

NYU Los Angeles

Television: History and Form -

MCC-UE 9006

Fall 2019

Instructor Information

- Tom Connelly
- Email:
- Office Hours:

Course Information

- Television: History and Form
- MCC-UE 9006
- Wednesdays 2:15-5:15 pm
- Room:

Course Overview and Goals

This course introduces students to the history of radio and television broadcasting in the context of social developments in the United States. We will explore the roots of content and programming strategies in radio and television. We will watch television episodes and clips and analyze why they were effective narratively and aesthetically. We will explore technological, industrial and regulatory factors that impacted the development of American broadcasting. We will also examine how digital media platforms such as Hulu, Amazon and Netflix are transforming economic models of broadcasting and cable television. Lastly, radio and television served as the primary source of dissemination of news and information, shaping the way we perceived ourselves, the world, and current events as they happened. A question we will address is whether or not this notion still holds true for broadcast media.

Course Requirements

Brief Description of Assignments and Due Dates

- **Showrunner Presentation (informal):** Briefly research the showrunner(s) of a television or animated series and present your findings in class on **Wednesday, October 16**.

- **Take Home Exams:** A number of short answer responses that test student's understanding of course terms and concepts and broadcasting history. The exam will be handed out in class a week before the due date.
- **Course Paper:** (1500-1700 words) (*Due on Tuesday, December 17 by midnight via email*). Write a critical essay of a television genre as it is represented in a current or recent television or animated series, describing how it has progressed from past decades, and how these developments offer insights into U.S. culture and society. More information will be presented in a handout in November. A rubric of my grading process will be provided.
- **Class Participation:** Your participatory grade involves responding to course readings/screening and active listening. It is important that you read the assignments, watch assigned screenings and be ready to discuss these texts with your peers.

Note: Late assignments will be penalized **10 percentage points** per day late. It is important that you check the due dates for each assignment in planning your semester workload. Please inform me in advance if an assignment conflicts with a religious observance. Medical emergencies or serious illness will be considered with proper documentation.

Grading of Assignments

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

Assignments/Activities	% of Final Grade
Showrunner Bio Presentation	10%
Two Take Home Exams	40% (20% each)
Course Paper (6-8 pages)	30%
Participation	10%
Attendance/Lateness	10%

Due Dates are listed in the course schedule

Letter Grades

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Points	Percent
A	4.00	94-100%
A-	3.67	90-93%
B+	3.33	87-89%
B	3.00	83-86%
B-	2.67	80-82%
C+	2.33	77-79%
C	2.00	73-76%
C-	1.67	70-72%
D+	1.33	67-69%
D	1.00	63-66%
D-	.67	60-62%
F	.00	<60%

Course Schedule

NOTE: Syllabus is subject to change at my discretion. I will inform you of any changes and re-post the revised syllabus.

Sept. 4: Introduction to the course: Why is TV the last true medium?

- “*Parks and Recreation: The Cultural Forum*” by Heather Hendershot pp.204–212

Screening: *Parks and Recreation* (“Pawnee Zoo,” season 2)

For next class: watch *The Donna Reed Show* (“Weekend Trip,” season 1)

Sept. 11: Before Broadcasting and Haunted Media

- Chp. 1 Making History pp.1–16 (**OC**)
- Chp. 2 Before Broadcasting pp.17–35 (**OC**)
- “The Voice from The Void: Wireless, Modernity, and the Distant Dead” by Jeffery Sconce pp.211–231

Sept. 18: Broadcasting Begins

- Chp. 3 Broadcasting Begins pp.36–63 (**OC**)
- Chp. 4 The Network Age pp.64–90 (**OC**)

For next class: watch PBS’s *American Experience* “War of the Worlds”

Sept. 25: Radio For Everyone, Mass Culture, and Propaganda

- Chp. 5 Radio For Everyone pp.92–114; 118–125; 128–130 (**OC**)
- “The Panic Broadcast” from *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* by Jeffery Sconce pp.110–118
- “The Myth of the *War of the Worlds*” by Jefferson Pooley and Michael J. Socolow
- Chp. 6 War at Home and Abroad, 1940 to 1945 pp.132–144 (**OC**)

Oct. 2: Early Television, the Big Freeze, Live Anthologies, and Desilu Productions

- Chp. 7 At Last Television pp. 166–170; 176–195; 198–201 (**OC**)

- “Desilu, *I Love Lucy*, and the Rise of Network TV” by Thomas Schatz pp.117–134

Screening: *I Love Lucy* (“Job Switching,” season 2)

Oct. 9: Working-Class Sitcom, the Domesticated Medium, and Quiz Show Scandal

- *The Honeymooners* by David Sterritt pp.1–25; 55–67
- Chp. 8 The Domesticated Medium pp.203–222; 235–239 (**OC**)

Screening: *The Honeymooners* (“The \$99,000 Answer”)

For next class: watch Rod Serling Interview from 1959 on YouTube, and *The Twilight Zone* (“The Monsters are Due on Maple Street,” season 1)

Oct. 16: Rod Serling, Fantastic Family Sitcoms, and Television in Los Angeles

SHOWRUNER PRESENTATIONS

- “*I Love Lucy*: The Writer-Producer” by Miranda J. Banks pp.244–252
- “*The Twilight Zone*: Landmark Television” by Derek Kompare pp.299–307
- “From Domestic Space to Outer Space: The 1960s Fantastic Family Sitcom” by Lynn Spigel pp.204–235
- “Holding The Center: Images of Urbanity on Television in Los Angeles, 1950–1970” by Michan Andrew Connor pp.230–255

Screening: *The Munsters* (“A Visit From The Teacher,” season 2)

For next class: watch *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (Pilot)

Oct. 23: The Classic Network System, Nightly News, PBS and TV Realism

DUE: Take home midterm (by midnight)

- Chp. 9 The Classic Network System pp. 240–277 (**OC**)
- From *Television's Second Golden Age* by Robert J. Thompson pp.11–17; 46–58

Screening: *All in the Family* (“Mike’s Hippy Friends Come to Visit,” season 1)

Oct. 30: Cable TV, Deregulation and Fowler’s Toaster, Long Form Storytelling

- “The Norman Lear Sitcoms and 1970s” by Gerard Jones pp.80–89
- Chp. 10 Rising Discontent pp.279–316 (**OC**)

Screening: *The Jeffersons* (“A Friend in Need,” Season 1)

Nov. 6: Televisuality, MTV, Fox and The Big Change

- “Televisuality” by John Caldwell, pp.1–11
- “How *Miami Vice* launched the ’80s on TV, then died with its decade” *The AV Club* by Noel Murray
- Chp. 11 The Big Change pp. 318–328; 335–346; 348–368 (**OC**)

Screening: *Miami Vice* (“No Exit,” season 1)

For next class: watch *The Sopranos* (“pilot”)

Nov. 13: HBO and Narrative Complexity

- “Introduction: A Brief History of HBO” by Gary R. Edgerton pp.1–20
- “Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television” by Jason Mittell pp.29–40

Nov. 20: Entering the Digital Era

- Chp. 12 Entering The Digital Era pp.370–415 (**OC**)
- “*The Mindy Project*: or ‘Why I’m the Mary, You’re the Rhoda’ Is the RomComSitCom’s Most Revealing Accusation” by Dahlia Schweitzer, pp.64–69
- “How Will You Make it on Your Own?: Television and Feminism Since 1970” by

Bonnie Dow pp.379–394

Screening: *The Mindy Project* (“Pilot,” Season 1)

Dec 4: Entering The Digital Era, Binge-Watching, and Cutting the Chord

- Chp. 13 Baby, It’s *You*: Web 2.0 pp.417–429; 436–441; 450–460 (**OC**)
- Chp. 14 Conclusion: TV after TV pp.466–478
- “Why You’re Addicted to TV” by Andrew Romano
- “The Future of Streaming is The Cable Bundle” by Emily Todd VanDerWerff

Screening: TBA

Dec 11: Prime Time Animation: Subverting Family Values

DUE: Second Take Home Exam (by midnight)

- “*The Flintstones to Futurama: Networks and Prime Time Animation*” by Wendy Hilton-Morrow and David T. McMahan pp.74–88
- “Back to the Drawing Board: The Family in Animated Television Comedy” by Michael V. Tueth, pp.133–146

Screening: TBA

FINAL PAPERS DUE: Tuesday, December 17 by midnight via email.

Course Materials

Required Textbook

- *Only Connect: A Cultural History of Broadcasting in the United States* by Michele Hilmes (4th edition) (Abbreviated as **OC** on the syllabus)

Articles

- A set of required readings will be available on NYU Classes.

Screenings

- Since many of the assigned episodes are very short, we will watch them in class

so we can collectively experience watching television. In addition, you will be assigned to watch screenings outside of class. Many of the assigned screenings can be found on Netflix, Amazon, YouTube and/or Hulu.

Resources

- **Access your course materials:** [NYU Classes](https://nyu.edu/its/classes) (nyu.edu/its/classes)
- **Databases, journal articles, and more:** [Bobst Library](https://library.nyu.edu) (library.nyu.edu)
- **Assistance with strengthening your writing:** [NYU Writing Center](https://nyu.mywconline.com) (nyu.mywconline.com)
- **Obtain 24/7 technology assistance:** [IT Help Desk](https://nyu.edu/it/servicedesk) (nyu.edu/it/servicedesk)

Course Policies

Attendance Policy

Study abroad at Global Academic Centres is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centres is mandatory, and unexcused absences will affect students' semester grades. The class roster will be marked at the beginning of class and anyone who arrives after this time will be considered absent. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence.

For courses that meet once a week, one unexcused absence will be penalised by a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade. For courses that meet two or more times a week, the same penalty will apply to two unexcused absences. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

Plagiarism Policy

The academic standards of New York University apply to all coursework at NYU LA. NYU LA policies are in accordance with New York University's plagiarism policy. The presentation of another person's words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

It is a serious academic offense to use the work of others (written, printed or in any other form) without acknowledgement. Cases of plagiarism are not dealt with by your instructor. They are referred to the Director, who will determine the appropriate penalty (up to and including failure in the course as a whole) taking into account the codes of conduct and academic standards for NYU's various schools and colleges.

Religious Observance

Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. Students must notify their professor and the Academic Programs Coordinator in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.

Inclusion, Diversity, Belonging and Equity

NYU is committed to building a culture that respects and embraces diversity, inclusion, and equity, believing that these values – in all their facets – are, as President Andrew Hamilton has said, “...not only important to cherish for their own sake, but because they are also vital for advancing knowledge, sparking innovation, and creating sustainable communities.” At NYU LA, we are committed to creating a learning environment that:

- fosters intellectual inquiry, research, and artistic practices that respectfully and rigorously take account of a wide range of opinions, perspectives, and experiences; and
- promotes an inclusive community in which diversity is valued and every member feels they have a rightful place, is welcome and respected, and is supported in their endeavours.

Provisions to Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are encouraged to contact the Moses Centre for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.