

MDIA 404 Television Industries and Forms:

The Case of Drama

Trimester 1 2010

1 March to 4 July 2010

30 Points

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)

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Phone: (04) 463 6843

Room: 206, 42-44 Kelburn Parade

Office Hour: Monday 4-5pm

CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS

Lectures

Mondays 1-3pm MY 403

COURSE CONTENT

This course relates changes in television's political economy to creative innovations in programming using television drama as the indicative case study. Since 1980, the technology-fuelled proliferation of TV services has produced aggressive inter-network competition, expanded commissioning agents and outlets, and

brought important shifts in industrial practice. With market fragmentation necessitating a shift in focus from 'mass' to 'niche' audiences, the business of television has increasingly centred on the provision of distinctive content, an imperative that has helped to liberate programme design. Although a far broader field is available for student research, lectures focus on American, British and New Zealand TV industries and the key fiction forms that have characterized their output since 1980 – 'high-end' drama series and serials, anthology dramas, and scripted series comedies. The course also investigates drama's influence on generic hybridity through three additional forms: docudrama, docusoap and comedy vérité.

COURSE DELIVERY

Course coverage will focus on issues or questions raised by the selected readings hence the set text (and required purchase) is the *MDIA 404 Course Reader 2010*.

Formal course delivery will be confined to the single two-hour lecture each week and lectures will combine a teacher-led approach with student discussion of key ideas, usually drawn from the list of weekly reading items. Students will be expected to prepare for lectures by completing the reading of the items listed for each topic in the 404 course reader.

Further study and learning support will involve two meetings between each student and the course convenor, these to be devoted to discussion of assignment research and essay planning. The need for such meetings highlights that at Honours level, assignment topics are not formally set but are developed by students in consultation with the course convenor.

Given the strategic importance of successful results at Honours level, MDIA 404 students are encouraged to make appointments to discuss their essay plans with Trisha at the earliest possible stage of their research process. The ideal pre-requisite to these discussions is that you have selected and also marked out some key elements of your assignment topic.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course students will:

1. Be knowledgeable about a range of television drama forms and be able to contextualise these within the broader evolution of American, British and New Zealand television;
2. Have read and applied relevant television and genre theory, and have engaged with institutional or policy issues of importance to television drama;
3. Understand the range of institutional, industrial and cultural influences shaping drama programmes. Observing the relationships between national television culture, television institutions, production

funding systems and drama output will allow an appreciation of drama as a meta-genre that responds to, and is able to reflect, prevailing institutional, industrial and cultural conditions.

4. Have demonstrated their research experience and critical understandings of some of the following: 1) a context, policy issue, or academic debate of importance to TV drama or its production; 2) a key movement or moment in British, American or New Zealand drama's development over the last three decades; 3) a particularly innovative or influential drama production; 4) the contribution of a key drama sub-genre, narrative or stylistic approach, or instance of hybridisation; and 5) an aspect of drama's consumption or reception by audiences.

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Other on-line course documentation (regarding lectures, assignments, additional reading suggestions, and any information about required changes) will be found on the **Blackboard** site for this course. Outside of information posted on this site, other communication between convenor and students will be made by email.

EXPECTED WORKLOAD

This course is designed on the assumption that students will be able to commit up to 20 hours a week, including attending 404 lectures and completing course-related academic reading, research, writing and viewing.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to gain a pass in MDIA 404 you must:

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.

MDIA 404 (Mon 1-3, MY 403) – 2010 Lecture Outline

Week 1	1 March	TV Drama: Contexts and Forms
Week 2	8 March	TV Drama and Narrative
Week 3	15 March	TV Drama Aesthetics Part One: Naturalism and Realism
Week 4	22 March	TV Drama Aesthetics Part Two: Modernism and Postmodernism
Week 5	29 March	'Authorship' in TV Drama
Week 6	19 April	'Quality TV': the American Paradigm
Week 7	26 April	New Zealand TV Drama– An Institutional and Cultural Case Study

Key Dates

- *Mid Trimester Break (including Easter) runs Friday 1 April to Sunday 18 April*
- *Week 12 lecture (June 1st) is devoted to student seminar presentations, though the first of these will occur in Week 11.*

Week 8	3 May	Fiction Meets Factual: Docudrama and Docusoap
Week 9	10 May	Contemporary 'High-End' Drama: Leading Series and Serials
Week 10	17 May	Scripted Comedy: Innovation, Aesthetics and Intertextuality
Week 11	24 May	Hybrid Aesthetics in Primetime: the Case of Comedy Verité

READINGS

Set Text *MDIA 404 Readings 2010* (Available at Student Notes)

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 additional readings for each lecture topic (the majority of which can be found either on library shelves or in library databases).

Periodicals Most Relevant to this Course

- *Screen (London)*
- *The Velvet Light Trap (Texas)*
- *Media International Australia (University of Queensland)*
- *Television and New Media (New York)*
- *Critical Studies in Television (Manchester)*
- *Journal of Popular Film and Television (Ohio)*
- *Media Culture and Society (London)*
- *FlowTV flowtv.org/ (Texas)*
- *New Zealand Journal of Media Studies*

Recommended General Texts

Below is a list of indicative books of importance to this course. Whilst many of the texts below will be consulted by MDIA 404 students during the course, it is not expected that you will purchase them.

- John Caughie, *Television Drama: Realism, Modernism and British Culture*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2000.
- Lez Cooke, *British Television Drama – A History*, British Film Institute: London, 2003.
- Glen Creeber, *Serial Television: Big Drama on the Small Screen*, British Film Institute: London, 2004.
- Trisha Dunleavy, *Television Drama: Form, Agency, Innovation*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2009.
- Gary Edgerton, and Jeffrey P. Jones (eds.) *The Essential HBO Reader*, The University Press of Kentucky: Kentucky, 2008.
- 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.
- Michael Hammond and Lucy Mazdon (eds.) *The Contemporary Television Series*, Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2005.
- 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

- Janet McCabe and Kim Akass (ed.) *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, London and New York: IB Tauris, 2007
- Jason Mittell, *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*, Routledge: London and New York, 2004.
- Robin Nelson, *State of Play: Contemporary "High-End" TV Drama*, Manchester University Press: Manchester and New York, 2007.
- Robin Nelson, *Television Drama in Transition: Forms, Values and Cultural Change*, Macmillan: Basingstoke, 1997.
- Carol A. Stabile and Mark Harrison (eds.), *Prime Time Animation: Television Animation and American Culture*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003.

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 or can email an order or enquiry to 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

This course is internally assessed and there are three coursework components, all of which must be completed in order for you to qualify for a final grade. In choosing assignment topics, you must ensure two things. First, that your coursework adheres to broad research aims as stated in the 'Learning Objectives', section of this document. Second, that there is no more than a minor element of repetition (of either topic or content) between the two essays for MDIA 404 and between essays produced for 404 and those produced for other courses that form part of your chosen programme of study. As graduate students you should take every opportunity to ensure that any written work you submit for assessment has been carefully edited so as to reduce grammatical or stylistic or technical errors which may impinge upon the grade that is awarded. Given the necessity for external moderation of all work produced by BA Hons students, any grades given during the course need to be regarded as **provisional**, with grades being finalised immediately following the completion of the external moderation process.

Assignment Types and Due Dates

1. **Essay One (Tuesday 19 April)**
3000 words, worth **35%**.

2. Student Seminar (Lecture slot Week 11 or 12, TBA)

An individual presentation of 15 minutes duration, worth **25%**, which uses material from one or other of the two essay topics. Presentations to be given to the class in the lecture slot Week 11 or 12. Written summary of presentation (with bibliography) is due to be submitted on that same day.

3. Essay Two (Friday June 11)

3000-3500 words, worth **40%**.

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 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 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. Please be aware that at Honours level additional pressures around assignment due dates are imposed by deadlines for external moderation.

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/avcademic/Publications.aspx