

**COMMRC 1105: Television & Society**  
**Tu & Th 1:00-2:15**  
**304 CL**  
**Spring 2012**

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**Office Hours:**  
**Tu 10:00 am-12:00 pm pm**  
**Th 2:30 pm-3:30 pm**  
**and by appointment**

In the 19th Century, critics such as Matthew Arnold defined culture as “the best which has been thought and said,” embracing a notion of “high culture” that explicitly rejected the “popular,” “folk” or “low-brow” cultures of the “common people.” However, with the coming of anthropology and a growing appreciation of folkways, “culture” began to acquire a broader definition that encompassed a people’s whole ways of life. Rather than merely the most high brow pleasures of the elite, “culture” included even the most seemingly mundane aspects of everyday life.

And yet, even at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, much of these high culture or high art biases remain, especially in regards to one of the most popular mediums of our time—television. From the Frankfurt School, to Neil Postman, television has consistently been seen as a brainless medium sucking up the otherwise healthy brainwaves of its passive consumers. Likewise, moves to create academic programs in television studies, such as the “Center for the Study of Popular Television” at Syracuse University, have been met with laughter, if not outright scorn. The serious study of television—a non-serious medium, it seems—is taken as an oxymoron of the highest order.

While we will take these contemporary critiques of television and television studies seriously, we will nonetheless attempt what to some scholars apparently seems impossible: the serious, critical, academic study of contemporary television, seeking to, in David Rubin’s words, “study television entertainment programs with the same care and passion as musicologists study Mozart and Ellington, or professors of English study Melville and Pynchon.” We will neither reject television off-handedly, as do many of its contemporary critics, nor embrace it uncritically, as mere passive consumers, but regard it rather as a fascinating contemporary cultural artifact worthy of our careful attention and study. Situated within contemporary anthropological notions of culture, rather than Matthew Arnold’s “high culture,” we will become ethnographers of our contemporary culture, attempting to explore our contemporary world via television. Just as anthropologist Clifford Geertz studied the Balinese through their popular rites and rituals, so we will study our own culture through the window of television.

In order to develop these skills we will work towards several goals. First, in the words of ethnographer Alfred Schutz, we will attempt to make contemporary television “ethnographically strange.” Television texts, like the food we eat or the clothes we wear, are so integrated into our everyday routines that they most often go unnoticed, remaining invisible and taken-for-granted. In order to study television seriously we will challenged our taken-for-granted assumptions, seeing television as an object of study with interesting, strange implications for our contemporary culture.

To facilitate this, we will explore and employ a variety of critical tools, from neo-Marxist theory, to Auteur-theory, to ethno-semiotics, to feminist criticism, utilizing each to render television strange and to remove it from its common sense context.

Second, we will take seriously the reading and writing of contemporary television criticism, immersing ourselves in the writings of other television scholars, as well as crafting our own, original criticism. We will learn to read critically, deeply, and with an eye for detail, the contemporary criticism of television scholars. Situating ourselves within the scholarly community from which this criticism emerges, we will develop an expertise in the languages and theories of television and television criticism. Likewise, developing our own skills as writers of criticism, we will work towards creating interesting, insightful, pieces of writing that tell ethnographically rich stories of our contemporary culture and encourage our readers to view their world in different ways and from multiple perspectives.

Finally, we will build a scholarly community devoted to the critical understanding and appreciation of contemporary television. By participating in regular discussions of television programs, collective criticisms of contemporary texts and scholarship, debates over problems and issues within television studies, by sharing our concerns, theories, criticisms, and writings, and by engaging each other critically, we will build a community in which television can be both taken seriously, and enjoyed as a pleasurable, important, interesting, and strange artifact of our contemporary culture.

### **Texts & Materials: (required unless otherwise noted)**

\*Vande Berg, L. R., Wenner, L. A., & Gronbeck, B. E. (2004). *Critical approaches to television* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company [VW&G below].

\*Other readings available on our Blackboard course website (via courseweb.pitt.edu)

\*Some device for recording broadcast and cable television programs (TiVo, DVR, VCR, etc.)

\*You will be expected to buy, rent, or download television programs throughout the semester. If you haven't already done so, you should download iTunes, as you may need to purchase programs through the iTunes store. You should also familiarize yourself with the range of options for watching television programs online and otherwise.

### **Midterm and Final Exams:**

The Midterm and Final Exams will be composed of multiple choice, short answer and essay type questions and will ask you to engage our readings and other material in critical, insightful manners. Questions, terms, and concepts will be developed directly from our readings and discussions. In preparation, you should review your notes and read each essay carefully and be familiar with its principle terms and concepts.

### **Essays:**

You will write two critical essays—each 7-9 double-spaced, typed pages and each demonstrating a different approach to television criticism. You will receive specific details on individual essay assignments during the course of the semester.

Although there are many different acceptable forms of writing, this course emphasizes analytic, thesis driven essays. This style of essay forces the writer to carefully formulate an argument about the objects they analyze and offers a good exercise in the critical thinking skills that are central to this class. For both of your essays, you will develop a well crafted central argument or THESIS STATEMENT that guides your essay overall. You will place this thesis at the opening of your

paper and the remainder of your essay will work to support this main argument. Each of your subsequent paragraphs and examples should be clearly related to your thesis. *If it isn't clear how any of your points connect to your central argument, then they should be revised or eliminated in favor of more relevant points.* The more clearly you connect these various examples and supporting arguments, the more clearly you will have supported your thesis and the stronger your essay should be overall.

Your thesis should be original and distinct to your essay and to the television program or programs that you analyze. *If your thesis could just as easily apply to another program and/or another essay, it is probably not specific or focused enough.* The theses “*Lost* uses a number of different aesthetic techniques” and “*Lost* is a beautifully shot program” are too broad to sustain a focused, well-developed argument. A stronger thesis might argue: “The use of extreme close-ups and non-diegetic sound on *Lost*, creates the feeling that the audience members are inside the heads of each of the main characters. This adds psychological depth to the experience of watching the show.” Likewise, “*Sex & the City* offers conflicting portrayals of women,” is not as strong as: “On *Sex & the City*, the conflicts between Carrie’s desire for independence and her ongoing pursuits of men offer a 21<sup>st</sup> century spin on the virgin/whore stereotype.” Have fun and be creative in crafting an interesting, specific thesis that offers a fresh argument about the topic you explore.

In supporting your thesis you will need to *use specific examples*. When talking about the use of camera shots or sound on *Lost*, you should discuss specific scenes or moments in the program and then analyze these in order to show how they support your thesis. *It's not enough to pick good examples alone; you need to show your reader how to understand these examples in the context of your argument.* One useful way of thinking about the number and kinds of examples you might use is to assume an open minded but cynical reader. This means going beyond asking whether or not you have given enough detail to illustrate the scene to someone who might not have seen the program you are discussing. Rather, you should ask yourself whether you have given enough evidence to convince an antagonistic reader who would not otherwise be inclined to believe your point or to agree with you (imagine your paper being read by someone who always seems to disagree with you). Depending on the type of analysis you are performing (aesthetic, economic, audience, etc.) you will likely need to use different sorts of examples. Think carefully about the best examples to use for your papers!

As you do each of the above, be sure that you *maintain a specific focus for your essay*. Because your essays will only be 7-9 pages long, you will want to keep your discussion as specific as possible. *Pick only the most relevant examples so that you can talk about them in detail.* You won't be able to talk about every aesthetic feature, rhetorical element, character, plot line, or sign, of any one program. Be selective in order to ensure a tightly focused, well-organized, well-argued essay.

#### *Guidelines for Essay Grades:*

A (90%-100%): “A” level papers satisfy the criteria of the assignment in exemplary ways. They have specific, focused central arguments that are illustrated with pertinent examples and supporting arguments. Each of the author’s points is clearly explained and developed, and all of these arguments and examples are clearly linked to one another and to the essay’s overall thesis. These essays offer insights about their topic that might not be obvious to a casual, everyday television viewer. “A” level essays are well-written, organized and illustrate a careful attention to editing and proof-reading (they have no more than one grammatical or proofreading error per page, taken as whole throughout the essay—i.e. no more than 8 such errors in an 8 page essay). They should be interesting and fun to read (and to write).

B (80%-89%): “B” level papers satisfy the basic criteria of the assignment and do so in a thoughtful, well-developed manner. These essays have clearly defined central arguments that are illustrated with a series of supporting examples. They make a genuine effort to critically engage their topic. These essays show an attempt towards careful proofreading and editing, even if they do not meet the criteria for “A” level work.

C (70%-79%): “C” level papers satisfy the basic criteria of the assignment, but lack the development, focus, or sophistication of “A” or “B” level papers. These papers may have unclear central arguments, or examples that are not clearly linked to each other or to the main topic of the essay. They may lack the careful proof-reading that characterizes “A” or “B” level essays, as illustrated by frequent spelling or grammatical errors.

D/F (0%-69%): “D” or “F” level essays fail to meet the basic criteria of the assignment in one or more ways, are turned in late, or show little effort to engage the topic of the assignment.

### **Deadlines:**

Deadlines are clearly marked on all assignments. As a general rule, late assignments are unacceptable and when accepted will result in a substantial penalty. In addition, you must be present on exam dates in order to complete examinations. If you must miss an exam date, please speak with me well in advance. Such requests will be taken on a case by case basis.

**I WILL NOT ACCEPT ASSIGNMENTS VIA EMAIL WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL.** If you cannot be in class when an assignment is due, you should give it to a classmate to turn in, or place it in my mailbox (in 1117 CL) prior to class.

**It is your responsibility to be sure that your computer files are properly backed up, that you have ample time to print your assignments before they are due, and that you are prepared for any other technology mishap that might occur in the process of completing an assignment. Malfunctioning computer equipment is not an adequate reason for a late assignment.**

### **Participation and Attendance:**

Participation in class discussions is an essential component of this course. You should make every effort to attend each class period and be prepared to contribute in insightful ways. If you must miss a class, be sure to notify me well in advance whenever possible. **Both the quantity and quality of your contributions are important. The most prepared students will make daily contributions that are insightful, interesting, and encourage discussion from fellow students—making efforts to engage, respond to, and converse with classmates in intelligent ways without monopolizing discussion or discouraging others from participating.**

#### *Guidelines for Participation Grades:*

A (90%-100%): These students ***attend all or virtually all class periods*** and ***make daily contributions to class***. These students evidence careful preparation for each class, complete daily reading assignments, and offer insightful, challenging, and critical commentary without monopolizing class discussion, or silencing other class members.

B (80%-89%): These students ***attend all or virtually all class periods*** and ***make at least weekly contributions to class***. While these students may not speak up every class period, it is clear that they have prepared for class, completed daily readings, and that they make a genuine effort to engage in a productive, thoughtful conversation.

C (70%-79%): These students *miss several classes* or *make irregular contributions to class*. If these students miss several classes, then they make up for it by making frequent, insightful, contributions when they are present. If these students do not participate regularly, then they make up for it by regular attendance, careful preparation, and at least some effort to participate in class sessions.

D/F (0%-69%): Generally, these students miss a high number of class periods and/or make little or no effort to engage in class discussions.

### **Reading Responses:**

You will complete weekly reading responses throughout the semester. These should be approximately one single-spaced, typed page, and are due in class each week. These should respond to the prompt offered on the syllabus and make a genuine effort to engage the question or exercise of the week.

*There are 13 possible Critical Responses, with your 7 best figuring in your final grade (though note that response #3 is required for everyone). Your individual responses will be evaluated on the following scale:*

√ (100%): These responses make a genuine effort to address the week's question in a thoughtful, interesting manner. While these responses need not be perfectly written, they show an ongoing attempt to write and think in provocative, challenging ways.

√- (70%): These responses do not fulfill the basic requirements of the assignment in one or more ways: they do not devote sufficient time or space to the question, or fail to take up the day's question completely; they are disorganized, or lack a coherent point.

***Late responses and e-mailed responses will not be accepted.***

### **Peer Facilitated Discussion:**

Throughout the course various class days will be devoted to a Peer Facilitated Discussion in which a group of three to four students serve as presenters and discussion leaders for the class as a whole. Here, the group should explore the assigned readings by utilizing a relevant television example, offering a critical reading of its content, and engaging the class in a critical discussion of both the readings and the topic of the day. **YOUR TASK IS NOT TO SUMMARIZE THE READINGS OR TO HAVE THE CLASS RECITE THEIR RELEVANT FACTS.** Rather, you should “digest” these essays, drawing them together, and showing your ability to critically engage the readings in insightful, interesting ways—demonstrating their connections and building a critical argument of your own. Ultimately, each group should offer a focused, original, compelling argument that demonstrates your engagement with both the readings and contemporary television that teaches your peers something they might not have known or gleaned from their own reading of the material.

**Your presentation will take up the last 45-50 minutes of class. You should be well prepared and able to engage your classmates for the duration of this time.**

Each group of presenters will do all of the following:

**1) MEET WITH ME BY THE WEEK PRIOR TO YOUR PRESENTATION.** At this time you should be prepared to brainstorm and discuss ideas for your presentation, suggesting directions you might take, examples you might use, arguments you hope to consider, and so forth. These meetings will probably last between 30 minutes and one hour.

**2) PREPARE A RELEVANT EXAMPLE (OR EXAMPLES) FOR THE CLASS TO VIEW.** These should help to demonstrate the issues under discussion for that day's class. These should be directly relevant to the day's readings and should be both **long enough to demonstrate the day's concepts effectively**, and **short enough to allow for sufficient time to discuss the example in detail**. Pick examples that will clarify points from the day's readings and provoke a lively, interesting discussion. For certain discussions (e.g. those about television economics or audience responses to programs) clips of television programs themselves might not be the most relevant examples. Be creative in your selection!

**3) OFFER A SET OF ARGUMENTS, THEMES, OR QUESTIONS FOR THE CLASS TO CONSIDER.** While you should spend a significant portion of the period engaging your classmates in conversation, you should do more than merely "draw-out" the class. Rather, you should have a set of well-prepared issues, problems, questions, etc., which you can explain and demonstrate to the class, utilizing ideas from the readings in combination with your selected examples. These need not be completely self-contained—that is, you need not tell the class how to view or understand everything; you don't have to answer every question you raise, but you should have a clear frame for your discussion and be raising a specific set of issues through out.

**4) ENGAGE THE CLASS IN A PROVOCATIVE, INTERESTING, AND INSIGHTFUL CONVERSATION.** Your ideas, questions, problems, and examples should all invite your classmates to participate in an interesting conversation that helps them think about the readings, and contemporary television, in ways that complicate and enhance their thinking.

Presentations that are well planned, well prepared, and satisfy all of the above criteria will receive full credit.

Our classroom has a DVD player, but if you are using computer files or internet sites in your presentation, **YOU WILL NEED TO PROVIDE YOUR OWN LAPTOP COMPUTER.** If you use a Macintosh computer, you will need to be sure that you have an adaptor for the video projector. We will have a standard VGA cable available in class.

**You should verify before class that you can play all of the necessary clips and files, that you know how to locate your clips quickly, that you know how to access the internet on campus if necessary, and are otherwise well prepared. You should also have a backup plan in case any of your files or DVDs does not work (e.g. questions you can ask in the absence of your clips).**

You will sign-up for presentation dates beginning on the second day of class.

### **TV Viewing Requirement:**

In order to get the most of our course readings and discussions, each of you will need to watch a series of television programs throughout the semester. At various times you may also be required to record all or portions of programs (or otherwise obtain copies of these programs) for use in your written assignments or class presentations. You should make sure that you are technologically capable to do so, or make arrangements to rent programs from a local video rental store.

### **Grading:**

Grading for the course breaks down as follows:

Midterm Exam:	25
Final Exam:	25

Essays:	20
Participation	15
Reading Responses:	10
Peer Facilitated Discussion	5

**Problems and Concerns:**

Please see me about any problems or concerns that might arise throughout the semester. I will be available during my office hours, and at other times by appointment.

**I would like to hear from anyone who has a disability which may require some modification of seating, testing or other class requirements so that appropriate arrangements may be made. I also encourage you to contact Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890/(412) 383-7355 (TTY), as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and suggest reasonable accommodations for this course.**

**Cell Phone Policy:**

Cellular phones may not be used during class—this includes phone conversations as well as such silent communication as texting or IM. You should verify that you have turned your phone off before each class period. In addition, if you are seen talking on, texting, or otherwise using your phone during exam periods you will be subject to possible failure on the examination and other disciplinary action.

**Plagiarism:**

Using someone else's work as your own, or without proper citation, constitutes plagiarism, and as such is grounds for failure of an assignment, of this course, and disciplinary action on the part of the college. If you have questions about properly citing an article, or what can be considered plagiarism, please feel free to speak with me. It is your responsibility to make sure that your work is original and contains the appropriate citations and references.

**COMMRC 1105: Television & Society**  
**Malin**  
**Spring 2011**

**Weekly Syllabus:**

This schedule is subject to revision.

**Week 1**

January 5, Thursday:

COURSE INTRODUCTIONS

**Week 2**

January 10, Tuesday:

AN INTRODUCTION TO TELEVISION STUDIES

Reading for discussion:

VW&G pp. 1-51

January 12, Thursday:

TV STUDIES CONTINUED

Reading for discussion:

“Possible Social Effects of Television” by David Sarnoff (online)

**Reading response #1 Due in Class:**

Sarnoff wrote this essay in 1941. To what extent have his predictions regarding the social effects of television come true? In what ways is television different today than Sarnoff predicted at the time? Do you notice any social effects of television that Sarnoff didn't foresee when he wrote this essay?

**Week 3**

January 17, Tuesday:

TV ARTISTS (?): AESTHETICS AND AUTEUR-CENTERED CRITICISM

Reading for discussion:

VW&G pp. 52-64, pp. 230-246

“Television terminology” (hand-out)

January 19, Thursday:

TELEVISION AESTHETICS CONTINUED

Reading for discussion:

“Television Production Techniques as Communication” by David Barker (online)

**Reading response #2 Due in Class:**

Use Barker's ideas to talk about the aesthetics of some contemporary program. How are the aesthetics of the show you explore similar to or different from those that Barker examines?

**Week 4**

January 24, Tuesday:

MORE TELEVISION AESTHETICS: VARIETIES OF REALISM

Reading for discussion:

“It’s Not Television, It’s Magic Realism: The Mundane, the Grotesque, and the fantastic in *Six Feet Under*” by David Lavery (online)

“I’m Dead, Wow, Cool: The Music of *Six Feet Under*” by Peter Kaye (online)

January 26, Thursday:

AESTHETICS CONTINUED: CAMCORDER VERISIMILITUDE

**Peer Facilitated Screening/Discussion #1: Action Aesthetics**

Reading for discussion:

“24 and Twenty-First Century Quality Television” by Daniel Chamberlain and Scott Ruston (online)

“Divided Interests: Split Screen Aesthetics in 24” by Michael Allen (online)

**Reading Response #3 Due in Class (required):** Offer a 1 Minute Scene/Shot Analysis of a (non-animated) situation comedy or drama of your choice. Follow the example on Blackboard, though if you pick a scene that is shot “in proscenium,” you should identify which camera is used for each different shot.

**Week 5**

January 31, Tuesday:

INTRODUCING SEMIOTIC APPROACHES

Reading for discussion:

VW&G pp. 66-86

February 2, Thursday:

SEMIOTICS CONTINUED

**Peer Facilitated Screening/Discussion #2: The Semiotic Simpsons**

Reading for discussion:

“And the Rest Writes Itself: Roland Barthes Watches *The Simpsons*” by David Arnold (online)

“Reading the Ungraspable Double-Codedness of *The Simpsons*” by Simone Knox (online)

**Reading Response #4 Due in Class:**

Discuss the combinations of signifiers, signifieds, and signs, in some segment of *The Simpsons*. Be specific! How do these elements fit together and what is the overall message that they convey?

**Week 6**

February 7, Tuesday:

INTRODUCING NARRATIVE APPROACHES TO TELEVISION

Reading for discussion:

VW&G pp. 196-211

February 9, Thursday:

NARRATIVE APPROACHES CONTINUED

**Peer Facilitated Screening/Discussion #3: CSI and Police Investigation Narratives**

Reading for discussion:

“Policing Propp: Towards a Textualist Definition of the Procedural Drama” by Chandler Harriss (online)

“Nation, Identity and the Fascination with Forensic Science in Sherlock Holmes and *CSP*” by Ellen Burton Harrington (online)

**Reading Response #5 Due in Class:** Following Harriss, perform a “Proppian” analysis of an episode of a “procedural drama” of your choice (use the model he lays out on page 46 of his essay). How well does the episode you identify fit Harriss’ model? What is interesting or unique about the way in which your episode satisfies or diverges from this?

## Week 7

February 14, Tuesday:

INTRODUCING RHETORICAL APPROACHES TO TELEVISION

Reading for discussion:

VW&G pp. 139-153

February 16, Thursday:

RHETORIC CONTINUED

**Peer Facilitated Screening/Discussion #4: The Rhetorics of TV News**

Reading for discussion:

“Mediating Hillary Rodham Clinton: Television News Practices and Image-Making in the Postmodern Age” by Shawn Perry-Giles (online)

“Securing the Middle Ground: Reporter Formulas in *60 Minutes*” by Richard Campbell (online)

**Reading Response #6 Due in Class:** Analyze a SPECIFIC segment from a news magazine program such as *20/20* or *60 Minutes*. How is the segment presented? Look at some combination of rhetorical and aesthetic devices. How do these devices help frame the message of the segment? Does the coverage seem to suggest anything about what you should think about the topic?

## Week 8

February 21, Tuesday:

MIDTERM EXAMINATION

February 23, Thursday:

INTRODUCING TELEVISION GENRES

Reading for discussion:

VW&G pp. 110-129

## Week 9

February 28, Tuesday:

GENRE CONTINUED

Reading for discussion:

“Recombinant Television Genres and Doogie Howser M.D.” by Matthew McAllister (VW&G pp. 129-138)

March 1, Thursday:

MORE TV GENRES: CONVENTIONAL REALITIES

**Peer Facilitated Screening/Discussion #5: Making-over Genre**

Reading for discussion:

“Self-Made Women: Cosmetic Surgery Shows and the Construction of Female Psychopathology” by Elizabeth Gailey (online)

“*Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*: An American Faery Tale” by Gareth Palmer (online)

**Reading Response #7 Due in Class:**

Try to break “reality television” into several different sub-genres, giving examples of each.

What sorts of characteristics do these different sub-genres share and how are they different?

**Week 10: Observe Spring Break Media Rituals**

**Week 11**

March 13, Tuesday:

INTRODUCING TELEVISION PRODUCTION STUDIES

Reading for discussion:

VW&G pp. 258-277

**Essay #1 Due in Class**

March 15, Thursday:

PRODUCTION STUDIES CONTINUED: POLITICAL ECONOMY & MEDIA CONGLOMERATION

Reading for discussion:

“Welcome to Havana, Mr. Corleone: Issues of Media Ownership and Control” by Robert McChesney (online)

**Reading Response #8 Due in Class:**

Option 1: Find out the company that owns some television program you know well. How does the program fit within the larger context of the company’s financial interests? How does it fit with other programs or products that the company might also own?

Option 2: Record one hour of programming from an advertising supported cable network. Make note of all of the advertisements included during that hour. Whom do these ads seem to be targeting? How does this fit with the kind of programming these ads accompany? What does this suggest about the economics of cable television?

**Week 12**

March 20, Tuesday:

IDEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON TELEVISION

Reading for discussion:

VW&G pp. 291-312; pp. 389-412

March 22, Thursday:

PRODUCTION STUDIES CONTINUED

**Peer Facilitated Screening/Discussion #6: The Business of *The Sopranos***

Reading for discussion

- “Surviving ‘the Hit’: Will *The Sopranos* Still Sting for HBO?” by Michael M. Epstein, Jimmie L. Reeves, and Mark Rogers (online)
- “The Family Racket: AOL, Time Warner, HBO, *The Sopranos*, and the Construction of a Quality Brand” by Deborah Jaramillo (online)

**Reading Response #9 Due in Class:**

How would you describe HBO’s brand identity? How has the network established this? Be specific and use specific examples to support your claims.

**Week 13**

March 27, Tuesday:

REPRESENTING GENDER & SEXUALITY

Reading for discussion:

- “*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*: Feminism, Postmodernity, and Postfeminism” by Susan Owen (VW&G pp. 464-472)
- “Seeing Straight Through Queer Eye: Exposing the Strategic Rhetoric of Heteronomativity in a Mediated Ritual of Gay Rebellion” by Robert Westerfelhaus and Celeste Lacroix (online)

March 29, Thursday:

IDEOLOGIES CONTINUED

**Peer Facilitated Screening/Discussion #7: The Ideological Dynamics of *The Daily Show***

Reading for discussion:

- “Political Culture Jamming: The Dissident Humor of *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*” by Jamie Warner (online)
- “Not Necessarily Not the News: Gatekeeping, Remediation and *The Daily Show*” by Aaron McKain (online)

**Reading Response #10 Due in Class:** DEFEND OR REFUTE the following claim: Despite being the product of a major media corporation, *The Daily Show* challenges the dominant ideologies of the United States. Use specific examples to support your position.

**Week 14**

April 3, Tuesday:

REPRESENTING RACE

Reading for discussion:

- “The Changing Face of the Black Family on Television” by Melbourne Cummings (online)
- “TV’s Black Comfort Zone for Whites” by Richard Carter (online)

April 5, Thursday:

MORE GENDER & SEXUALITY

**Peer Facilitated Screening/Discussion #8: Sex & the City**

Reading for discussion:

- “What’s the Harm in Believing?: Mr. Big, Mr. Perfect, and the Romantic Quest for *Sex and the City*’s Mr. Right” by Joanna Di Mattia (online)

“Orgasms and Empowerment: *Sex and the City* and the Third Wave Feminism” by Astrid Henry (online)

**Reading Response #11 Due in Class:** DEFEND OR REFUTE the following claim: The representations of women on *Sex and the City* are empowering for female viewers. Use specific examples to support your position.

### Week 15

April 10, Tuesday:

REPRESENTING RACE CONTINUED

#### **Peer Facilitated Screening/Discussion #9: Race and Reality TV**

“Pretending to Be “Postracial”: The Spectacularization of Race in Reality TV’s *Survivor*” by Emily Drew (online)

“Performing Race in *Flavor of Love* and *The Bachelor*” by Rachel Dubrofsky and Antoine Hardy (online)

April 12, Thursday:

INTRODUCING AUDIENCE CENTERED APPROACHES TO TELEVISION

Reading for discussion:

VW&G pp. 329-342; pp. 358-369

“Your Sister in St. Scully: An Electronic Community of Female Fans of the *X-Files*” by Sarah Wakefield (online)

#### **Reading Response #12 Due in Class:**

Option 1: Observe some group of people watching television. In your response, talk about what you see and what you think is interesting about it. What do your observations tell you about how people interact with television?

Option 2: Explore some online “fan site” devoted to a television program with which you are familiar. What sorts of activities or conversations are taking place on this site? What can looking at this site tell us about the ways in which fans relate to this particular program?

### Week 16

April 17, Tuesday:

AUDIENCE CENTERED APPROACHES CONTINUED

#### **Peer Facilitated Screening/Discussion #10: Ethnographies of Fan Communities**

Reading for discussion:

“Pittsburgh in Fort Worth: Football Bars, Sports Television, Sports Fandom, and the Management of Home” by Jon Kraszewski (online)

“The Best of Both Worlds: Sports Fans Find Good Seats at the Bar” by Susan Tyler Eastman and Arthur Land (online)

#### **Essay #2 Due in Class**

April 19, Thursday:

PAUSE, REWIND AND FAST-FORWARD: THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF TELEVISION AND TELEVISION STUDIES

**Reading Response #13 Due in Class:** What are the three most important things everyone should know about television? Why?

**FINAL EXAMINATION: TO BE ANNOUNCED**