

# MDIA 302 Television Narrative

**Trimester 1 2010**

**1 March to 4 July 2010**

**20 Points**

“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**

## TRIMESTER DATES

Teaching Dates: 1 March 2010 to 4 June 2010

Mid-trimester Break

Including Easter: 2 April to 18 April 2010

Study Week: 7 June to 11 June 2010

## WITHDRAWAL DATES

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds.aspx>

## NAMES AND CONTACT DETAILS

### **Dr. Trisha Dunleavy (Convenor)**

Email: [trisha.dunleavy@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:trisha.dunleavy@vuw.ac.nz)

Phone: (04) 463 6843

Room: 206, 42-44 Kelburn Parade

Office Hour: Wednesday 5-6pm.

### **Anna Currie (Course Tutor)**

Email: [anna.currie@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:anna.currie@vuw.ac.nz)

Phone: 4638933

Room: 107, 42-44 Kelburn Parade

Office Hour: Wednesdays 2-3pm.

## CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS

This course entails one two-hour lecture and one 50-minute tutorial each week of trimester. Please note that attendance at lectures and tutorials is compulsory for students in MDIA 302 and a minimum attendance level is a required element of course completion. Please refer to the section entitled 'Mandatory Course Requirements' for details of attendance requirements.

### Lectures

Wednesdays 3-5pm MY220

### Tutorials

Wednesdays 12-1, 1-2 and Thursdays 10-11, 11-12.

Tutorial Enrolment will be via S-Cubed from 6pm March 3<sup>rd</sup>

## COURSE DELIVERY

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 requirements for attending classes and completing assignments, an active engagement means reading the required items every week; viewing programme examples 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.

- Lectures are characterized 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. It is important to have completed this reading before the tutorial on each topic. The attendance threshold that applies to MDIA 302 lectures and tutorials recognizes that in this subject, students who miss a proportion of classes perform less well and require more individual assistance from staff than those who do attend a clear majority of classes.
- 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.

## COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

There are two systems of course support outside of actual classes. Please use **S-Cubed** to sign up for tutorials. All other on-line course documentation (regarding lectures, assignments, additional reading suggestions, and any information about required changes) will be found on **Blackboard**.

## COURSE CONTENT

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 docusoaps, 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 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.

## EXPECTED WORKLOAD

MDIA 302 is a 20-point course, inferring a workload total of around **200 hours**. The course has been designed on the assumption that students will commit sufficient study time which, in addition to attending lectures and tutorials, will be taken up with: reading required texts and additional literature; viewing relevant TV programmes, including the close reading of episodes to be used in assignments; assignment research and writing; and staff consultation where necessary.

## GROUP WORK

The second assignment – tutorial presentation – is likely to involve a measure of working with one or two other MDIA 302 students. However, whereas the presentation itself will involve you working with others the grade for this assignment is generated by the work that you complete individually.

**MDIA 302 Lectures (Wed 3-5pm MY220) – 2010 Outline**

| Week   | Lecture Topic   | Lecture Date | Tutorial Number | Tutorial Dates |
|--|---|--------------|-----------------|----------------|
| <i>Week 1</i>  | Contexts and Approaches                               | 3 Mar        |                 | No tutorials   |
| <i>Week 2</i>  | Narrative Theory                                      | 10 Mar       | 1               | 10-11 Mar      |
| <i>Week 3</i>  | Series and Serial Form                                | 17 Mar       | 2               | 17-18 Mar      |
| <i>Week 4</i>  | Realism   | 24 Mar       | 3               | 24-25 Mar      |
| <i>Week 5</i>  | Melodrama   | 31 Mar       | 4               | 31 Mar -1 June |
| <b>Dates to keep in mind</b>   |   |              |                 |                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-Trimester Break April 2 to April 18</li> <li>• First Essay due Tuesday April 20, 4pm</li> <li>• Final Essay due Friday June 4, 4pm</li> </ul> |   |              |                 |                |
| <i>Week 6</i>  | Intertextuality                                       | 21 Apr       | 5               | 21-22 Apr      |
| <i>Week 7</i>  | Comedy  | 28 Apr       | 6               | 28-29 Apr      |
| <i>Week 8</i>  | Narratives of Crime                                   | 5 May        | 7               | 5-6 May        |
| <i>Week 9</i>  | Narratives of Competition:<br>the Game-Doc            | 12 May       | 8               | 12-13 May      |
| <i>Week 10</i>   | Complexity in High-End<br>Series and Serial Drama     | 19 May       | 9               | 19-20 May      |
| <i>Week 11</i>   | Narratives of<br>Transformation: the<br>Makeover Show | 26 May       | 10              | 26-27 May      |
| <i>Week 12</i>   | Hybrid Narratives: Fiction<br>Meets Faction           | 2 June       | 11              | 2-3 June       |

## READINGS

**Set Text**        *MDIA 302 Readings 2010* (Available at Student Notes from Feb 2010).

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 and can be found either on library shelves or in library databases.

### 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, it is not expected that you will purchase these texts.

- Glen Creeber, *Serial Television: Big Drama on the Small Screen*, British Film Institute: London, 2005
- Trisha Dunleavy, *Television Drama: Form, Agency, Innovation*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2009.
- Gary R. Edgerton and Brian G Rose (eds.) *Thinking Outside the Box: A Contemporary Television Genre Reader*, The University Press of Kentucky: Kentucky, 2005
- Jonathan Gray, *Watching With The Simpsons: Television, Parody and Intertextuality*, Routledge: New York and London, 2006
- Dana Heller (ed.) *Makeover Television: Realities Remodelled*, IB Tauris: London 2007
- Annette Hill, *Restyling Factual TV: Audiences and News, Documentary and Reality Genres*, Routledge: London and New York, 2007.
- Annette Hill, *Reality TV: Audiences and Popular Factual Television*, Routledge: London and New York., 2005
- Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn (ed.) *Understanding Reality Television* Routledge: London and New York, 2004
- Roger Horrocks and Nick Perry (eds.), *Television in New Zealand. Programming the Nation*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2004
- Richard Kilborn and John Ozod, *An Introduction to Television Documentary: Confronting Reality*, Manchester University Press: Manchester and New York, 1997
- Marc Leverette, Brian L Ott, Cara Louise Buckley (eds.), *It's Not TV: Watching HBO in the Post-Television Era*, New York and London: Routledge, 2008
- Robin Nelson, *State of Play: Contemporary "High-End" TV Drama*, Manchester University Press: Manchester and New York, 2007
- Jason Mittell, *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*, Routledge: London and New York, 2004

For the first two weeks of trimester all undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer, while postgraduate textbooks and student notes will be available from the top

floor of vicbooks in the Student Union Building, Kelburn Campus. After week two all undergraduate textbooks will be sold from vicbooks and student notes from the Student Notes Distribution Centre on the ground floor of the Student Union Building. You can order textbooks and student notes online at [www.vicbooks.co.nz](http://www.vicbooks.co.nz) or can email an order or enquiry to [enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz](mailto:enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz). Books can be couriered to you or they can be picked up from the shop. You will be contacted when they are available.

### ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS AND DATES

This course is internally assessed. There are three items, all of which must be attempted and submitted in order to qualify for course completion and a pass grade.

- First Essay – 2600 words – 35 %  
Due: Tuesday 20 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 4 June, 4pm.

### ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEETS

Assignment cover sheets and extension forms can be found on Blackboard or outside the Programme office. Remember to fill in your tutor's name.

### PENALTIES AND EXTENSIONS

Work submitted after the deadline will be penalised by a 2.5 percent deduction from your total mark per work day or part work day, starting from the hour the work is due. This means late work will drop one 'grade-step' every second day—i.e. from C+ to C, or A- to B+. Late work also receives only minimal comments from your marker.

#### Extensions

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 (available on your course Blackboard site) prior to the assignment due date. This must be accompanied by relevant documentation (e.g. a doctor's certificate) where appropriate. Tutors cannot grant extensions.

## MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

To gain a pass in MDIA 302 you must:

- Attend a minimum of 7 two-hour lectures
- Attend a minimum of 7 tutorials
- Submit all three pieces of written work specified for this course, by the set deadline dates or by those for which an extension has been arranged

## CLASS REPRESENTATIVES

A class representative will be elected in the first class, and that person's name and contact details will be available to VUWSA, the Course Coordinator and the class. The class representative provides a communication channel to liaise with the Course Coordinator on behalf of students.

## STATEMENT ON LEGIBILITY

You are expected to present work that meets appropriate standards. Work submitted during the course (i. e. work that is internally assessed) should be typed or prepared on a computer. Work submitted in the final examination will obviously be handwritten. You are expected to write clearly. Where work is deemed 'illegible', you will be given a photocopy of the work and asked to transcribe it to an acceptable standard (preferably typed) within a specified time frame.

## 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. 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>

The AVC (Academic) website also provides information 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. This website can be accessed at:

[http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about\\_victoria/avcacademic/Publications.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcacademic/Publications.aspx)