

## ADVANCED TOPICS IN CINEMA - TELEVISION SCRIPT ANALYSIS – WINTER 2013

DC 370 (201, 210)

Thursdays: 1:00pm to 4:15pm

STDCT 330

Instructor: Nathan DeWitt, MFA

Office Hours: Mondays: 3:30pm to 5:00pm, Wednesdays 3:30pm to 5:00pm, Thursdays 11:00am to 12:30pm. (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 (Mondays), STDC 332 (Wednesday & Thursday).

[ndewitt@cdm.depaul.edu](mailto: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, 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 1:00pm on Thursdays. **NO LATE WORK IS ACCEPTED!**

### **Reading:**

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

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

### **Viewing:**

In-class viewings will be accompanied by lectures, meaning the professor will be talking over the material; consequently, students are expected to have watched all episodes BEFORE attending class. Digital copies of all episodes will be available on ColWeb.

**Pop Quizzes:**

Pop Quizzes will be given periodically to make sure In-Class students have done the viewing and Online Students are watching the lectures. These 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 viewings. If you have watched the episodes, you should have no problem passing the quizzes.

**Grading:**

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

Midterm: 25%

Final Paper: 35%

Participation/ Pop Quizzes: 10%

**THE SCHEDULE****January 10**

Week 1:

Lecture: The Basics:

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

**Homework:** Breakdown a NETWORK show of your choosing. NO PREMIUM SHOWS. A handout will be provided. Due on ColWeb: January 17 by 1:00pm.

**January 17**

Week 2:

Lecture: Types of Shows: The Principal Lead

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

**January 24**

Week 3:

Lecture: Types of Shows: Partnerships

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

**January 31**

Week 4:

Lecture: Types of Shows: Ensembles

In-class viewing: FRIENDS “The One With Two Parties” & 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 (structure, etc)? Who are the main characters, how are they characterized and how do they relate to one another? Due on ColWeb: February 7 by 1:00pm.

**February 7**

Week 5:

Lecture: Tension: Intersecting Storylines

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

## **February 14**

Week 6: Tension: Non-linear narrative

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

**Homework:** Take home MIDTERM. Due on ColWeb February 21 by 1:00pm

## **February 21**

Week 7:

Lecture: Theme: Family

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

## **February 28**

Week 8:

Lecture: Theme: Gender Roles

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

**Homework:** Theme Paper. Watch an episode of a TV show. Talk about the themes of that episode. 3 pages. Due on ColWeb March 7 by 1:00pm.

## **March 7**

Week 9:

Lecture: Innovations in Form

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

## **March 14**

Week 10:

Lecture: Taking Risks

In-class viewing: COMMUNITY (TBD) & BREAKING BAD “Pilot”

## **Final Paper:**

Watch and discuss a TV show. Talk about its structure, its tensions, the type of characters and architecture the show employs and what themes the show explores. 6-10 pages. **Due on ColWeb March 21, 1:00pm.**

## **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 PLS 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