

# Victoria

UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

*Te Whare Wānanga  
o te Ūpoko o te Ika a Māui*



SCHOOL OF ENGLISH, FILM, THEATRE AND MEDIA STUDIES

## **MDIA 302 – TELEVISION NARRATIVE**

**TRIMESTER 2, 2008**

### **COURSE GUIDE**

“Whereas our ancestors used to listen to tall-tale spinners, read penny dreadfuls, tune in to radio dramas, or rush to the local bijou each Saturday, now we primarily satisfy our ever-constant yearning for stories by gathering around the flickering box in the living room. Television is the principal storyteller in contemporary...society.”

**Sarah Kozloff**

**Course Convenor**

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**Tutors**

Gregor Cameron and Paul Davies

**Guest Lecturers**

Dr. Joost deBruin and Tiara Sukhan

**Lectures**

Thursday 3-5pm Hunter LT 220 (One two-hour lecture)

**Tutorials**

Tutorials run for one hour every week, beginning in Week 2. Students should sign up for tutorials on-line. Please go to the Blackboard site for this course and follow the instructions. Tutorial lists will be posted on the Blackboard site and the Media Studies notice board by the beginning of Week 2.

**Course Description:**

This course examines narrative strategies and tendencies in contemporary primetime television programming, both fictional and factual. Applying screen narrative theory and using textual analysis, we will examine what kinds of stories TV tells us and the narrative strategies it uses to do this. Narrative forms to be studied include: series and serial drama, continuing soap opera, scripted (series) comedy, reality gameshows and docu-soaps, and selected lifestyle and makeover formats. Lecture topics for this course are organised into three interrelated sections. These are: 1) 'Narrative Structures, Contexts and Theory'; 2) 'Narrative Modes'; and 3) 'Case Studies in Popular Long-Form Programming'.

**Course Objectives:**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. Understand key theoretical concepts in and formal approaches to TV narrative;
2. Be familiar with current academic research into the leading fictional and factual television forms;
3. Have the ability to analyse and evaluate narrative structures across factual as well as fictional TV programmes;
4. Understand some of the cultural appeals (both 'local' and 'universal') with which TV narratives are imbued; and
5. Draw linkages between the narrative forms that pervade primetime TV and the mix of cultural and institutional influences that inform and shape its programmes.

NB. Assessment items for this course (please see page 3) are cumulatively designed to test student learning and understandings of **all** of the above aims and objectives. This coverage is ensured by the prohibition of any duplication of topics or material between assignment questions.

**Course Completion and Philosophy:**

The expected minimum for students to successfully complete MDIA 302 is that they attend lectures and tutorials and submit all assignments. Students should assume that the staff involved in this course will put maximum effort into teaching at a high level. To take full advantage of this commitment by staff, students are encouraged to actively engage with the material offered on MDIA 302. In addition to the minimum requirement specified above attending classes and completing assignments, an active engagement means reading the required items every week; viewing programme example outside of classes; searching for more information about topics of special interest; participating in class discussions; and devoting a genuine intellectual energy to assessment tasks.

**Set Text:**

*MDIA 302 Readings 2008* (Available at Student Notes from July 2008)

**Recommended General Texts (Continued Over Page):**

- Gary R. Edgerton and Brian G Rose (eds.) *Thinking Outside the Box: A Contemporary Television Genre Reader*, The University Press of Kentucky: Kentucky, 2005
- Roger Horrocks and Nick Perry (Eds.), *Television in New Zealand. Programming the Nation*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2004
- Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn (ed.) *Understanding Reality Television* Routledge: London and New York, 2004
- Annette Hill, *Reality TV: Audiences and Popular Factual Television*, Routledge: London and New York:, 2005
- Robin Nelson, *State of Play: Contemporary "High-End" TV Drama*, Manchester University Press: Manchester and New York, 2007
- Jonathan Gray, *Watching With The Simpsons: Television, Parody and Intertextuality*, Routledge: New York and London, 2006
- Jason Mittell, *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*, Routledge: London and New York, 2004
- Glen Creeber, *Serial Television: Big Drama on the Small Screen*, British Film Institute: London, 2005
- Richard Kilborn and John Ozod, *An Introduction to Television Documentary: Confronting Reality*, Manchester University Press: Manchester and New York, 1997
- Dana Heller (ed.) *Makeover Television: Realities Remodelled*, IB Tauris: London 2007

NB. A full reading list for MDIA 302 will be posted on Blackboard at the beginning of the course.

### **Mandatory Requirements for Passing MDIA 302:**

The course is internally assessed. In order to pass it, students are required to:

1. attend at least nine tutorials; and
2. complete all three assignments

### **Internal Assessment Items and Due Dates:**

- First Essay – 2600 words – **35 %**  
**Due:** Monday 11 August, 4pm
- Tutorial presentation – **30 %**  
These will occur in your regular tutorial class, from Week 4 to Week 11.
- Final Essay – 3000 words – **35 %**  
**Due:** Monday 6 October, 4pm

## **Assignment Submission Expectations and Late Penalties**

- Students who cannot attend a particular tutorial session or who require an extension for any of the assignments need to contact their tutor well in advance of the due date for the essay or presentation. Extensions will not be given without a medical certificate or similar evidence.
- Late essays which have not been granted an extension will be subject to a penalty of 5% of the assignment's grade. Plagiarism (see below) will, in most cases, result in an E grade, or, depending on the severity of the plagiarism, automatic failure.
- Students are expected to be familiar with the New Zealand television landscape. Watching television is an indispensable part of this course. Students are encouraged to watch more television than they normally would, especially regarding the genres that are central to this course.
- Plagiarism will not be tolerated in any assessment item for this course, whether this is presented in written or in oral form.

## **Essay Submission**

Essays for this course are checked electronically for plagiarism. You will be required to upload a copy of your essay to the MDIA 302 Blackboard site. It will then be uploaded to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com). Turnitin is an online plagiarism prevention tool which identifies material that may have been copied from other sources including the Internet, books, journals, periodicals or the work of other students. Turnitin is used to assist academic staff in detecting inappropriate referencing, misquotation and the inclusion of unattributed material, which may be forms of cheating or plagiarism. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted materials on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions will not be made available to any other party.

As well as submitting your essays electronically, you need to hand in a hard copy. You will be required to attach a cover sheet which you need to sign, indicating that you are aware of the University's policy on plagiarism and that the assignment is all your own work. It is your responsibility to ensure you understand what plagiarism is, and what the University's policy on plagiarism is. Please do NOT sign the cover sheet if you do not understand.

## **Workload**

The course is designed on the assumption that students will commit an average of 18 hours a week to the course, which includes attending lectures and tutorials, watching TV, reading required texts and additional literature, and preparing for assignments.

## **Additional information**

There is a Blackboard site for this course, which we will use to post announcements and additional information such as a selection of Power Point slides from the lectures (these contain the key points of a lecture, but do not replace your own notes), tutorial exercises, assignments, guidelines on essay writing, and links to relevant websites.

## **GENERAL UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND POLICIES**

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the *Victoria University Calendar* available in hardcopy or under "about Victoria" on the Victoria homepage at:

[http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about\\_victoria/calendar\\_intro.html](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/calendar_intro.html)

Information on the following topics is available electronically under "Course Outline General Information" at:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/newspubs/universitypubs.aspx#general>

- Student and Staff Conduct
- Academic Grievances
- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism
- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student Support

## Assessment Criteria for MDIA 302

### **A+ 85-100%**

Excellent work showing sophisticated and independent thought. Superior analysis, comprehensive research, good theoretical or methodological understanding and impeccable presentation.

### **A 80-84%**

Work is distinguished by the clarity of thought and argument. Question is answered skilfully, is meticulously structured and the argument is convincing. Demonstrates sophisticated comprehension of the topic, a familiarity with scholarship & research in the area, and a clear understanding of related theoretical issues. A high standard of critical analysis. Presentation and organization are excellent with correct use of citation conventions when required.

### **A- 75-79%**

Work of a high standard: ideas could be of 'A' quality material but the overall effect was undermined by limitation or inconsistency in one area. It could also be 'A' material that was flawed by the quality or consistency of its technical presentation, research support, or theoretical understandings. Demonstrates independent thought, good writing skills, effective selection/structuring of material, and a general clarity and sense of purpose.

### **B+ 70-74%**

Work which exhibits a good standard of research and of writing. Contains some perceptive analysis, and effective research, preparation and planning. This work may demonstrate insight and perception but this standard is not maintained through the whole work. The argument, technical quality, and other elements may be inconsistent in quality. May require greater integration of theoretical or empirical analysis. Demonstrates some independence of thought.

### **B 65-69%**

Consistently good work and still above average. May demonstrate strong analysis, theoretical reading or contextual knowledge, but without integrating these elements into a balanced argument. May be well researched and documented but in the 'B' range there could well be a deficiency in some aspect of research or understanding. May have problems with technical presentation, structure, argument and/or research.

### **B- 60-64%**

Good work but may not be consistent and thus falls short of 'B' quality in one or more respects. In this grade area the work will have exceeded the standard expected for passes at this level. Question is satisfactorily answered and has been appropriately informed by research, but there is less attention to the detail and complexity of issues. There may be problems with the essay structure, the writing style, the selection of material or the argument. There may also be problems with presentation, expression, and grammar.

### **C+ 55-59%**

The essay is limited in achievement due to an overall incapacity for independent research or thought – hence it will tend to demonstrate a reliance on lecture material. Work in the C range will have paid insufficient attention to critical sources and not be widely researched. Work in this category may have deficiencies in structure and organization, the quality of argument, and/or the writing style.

### **C 50-54%**

Satisfactory completion of set tasks only. Basic engagement with the subject matter and lacking in critical analysis or a considered conceptual approach. May be poorly planned and constructed, with serious problems of clarity and expression. May not have used or have acknowledged an appropriate range of sources. May be purely descriptive. There may be some significant problems with writing, research or organization.

### **D 40-49%**

Misses the point of the exercise or has failed to respond adequately to it. The work is deficient in important respects to the extent that it cannot be regarded satisfactory at this level. A 'D' grade essay may contain some elements of attaining a pass grade.

### **E 0-39%**

This category implies that the essay is well below the achievement minimum (in a range of respects) for work at this level. A E essay will demonstrate not one, but several of the 'D' essay's deficiencies - it may be well short of the prescribed length, badly written, poorly conceived, ill structured, hastily prepared, full of technical or other inaccuracies, and/or lacking in even a basic understanding of the concepts. An essay in the 'E' area may have been penalised by inappropriate referencing or plagiarism (please see pages 7-8 for more information).