

English/Film Studies 291 Spring 2013: Syllabus

Intro to Television Studies

Instructor: Katie Morrissey

Email: morriss9@uwm.edu

Office: Curtin 483

Office Hours: TBA

Course Description

From watching cartoons in the living room to late night movies in our dorm rooms, for decades the television set has been an important fixture in many people's daily lives. Today we also increasingly watch television on the go--using computers, cell phones, DVRs, and DVDs to keep up with our favorite shows. This course provides an introduction to television studies both by looking back and by looking forward. We will learn more about television's past and the different factors shaping what television shows look like today. We will also discuss more recent technological changes, including the digitization of television, and how these things may affect what television looks like in the years to come. Due to its presence in our homes and as part of our daily lives, studying television has also become a way for us to study our society, to think about the ways television represents the world to its viewers, and to consider how viewers engage with television. In this class we will watch a variety of television programs, learn more about different approaches to studying of television, and consider television's larger role in popular culture and society.

Please note:

There are no prerequisites for this course and you are therefore not expected to have any prior knowledge of media studies. You are, however, expected to treat the material as a legitimate object of study. We will begin with the premise that television offers much more than "entertainment" and that, accordingly, studying it is a serious undertaking requiring rigor and diligence.

Required Text

- *Television: Critical Methods and Applications* (4th Edition) by Jeremy Butler

Copies of this book are available at the UWM Bookstore. You are also welcome to buy copies used and/or online. There have been some major changes made to this edition of the text, so be sure to purchase the 4th edition.

Any additional course readings will be posted as pdf files on D2L.

Course Screenings

As this is a media studies course, most weeks you'll be assigned television content to watch along with the readings. Each week you will be given a list of screening items to choose from. You are responsible for making time to acquire and view the requisite TV programs in time to do the week's work. Course screenings are required, so you must make sure you have the time and technical capacity for viewing.

Important Notes on Screenings:

- Each week I will try to provide you with several viewing options. This will typically include content available online on sites like Hulu.com, Netflix.com, TV network websites, and the UWM Media Library. The screenings consist of popular content that is also typically available for rental at your local library and/or video rental store. All students in this course must have some sort of access to video content.
- I do not require students to have a Netflix or HuluPLUS account for this class, but you may find it is easier for you to access content if you have one. You may want to consider temporarily signing up for one of their basic online streaming accounts for the duration of this class. Or, you might want to ask around and see if a friend has an account you can share. I'll poll the group during the first week of class to see if one of these options (Hulu or Netflix) is easier for the group than the other. Then I will work to pick screening options which work best for our class.
- If you need to access hard copies of the shows and aren't near the UWM Library, you may want to check out your local public library. You'd be amazed at how many DVDs they have. (Also, tip: These days you can usually log into the library's website and reserve copies for yourself in advance.)

- When television, you may also be asked to turn on a television set and watch content as it is broadcast live (commercials and all). When we focus on TV and digital media, you may need to visit websites that require you to download and install plug-ins (i.e. Quicktime, Flash, etc.) to view their content. If you think you may have problems doing any of these things, be sure to contact me the first week of class so we can discuss it.

Grading

Discussion Posts: 35%

Participation: 5%

Self-Checks: 5%

Essays: 55% (Midterm Paper: 25%, Final Paper: 30%)

Assignments

Discussion Posts (35%) and Participation (5%)

As an online course, this class relies heavily on the active participation of all students. Each week, most of our time will be spent discussing the readings and screenings. To fully participate in the course and to get the most out of it, you must take the time to reach through all posts and comments. (Just FYI, D2L lets me see who does and does not read each post.) Regularly reading and responding will help you with the course material. Just as importantly, your contributions will also allow you to help others in the class, as all of you work together to flush out an idea or hammer through a challenging question.

As an online class, you will find yourself writing a lot in this course. Each week you are required to post one discussion post and two responses. With each portion of class, you will find yourself writing several pages worth of comments and posts. I have provided guidelines to help you with creating your posts and to give you a sense of the appropriate tone for our discussions. I will also assess your posts each week and assign them an overall grade (1-10 points). At the beginning of the semester, I will also give you feedback on your posts and comments so that you have a sense of what's expected.

As you post, remember that this is a classroom and the tone of your writing should be appropriate to an academic environment. I have no problem with an occasional smiley :-), but I do expect you to write clearly and to keep an eye on spelling and grammar. Essentially, this is a classroom, not an IM session with a friend.

You'll notice I've also specified an additional 5% of your grade for participation. This aspect of your grade is to recognize and encourage all of you to support each other and work together each week. Every week I'll ask you to share your questions and ideas with the class, but I will also ask you to listen to others and give feedback to them on their ideas and questions as well. Essentially, I want I want us to talk to each other, rather than having a discussion forum where we "post and run." ☺ The 5% participation grade is designed to recognize and encourage all of you to participate by listening to each other, engaging in the each other's ideas, and provide constructive feedback.

Self-Checks (5%)

Each Wednesday you will be asked to check on yourself and how well you've absorbed some of the concepts and key-terms for the week. This is a quick no-penalty quiz, you simply receive credit for doing it. If you don't do it, you don't get credit. The results are for you and simply let you assess how well you're doing with the week's material. This self-check is designed to alert you to concepts/terms you may want to review or ask me for additional help with.

Essays (55%)

You will write two papers this semester. The first essays should be 4-5 pages long and the second 5-7 pages long. These will be double-spaced, use a standard sized font and follow the MLA style of citation and formatting. The essays will work in two ways: assessing your understanding of television concepts and terms, asking you to apply what you've learned by analyzing TV content and developing your own arguments about particular TV texts.

All work in this class must be your own. Any material or ideas taken from another person must be appropriately cited and contextualized. Failure to do these things will be considered an act of plagiarism and will lead to failure in the class.

Be warned, plagiarism is a serious offense under UWM's code of ethics and has serious consequences. For more information and additional university policies, go here: <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf>.

Scheduling

Since this is an online course, our schedule is different from a traditional class that meets face-to-face. Our week typically runs from Monday to Saturday, with Monday through Wednesday prep days (time to do the readings and screenings) and Thursday through Saturday being discussion days. Whether you are working at two pm or two am, as long as your work is up by the deadline, you are free to post whenever you wish.

P.S.

If you have any questions regarding the course policies or assignments, please post them to the "Questions and Problems" discussion forum. All general questions on the class should be posted in this forum. For personal concerns, please email me directly (morriss9@uwm.edu). Do remember that the schedule is subject to some change, as is this syllabus.

English/Film Studies 291 Spring 2013 Course Calendar

A Typical Week*

Days 1-3 (Monday - Wednesday): Prep days

- Official allotted time for readings and screenings, as well as the review of lecture/reading notes and discussion questions.
- Weekly Self-check due by 11:59 pm Wednesday.

Days 4-6 (Thursday - Saturday): Discussion

- Initial post (175-250 words) due by 11:59 pm Friday.
- Two response posts (100-150 words) due by 11:59 pm Saturday.
- You are only required to make two responses, but you are welcome and encouraged to respond further and continue your conversations.

* *This schedule will be different on weeks when essays are due.*

This course moves fast and requires careful planning and scheduling on your part. I strongly recommend that you set up a weekly schedule for yourself, keeping in mind your other outside obligations, so you know when the best times are for you to get online and get the work done. Pay close attention to the overall schedule, requirements and deadlines, so that you can stay on track. It usually takes a few weeks for your weekly schedule to fall into place, plan to give yourself lots of extra time in the first few weeks, so you'll be sure you don't fall behind.

A quick note on screenings...

Many of the films we can screen online are only available for a limited time. Because of this, I typically wait until Sunday evenings to finalize and post our weekly screenings, the lecture notes, and discussion assignments. (This is why the screenings on this calendar are listed "TBA" or To Be Announced). So far, this hasn't caused any problems for students, but I can imagine circumstances where it might. For example, some of you may need to rent your movies a day or two earlier or have schedules that require you to get a head start on the week. If so, please contact me and let me know. I'll do my best to work with you and get you the screening options up earlier.

Week One (1/22 - 1/26) Getting Started

- **Read:** Carefully read *all* the course documents and post any questions you may have to the Questions/Problems area of the discussion forums. Also read the two short pdfs posted for week one (Mittell's Intro/TV History and the excerpts from Allen's FAQ).
- **Discussion:** Introductory and discussion posts due by Saturday at 11:59 p.m. Also, post any questions about the class or course documents to the "Questions and Problems" discussion forum.

Week Two (1/27 - 1/31)

- **Read:** Butler, Chapter One and lecture notes.
- **Watch:** Two hours of live TV with commercials.
- **Self-check:** Completed by 11:59 Wednesday.
- **Discussion:** Initial post by 11:59 pm Friday.
- **Responses:** Two discussion responses by 11:59 pm Saturday.

Week Three (2/3 - 2/9)

- **Read:** Butler, Chapter Two and lecture notes.
- **Watch:** TBA
- **Self-check:** Completed by 11:59 Wednesday.
- **Discussion:** Initial post by 11:59 pm Friday.
- **Responses:** Two discussion responses by 11:59 pm Saturday.

Week Four (2/10 - 2/16)

- **Read:** Butler, Chapter Three and lecture notes.
- **Watch:** TBA
- **Self-check:** Completed by 11:59 Wednesday.
- **Discussion:** Initial post by 11:59 pm Friday.
- **Responses:** Two discussion responses by 11:59 pm Saturday.

Week Five (2/17 - 2/23)

- **Read:** Butler, Chapter Four; Roscoe's "Big Brother Australia;" and lecture notes.
- **Watch:** TBA
- **Self-check:** Completed by 11:59 Wednesday.
- **Discussion:** Initial post by 11:59 pm Friday.
- **Responses:** Two discussion responses by 11:59 pm Saturday.

Week Six (2/24 - 3/2)

- **Read:** Butler, Chapter Six, Chapter Seven, and lecture notes.
- **Watch:** TBA
- **Self-check:** Completed by 11:59 Wednesday.
- **Discussion:** Initial post by 11:59 pm Friday.
- **Responses:** Two discussion responses by 11:59 pm Saturday.

Week Seven (3/3 - 3/9)

- **Discussion:** Butler, Chapter Eight, Chapter Nine, and lecture notes.
- **Watch:** TBA
- **Self-check:** Completed by 11:59 Wednesday.
- **Discussion:** Initial post by 11:59 pm Friday.
- **Responses:** Two discussion responses by 11:59 pm Saturday.

Week Eight (3/10 - 3/16)

- **Read:** Butler, Chapter Ten and lecture notes.
- **Watch:** TBA.
- **Self-check:** Completed by 11:59 Wednesday.
- **Discussion:** Initial post by 11:59 pm Friday.
- **Responses:** Two discussion responses by 11:59 pm Saturday.

Week Nine (3/17 - 3/24) - Spring Break

Week Ten (3/24 - 3/30) Essay 1 Due

- **Discussion:** Initial post by 11:59 pm Monday.
- **Response:** One required response due by 11:59 pm Tuesday.
- **Post:** Essay 1 Due in D2L Dropbox by 11:59 pm Saturday 3/30.

Week Eleven (3/31 - 4/6)

- **Read:** Butler, Chapter Five and lecture notes.
- **Watch/Browse:** TBA
- **Self-check:** Completed by 11:59 Wednesday.
- **Discussion:** Initial post by 11:59 pm Friday.
- **Responses:** Two discussion responses by 11:59 pm Saturday.

Week Twelve (4/7 – 4/13)

- **Read:** Butler, Chapter Eleven and Twelve, and lecture notes.
- **Watch/Browse:** TBA
- **Self-check:** Completed by 11:59 Wednesday.
- **Discussion:** Initial post by 11:59 pm Friday.
- **Responses:** Two discussion responses by 11:59 pm Saturday.

Week Thirteen (4/14 – 4/20)

- **Read:** Butler, Chapter Thirteen; Additional reading TBA; Lecture notes
- **Watch/Browse:** TBA
- **Self-check:** Completed by 11:59 Wednesday.
- **Discussion:** Initial post by 11:59 pm Friday.
- **Responses:** Two discussion responses by 11:59 pm Saturday.

Week Fourteen (4/21 - 4/27)

- **Read:** Transmedia storytelling and convergence readings (TBA) and lecture notes.
- **Watch/Browse:** TBA
- **Self-check:** Completed by 11:59 Wednesday.
- **Discussion:** Initial post by 11:59 pm Friday.
- **Responses:** Two discussion responses by 11:59 pm Saturday.

Week Fifteen (4/28 - 5/4)

- **Read:** Audience and Cult TV readings (TBA) and lecture notes.
- **Watch/Browse:** TBA
- **Self-check:** Completed by 11:59 Wednesday.
- **Discussion:** Initial post by 11:59 pm Friday.
- **Responses:** Two discussion responses by 11:59 pm Saturday.

Week Sixteen (5/5 – Thursday 5/9) Prepping for Essay 2

- **Discussion:** Initial post by 11:59 pm Monday.
- **Response:** One required response (and any additional questions) due by 11:59 pm Wednesday.
- **Post:** Essay 2 Due in D2L Dropbox by 11:59 pm Saturday 5/18.