

TELEVISION & Culture

COMM 3003
Fall 2009, Section 501
Tuesdays, 6-9 p.m.
Carrier Center

Instructor: **Danny Linton**
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E-mail: **danny@memphis.edu**
Office Hours: **By Appointment**

Books and Readings:

- Gary R. Edgerton & Brian G. Rose, *Thinking Outside the Box: A Contemporary Television Genre Reader*.
- Steven D. Stark, *Glued to the Set: The 60 Television Shows and Events That Made Us Who We Are Today*.
- Other readings as required.

Grading Scale:

A+ (99-100)	A (92-98)	A- (90-91)
B+ (88-89)	B (82-87)	B- (80-81)
C+ (78-79)	C (72-77)	C- (70-71)
D+ (68-69)	D (60-67)	F (59 and below)

Your grade will be a reflection of how well you have mastered the material, not how hard you have worked. I do not curve grades, though there may be opportunities for extra credit as the semester progresses.

Grading Procedures:

Paper One: 30%

Paper Two: 30%

Participation/In-Class Written Assignments: 40%

Attendance Policy:

This class depends on the participation and the mutual support of students. I do not take attendance in my class. However, failure to attend classes regularly will, without fail, adversely affect your scores on exams and written assignments, as well as lower your participation grade. Put simply, if you do not attend class, you cannot master the material. Attendance is vital to your participation grade, in particular, as it is derived from work done directly in class. If you should miss a class during which a participation grade is given, you **cannot** make up this grade, **even if you have an excused absence**. You cannot receive credit for participating in an exercise you were not present for, even if you have a good reason for not being there. Punctuality is also required. Please come to class on time. Latecomers often interrupt the screening of a television show and distract the students who did show up on time. In addition, do not attend class without the intention of staying for the duration. Excessive tardiness and/or leaving early will also adversely affect your grade.

Originality:

According to The University of Memphis Student Handbook, your assignments must reflect your own effort. In situations where external sources are used, you must acknowledge your sources and add your own analysis; otherwise, it's plagiarism. If you plagiarize or cheat, the minimum penalty is an F on the assignment; other penalties could include an F for the course and/or suspension. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs.

Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities (including invisible disabilities such as chronic diseases or learning disabilities) are encouraged to notify me of their condition within the first two classes of the semester. The college and I will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities.

Policy on Written Assignments:

The writing assignments for this course will be comprised of critical analyses of television programs based on the principles discussed both in your readings and in class. Specific details and requirements for each assignment will be distributed separately. I do not accept handwritten, faxed or e-mailed papers, nor do I accept late submissions, except in the cases of excused, documented emergencies. Being ill, printer malfunctions, and car trouble on the day the paper is due do not constitute emergencies. COMM 3003 is a writing intensive course, meaning that not only is a substantial amount of writing required, but also that improving your writing skills is a key objective of the course. That being the case, I will grade written work not only for conceptual clarity and mastery, but also for appropriate grammar and structure. The ability to express your ideas in written form is as important as the ideas themselves.

Content Disclaimer:

Some of the television shows we will view in this class may contain nudity, violence, sexual situations, or other graphic material. Since television cannot successfully be studied without looking at a wide variety of material, no films have been eliminated (or selected, for that matter) solely on the basis of such content. If you should find the content of a particular program to be objectionable, I ask that you at least give the program a chance. If, having done that, you still have a problem, I will not make you stay to watch the show. You will, however, still be required to master the concepts the program is displaying and its importance to the study of the medium. Please bear in mind that I am not expecting you personally to like every program shown. You are here to learn about the television medium, not watch a marathon of your favorite series.

Miscellaneous Notes:

There is no eating, drinking, or smoking allowed in TC237A or any of the University's off-campus classrooms. Also, please turn off all cell phones and pagers during class, as they are an obvious distraction to both me and your fellow classmates. Also, you may not use laptop computers during program screenings.

Course Schedule:

All assignments are in bold type and are to be completed before class on the day they appear in the schedule. Please bring your books and/or readings to class. Case studies are subject to change.

SEPTEMBER

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| 1 | Introduction to the course; Class introductions | |
| 8 | Realism & Formalism: TV Drama
Case Study: <i>The Twilight Zone</i> | <i>Glued to the Set</i>, Ch. 16 |
| 15 | Realism & Formalism: Reality TV
Case Study: <i>Big Brother</i>
Guest Speaker: Frank Robertson | <i>Thinking Outside the Box</i>, Ch. 8 |
| 22 | Setting the Agenda: Network & Cable News
Case Studies: <i>The CBS Evening News with Katie Couric</i> | <i>Glued to the Set</i>, Chs. 25 & 46 |
| 29 | The Sitcom as Reality
Case Studies: <i>All in the Family</i> and <i>Roseanne</i>
Guest Speaker: Candy Justice | <i>Thinking Outside the Box</i>, Ch. 5
<i>Glued to the Set</i>, Chs. 33 & 53 |

OCTOBER

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| 6 | The Sitcom as Reality
Case Study: <i>The Cosby Show</i> and <i>The Golden Girls</i> | <i>Glued to the Set</i>, Ch. 51 |
| 13 | PAPER ONE DUE | |
| 20 | No class: Fall Break | |
| 27 | Daytime Talk Shows
Case Study: <i>The Oprah Winfrey Show</i> | <i>Glued to the Set</i>, Ch. 56 |

NOVEMBER

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| 3 | Semiotics in Television Advertising
Case Study: Various TV Commercials | Reading TBA |
| 10 | The Changing Face of Game Shows
Case Studies: <i>Match Game</i> , <i>The Price is Right</i> ,
and <i>Who Wants to Be a Millionaire</i> | <i>Glued to the Set</i>, Ch. 24 |
| 17 | TBA | |
| 24 | Feminist theory and Gender Criticism
Soap Operas
Case Study: <i>The Young and the Restless</i> | <i>Glued to the Set</i>, Ch. 41
<i>Thinking Outside the Box</i>, Ch. 6 |

DECEMBER

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| 1 | Feminist theory and Gender Criticism
Case Study: <i>Sex and the City</i> | <i>Thinking Outside the Box</i>, pp. 232-37 |
| 8 | Screening of <i>Great Television Moments: What We Watched</i> | |
| 15 | PAPER TWO DUE | |