

## MDIA 404 Television Industries and Forms:

### The Case of Drama

**Trimester 1 2011**

28 February to 2 July 2011

30 Points

#### TRIMESTER DATES

Teaching dates: 28 February 2011 to 3 June 2011

Mid-trimester break: 18 April to 1 May 2011

Last piece of assessment due: 31 May 2011

#### 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: 203, 81 Fairlie Tce

Office Hour: By appointment

#### CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS

**Lectures**

Tuesday 2.10 pm – 4.50 pm

81 Fairlie Terrace, Room 103

#### 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. Emphasising the critical perspectives of genre, political economy, narrative and aesthetics, lectures focus on American, British and New Zealand industries and the key fiction forms that have characterized their programme output since the 1980s – '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 verité.

## 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 2011*.

Formal course delivery will be confined to the lecture each week and this will combine a teacher-led approach with student discussion of key ideas 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 course reader.

Further study and learning support will involve meetings between each student and the course convenor, these to be devoted to 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 prerequisite 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 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; and

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) the influence of a particular creative approach or innovative drama production; 4) the contribution of a key narrative or stylistic strategy, or instance of 'hybrid' experimentation; and 5) an aspect of drama's political economy, commissioning, consumption, or reception.

#### 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.

#### READINGS

**Set Text**        *MDIA 404 Readings 2011* (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 (along with the additional articles that will be recommended) 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.

All undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer from 7 February to 11 March 2011, 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 of the trimester all undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from vicbooks on Level 3 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

This course is internally assessed and there are three coursework components, all of which must be completed in order for you to meet mandatory course requirements. 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 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 affect 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 (Friday 15 April)**  
3000 words, worth 40%.
- 2. Student Seminar (Tuesday 24 and 31 May)**  
An individual presentation of 15 minutes duration, worth 20%, which uses material from one of your MDIA 404 essays. Presentations to be given to the class in the lecture slots, Weeks 11 and 12.
- 3. Essay Two (Monday 23 May)**  
3000 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

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.

Work submitted after the deadline will be penalised by a 2.5 percent deduction from your total mark per work day. Late work also receives only minimal comments from your marker.

### **MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

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

Submit all three pieces of work specified for this course, by the set deadline dates or by those for which an extension has been granted.

### **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 (ie. 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>

#### WHERE TO FIND MORE DETAILED INFORMATION

Find key dates, explanations of grades and other useful information at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study).

Find out how academic progress is monitored and how enrolment can be restricted at

[www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress). Most statutes and policies are available at

[www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy), except qualification statutes, which are available via the *Calendar* webpage at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar.aspx) (See Section C).

Other useful information for students may be found at the website of the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic), at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about\\_victoria/avcacademic](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcacademic).

## COURSE PROGRAMME

**Essay Due dates:** Friday 15 April (**Essay One**) and Monday 23 May (**Essay Two**)

**Student Seminar Dates:** Either Tuesday 24 May or Tuesday 31 May (TBA)

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 5 April 'Quality TV': the American Paradigm

Week 7 12 April New Zealand TV Drama – An Institutional and Cultural Case Study

**Mid Trimester Break:** Monday 18 April– Sunday 1 May 2011

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 Student Seminars (1)

Week 12 31 May Student Seminars (2)

**Study Week:** Monday 6 June to Sunday 12 June 2011