

BLHS-171 TV:HISTORY/CULTURE/STRUCTURE

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Meeting Times: Tuesdays, 6:15-8:55
Location: White-Gravenor 201A

Course Description

Although our familiarity with television centers on the shows we watch, we must remember that programming is only a fraction of what actually constitutes television. From its roots in radio, to its current convergence with other media, television has occupied a peculiar position between public and private interests. Specifically, industry, commerce, and government regulation have intersected (smoothly and otherwise) to create a broadcast medium that produces cultural artifacts and disseminates information. In this course, we will examine the ways in which industrial factors and communication policies have shaped the medium that sits in 98% of U.S. homes. In addition to tracing this development historically and thematically, we will also confront it critically.

Reading Material

- IN THE BOOKSTORE
 - Hilmes, Michelle. 2007. *Only Connect: A Cultural History of Broadcasting in the United States*, 2nd ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
 - Allen, Robert C. and Annette Hill, eds. *The Television Studies Reader*. 2004. London and New York: Routledge.
(This anthology is marked as TVSR in your weekly schedule)
- AT LAUINGER CIRCULATION DESK
 - **Books on reserve at Lauinger circulation desk. Please obtain these readings early to avoid the rush. (Reserve books denoted with a double asterisk)
Inexpensive copies of these books are available online. If you decide to buy one, be sure to buy the proper edition.
 - Newcomb, Horace, ed. 1994. *Television: The Critical View*, 5th Edition. New York: Oxford University Press. (This anthology is marked as TVTCV in your schedule)
 - Fiske, John. 1987. *Television Culture*. New York: Routledge.
(This book is marked as TC in your schedule)
- Selected Readings on Electronic Reserve (Reserve readings are denoted with an asterisk)

Class Structure, Attendance, and Participation

I envision this class as an extended discussion of the multi-faceted terrain of television. I will lecture as needed, but I want you to come to every class prepared to contribute to lively discussion based on the readings and screenings.

Blackboard and E-mail

Please check our course site on Blackboard regularly for announcements, documents, grades, etc. Since we only see each other once a week, we will need to rely on e-mail quite a bit. I will make every effort to respond to your e-mails as quickly as possible. E-mail is the best way to contact me.

Assignments & Exams

In-class Essays (2)	30%
Class Participation	20%
Final Paper Presentation	20%
Final Paper	30%

Final Paper

For your final paper, I want you to think broadly about the course topic. You are welcome to base your paper on a case study, but your analysis must speak to the larger issues you encountered in class. I will distribute detailed guidelines for the final paper later in the semester, but start formulating ideas immediately.

Academic Dishonesty

Your reputation is based on the quality and originality of your work. If the work you submit was written by someone else, then your reputation is tarnished. I operate under the assumption that all work that students submit is original (prepared by the student specifically for this class). If that is not the case, I am required by Georgetown University to document and report any academic dishonesty. Please visit the Honor Council's website to understand what we mean by plagiarism: <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/hc/plagiarism.html>

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 8/26

Topic: Introductions, What do we *really* think about television?

- Historical, Social, and Cultural Context: HILMES CH. 1, 2
- Television's roots: U.S. popular culture; Motion picture industry
- SCREEN: *Empire of the Air: The Men Who Made Radio* (Ken Burns 1991)

WEEK 2 9/2

• Topic: Beginnings of Radio, Beginnings of Control: HILMES CH. 3

- Early communications policies, etc.: HILMES CH. 4
- LISTEN: Early Radio Drama
- Radio & the motion picture industry: *HILMES, HILMES CH. 5

WEEK 3 9/9

- Early Television: HILMES CH. 7

- SCREEN: Early TV Programs
- The Sponsor: *Anderson
- Quiz Show Scandals

WEEK 4 9/16

- Screen: *Quiz Show* (Robert Redford 1994)
- Understanding the State of TV: Television and Commerce
- Read: *Corner (TVSR); **Meehan (TVTCV)

WEEK 5 9/23

- In-Class Essay #1
- Understanding the State of TV: Media and the Public Interest
- Read: Ouellette & Lewis (TVSR)
- Screen: *History Detectives*
- Television and Culture: High culture/Low culture
- Read: *MacCabe "Defining Popular Culture"; *Kaminsky "What is the critical task?"

WEEK 6 9/30

- Television and Culture: Television as cultural forum
- Read: **Newcomb & Hirsch (TVTCV); *Fiske "British Cultural Studies"; *Fiske & Hartley "Bardic Television"
- Screen: *M*A*S*H, All in the Family*

WEEK 7 10/7

- Class and TV: "Quality" and Boutique Television
- Read: *Feuer "The MTM Style"; **Williams (TVTCV)
- SCREENING: *Twin Peaks*

WEEK 8 10/14

- Feminized Television
- **Spigel (TVTCV); *Arthurs "Sex and the City and Consumer Culture"
- Screen: *Sex and the City*

WEEK 9 10/21

- Television and Reality Part I: History of TV News; Liveness; News Programming
- Read: Bourdon (TVSR); Morse (TVSR); **Fiske (TC, Chapter 15)

WEEK 10 10/28

- Television and Reality Part II: Docudrama
- Read: Paget (TVSR); **Fiske (TC, Chapter 3)
- SCREENING: *Path to 9/11* (2006)

WEEK 11 11/4

- In-Class Essay #2
- Structures of Viewing: Flow; Genre

- Read: *Browne "The Political Economy of the Television (Super) Text"; Mittell (TVSR); *Kaminsky "Genre and Order"
- SCREENING: *The Sopranos*

WEEK 12 11/11

- The Future of Television: Policy; Convergence and Regression?
- Read: TBD

WEEK 13 11/18

Final Paper Presentations

WEEK 14 11/25

Final Paper Presentations

WEEK 15 12/2

Final Paper Presentations

Course Wrap-Up

Course Evaluations