

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 1, 2009

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	Dr Trisha Dunleavy Email: trisha.dunleavy@vuw.ac.nz Phone: (04) 463 6843 Office: Room 206, 42-44 Kelburn Parade
Tutor	Tiara Sukhan
Guest Lecturers	Tiara Sukhan
Trimester Dates	There are twelve lectures for this course. The first takes place on Monday 2 March and the last on Monday 1 June 2009. Mid-term break begins Monday 13 April and the second half of term starts Monday 27 April.
Lectures	Monday 11-1pm 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 and do so as soon as possible. Please go to the Blackboard site for this course and follow the instructions. Tutorial lists will be posted on the Blackboard site by or just before Monday Week 2 (9 March).

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'.

Learning 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 5) 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.

Course Delivery

All lectures and tutorials for this course are compulsory. In this subject, students who miss a proportion of classes almost always perform less well than those who do attend every week.

Lectures are characterised by a teacher-lead approach, supported by powerpoint notes and indicative DVD clips. Course readings (published by Student Notes) provide essential support for each lecture and students are strongly advised to read as many as possible of the items related to the topic before each week's lecture.

The tutorial schedule is designed so that tutorials follow the lecture topics by one week. Tutorials are highly interactive and are designed to incorporate considerable input from

tutorial members. Students need to have prepared for tutorial discussions by completing the weekly readings before class.

Set Text

MDIA 302 Readings 2009 (Available at Student Notes from Feb 2009).

This reader contains *required readings* to support lectures and tutorials which form a solid theoretical or conceptual basis for assignment work. In preparing assignments, students should begin by consulting all of the relevant readings before moving on to the list of *further readings* which will be included in the powerpoint notes for each lecture topic.

Recommended General Texts

The books below are available in the library. Whilst most of them will be consulted by MDIA 302 students during the course, there is no requirement for students to purchase these texts.

- 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 seven of the nine tutorials; and
2. Complete all three assignments.

Internal Assessment Items and Due Dates:

- First Essay – 2600 words – **35 %**
Due: Thursday 9 April, 4pm
- Tutorial presentation – **25 %**
Presentations occur in your regular tutorial class, from Week 4 to Week 12. Each student's presentation will be followed by the submission of a written summary. Marks will be divided equally between the *presentation* and the *summary* to determine the grade for this piece of assessment.
- Final Essay – 3000 words – **40 %**
Due: Friday 5 June, 4pm.

Lateness Penalties

- Assignments submitted after the deadline without a written extension will be penalised at a rate of 2% (out of a total of 100) per working day. In other words, if you get 50% for an assignment, after one day your grade will drop to 48%, then 46% the following day etc.
- Late assignments are likely to receive limited feedback.
- The weekend counts for one day (i.e. an assignment due on Friday that is submitted on Monday will receive a 2% penalty).
- Please ensure that you are aware of the *time* that your assignment is due, as well as the date, as this is the cut-off time utilised in calculating lateness penalties.

Extensions to Assessment Deadlines

Extensions will be granted only in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. Issues of workload *do not* constitute exceptional and unforeseen circumstances.

If you require an extension, you must complete an extension request form *prior to* the assignment due date. This must be accompanied by relevant documentation (e.g. a doctor's certificate) where appropriate.

Extension requests must be submitted by email to Trisha Dunleavy. Tutors cannot grant extensions.

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.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. All written and oral assessment items for this course will be checked for plagiarism. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such material

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, on the University's website: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

General University Policies and Statutes

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* or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

This website also provides information for students in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates.