

CTCS 191 – **Introduction to Television**
Spring 2014
W: 2:00-4:50p (Norris Theater)

Prof. Nitin Govil
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(o) W: 12-1:45 (SCA 317)*
*call 213.740.3334 for appt.

Course website: <http://ctcs191.wordpress.com>
Follow on Twitter: @CTCS191

Lead Teaching Assistant: Kate Fortmueller (kfortmueller@gmail.com)
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Course Description

What and where is American television today? Will video streaming replace cable TV? Has the quality of television outpaced feature films? Has reality TV run out of steam? Are women auteurs in television the next big thing? What is the relationship between technologies, institutions, narratives, aesthetics, and audiences? To discuss these questions, this course introduces students to the study of television as a dramatic form with a history of industrial and creative practices that both overlap and diverge from that of other media. In this course, we will focus on innovations in American television over the past 15 years and will read history, theory, and criticism pertaining to television as textual form and industrial practice.

Required Texts

1. Michael Curtin and Jane Shattuc, *The American Television Industry*. New York: Palgrave, 2009. [listed as *ATI* on syllabus]
2. Other required readings to be made available on our course Black Board site

Assessment

In Class Mid-Term Exam:	30%
5-7 Page (or eq.) Paper/Project:	30%
Take Home Final Exam:	20%
Discussion Section:	20%

Grading Scale		
100-98: A+	97-94: A	93-90: A-
89-87: B+	86-83: B	82-80: B-
79-77: C+	76-73: C	72-70: C-
69-60: D	59-0: F	

Discussion Sections

All students must enroll in and attend one discussion section that meets once a week for 50 minutes outside lecture. These discussion sections will be lead by one of your TAs. The purpose of section is to clarify and extend the topics raised in lecture through dialogue and conversation in a small group setting. In a large class such as ours, discussion sections are critical to engaging and synthesizing the course material. Our focus in section will be to clarify ideas by working through concepts together as a group.

Course Requirements and Policies:

All assignments must be handed in on time; exceptions will be made only with official documentation. Attendance is required at lecture AND discussion. All assignments for the course must be submitted to receive a passing grade in the course. Again, all assignments must be completed as scheduled. Assignment details will be forthcoming.

Grade disputes: if you have a question about a grade you receive on an assignment, you must raise your question with your TA before the next assignment is due. You may not, for example, contact your TA with questions about the grade you received on your first assignment the week before the final.

Regarding medical emergencies during the midterm and final exam, please note that the USC Student Health Center no longer offers appropriate documentation to students who visit their premises for treatment, as their services were apparently widely misused. We remain sympathetic to students who are unable to take their final exams due to genuine medical emergencies, and suggest one of two courses. Under both circumstances, you will need a formal letter from a doctor on official letterhead to document your illness. There will be no exceptions to this requirement. You may request an "Incomplete" on your course, provide your TA/Professor with appropriate documentation prior to the end of term, and make arrangements to complete the final assignment by a date set by your TA and Professor. Alternatively, you may fax a copy of your doctor's letter to the Department of Critical Studies at (213) 740-9471 after informing your TA and Professor, and sit for a make-up exam (if offered) on the date set by your TA and Professor.

Student conduct: turn off cell phones during lecture, screenings and discussion section. Use laptops for note taking only and please close laptops during screenings. Do not exit through the side doors in Norris Theater. Only bottled water is allowed inside the auditorium.

Students With Disabilities: 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 that the letter is delivered to the Professor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 am-5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity:

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General Principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. The Student Guidebook contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A:

<http://usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/> Information on intellectual property at USC is available at <http://usc.edu/academe/acsen/issues/ipr/index.html>.

Plagiarism (copying and modifying someone else's work or website and presenting it as your own) will not be tolerated. If you are doubtful about how to use citations, please see the Teaching Assistant or the Professor.

Course Exam, Project and Paper Retention Policy: It is the responsibility of all students in Critical Studies courses to retrieve all papers, projects, assignments and/or exams within one academic year of completion of a course. These records may be essential in resolving grade disputes and incompletes as well as assist in verifying that course requirements have been met. The Critical Studies Division will dispose of all records from the previous academic year in May of the current academic year. No exceptions. Please be in contact with your TA about collecting these documents while you are taking the course.

Welcome aboard!

Course Schedule

Please note – screenings and readings are subject to change

Session 1 – Jan 15

Course Introductions

See: *The Sopranos* (1999): “The Sopranos” and “College”
Bjork on Television (2007): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4d4rdat3HdA>

Session 2 – Jan 22

Textual Politics

Read: 1. “Chapter 1 – Key Players.” *ATI*, 5-33.
2. Emily Nussbaum, “When TV Became Art.” *New York Magazine*, December 4 2009.
See: *Homicide: Life on the Street*, “Gone for Goode” (1993)
The Wire, “The Target” (2002)

Session 3 – Jan 29

Receptions - Audiences and Fans

Read: 1. “Chapter 2 – Audiences and Advertising.” *ATI*, 34-57.
2. Suzanne Scott, “*Battlestar Galactica*: Fans and Ancillary Content.” In Ethan Thompson and Jason Mittell, eds., *How to Watch Television*. NYU Press, 2013. 320-329.
See: *Lost* (2001), clip
Battlestar Galactica (2003)
Portlandia, “One More Episode” (2012)

Session 4 – Feb 5

Homeland Insecurity, Part 1

Read: 1. “Chapter 3 – Television Programming.” *ATI*, 58-87.
2. Alessandra Stanley, “Chasing Suspicions of an Enemy Within.” *New York Times*, September 29, 2011.
See: 24 (2001) clip
The Americans (2012) clip
The Blacklist (2013) clip
Homeland (2011)

Session 5 – Feb 12

Situating Comedy

Read: 1. “Chapter 4 – Making TV on the Broadcast Networks.” *ATI*, 88-118.
2. Katrina Richardson, “The Great Sitcom Divide.” *Salon.com*, January 20, 2012.
See: *How I Met Your Mother* (2005) clip
Tyler Perry’s House of Payne (2006) clip
The Comeback (2005)
Louie (2010)
Arrested Development (2013)
Modern Family, “Game Changer,” (2013)

Session 6 – Feb 19

Women's Work, between Cable and Broadcast

Read: 1. "Chapter 5 – Branded Cable Networks." *ATI*, 119-144.
2. Judith Miller, "Lena Dunham and Mindy Kaling Advise Young Females on How to Humorously Confront Gender Bias." *Vanity Fair*, November 11 2013.

See: *30 Rock* (2006) clip
Enlightened (2013) clip
Ugly Betty (2006) clip
Scandal (2012)
Girls (2013)
The Mindy Project (2013)

Session 7 – Feb 26

MIDTERM

No Reading Due or Screening Scheduled

Session 8 – Mar 5

Shifting Models

Read: 1. "Chapter 6 – The New Economies of TV Information." *ATI*, 145-171
2. Scott Timberg, "Cable TV to the Rescue: Will the "Quality Subscription Model Work for Books, Movies, Music?" *Salon.com*, July 21, 2013.

See: *Breaking Bad* (2010)

Session 9 – Mar 12

Convergence, Part One

Read: 1. "Conclusion." *ATI*, 172-184.
2. Jennifer Holt: "It's Not Film, It's TV: Rethinking Industrial Identity." *Jump Cut* 52, Summer 2010.

See: *The Good Wife* (2009)
Scandal (2012)

****NO CLASS MAR 19 (SPRING RECESS)****

Session 10 – Mar 26

Digital Distribution and Television Online

Read: 1. Kevin P. McDonald, "Digital Dreams in a Material World: The Rise of Netflix and its Impact on Changing Distribution and Exhibition Patterns." *Jump Cut* 55 (Fall 2013).
2. Anne Helen Petersen, "The New Canon." *LA Review of Books*, October 7 2013.

See: *House of Cards* (2012)
Orange is the New Black (2013)

Session 11 – April 2

The News: Liveness and Commentary

Read: TBA

See: "Balloon Boy" – *Fox News*
The Daily Show
The Colbert Report

Session 12 – April 9

Nordic Noir, American Remakes

- Read: 1. Tasha Oren and Sharon Shahaf, "Global Television Formats: A Global Framework for TV Studies." In Tasha Oren and Sharon Shahaf, eds., *Global Television Formats: Understanding Television Across Borders*. Routledge, 2012. 1-19
2. Lauren Collins, "Danish Postmodern: Why Are So Many People Fans of Scandinavian TV?" *The New Yorker*, January 7, 2013: 22-30.
- See: *Hatufim (Prisoners of War)*, (2010)
Forbrydelsen (2010)
The Killing (2011)

Session 13 – April 16

WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE

Mad Men

- Read: 1. Gary Edgerton, "The Selling of Mad Men: A Production History." In Gary Edgerton, ed., *Mad Men*. I.B. Tauris, 2011. 3-24.
- See: *Mad Men* (2007): "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" and "Babylon"

Session 14 – April 23

Death and Return in Contemporary Life

- Read: 1. Murali Balaji, "Eating the Dead: AMC's Use of Synergy to Cultivate Zombie Consumption." In Murali Balaji, ed., *Thinking Dead: What the Zombie Apocalypse Means*. Lexington Books, 2013. 227-240.
2. Maureen Ryan, "Creepy Undead Drama Done Right." *Huffington Post*, October 29, 2013.
- See: *The Walking Dead*, "Days Gone Bye" (2010)
Les Revenants (The Returned), "Camille" (2012)

Session 15 – April 30

Convergence, Part Two (Fantasy and Reality)

Distribute Final

- Read: 1. Chris Alloy, "The Future of Television: Countless Options, Multiple Screens." *Wired*, September 23 2013.
2. Emily Nussbaum, "The Graphic Arts of *Game of Thrones*." *The New Yorker*, March 7, 2012.
3. Aamer Rahman, "*Game of Thrones* and Racist Fantasy." *Art Threat*, June 15 2013.
<http://artthreat.net/2013/06/game-of-thrones-and-racist-fantasy/>
- See: *Game of Thrones* (2011): "Winter is Coming" and "The Kingsroad"

****Take-home final – hard copies due Monday, May 12 @3pm****