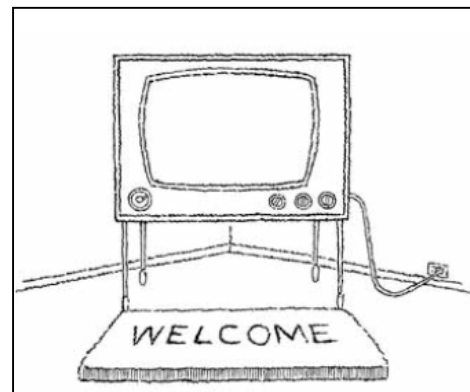


**CTCS 587: Television Theory**  
USC School of Cinematic Arts  
Spring 2008

Instructor: Dr. Miranda Banks  
Class: Friday 10 a.m. – 12:50 p.m., Lucas 309  
Email: [mbanks@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:mbanks@cinema.usc.edu)  
Office: Lucas 409 Phone: (213) 740-3334  
Office hours: Wednesdays 12 p.m. – 1:45 pm



TA: Shelley Plummer Email: [shplummer@alum.vassar.edu](mailto:shplummer@alum.vassar.edu)

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**Required Texts:**

Jason Mittell, *Genre & Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*  
Lynn Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs*  
Michelle Hilmes, ed. *NBC: America's Network*  
Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson, *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*  
Course reader, available at Magic Machine

**Optional Text:** Bernadette Casey et. al., *Television Studies: The Key Concepts*

**Suggested Further Reading:** Michelle Hilmes, *Only Connect: A Cultural History of Broadcasting in the United States* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Belmont: Thompson-Wadsworth, 2007).

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**Course Overview:**

This course will survey theoretical and critical approaches to the study of television and its visual, dramatic, and social conventions. We will pay special attention to issues of representation, cultures of production, narrative, industry studies, and reception. Rather than succumb to the generalizations of television as a "vast wasteland" or a "plug-in drug," we will explore the richness of television scholarship that encourages us to take television seriously by theorizing how this medium works as an industry, as a mechanism of globalization, as a source of entertainment, as a public sphere, and as a forum for the negotiation of cultural norms.

For this class you will be expected to produce persuasive, clearly argued, and insightful graduate-level work. You will be engaging with complex ideas and sophisticated arguments, and you will necessarily refine your own critical thinking and writing skills in the process. Therefore, you must keep up with assignments and come prepared each week for discussion.

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**Course Requirements and Grading Breakdown:** All assignments must be completed in order to receive a final grade in this course. Failure to do so will result in an F for the course. All work must be handed in on time. Late papers will only be accepted in cases of emergency or prolonged illness with official documentation.

**Participation**

**10%**

Because this class is a discussion-based course, attendance, faithful preparation, and active participation from all class members are necessary. You are required to be on time and in class for each meeting. Excused absences are only those that are documented medical or family emergencies; all other absences will affect your participation grade. Because this course only meets once a week, it is required that you

attend every course meeting. Please arrive on time and expect to stay for the entire class period. Attending class means that both your body and your mind are present: turn off your cell phones, do not disrupt other students' learning by talking needlessly to the other students around you, and do not play on your computers, listen to your iPod, etc. Come each week prepared to discuss the assigned readings and bring in any questions you may have related to the week's material.

### **Reading & Oral Presentations 45%**

Each student will be responsible for three presentations in this class: one on an assigned course reading, one on your review of an outside text, and one on your ongoing semester research project. Reading presentations will be relatively short (10 minutes) and should summarize the main points of the article while also offering key issues and/or questions for discussion. This means you will prepare, present, and distribute copies of an abstract of one of the articles to the rest of the class. You will then be responsible for generating discussion about the assigned readings. An abstract should be a full page in length—and not longer than two pages. (I will pass out two signup sheets on the first day of class). The last week of the course, you will present a short (10-15 minute) presentation on your final project to the class. These research presentations will be on your works in progress and are a way to share your work as well as get helpful feedback before your final paper is due. They will be scheduled for the last two weeks of class.

### **Research Paper, Including Prospectus 45%**

Proposal/Abstract	2/22
Outline/Bibliography	4/4
Final Paper Due	5/12

Your principal assignment for this course is to conduct research and write a 4,500 word (approx 15 page) term paper that will comprise 50% of your grade. In this paper you will apply three of the methodological or theoretical models of television scholarship discussed in class in conjunction with one another in your study of either a single television series, practitioner, or independent production studio. The goal of this paper is to use both the methods and theoretical approaches that we have studied this semester to analyze the content and reception of a particular program, person, or, studio of your choice. Everyone is required to submit a proposal/abstract and a first draft before the final draft—due dates are specified above. Your proposal should sketch out the basic topic, locate its argument within course concerns, and identify key sources in a preliminary bibliography. Ideally (especially for Critical Studies students) your final paper should be suitable to submit for publication in a media-related journal. Students should meet with me during the semester to discuss their ideas and research progress. During the last two weeks of the course, each student will present a short (10 minute) presentation on their final project to the class.

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### **Blackboard:**

I will use the blackboard site (<https://www.blackboard.usc.edu>) for this class to post announcements, assignments and links/articles that we will discuss in class. Please check it at least once a week to be up to date on all course materials. Be sure you have an email account linked up with blackboard so class emails sent by the instructor or TA will reach you.

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### **Academic Integrity:**

Plagiarism—derived from the Latin word for “kidnapper”—is more than simply taking the *words* of others and presenting them as your own; it is also taking the *ideas* of others and presenting them as your own. If you use another author's words or ideas, you must cite them in proper MLA format.

USC does not tolerate plagiarism or academic dishonesty in any form. Plagiarism, cheating on exams, submitting a paper to more than one instructor or a paper authored by anyone other than yourself violates official policy. All suspected cases are automatically turned over to the Office of Student Conduct for disciplinary action and can result in the failure of the course and/or dismissal from the University. Please consult your SCAMPUS for an outline of the rules and regulations regarding academic integrity.

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### **Students With Disabilities:**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure that the letter is delivered to the professor or the TA as early in the semester as possible. The TA will sign these forms for students to return to the DSP. **Late delivery of this information can prevent scheduling delays and difficulties.** DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30am-5:00pm, Monday through Friday. Their phone number is 213-740-0776.

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*NB: Schedule is subject to change. Students are responsible for all schedule/assignment changes announced in class.*

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

Week One: 1/18 Introduction: What is TV? What is TV Theory?

Week Two: 1/25 Defining Television, Defining Television Studies  
Horace Newcomb and Paul Hirsch, "Television as a Cultural Forum: Implications for Research"  
Charlotte Brunsdon "What Is the 'Television' of Television Studies?"  
Julie D'Acci, "Cultural Studies, Television Studies, and the Crisis in the Humanities"

Supplemental Reading: Horace Newcomb, *TV: Most Popular Art*

Week Three: 2/1 Theorizing Flow & Liveness  
Raymond Williams, "Programming: Distribution and Flow" from *Television*  
William Uricchio, "Television's Next Generation: Technology/Interface Culture/Flow"  
Mimi White, Television "Liveness: History, Banality, Attractions"

Supplemental Reading: Raymond Williams, *Television*

Week Four: 2/8 The Spaces of TV Viewing  
Lynn Spigel, "The Suburban Home Companion" and "Portable TV"  
Anna McCarthy, "The Rhythms of the Reception Area"  
David Morley, "At Home with Television"

Supplemental Reading: Anna McCarthy, *Ambient Television*

Week Five: 2/15 Feminist Historical Analysis  
Lynn Spigel, "Installing the Television Set" and "From Domestic Space to Outer Space"



Julie D'Acci, "Defining Women: The Case of *Cagney and Lacey*"  
Anna McCarthy, "*Ellen*: Making Queer Television History"

Supplemental Reading: Elana Levine, *Wallowing in Sex*  
Amanda Lotz, *Redesigning Women: Television after the Network Era*

Week Six: 2/22 Industrial Analysis: History Re-imagined

Chad Raphael, "The Political Economic Origins of Reali-TV"  
Jennifer Holt, "Vertical Vision: Deregulation, Industrial Economy and Prime Time Design"  
Joseph Turow, "Targeting a New World" from *Breaking Up America*

Supplemental Reading: Derek Kompare, *Rerun Nation*  
Toby Miller et. al., *Global Hollywood 2*  
Christopher Anderson, *Hollywood TV*

Week Seven: 2/29 Genre Studies

Jason Mittell, *Genre & Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*  
Todd Gitlin, "The Triumph of the Synthetic: Spinoffs, Copies, Recombinant Culture" from *Inside Primetime*

Supplemental Reading: Joshua Gamson, *Freaks Talk Back: Tabloid Talk Shows and Sexual Nonconformity*  
Kathleen Rowe, *The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter*

Week Eight: TBD (SCMS) Audience Studies

Ellen Seiter, "Qualitative Audience Research"  
Henry Jenkins, "*Star Trek*: Rerun, Reread, Rewritten: Fan Writing as Textual Poaching"  
Matt Hills, "Cult TV"

Supplemental Reading: Ien Ang, *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera & the Melodramatic Imagination*  
Ellen Seiter: *Television and New Media Audiences*

Week Nine: 3/14 Industrial Analysis: The Network

Michelle Hilmes, *NBC: America's Network*

Supplemental Reading: Susanne Daniels et. al., *Season Finale: The Unexpected Rise & Fall of the WB & UPN*



Week Ten: 3/21 SPRING BREAK

Week Eleven: 3/28 Auteurism

Horace Newcomb and Robert Alley, "The Television Producer," from *The Producer's Medium*  
John Caldwell, "Excessive Style" and "Modes of Production" from *Televisuality*

Supplemental Reading: Julie D'Acci: *Defining Women" Television and the Case of Cagney & Lacey*

Week Twelve: 4/4 Production Cultures

PAPER OUTLINE DUE

John Caldwell, "Industrial Auteur Theory" from *Production Culture*  
Allen J. Scott, "The Other Hollywood: Television Program Production" from *On Hollywood*  
Elana Levine, "Toward a Paradigm for Media Production Research: Behind the Scenes at *General Hospital*"

Supplemental Reading: Laura Grindstaff: *The Money Shot: Trash, Class, & the Making of TV Talk Shows*  
John Caldwell, *Production Culture*

Week Thirteen: 4/11 Race and Ethnicity

Sut Jhally and Justin Lewis, "Enlightened Racism"  
Herman Gray, "The Politics of Representation in Network Television"  
George Lipsitz, "The Meaning of Memory"

Supplemental Reading: Herman Gray, *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for Blackness*  
Beretta Smith-Shomade, *Shaded Lives: African-American Women & Television*

Week Fourteen: 4/18 Globalization

Timothy Havens, "Globalization and the Generic Transformation of *Telenovelas*"  
Michael Curtin, "Media Capitals: Cultural Geographies of Global TV"

Supplemental Reading: Serra Tinic, *On Location: Canada's Television Industry in a Global Market*  
Timothy Havens, *Global Television Marketplace*

Week Fifteen: 4/25 Textual Analysis

Jeffrey Sconce, "What If?: Charting Television's New Textual Boundaries"  
TBD, clips from [www.flowtv.org](http://www.flowtv.org)

Week Sixteen: 5/2 Final Presentations

REMEMBER, CLASS THIS WEEK WILL START AT 9am



**FINAL PAPERS DUE: Monday May 12<sup>th</sup>  
at 2pm in Dr. Banks' mailbox**