

TELEVISION GENRES AND ANALYSIS– FALL 2017

DC 429 (701)

Thursdays, 5:45pm to 9:00pm

14 East Jackson, LL105 (CDM Theater).

Instructor: Nathan DeWitt, MFA

Office Hours: Mondays: 4:00pm to 5:45pm, Thursdays: Noon to 1:30pm, 4:45pm to 5:45pm. I am in and out of my office frequently during office hours so please let me know if you will be stopping by.

I'm also available by appointment.

Loop Office: CDM 616

ndewitt@depaul.edu

Course Management System: D2L.

Prerequisites: NONE.

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.

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 these three graded assignments.

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 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! Homework is not accepted via email unless there is a malfunction with D2L. Please do not send me assignments via email unless I ask for them first.**

Reading:

The Revolution Was Televised by Alan Sepinwall. Touchstone, reprint edition, May 2013.
ISBN-10: 1476739676, **ISBN-13:** 978-1476739670

Viewing:

Students are expected to have viewed the episodes we'll be watching in class **PRIOR TO COMING TO CLASS**. Streaming copies of all episodes will be available on ColTube. <http://coltube.cdm.depaul.edu> Login with Campus Connect information.

THE AMERICANS Viewing:

As a requirement for this course, students are expected to watch Season 1 of FX's critically acclaimed drama THE AMERICANS. There is a weekly viewing schedule students are expected to maintain. Students will submit response papers of one to two pages in length discussing the episode or episodes

assigned each week. We will be discussing the show frequently in class, so please stay current and NO SPOILERS. Streaming copies of all episodes will be available on ColTube but you may also find this show on Amazon Prime or other streaming outlets.

Grading:

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

Midterm: 20%

Final Paper: 30%

The Americans Responses: 10%

Homework/ Participation: 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

September 7:

Class 1:

Lecture: Introduction, The Basics. Types of Shows: The Situation Comedy, The Procedural

In-class viewing: FRIENDS “The One With the Embryos” & THE X FILES “Pilot”

READING AT HOME: Sepinwall: Prologue “Let's be careful out there...”

Homework: Personal introduction. Due on D2L: September 14, 2017 at 5:45pm.

September 14:

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: September 21, 2017 by 5:45pm.

THE AMERICANS: “Pilot.” (Response Paper is due before next class).

September 21:

Class 3:

Lecture: The Professional TV Writing Process, Types of Shows: Partnerships, The LGBTQ Sitcom, The Espionage Series.

In-class viewing: WILL & GRACE “Pilot” & BREAKING BAD “Pilot”

READING AT HOME: Sepinwall: Chapter 2, “All Due Respect” and Chapter 12 “I Am The One Who Knocks!...”

Homework: Questions about the reading. Due on D2L: September 28, 2017 by 5:45pm.

THE AMERICANS: “The Clock,” and “Gregory.” (Response Paper is due before next class).

September 28:

Class 4:

Lecture: Intersecting Storylines, Types of Shows: Ensembles

In-class viewing: SEINFELD “The Opposite,” “The Slicer” & THE SOPRANOS “Pilot”

Homework: Character Paper. Write a Three Page Paper on the characters of the SIX FEET UNDER pilot episode. A link and handout will be provided. Due on D2L: October 5, 2017 by 5:45pm.
THE AMERICANS: “In Control” (Response Paper is due before next class).

October 5:

Class 5:

Lecture: Tension, Types of Shows: Science Fiction

In-class viewing: ENLIGHTENED “Pilot” and LOST “Walkabout”

READING AT HOME: Sepinwall: Chapter 6 “Do you want to know a secret?...”

Homework: Questions about the reading. Due on D2L: October 12, 2017 by 5:45pm.

THE AMERICANS: “COMINT” and “Trust Me.” (Response Paper is due before next class).

October 12:

Class 6:

Lecture: Non-linear narrative, Innovations in Form. Types of Shows: The Anthology Series, The African American Sitcom

In-class viewing: THE BERNIE MAC SHOW “Pilot”, BLACK-ISH “The Word,” & TRUE DETECTIVE “The Long Bright Dark”

Homework: Take home MIDTERM. Due on D2L: October 19, 2017 at 5:45pm.

THE AMERICANS: “Duty and Honor.” (Response Paper is due before next class).

October 19:

Class 7:

Lecture: Theme. Types of shows: The Police Series, The Period Piece.

In-class viewing: THE WIRE “The Target” & MAD MEN “Maidenform”

READING AT HOME: Sepinwall: Chapter 3 “All the Pieces Matter” and Chapter 11 “It's a time machine...”

Homework: Questions about the reading. Due on D2L: October 26, 2017 by 5:45pm.

THE AMERICANS: “Mutually Assured Destruction” and “Safe House.” (Response Paper is due before next class).

October 26:

Class 8:

Lecture: Adult Animation

In-Class viewing: THE SIMPSONS “Bart Sells his Soul,” “HOMR” & SOUTH PARK “The Hobbit” & THE BOONDOCKS “Return of the King”

Homework: Theme Paper. Discuss the themes of any adult animation, cable, premium or internet show of your choosing. A handout will be provided. Due on D2L: November 2, 2017 at 5:45pm.

THE AMERICANS: “Only You” and “Covert War.” (Response Paper is due before next class).

November 2:

Class 9:

Lecture: Internet Shows

In-class viewing: ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT “Pilot” & ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK “I Wasn't Ready” & TRANSPARENT “Pilot”

READING AT HOME: Sepinwall: Epilogue “Don't stop believing...”

Homework: Personal Conclusion. Due on D2L: November 9, 2017 at 5:45pm.

THE AMERICANS: “The Oath” and “The Colonel.” (Response Paper is due next class).

November 9:

Class 10:

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

In-class viewing: MODERN FAMILY “Fizbo”, COMMUNITY “Remedial Chaos Theory” & LOUIE “Poker/Divorce” & EMPIRE “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, November 16 by 9:00pm.

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