USC School of Cinematic Arts
CNTV-101: Reality Starts Here
Exploring the Landscape of Entertainment Media

Fall 2015—F—1:00-3:50
Location: NCT

Instructor: Dr. Jeff Watson
Office: SCI 201J
Office Hours: By appointment

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Prerequisite(s): none
Co-Requisite (s): none
Concurrent Enrollment: none
Recommended Preparation: none

Course Description

How we entertain, and are entertained, speaks volumes about who we are as a society. Entertainment is both an expression and an influencer of the conditions of contemporary life. In this course, we will explore the theory and practice of entertainment, both as a timeless element of society, and as something undergoing radical changes in response to shifts in technology, economics, politics, and other forces. To facilitate this discussion, students will read foundational texts in media theory, engage in in-class exercises, and have conversations with a range of special guests from the fields of film, television, interactive media, videogames, experience design, and academic research.

Learning Objectives

Students will work together to think critically and expansively about the past and futures of entertainment. Students should expect to emerge from this class with a holistic understanding of entertainment media, along with a set of foundational collaboration skills and peer-to-peer connections designed to support them as they move forward in their respective divisions.

Readings and Reference Materials

All readings will be provided electronically on the course website, http://cntv101.net.

Grading Breakdown

Since this is a pass/fail class, students will not receive letter or percentile grades for participation in assignments. Unexcused absences or failure to participate in in-class exercises/group activities (see "Assignments, Activities, & Responsibilities" below) will earn students a deduction. **Any student with two deductions will be at risk of failing the class.**

Assignments, Activities, & Responsibilities

Each student will be responsible for the following:

1. **Attendance in every class, for the duration of the class.** If you can't make it to class, you must let us know in writing prior to the beginning of class. Excuses for absences will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. If you are unable to notify us before class, a doctor's note or equivalent will be required to avoid receiving a deduction.
2. **Participation in group activities.** At the beginning of the semester, you will be assigned a group comprised of approximately 12 students spanning the six divisions of the School. You will be expected to actively participate in all in-class and out of class group activities. These include:
   a. The "Show Packet." Once a semester, your group will be asked to produce video materials to be shown during class time. Everyone in your group must contribute to the production of these materials.
   b. The "Documentary Packet." Once a semester, your group will be asked to document in-class and out-of-class activities on social media.
   c. Speed Dating. At various times throughout the semester, your group will be matched with another group for a "speed dating" networking activity.
   d. #storygame. At various times throughout the semester, your group will be reshuffled with another group and broken into smaller teams for the purpose of playing #storygame. At the end of the semester, your #storygame team will present a pitch, short film, or interactive demo based on what you create through the play of the game.
   e. Studio Time. At various times throughout the semester, classtime will be used for "Studio Time." During this time, you
3. **Preparation for and participation in Instant Book Club.** Each week, you will be assigned a reading covering some aspect of media theory and/or history. During Instant Book Club, you may be called upon to come to the stage to discuss the reading. Make sure to be prepared for this eventuality.
4. **Participation in guest interviews.** Each week, one or two students will be chosen at random to lead the discussion with our special guests. To prepare for this eventuality, make sure to pay attention during the guests' presentations.

Course Schedule

Reality Starts Here

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Revision 1.2
9 October 2015

Week 1 – August 20

Theme: Introduction
Reading: N/A
Activity: N/A
Scheduled Guests: N/A

Week 2 – September 4

Theme: Worlds
Reading: Jorge Luis Borges, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius"
Activity: Envelopes
Scheduled Guests: Aniko Imre, Alex McDowell

Week 3 – September 11

Theme: Media
Reading: Marshall McLuhan, The Medium is the Massage
Activity: N/A
Scheduled Guests: Akira Lippitt, Mary Sweeney

Week 4 – September 18

Theme: Narrative
Reading: Jerome Bruner, "Life as Narrative"
Activity: N/A
Scheduled Guests: Steve Anderson, Stuart Candy

Week 5 – September 25

Theme: Fact and Fiction
Reading: Werner Herzog, "The Minnesota Declaration"
Activity: Envelopes
Scheduled Guests: Andreas Kratky, Doe Mayer, Sheila Sofian

Week 6 – October 2

Theme: Creativity
Reading: Ed Catmull, "The Unmade Future" from Creativity, Inc.
Activity: Class structure discussion
Scheduled Guests: Behnaz Farahi, Jesse Vigil

Week 7 – October 9

Theme: Pivot
Reading: N/A
Activity: Speed Dating
Scheduled Guests: Linda Brown, Mike Patterson, Chanel Summers

Week 8 – October 16

Theme: Space
Reading: Henry Jenkins, "Game Design as Narrative Architecture"
Activity: #storygame
Scheduled Guests: Lisa Mann, Scott Fisher

Week 9 – October 23

Theme: Play
Reading: David Foster Wallace – The Nature of the Fun
Activity: Studio Time + TAs / Speed Dating
Scheduled Guests: N/A

Week 10 – October 30

Theme: Halloween
Reading: N/A
Activity: Screening
Scheduled Guests: Peter Brinson, Marientina Gotsis, Kara Keeling

Week 11 – November 6

Theme: Politics
Reading: TBD
Activity: #storygame
Scheduled Guests: John August, Pablo Frasconi

Week 12 – November 13

Theme: Difference
Reading: TBD
Activity: Studio Time + TAs
Scheduled Guests: Flint Dille, Michael Taylor

Week 13 – November 20

Theme: TBD
Reading: TBD
Activity: Speed Dating
Scheduled Guests: TBD

Week 14 – November 27

NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING)

Week 15 – December 5

Theme: The Future
Reading: N/A

Activity: #storygame final pitches/presentations
Scheduled Guests: N/A

END OF CLASSES. THERE IS NO EXAM FOR THIS COURSE. HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity http://equity.usc.edu or to the Department of Public Safety http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/ provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage http://sarc.usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information http://emergency.usc.edu will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.