

COMM 433: HOME ENTERTAINMENT

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Fall 2013

T/TH 11:00-12:20, ASC 225

Course Description:

This course examines the significant historical impact of television and subsequent ancillary home entertainment forms (pay television, cable television, home video, DVD, DVR, video-on-demand, over-the-top, etc.) on the entertainment industry at large. The purpose of the course is to understand an important economic and cultural shift in the film industry that occurred with the rise of television and more contemporary home entertainment platforms. Television's history is intimately tied to the film industry and the re-articulation and reframing of the film medium in changing exhibition contexts. In surveying a range of formats and products, we will explore home entertainment as it dialogues with other arenas of media distribution and exhibition, specifically traditional theatrical film exhibition. The course will frame these issues historically, looking at the early days of television, and then focus its attention on the 1970s to the present. The course will map the changing relationship and increasing convergence of the film, television and other entertainment industries, pose questions about media ownership, and consider ways in which the cultural and social space of the home has been altered by the constant evolution of the home "theater."

Guest speakers will periodically come to class. Please note that you are expected to attend and be fully engaged during these class sessions.

Course Readings:

All course readings can be found on Blackboard.

To follow the home entertainment industry, you may want to regularly read some of the following trades/websites:

[Ad Age](#), [Ad Week](#), [Broadcasting and Cable](#), [Business Insider](#), [Cnet](#), [Daily Variety](#), [Deadline Hollywood](#), [Hollywood Reporter](#), [MediaWeek](#), [Multichannel News](#), [Mashable](#), [Streaming Media](#), [TechCrunch](#), [Television Week](#), [The Verge](#), [Wired](#), [Zdnet](#)

Course Requirements and Attendance:

Students are required to do all of the reading, attend all classes, complete all assignments, and participate fully in class discussion. Attendance is mandatory and will be taken each class meeting. Attendance grade may be affected by your promptness and level of attention during class lecture. You are allowed two absences without explanation, after which there is a deduction off the final grade for each unexcused absence.

Personal computers and wireless Internet are a key part of today's technological culture, but they also can distract you from the class discussion and dampen participation. I expect you to use computers for note-taking purposes only, and to avoid using other mobile devices during class time. Any deviation will result in laptops being banned from the classroom and participation grades being impacted.

All assignments must be completed and handed in on time to avoid a grade reduction. If you are unable to turn in an assignment due to illness or a personal emergency, you must provide written documentation that will allow you to be excused, or discuss your

situation with me in a timely manner. Do not wait until the end of the semester to sort things out. Remember: this is YOUR responsibility.

Assignments and Grading:

You are responsible for the material covered in class and in the reading. You will be evaluated on the following:

- 1) the level of your engagement with the class materials (as demonstrated in your written work and class participation)
- 2) your capacity to explain your ideas and analysis in articulate and well-written forms
- 3) your ability to creatively explore the theories and methodologies of the class

All of your work will be graded on two primary evaluative scales:

- 1) how well it demonstrates an understanding of the theories and methodologies of the class
- 2) how well it articulates and structures its argument

The final course grade will be based on the following distribution:

Class participation	10%
Home viewing auto-ethnography (weekly)	20%
Cable Report	15%
Take Home Midterm (5-7 pages)	25%
Research Paper (15 pages)	30%

Home Entertainment Auto-Ethnography

Each student will keep a wordpress blog to record regular (at least every other day) viewing habits, including the following information. At the end of the term, you will write a brief (3-4 page) summary of your findings.

- WHAT you viewed, what TIME and HOW LONG, WHERE (at home, be specific), ON WHAT DEVICE/PLATFORM and if relevant a list of other activities you were engaged in (other technologies, eating, etc.) or other people in the room
- How you would characterize your viewing as an example of “home entertainment”
- Include images or video if possible
- Any relevant commentary re: circumstances around viewing (if it is for work or class, if you were watching because someone else wanted to see something)

Cable Report

Each student will be assigned a cable network and give a 10 minute presentation to the class as follows:

- Go to the corporate website and determine the cable channel's ownership and connection to other channels or media industry conglomerates. Be prepared to show some examples from the corporate website.
- Assess an average day's programming, considering genres (movies, television dramas or comedies, reality programming, news, etc) and target audience (if clearly discerned).
- Explain how the channel brands itself and constructs a specific and differentiated identity. What kind of promotional rhetoric does the channel use (note slogans, wording, logos, images on the home page) to solicit its audience? What is the channel selling/valuing as its primary form of entertainment? Does the channel's identity relate in any overt or explicit way to its parent company?

You will receive details about midterm and research assignment separately.

You must complete ALL of these assignments in order to pass the class. **Failure to complete ONE OR MORE of them will result in an F in the class.**

Course Grading Policy:

Grades will be assigned as follows:

A	outstanding, thoughtful and insightful work and analysis, showing an ability to think beyond the basic course material
A-/B+	above average work, demonstrating effort and keen understanding of conceptual ideas
B/B-	average work, needs improvement on ideas and argument
C+/C	shows little effort, lacks clarity and/or argument
C- and below	fulfilling the bare minimum and showing little understanding of the material

Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score depending upon the weight assigned to each. Your percentage scores on the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade as per the scale shown below:

A+	= 97-100	C	= 76-74
A	= 96-94	C-	= 73-70
A-	= 93-90	D+	= 69-67
B+	= 89-87	D	= 66-64
B	= 86-84	D-	= 63-60
B-	= 83-80	F	= 59-00
C+	= 79-77		

If you have concerns regarding a grade on a given assignment, you must first wait 24 hours (cooling off period) before appealing it in writing, stating the reasons why you feel the grade is inaccurate. All concerns should be addressed within 10 days of receiving the graded assignment. After that, no appeals will be accepted for review and the grade will be considered final.

Academic Integrity:

When taking this class, you enter into a contract that states that all the work you are turning in is your own and no one else's, and that you have not turned in any work for which you have received credit in another class. Do not take this policy lightly! The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. It endorses and acts on the SCampus policies and procedures detailed in the section titled "University Sanction Guidelines." These policies, procedures and guidelines will be assiduously upheld. They protect your rights, as well as those of the faculty. It is particularly important that you be aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, submitting a paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself. Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade in the course, and be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. If you have any doubts about any of these practices, you must confer with the professor.

Disability

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 the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.- 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213)740-0776.

ESL Students

Please inform me as soon as possible if you require special accommodations based on your understanding of the English language.

READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

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Week 1 **Home Entertainment: Precursors**

August 27: Peter Kramer, "The Lure of the Big Picture: Film, Television and Hollywood"

August 29: Rick Jewell, "Hollywood and Radio: Competition and Partnership in the 1930s"

Guest: [Dino Everett, Archivist Hugh Hefner Moving Image Archive](#)
"Show and Tell"—Early Home Projection

Week 2 **Television as Home Theater: Programming and Place**

September 3: Lynn Spigel, "Home Theater"

September 5: Chris Anderson, "Origins of Warner Bros. Television"

Week 3 **The Great Industrial Divide: Negotiating Hollywood at Home**

September 10: Michelle Hilmes, "Television: The Vault of Hollywood"
Robert Vianello, "The rise of the Telefilm and the Networks' Hegemony Over the Motion Picture Industry"

September 12: Mark Alvey, "The Independents: Rethinking the Television Studio System"

September 13: **Last day to drop without receiving a "W"**

Week 4 **Brand New Horizons: The Early Promises of Cable Television**

September 17: John McMurria, "A Taste of Class: Pay Television and the Commodification of Post-War America"

September 19: Thomas Streeter, "Blue Skies and Strange Bedfellows: The Discourse of Cable Television"

Week 5 **Who Owns the Media? Changing Landscapes and Regulatory Systems**

September 24: Jennifer Holt, "In Deregulation We Trust: The Synergy of Politics and Industry in Reagan-era Hollywood"
Peter DeCherney, "Hollywood's Guerrilla War: Fair Use and Home Video"

September 26: Douglas Gomery, "Interpreting Media Ownership"
Jennifer Holt, "It's Not Film, It's TV," *Jump Cut* no. 52, Summer 2010.

Week 6 **Changing TV Landscapes: Premium Cable**

October 1: Amanda Lotz, "If it's Not TV, What Is It? The Case of US Subscription TV"
Deborah L. Jaramillo, "The Family Racket: AOL Time Warner, HBO and *The Sopranos*"

October 3: Screening: *Z Channel: A Magnificent Obsession*
MIDTERM DUE

Optional: George Mair, *Inside HBO: The Billion Dollar War Between HBO, Hollywood and the Home Video Revolution*, excerpts

Week 7 **Branded Cable Networks**

October 8: ORAL REPORTS: Cable Networks*

October 10: ORAL REPORTS: Cable Networks*

*choose from PDFs on Blackboard for background reading on various networks + research website of your assigned cable channel (see above)

Week 8 **The Business and Culture of Home Video**

October 15: Frederick Wasser, "Home Video: the Early Years" + "Video Becomes Big Business"

October 17: Joshua Greenberg, "Movie Culture in Video Stores and at Home"

Week 9 **The Rise and Revolution of DVD**

October 22: Paul MacDonald, "Disc to Digital: From Videodisc to DVD"

October 24: Paul MacDonald, "Videoscopia: Shaping the US Market in the Digital Age"

Week 10 **Next Generation Home Theater**

October 29: Barbara Klinger, "The New Media Aristocrats: Home Theater and the Domestic Film Experience"

October 31: Alison Trope, "Hollywood in a Box: Channeling Hollywood Through Home Entertainment"

Week 11 **From Subscription and Pay Per View to User-Generated and Peer to Peer: The Many Faces of Digital Distribution**

November 5: Janet Wasko, "The Future of Film Distribution and Exhibition"
Alisa Perren, "Business as Unusual: Conglomerate Sized Challenges for Film and Television in the Digital Arena"
Daniel Chamberlin, "Television Interfaces"

November 7: Gina Keating, excerpts from *Netflixed*
Greg Sandoval, "[Netflix's Lost Year](#)"
Excerpts from the Verge "Over the top: the new war for TV is just beginning"

Week 12 **Home Away from Home: Making the Most of Mobility**

November 12: Chuck Tryon, "Pushing the (Red) Envelope: Portable Video, Platform Mobility, and Pay-Per-View Culture"

November 14: Alisa Perren and Karen Petruska "Big Hollywood, Small Screens"

Week 13

Hardware Wars Redux: Controlling the Market on Convergence

November 19: William Boddy, "Interactive Television and Advertising Form in Contemporary U.S. Television"

November 121: Mark Deuze, "Convergence Culture and Media Work"
Jennifer Holt, "Platforms, Pipelines, and Politics: The iPhone and Regulatory Hangover"

Week 14

Fragmented Screens and Competing for Attention

November 26: Derek Kompare "Revising Repetition for Multiplatform Television Distribution"
["The Rise of the 'Connected Viewer'" \(Pew Study\)](#)
Nielsen Cross Platform Report

November 28: Thanksgiving/NO CLASS

Week 15

Planned Obsolescence and Home Entertainment Consumption

December 3: Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller, "Ecological Ethics and Media Technology"
Joseph Giltinan, "Creative Destruction and Destructive Creations:
Environmental Ethics and Planned Obsolescence"

December 5: Course wrap up

December 7-10 Study Days

December 13

PAPER DUE