

students' understanding of Basic Structure, Character, Theme and eventually a complete analysis.

- Students will be able to comment on the relationship between form and content in a work. They will learn the generic expectations of a particular form and how an artist (writer, producer, actor, etc) can complicate, enrich or subvert these expectations. Analysis and examination of the relationship between form and content represents the bulk of this course. Students are given a framework of knowledge regarding what to expect from half-hour and hourlong scripted programming, both in terms of form and content. Once this framework has been established, students examine ways in which artists used the form to deepen the audience's sense of character, tension and theme. Students investigate these relationships through class discussions, exam questions, several shorter papers and a longer final paper in which they write a complete analysis for a television series.
- Students will be able to assess the formal aspects of their subject and put these qualities into words, using, when appropriate, specialized vocabulary employed in class and readings. To better equip them in their analysis of television, students will learn a mix of common cinematic and literary language in addition to specialized screenwriting and film-making vernacular. This language will be employed in class discussions, exams and several papers.
- Where appropriate, students will be able to consider the original audience to witness a work of art and consider how their expectations differ from our own. This examination may include the elements of form, rhythm or style, the visual material and aesthetic of a piece. Students will be able to articulate a subject as well as write about it, explaining how narrative and aesthetic elements comprise a particular style of television (art). Students will learn about the context in which each episode aired and how this context affected its original reception. Students will also learn about the genre of television, how it has evolved over time and the technological innovations shaping the genre today.

Learning Outcomes will be met through lectures, viewings and readings on the history and story structure principles of many television forms and measured via written papers, pop quizzes and a midterm exam.

Writing Expectations:

There are two 2-3 page Papers and one 6-10 page Final Paper in this course. Papers are expected to be free of spelling and grammatical errors. **It's** YOUR work, YOU'RE responsible for **its** clarity.

Writing Expectations will be met with three graded assignments. Two of these papers will be based on a show of the Professor's choosing, a longer paper will be based on a show of the student's choosing.

Online Course Management System:

D2L: <https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/home> Here students will find lecture slides, lecture videos, links to streams of the episodes for this course and any other relevant information they may need. This is where students will upload your assignments for this course. Login with Campus Connect information.

Homework:

All assignments for this course must be typed and submitted on D2L. **NO LATE WORK IS ACCEPTED!**

Reading:

The Revolution Was Televised by Alan Sepinwall. Touchstone, reprint edition, May 2013.

ISBN-10: 1476739676, **ISBN-13:** 978-1476739670

Viewing:

In-class Students may find it helpful to watch the episodes we are going to watch in class beforehand, Online Students are required to watch these episodes as part of this class. All Students will definitely find it helpful to re-watch the episodes they are expected to write about. Digital copies of all episodes will be available on ColTube. <http://coltube.cdm.depaul.edu> Login with Campus Connect information.

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 viewing the lectures and the reading. **These quizzes may happen at the start of class or part of the way through the lecture. 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 students have read the pages, students should have no problems passing the quizzes. Online Students have ONE WEEK from the date of the quiz to email their answers. **Emailed quizzes MUST INCLUDE student's name and section number.** After one week, no late quizzes will be accepted.

Grading:

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

Midterm: 25%

Final Paper: 35%

Participation/ Pop Quizzes: 10%

Grading Scale:

A: 93.5-100%; A-: 92.5-93.49%

B+: 89.5-92.49%; B: 83.5-89.49%; B-: 82.5-83.49%

C+: 79.5-82.49%; C: 73.5-79.49%; C-: 72.5-73.49%

D+: 69.5-72.49%; D: 63.5-69.49%; Below 63.5% is an F

THE SCHEDULE

June 17:

Class 1:

Lecture: Introduction, The Basics. Types of Shows: The 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).

June 19:

Class 2:

Lecture: Development. Characters. 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 D2L: Tuesday, June 24, 2014 by 1:00pm.

June 24:

Class 3:

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

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

June 26:

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”

Homework: Character Paper. Write a Three Page Paper on the characters of SIX FEET UNDER. A handout will be provided. Due on D2L: Tuesday, July 1, 2014 by 1:00pm.

July 1:

Class 5:

Lecture: Tension: Intersecting Storylines

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

COMEDIANS IN CARS GETTING COFFEE

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

July 3:

Class 6:

Lecture: Tension: Non-linear narrative.

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

Homework: Take home MIDTERM. Due on D2L: Tuesday, July 8, 2014 at 1:00pm.

July 8:

Class 7:

Lecture: Theme. 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).

July 10:

Class 8:

Lecture: The Costume Drama.

In-Class viewing: LOUIE “Poker/Divorce,” & MAD MEN “Maidenform.” SOUTH PARK “Margaritaville”

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

Homework: Theme Paper. Discuss the themes of the SOUTH PARK episode “Margaritaville.” A handout will be provided. Due on D2L: July 15, 2014 at 1:00pm.

July 15:

Class 9:

Lecture: 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).

July 17:

Class 10:

Lecture: Post Water Cooler TV. The Future of the Industry.

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 D2L Thursday, July 24 by 5:00pm.

College Policies

Online Course Evaluations

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 three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online in [CampusConnect](#).

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>. If you have any questions be sure to consult with your professor.

Academic Policies

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the [University Academic Calendar](#). Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at: cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment.

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 the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at: csd@depaul.edu.

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