

TELEVISION GENRES AND ANALYSIS– FALL 2018

DC 429 (701)

Thursdays, 5:45pm to 9:00pm

14 East Jackson, LL105 (CDM Theater).

Instructor: Nathan DeWitt, MFA

Office Hours: Tuesdays: 11:30am to 1:30pm, Thursdays: Noon to 1:30pm and 4:45 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.

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

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 and quizzes.

Writing Expectations:

Writing Expectations will be met with graded assignments. There are FOUR paper packets which consist of several writing assignments. There is also one Final Project in this course for which students pitch their own idea for a scripted series. The things you turn in are expected to be free of spelling and grammatical errors. **It's YOUR work, YOU'RE responsible for its clarity.**

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. Since this course focuses on studying television and television storytelling it's very important students have access to Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, HBO Go, HBO Now, FX Now and/or an ability to purchase episodes on iTunes or Amazon. The subscriptions to these sites should be considered part of your 'books' expenses for this course. Please do not pirate materials for this course.

THE SOPRANOS Viewing:

As a requirement for this course, students are expected to watch Season 1 of HBO's critically acclaimed drama THE SOPRANOS. There is a weekly viewing schedule students are expected to maintain. In packets of 2-4 papers, students will submit response papers of about 500-700 for each assigned episode. Students may comment on or respond to anything they see, including praise, abject criticism and anything in between. We will be discussing the show frequently in class, so please stay current. **SORRY, THE SERIES WILL BE SPOILED FOR YOU.** You may find this show on Amazon Prime, HBO Go or other streaming outlets.

Grading:

The course is out of 1,000 possible points.

4 Paper Packets, 100 points each. (400 points)

5 Online Quizzes, 60 points each. (300 points)

Final Project: 200 points.

The Sopranos Responses: 100 points.

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

Add/ Drop dates can be found here: <https://www.depaul.edu/university-catalog/academic-handbooks/undergraduate/university-information/Pages/academic-calendar.aspx>

THE SCHEDULE**September 6:**

Class 1:

Lectures:

The TV Industry, Development, The Professional TV Writing Process

Viewing:

30 ROCK "Pilot" (NBC, Hulu)

UnREAL "Return" (Pilot) (Lifetime, Hulu)

Reading: 30 Rock Pilot script (Draft, available on D2L).

Homework:

Quiz 1 (covers Class 1) 30 questions, 60 possible points. Administered on D2L. Due before next class.

September 13:

Class 2

Lectures:

Story Basics, The Procedural Drama, The Police Series, The Situation Comedy

Viewing:

THE X FILES "Pilot" (Fox, Hulu)

SEINFELD "The Opposite" S5, E21, (NBC, Hulu) (Pay attention to the episode title as Hulu episode numbering is a different than production episode numbering)

FRIENDS "The One Where No One's Ready" S3, E2, (NBC, Netflix)

Homework:

Paper Packet 1 (covers Classes 1 and 2) 100 possible points. Due before next class.

September 20:

Class 3:

Lectures:

Characters, HBO, Serial Programming

Viewing:

SIX FEET UNDER "Pilot" (HBO, HBO Now, HBO Go, Amazon)

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT "Pilot" (Fox, Hulu) (*Time permitting, you may be asked to watch this at home*)

BREAKING BAD "Pilot" (AMC, Netflix)

Reading:

Sepinwall Chapters 2 "All Due Respect" and 12 "I am the One Who Knocks"

Breaking Bad Pilot script (Draft, available on D2L).

Homework:

Quiz 2: Covers Classes 2-3 and the assigned Sepinwall reading. 30 questions. 60 possible points.

Administered on D2L. Due before next class.

THE SOPRANOS episodes 1-4: "The Sopranos." (Pilot), "46 Long," "Denial, Anger and Acceptance" and "Meadowlands." (Response Paper is due before next class).

September 27:

Class 4:

Lecture:

The Unruly Woman Sitcom

Viewing:

ROSEANNE "Life and Stuff" (Pilot) (ABC, Amazon)

SEX AND THE CITY "Sex and the City" (Pilot) (HBO, HBO Now, HBO Go, Amazon)

GIRLS "Pilot" (HBO, HBO Now, HBO Go, Amazon)

PARKS AND RECREATION "Ann's Decision" S5, E12 (NBC, Hulu)

MOM "Pilot" (CBS, Hulu)

Homework:

Paper Packet 2 (covers Classes 3 and 4). 100 possible points. Due before next class.

October 4:

Class 5:

Lectures:

Tension and Non-linear narrative, The Espionage Series, Science Fiction and The Dawn of Spectacle TV

Viewing:

24 "12:00am to 1:00am" (Pilot) (Fox, Amazon)

LOST "Walkabout" S1, E4 (ABC, Hulu)

Reading:

Sepinwall Chapters 6 "Do You Want to Know a Secret?" and 8 "Tell me Where the Bomb Is!"

Homework:

Quiz 3: Covers Classes 4-5 and the assigned reading. 30 questions. 60 possible points. Administered on D2L. Due before next class.

THE SOPRANOS episodes 5-8: "College," "Pax Soprana," "Down Neck," and "The Legend of Tennessee Moltisanti." (Response Paper is due before next class).

October 11:

Class 6:

Lectures:

Theme, Adult Animation

Viewing:

THE SIMPSONS "Last Exit to Springfield" S4, E17 (Fox, FX, streaming)

SOUTH PARK "Margaritaville" S13, E3 (Comedy Central, Hulu)

THE BOONDOCKS "Return of the King" S1, E9 (Cartoon Network, Hulu)

RICK AND MORTY “The Lawnmower Dog,” S1, E2 (Cartoon Network, Hulu)

BoJACK HORSEMAN “Fish out of Water” S3, E4 (Netflix)

Homework:

Paper Packet 3 (covers Classes 5 and 6). 100 possible points. Due before next class.

October 18:

Class 7:

Lectures:

The Hospital Drama, The Horror Series

Viewing:

GREY’S ANATOMY “A Hard Day’s Night” (Pilot) (ABC, Netflix)

THE WALKING DEAD “Days Gone Bye” (Pilot) (AMC, Netflix)

Reading:

Sepinwall Chapters 3 “All the Pieces Matter” and 7 “She Saved the World. A Lot.” (We do not watch THE WIRE or BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER in this course but you are expected to read about them).

Homework:

Quiz 4: Covers Classes 6-7 and the assigned reading. 30 questions. 60 possible points. Administered on D2L. Due before next class.

THE SOPRANOS episodes 9-11: “Boca,” “A Hit is a Hit,” and “Nobody Knows Anything.”

(Response Paper is due before next class).

October 25:

Class 8:

Lectures:

The African American Sitcom, The Primetime Soap

Viewing:

BLACK-ISH “THE Word” S2, E1 (ABC, Hulu)

ATLANTA “The Big Bang” (Pilot) (FX, Hulu)

INSECURE “Insecure As Fuck” (Pilot) (HBO, HBO Go, HBO Now)

EMPIRE “Pilot” (Fox, Hulu)

Homework:

Paper Packet 4 (covers Classes 7 and 8). 100 possible points. Due before next class.

November 1:

Class 9

Lectures:

The Period Piece, The Anthology Series and the Fantasy Drama

Viewing:

GAME OF THRONES “Winter is Coming” (Pilot) (HBO, HBO Go, HBO Now)

AMERICAN CRIME STORY: THE PEOPLE v. OJ SIMPSON “From the Ashes of Tragedy” (Pilot) (FX, Netflix)

Reading:

Sepinwall Chapters 4 “A Lie Agreed Upon” and 11 “It’s a Time Machine” (We do not watch DEADWOOD or MAD MEN in this course but you are expected to read about them).

Homework:

Quiz 5: Covers Classes 8-9 and the assigned reading. 30 questions. 60 possible points. Administered on D2L. Due before next class.

THE SOPRANOS episodes 12-13: “Isabella” and “I Dream of Jeannie Cusamano.” (Response Paper is

due before next class).

November 8:

Class 10:

Lectures:

The LGBTQ Sitcom, Internet TV

Viewing:

TRANSPARENT "Pilot" (Amazon)

MASTER OF NONE "Thanksgiving" S2, E8 (Netflix)

THE HANDMAID'S TALE "Offred" (Pilot) (Hulu)

Homework:

Final Project. 200 Possible points.

Final Project:

For this assignment, you are asked to come up with an original idea for a scripted television series. This idea might be 100% your own, or it could be an adaptation of a public domain title, such as THE ART OF WAR by Sun Tzu. **Due on D2L Thursday, November 15, 2018 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 PLoS 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