

FILM 102: Introduction to Television and Digital Media

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COURSE OVERVIEW

Course Objectives

- Analyze the structure and aesthetics of television and digital media
- Evaluate how television and digital media construct meaning and influence local and global cultures
- Identify how various forms of television and digital media impact our experience of identity, politics, and community
- Communicate using the correct terminology and methodologies of media studies scholarship

Course Description

This course introduces you to the analysis of television and digital media. Readings and assignments ask you to identify and evaluate the aesthetic principles, narrative strategies, and cultural significances of these media forms. Although not a history course, it explores some technological developments that shift how media are produced, distributed, consumed, and monetized from the origins of television in the early 20th century to the social media, streaming video, and video games of today.

READING AND MEDIA ASSIGNMENTS

Required Reading

Textbook: IMPORTANT NOTE—Your textbook is available for free as an ebook through the Emory library.

- *Television: Visual Storytelling and Screen Culture*, 5th edition, by Jeremy G. Butler, (Routledge, 2018)—[TEL], <https://doi-org.proxy.library.emory.edu/10.4324/9781315181295>

Essays and other Readings:

- Links will be provided to online articles and PDFs on Canvas—[CAN]

Required Viewing/Media

In addition to readings, you will be required to watch television shows and experience other media on your own time. While we do not have a separate "screening time," this additional time spent on the course accounts for the additional credit for this class (4 credits

instead of 3) and the Discussion section (FILM 102-3) that you are signed up for. (There are no additional requirements for the FILM 102-3 discussion section, and it will not be assigned a day or classtime.)

Most television episodes will be provided for you (for free) through Canvas or the Emory Library. In addition, you are required to access [Netflix](#) and [Hulu](#) for some screening assignments. You do not need to have your own paid accounts, but you do need some way to access the content on Netflix and Hulu (free trial, someone else's account, etc.). If this is not possible, please contact me as soon as possible for alternative assignments.

In addition, some media assignments may involve a small fee for access (such as video game downloads).

Objectionable Material

The television shows and other media we will look at for this class may contain material you find objectionable. Some of these media will include violence, swear words, and sexual material. It is important for us to look at this material critically and analytically to get a full understanding of media, particularly online media. If you do not feel comfortable with particular material, or have specific triggers, please talk to me ahead of time so that I can assess whether a different assignment is appropriate. While I will try to provide content warnings in Canvas, I cannot guarantee that these warnings are comprehensive or cover all possible objectionable material.

Technology Requirements

- [Canvas](#)—Course information, assignments, and readings/links (other than the required books) will be available here.
- [Zoom](#)—Account needed in order to participate in the live class sessions.
- [Flipgrid](#)—Free service that allows you to make video responses.
- [Netflix](#)—You need access to some content that is exclusive to Netflix.
- [Hulu](#)—You will need access to some TV shows on Hulu.
- [Twitter](#)—You will need a Twitter account in order to live-tweet a TV show together with the class. Tag anything related to this class with #emorytdm.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADES

Attendance and Participation (worth 10% of course grade)

Participation in our in-person (and online) sessions is required and should involve consistent, frequent, high-quality, and substantive verbal and/or written communication, both in the large group and in breakout rooms/small groups. You are allowed 2 unexcused absences from the in-person without penalty. If there are reasons why you need to miss more live sessions or need to take a break from schoolwork (for instance, if you or a loved one is ill), please be in touch with me as soon as possible. There will be ways to make up missed sessions or assignments for those who have legitimate reasons to be absent. Excessive, unexcused absences from the live sessions may result in failure for the course.

If you are sick, not feeling well, or unable to come to class for another reason, please reach out to me and let me know the situation. Do not come to class if you have any symptoms of illness. Any absences due to illness (or potential illness) will be counted as excused.

A lot of this class will be discussion-based because I find that it is easiest to learn when you are able to talk through ideas. I expect you to come to class prepared to discuss the week's material and actively engage with the class. If you are naturally quiet, uncomfortable speaking in class, or otherwise prefer other engagement options, please talk to me and we can find other ways for you to participate or to feel comfortable participating in class.

Because we our class will engage with our contemporary culture, it is incredibly important that we establish a supportive environment in which all students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts. Give others the kind of curious attention, generosity, compassion, and benefit of the doubt you yourself would like to receive. If you feel alienated or uncomfortable in class for any reason, please reach out to me to discuss possible remedies.

Discussion Board Contributions (15% of course grade)

You are required to contribute to a discussion board responding to the reading and lecture each week, due on Mondays. To receive full credit for these responses, you will need to complete at least 10 throughout the semester. These responses should be substantive and at least 250 words. Prompts will be given each week. The writing can be informal, but should still use accurate spelling and grammar. Each response will be graded as either full credit (2 points), half credit (1 point), or no credit (0 points). The grading is based on how well you have understood the material presented in the lecture and reading and your ability to produce a thoughtful and substantive response.

Screening Responses/Activities (10% of course grade)

You are required to contribute an online response to the weekly screening of TV or digital media activities, due on Tuesdays. Most weeks, this will consist of recording a brief video on Flipgrid. This also includes the live-tweet and possibly other activities. To receive full credit for these responses, you will need to complete at least 10 throughout the semester. These videos can be informal, but are intended to demonstrate that you completed the screening and have thought about how it relates to our class. There will be other activities to complete on Canvas, such as selecting YouTube videos or Instagram posts to discuss in class.

Unit Exams (20% each, for a total of 40% of the course grade)

There will be two exams in this class, one at the end of each unit. The second exam is on Unit #2 and is not cumulative; it is not a final. Each exam will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and long answer (multiple paragraph) questions, and it will be administered through Canvas. The exams will be open-book and open-note (but NOT open-internet). These exams will take place on Fridays and will be timed, but you will have a choice of when to begin the exam.

Final Paper/Creative Project (5% for the proposal and drafts; 20% for the project itself; for a total of 25% of the course grade)

In the second half of the class, you will begin working on a final project relating to television and/or digital media. You will do a creative project on a subject of your choice

(related to class material) with an accompanying paper of at least 1000 words that explains the project and ties it in to class material. Options for the creative project will be discussed later in the class. Deadlines will be provided for a proposal, rough draft(s), and final submission. The final project and paper will be due in the finals period.

Grading Scale

Here is how I classify each letter grade when I calculate the final grade for the course. I also round up anything .5 or higher.

A = 94 or higher

A- = 90-93

B+ = 87-89

B = 84-86

B- = 80-83

C+ = 77-79

C = 74-76

C- = 70-73

D+ = 67-69

D = 64-66

D- = 60-63

F = 59 or lower

COURSE POLICIES

Plagiarism / Academic Honesty Policy

You are expected to follow the [Emory College of Arts and Sciences Honor Code](#). The honor code is in effect throughout this semester, and relates to all aspects of the work you do in this course. By taking this course, you affirm that it is a violation of the code to cheat on exams, to plagiarize, or to deviate from the teacher's instructions about collaboration, on all work that is submitted for grades. You also affirm that if you are aware of others violating the code you have a duty to report them to the honor council. Any violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Emory Honor Council for adjudication.

All assignments turned in for this class must be the student's own work or must be properly attributed to the original source with proper citations. Please consult your instructor if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or how to properly cite material.

Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

I am personally committed to diversity in relation to race, gender identity and expression, class, ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexuality, and other aspects of identity and background. I value diverse perspectives in the classroom because this enhances our ability to learn and generate new ideas. I am also committed to social justice and equity in the effort to make reparations for past injustices. This takes the shape of elevating the work (both written and audiovisual) of scholars/artists and students of color, honoring and supporting students from all backgrounds, and trying to be as explicit and clear about my expectations for all students. My commitments to social justice and equity infuse both my research and how I teach

topics relating to media. Issues of identity and equality are not incidental to the field of film and media, but are essential to it. As such, these topics will be part of our weekly discussions.

I am always working to improve myself and my courses, and I always welcome suggestions from students, particularly in how I can better serve underrepresented students, diversify my syllabus, and address important issues of justice, equity, and inclusion. Please come talk to me if you have concerns about any of these topics.

Land Acknowledgement

Emory University acknowledges the Muscogee (Creek) people who lived, worked, produced knowledge on, and nurtured the land where Emory's Oxford and Atlanta campuses are now located. In 1821, fifteen years before Emory's founding, the Muscogee were forced to relinquish this land. We recognize the sustained oppression, land dispossession, and involuntary removals of the Muscogee and Cherokee peoples from Georgia and the Southeast. Emory seeks to honor the Muscogee Nation and other Indigenous caretakers of this land by humbly seeking knowledge of their histories and committing to respectful stewardship of the land.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1: Introduction to the Course
Wednesday live session will give an overview of what to expect from this class

WEEK 2: Introducing Television and Digital Media
Reading: [TEL] Ch. 1, 'An Introduction to Television Structures and Systems'
[CAN] Janet Murray, "Affordances of the Digital Medium," *Inventing the Medium: Principles of Interaction Design as a Cultural Practice* (MIT 2011)

Screening: [CAN] *I Love Lucy* "Job Switching" (Lucille Ball and Desi Arnez, Jr., CBS, Season 2, Ep. 4, 1952-30 min)
[Netflix] *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch*

UNIT ONE—TELEVISION

WEEK 3: The Business of Television
Reading: [TEL] Ch. 6 excerpt, 'The Television Commercial' (pgs. 131-153)
[TEL] Ch. 14 excerpt, 'The Discourse of the Industry I & II' (pgs. 346-352)
[CAN] Suzanne Leonard, "The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills: Franchising Femininity" in *How to Watch Television, Second Edition*

Screen: [CAN] *The Goldbergs*, "A Sad Day" (Gertrude Berg, DuMont, 1954-30 min)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgiYXIUG5eg>
[HUL] *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills* (Scott Dunlop, Bravo, Season 1, Ep.

13, 2011-55 min)

[HUL] *black-ish*, "VIP" (Kenya Barris, ABC, Season 3, Ep. 1, 2016-21 min)

WEEK 4: Television Storytelling I—Narrative and Content

Reading: [CAN] Ethan Thompson and Jason Mittell, "Introduction: An Owner's Manual for Television" in *How to Watch Television Second Edition*
[TEL] Ch. 3 excerpt, 'Narrative Structure' (pgs. 34-48)
[CAN] Racquel Gates, "Empire: Framing Blackness" in *How to Watch Television, Second Edition*

Screen: [CAN] *Living Single*, "Mystery Date" (Yvette Denise Lee, Fox, Season 1, Ep. 19, 1994-30 min)
[CAN] *Friends*, "The One with Chandler's Work Laugh" (David Crane, NBC, Season 5, Ep. 12, 1999-30 min)
[CAN] *Empire*, "Pilot" (Lee Daniels, FOX, Season 1, Ep. 1, 2015-60 min)

WEEK 5: Television Aesthetics

Reading: [TEL] Chapter 7 "Introduction to Television Style: Modes of Production"
[CAN] Sean O'Sullivan, "The Sopranos: Episodic Storytelling" in *How to Watch Television, Second Edition*

Screen: [CAN] *Soap*, (Susan Harris, ABC, Season 1, Ep. 1, 1977-30 min)
[CAN] *The Sopranos*, "College" (David Chase, HBO, Season 1, Ep. 5, 1999-60 min)
Recommended: [CAN] *Empire*, "Pilot" (Lee Daniels, FOX, Season 1, Ep. 1, 2015-60 min)

WEEK 6: Television Storytelling II—Narrative and Context

Reading: [TEL] Ch. 14, 'Ideological Criticism and Cultural Studies' (pgs. 339-345, 352-364)
[CAN] Crystal Camargo, "Crossing the Sonic Color Line: TV Voiceover Narration in *Never Have I Ever*" in *flowTV*
<https://www.flowjournal.org/2021/04/crossing-the-sonic-color-line/>

Screen: [CAN] *Orange Is the New Black*, "Lesbian Request Denied" (Jenji Kohan, Netflix, Season 1, Ep. 3, 2013-60 min)
[NET] *Never Have I Ever*, "...felt super Indian," (Mindy Kaling, Netflix, Season 1, Ep. 4, 2020-22 min)
[HUL] *Steven Universe* "Jail Break" (Rebecca Sugar, Cartoon Network, Season1, Ep. 49, 2015-11.50 min)
Recommended: [CAN] *Stuart Hall: Representation & the Media* (MEF, 1997-55

min)

Week 7 Televisual Audiences

Reading: [CAN] Rob Henderson, "Everything I Wanted to Know about Elite America I Learned from *Fresh Prince* and *West Wing*" in *The New York Times* (October 10, 2020)
[CAN] Rick Porter, "TV Long View: A Guide to the Ever-Expanding World of Ratings Data" in *The Hollywood Reporter* (October 5, 2019)

Screenings: [CAN] *The Amos 'n Andy Show*, "Happy Stevenses" (Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, CBS, Season 1, Ep. 19, 1951-26 min)
[NET] *Emily in Paris* "Voulez-Vous Coucher Avec Moi?" (Darren Star, Netflix, Season 2, Ep. 1, 2021-30 min)

WEEK 8: Contemporary TV Viewership

Reading: [TEL] Ch. 2, 'Television in the Contemporary Media Environment'
[TEL] Ch. 3 excerpt "Transmedia Storytelling and Binge-Watching" (p. 48-51)

Screen: *Gossip Girl*, "Victor/Victrola" (2007)
The Walking Dead, "Wildfire" (2010)

Exam: **UNIT #1 Exam**

WEEK 9: **SPRING BREAK**

UNIT TWO—DIGITAL MEDIA

WEEK 10: What Are Digital Media?

Reading: Review [CAN] Janet Murray, "Affordances of the Digital Medium"
[CAN] Excerpts from Ch. 11 "The Internet and Social Media" in *Understanding Media and Culture*
[CAN] "The People Formerly Known as the Audience" by Jay Rosen

Screen: Interactive screening: Activities (ELIZA, Zork, etc.)

WEEK 11: Reality TV and Micro-Celebrity

Reading: [CAN] "You May Know Me From YouTube: (Micro)-Celebrity in Social Media," by Alice Marwick
[CAN] Ch. 18 "*America's Next Top Model: Neoliberal Labor*" by Laurie Ouellette,

in *How to Watch Television Second Edition*

Screen: *America's Next Top Model* (S1:E1, "The Girl Who Wants It Bad," 2003)
Keeping Up with the Kardashians (S2:E8, "Kardashian Family Vacation," 2008)

WEEK 12: New Forms of Distribution and Content

Reading: [CAN] "*High Maintenance* and *The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl: Indie TV*" by Aymar Jean Christian

[CAN] "YouTube: The Intimate Connection between Television and Video Sharing" by Jose van Dijck

Screen: *The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl* (episodes from web series)
Insecure (S1.E1)
Student-selected YouTube videos

WEEK 13: Interactive Audiences

Reading: [CAN] "More Than a Backchannel: Twitter and Television" by Harrington, Highfield and Bruns, Participations (2013)

[CAN] Andre Brock, "From the Blackhand Side: Black Twitter as Cultural Conversation," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 56.4 (2012): 529–549

Screen: Live-tweet event (student-selected TV show)

WEEK 14: Digital Culture and Algorithmic Inequity

Reading: [CAN] "Algorithmic Inequity," Ch. 7 of Sara Wachter-Boettcher's book *Technically Wrong: Sexist Apps, Biased Algorithms, and Other Threats of Toxic Tech*

[CAN] "[Trump's Been Unplugged. Now What?](#)" by Anna Wiener (*The New Yorker*)

Screen: [NET] *The Social Dilemma* (Jeff Orlowski, 2020)

WEEK 15: Video Games and Gamification

Reading: [CAN] "[Video Games Are Better Without Stories](#)," by Ian Bogost

[CAN] "[Gamified Life](#)," by Vincent Gabrielle

[CAN] "[Emory Students Win Amazon's Alexa Prize for Artificial Intelligence 'Social Companion'](#)" by Carol Clark

Screen: Students play video games on their smartphones

WEEK 16: Review and Share Final Projects
We will share drafts of final projects in class. No additional readings or screenings this week.

Exam: **UNIT #2 Exam**