



these up, you must be here within the first five minutes of class, and you must stay for the duration of the class period to receive the points.

### **General Grading Guidelines:**

#### **Report: Defining Television (1 point)**

In this report, you will use course readings and class discussions to define what makes television different from every other screen medium. On your pursuit of the rare element “televisium” you should consider content (ex: narrativizing, characterization), the structuring of this content (ex: interruption, segmentation), audience uses and gratifications, delivery mechanisms, business practices, production techniques, and any other factors that make television different than film / video / video games / social media / etc. You will offer a one to two sentence definition including five elements that make television unique, and then define those five elements in bullet point form with specific examples from television.

#### **Presentation: The New Distribution (1 point)**

In this presentation, you and your partner will select one sub-genre of television and conduct an exhaustive search where this genre airs in both first run and syndication forms. Specifically you will research where this genre resides on broadcast, cable, SVOD, and AVOD platforms. In your presentation, you will pitch your idea for a program in this genre and demonstrate all of the specific places your program will air in its lifespan as a program (both as first run and syndication).

#### **Report: Narrative Analysis (3 points)**

In this report, you will conduct an in-depth analysis of a successful television program's narrative structures over the course of a single episode, a season, and a series. You will apply the various foundational narrative theories such as the enigma/delay/resolution structure, moments of equilibrium/disequilibrium, coherence / causality, and the A/B/C story structure. This will be a blend of bullet points and timelines drawn out. For a television producer, this is an incredibly valuable exercise.

#### **Presentation: In-Depth Semiotic Analysis of a Single Character (2 points)**

In this four to five minute ultra-polished presentation, you will conduct a deep analysis of a single character from a single television show using semiotics as your lens to examine message and meaning. Select a character to whom you are inexplicably drawn, and examine the signifieds (meanings) to the corresponding signifiers (messages) of the character using the character analysis techniques we examine.

#### **Report: Mapping the Generic Foundation (3 points)**

In this report, you will use the history of three televisual subgenres to demonstrate how one current show on television used the forms of the genre as its inspiration. Specifically, you will select one current program on television and figure out what three subgenres does it draw direct inspiration from (ex: professional wrestling is a soap opera, a variety show, and an action procedural). Next, you will watch programming from each of the three genres from the formative days of it, its golden age, and its most recent era. Select two programs from each era of each subgenre (2 x 3 x 3 = 18 shows in total) and examine *mise en scene*, production elements, and narrative / character techniques that the sub-genre contributes to the show.

#### **Series Treatment & Presentation (5 points)**

In your final project of the semester, you will use your character analyzing, genre mapping, and narrative navigating skills to develop a complete treatment for an original scripted television show. Understanding the meaning-making structures of television through character, narrative, and genre will result in a creative concept rooted in quality televisual strategies and tactics. For this treatment you will develop your program objective (title / goals and takeaways / audiences / differentiation and fit), mapping out the series

(format / generic combination / logline / setting, aesthetics, and logic of the world), character analysis of your three mains (ideas they represent / motivations / traits / dialogue sample / other indicators), narrative and arcs (episode outline for the first six episodes / main arcs and through-lines / a complete detailed arc of the pilot), and the distribution and marketing (what channels it would air first run and syndication / monetization opportunities / three paratexts). There will be substantial in-class time to develop these concepts and you will present your final polished treatment to the class.

### **“Brings” and “Examples” (7 points)**

These are typed responses to a concept that the day's reading discusses or some other related example/response. There are 36 “brings” and “examples” in total meaning a combination of 5 brings/examples = 1 point with the ability to miss one without consequence. Note that some days will have a “bring” and an “example” or two “examples.” These are due within the first five minutes of class (no exceptions) and you must be present for the entire class period and it must be what the prompt requested to get credit. Note: All “examples” require your to print screengrabs as well.

**22 Points Total**

Presentations and papers are graded as full points or a zero. If you do not receive points, you have the ability to revise the presentation/paper and resubmit it for points. Any revised content is due at the Wednesday of Week 13. “Examples” must be embedded on WordPress before the start of class and “brings” must be brought to class in specified form. Brings or examples cannot be revised, therefore they must be correct the first time.

### **General Grading Guidelines**

Projects in the professional world do not receive partial credit. They are either of professional quality or not. However, projects of a professional quality seldom happen on a first draft. They nearly always require revisions that ultimately improve the project. The assessments in this class will mirror the television industry.

- All assignments are assigned orally. (There is always substantial time for clarification in class.)
- You must have your project in class during the class that it is due and it must be in the form of a reasonable draft (where time has clearly been spent on it) or else you cannot make revisions, and therefore receive a zero.
- On every assignment, there is only the score of full points or zero. The score of full points will be awarded to proficient projects that follow the required structure, address all areas of the assignment, utilize concepts from the course to analyze content and draw conclusions, and cite actual cogent examples from television programming/
- All feedback on presentations will be received orally in class and must be incorporated in order to receive the full points. (Take notes during the feedback). Reports will have written feedback which you are expected to address.
- If you get a zero of a Presentation or Report, you have until Week 14 to revise it (“Brings” and “Examples” cannot be revised; they must be correct for class). If it meets the quality required, you receive full credit. Keep in mind, just because you make revisions, it does not guarantee points. The project has to be right. This can take one draft or four.
- I am on your team and will do everything I can to help you get the project to this level of quality. We serve the product, not our egos!

There are several advantages to this grading process. First, it mirrors a professional environment, where your work is not complete until it is ready for the public. Secondly, it rewards good work with full credit. Third, it allows for revision, which is an invaluable skill and will motivate you to do quality work as you must stand by your work. The drafting process is an invaluable one. Unlike other classes “just getting it done” does not get you points; it must be right.

Grades will be assigned as follows:

**100-90% = A**

**89-80% = B**

**79-70% = C**

**69-60% = D**

**59- 0% = F**

### **Note on Graduate Student Projects**

Students in the Communication Studies M.A. program can take any course 4750 or above for graduate credit, provided the course requires work past the undergraduate level. In this course, M.A. students will be required to have 50% more to their project (ex: if a report is 10 pages for the undergraduate, it will be 15 pages for the graduate student) as well as being held to a graduate-level of research sources and analyses in evaluation.

### **Attendance, late work, and two extension coupons:**

While there is no formal attendance policy in the course, those who do not attend nearly every session almost always fail this course. Additionally, you are required to be present on-time and for the duration of a class where an assignment is due or it will not be accepted. Let me reiterate, no late work is accepted in this course as it only leads to future problems. This includes “brings” and “examples which make up 31.8% of this course's grade. We spend each class discussing and unpacking media theories and concepts and the “bring” is meant to prime you for the discussion. They cannot be separated from one another and there are no exceptions.

That being said, life does happen sometimes. With this in mind, this syllabus includes two extension coupons that can be used on any assignment for any reason without any explanation needed. This coupon allows you an extension on any assignment (bring or project) until the next class period, and you still receive full points if you accomplish the assignment satisfactorily. Here is how to use the coupon:

1. You may only use two coupons per semester. This system is meant to be flexible and to simplify life for both of us in the event that you miss class or cannot complete an assignment on time. By using these two coupons, you will not ask me to accept any other late work this semester regardless of your circumstance. If you ask me to accept late work after using your two coupons, the previous coupons will be considered null and void and you will receive zeros on those projects. There are no exceptions, so try to avoid using the coupon unless absolutely necessary.
2. These coupons can be used at any point in the semester through week 14. This means that coupons cannot be used in the final two weeks of the semester.
3. Write your name on it and staple or paper clip it to your assignment. Folded over does not count and will not be accepted.

### **Cell Phones & Digital Devices:**

Absolutely no cell phone / tablet / laptop / digital device usage is allowed in this class. Unless directly directed to use the device for in-class research or if you inform the professor about an urgent situation where someone will be contacting you, device usage is absolutely banned. This classroom is a space for complex thought and conversation. In order to have complex thought and conversation, you need to be present without disruption. This policy is supported by unequivocal data on the negative correlation between screens in the classroom and learning.

1. A Massachusetts Institute of Technology study demonstrated that it is impossible for the brain to multi-tasking and any attempt to do so “ruins productivity, causes mistakes, and impedes creative thought.” Disrupting a thought process by checking digital content is not good for learning or the generation of new ideas.
2. Multiple empirical studies have demonstrated that screens in the classroom diminish learning. A Princeton study demonstrated how taking notes on a laptop lowered comprehension of material and retention. Studies by Kaspersky found that the mere presence of a smart phone on a desk lowered test scores by 23%, causes “digital amnesia,” and makes employees 26% overall less productive at work.
3. Checking your phone also makes class time emotionally less enjoyable. The National Institute of Health found that a rise in anxiety and stress is directly related to problematic cell phone usage. If you believe you will have a difficult time abstaining from digital devices, you are not alone. A Baylor University study found that 60% of college students felt mentally and physically addicted to their cell phones.

In order to encourage a singular focus, I will not accept whatever assignment is due that day from you and you will receive a zero on it if you look at your digital device during class. This is any glance at a cell phone, tablet, or lap top. Notes should be taken by hand (and then transcribed later if you wish). There are no warnings. If you continue to look at the device, you will lose a previous “bring” point for each infraction. To add some spice to the equation, if I miss the infraction, and your classmate informs on you, he/she gets the “bring” point taken from you.

I run a classroom that places a premium on showing up and engaging with a topic. Under this system, conversations are more intriguing, students report a deeper understanding of material, and every class period goes by faster. “Be here now,” as there is no advantage to thinking about somewhere else that you are not.

### **Academic integrity:**

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU’s Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards. Consequences of academic dishonesty range from failing of the course to expulsion from the university. There is a zero tolerance policy of plagiarism in this course.

### **Students with disabilities:**

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

### **The Student Success Center:**

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center ([www.eiu.edu/~success](http://www.eiu.edu/~success)) for assistance with time management, text taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581- 6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

## **Tentative Course Schedule**

### **Week 1: Television: Forms and functions.**

M: Considering television

Bring: Your self to discuss your love of television.

W: Defining Television

Assign: Defining Television

Read: Vande Berg, Wenner, & Gronbeck - “The context for criticism”  
O'Donnell Ch. 1 “The work of the critic”

Examples: Find clips of television that accomplish the following: 1. Television as entertainment 2. Television as socializing agent (cultural norms / expectations). 3. Television as educational tool / information provider 4. Television as community creator. 5. Television as providing possibilities. You should have five clips in total and screengrabs of each clip printed out.

Bring: After reading the articles, provide 1. A list of 5 things that television “does” that were not part of the examples above. 2. Three elements that make television different from any other screen medium (ex: videos, film, video games).

**Week 2**

M: Television as medium. Television as content.

Read: Hartley Ch. 2 “What are the uses of television studies?”  
Peirce - “Quarterlife and remediation”

Example: 1. Embed one example of a media text (film, webisode, comic book) that failed in trying to be episodic television. 2. Embed one example of a media text that succeeded in becoming episodic television.

Bring: 1. Five additional elements of “televisium” that make television unique. Consider structuring, segmentation, narrative structure, business strategies, characterization, and production elements.

W: Debating defining television

**Due: Defining Television**

Assign: The New Distribution

Bring: Your self for an in-class debate on “What is television?”

**Week 3**

M: No classes held at university (Labor Day)

W: Presentations

**Due: The New Distribution**

Bring: Your self to present and view the other presentations.

**Week 4: Why is that on TV?**

M: The business of content.

Assign: Tracing It Back

Read: O'Donnell Ch.2 “Demystifying the business of television”

Bring: 1. Select two competing television channels of a similar style (ex: MTV and VH1, ESPN and Fox Sports, TNT and FX, NBC and CBS, etc.) and examine their programming schedules for a 7 day period. Provide a paragraph explanation of the overall programming choices according to O'Donnell and provide specific examples. 2. Select any two SVOD services (ex: Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu). Compile a list of the programs that each acquired this month (both originals and syndication). Looking at these lists, compare/contrast the aggregate audiences that each is pursuing.

W: The Post-network Era & Vertical Viewing

Read: Butler Ch.1 “Television's ebb and flow in the postnetwork era”

Examples: Embed examples of an ending of an episode or segment that promoted flow in 1. An episode of actuality-based programming and 2. scripted narrative-based programming. These should be the portions of the episode that made you keep watching.

Bring: Watch cable / broadcast television for an hour (there are multiple places on campus to do so). Make sure the content is scripted. Then, go on streaming platform (ex: Netflix, Prime) and vertically view an hour of televisual content made exclusively for the platform of a show similar to the first show. In two columns, type out five ways in which the show's content differed.

**Week 5**

M: Television narratives  
 Narrative devices and structures on television  
 Enigma / delay / resolution  
 Series, serial, & anthology  
 A/B/C stories

Assign: Narrative Paper

Read: Fiske Ch. 8 “Narrative”

Examples: Provide two examples from two very different genres of a narrative-driven show. Both should have an A, a B, and a C story.

W: Applied narrative devices and structures  
 Enigma / delay / resolution  
 Series, serial, & anthology  
 A/B/C stories

Example: Embed an episode of a show that you could not stop watching from 1. A dramatic / serious genre. 2. A comedic / light-hearted genre.

Bring: After watching the episodes, type out each question that each episode asked that kept you viewing.

**Week 6**

M: Satellites & Kernels  
 Equilibrium / Disequilibrium  
 Cliffhangers. Narrative delay

Read: Kozloff “Narrative Theory and Television”

Bring: For a long-running show (defined as a minimum of 5 seasons) that has concluded its run, create a timeline of all major character changes and story moments. These should be major moments that change the direction of a character / program. They typically provide an answer while they ask a new question.

Example: An episode of a series with a compelling story. It should be a well-written show with a network 30 run time.

W: Narratives in unlikely places

Examples: Embed three examples from genres that we do not typically think of as narrative-driven such as television news, infomercials, commercials, game shows, talk shows, and any other unlikely genre.

**Week 7**

M: In-class narrative analysis

Example: A pilot episode of a series with a compelling story. It should be a well-written show with a network 30 run time.

W: Episode / season / series arcs

**Due: Narrative Analysis**  
 Assign: Mapping the Generic Foundation

Bring: Yourself for a narrative analysis binge.

### **Week 8**

M: Semiotics – Meaning and message  
 Read: Seiter “Semiotics, structuralism, and television”

Examples: Two clips from two very different genres that are rich with meaning. Pay attention to the *mise en scene* elements (staging, costuming, set dressing, and anything else physically present before the cameras roll).

W: Codes of Television  
 Read: Fiske “Codes of Television”  
 O'Donnell Ch. 3 “Television Style”

Examples: Two clips from two very different genres that are rich with meaning. Pay attention to the technical and production elements (camera movements, visual composition, cuts, post-production techniques).

### **Week 9**

M: Structuring a scene & exposition

Examples: Select two opening scenes from two very different genres that provide exposition of the setting as they introduce us to the televisual world.

W: The texts surrounding the text  
 Read: Gray “Promos as extratextual”

Examples: Three para-texts surrounding a single program (ex: teasers, trailers, spots, etc.).

### **Week 10**

M: Characters and Characterization Assign: Character Presentation  
 Read: Butler Ch. 3 “Building narrative : Character actor, star”

Examples: 1. A scene from a show introducing us to a particularly rich and textured character. 2. A scene from much later in the series of that same character.

W: Reading character – Verisimilitude and types  
 Read: Fiske Ch. 9 “Character Reading”  
 Dyer - “Stereotyping”

Examples: 1. Provide clips of two characters who feel very “real” and textured. One should be from a fictional genre and one should be from an actuality-based genre. 2. From that same program, after reading the Dyer article, provide a clip that contains a stereotype and one that contains a social type.

### **Week 11**

M: Representation vs. the “real” **Due: Mapping the Generic Foundation**  
 Read: O'Donnell Ch. 7 “Representation and its audience”



Bring: From the program you mapped, provide a list of five concepts that the show seeks to represent (or re-present!).

W: Cultural Myth  
Read: Barthes “Mythologies”

Bring: A list of three cultural myths that have been naturalized on television. These should be in cause and effect form.

Example: Select any of the cultural myths you listed and find 1. A television commercial and 2. An episode of a television show that both utilize this cultural myth.

### Week 12

M: Character Analysis Presentation **Due: Character Analysis Presentation**

Bring: Your self to enjoy a deep reading of a character through semiotics.

W: Character Analysis Presentation

Bring: Your self to enjoy a deep reading of a character through semiotics.

### Week 13

M: Ideology and talent Assign: Series Treatment & Presentation  
Read: Holmes “Susan Boyle”  
Baltruschat “Canadian Idol”

Example: Two problematic back story vignettes from any television talent show.

W: Ideology and success **Due: All Revisions**  
Read: Winslow “Extreme home makeover”

Examples: Two makeover shows (the genre, as “Bar Rescue” is a makeover show) that are very different from one another but still sell a transformation.

### Week 14

M: Guided development  
Program Objective & Distribution

Bring: A rough draft of parts 1 and 5 of your final project (1. Program objective. 5. Distribution and marketing). Be prepared to walk the class through your initial premise as well as why the show is awesome / unique.

W: Guided development  
Format and Genre

Bring: A rough draft of parts 2 and 3 of your final project (2. Mapping out the series 3. Characters) complete with the actual examples of subgenres from which you will pull as well as characters who have provided the inspiration.

**Week 15**

M: Guided Development  
Narratives and Arcs

Bring: A rough draft of part 4 of your treatment (4. Narratives and Arcs). Be ready to discuss each element and level of your narrative.

W: Guided Development

Bring: A revised draft of parts 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 of your treatment.

**Week 16**

Wed., 12/11 – 2:45 to 4:45 as scheduled by the university

**Due: Series Treatment**

Bring: You to present your final polished treatment ready to pitch.

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**EXTENSION COUPON**

**Usage Notes: There is an absolute limit of two extensions per semester.**

**Additional requests result in the voiding of all coupons. If you choose to use this coupon on a typically unexcused reason and then you have a family emergency / illness / some other typically excused reason, you are out of luck. Use these wisely.**

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