

TELEVISION & CULTURE

General Information

Course & Section COMM 3003-

Semester

Meeting Times

Room

Instructor

Office Hours

E-Mail

Phone

901.678.2565 (dept)

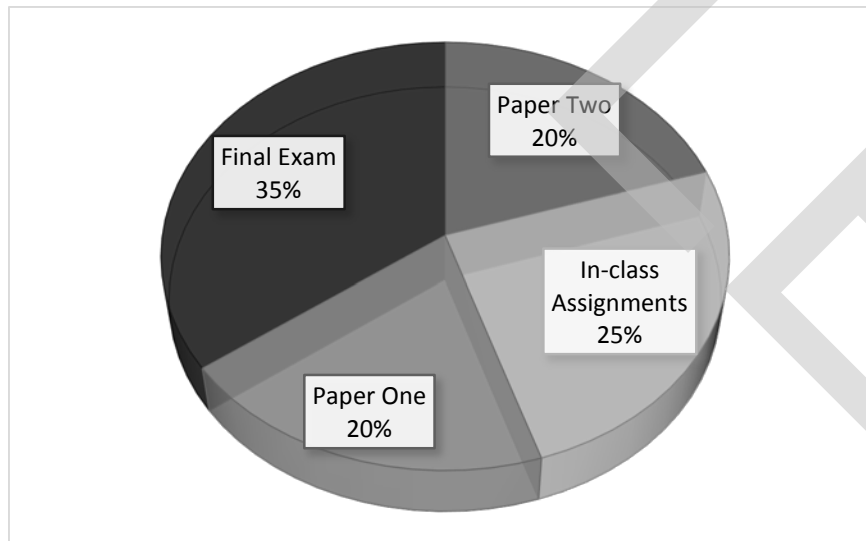
Books & Grading

- Books and Readings
- Gary R. Edgerton & Brian G. Rose, *Thinking Outside the Box: A Contemporary Television Genre Reader*.
 - Steven D. Stark, *Glued to the Set: The 60 Television Shows and Events That Made Us Who We Are Today*.
 - Other readings as required.

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|----------------------|-------------|-----------|------------------|
| <u>Grading Scale</u> | A+ (99-100) | A (92-98) | A- (90-91) |
| | B+ (88-89) | B (82-87) | B- (80-81) |
| | C+ (78-79) | C (72-77) | C- (70-71) |
| | D+ (68-69) | D (60-67) | F (59 and below) |

Your grade will be a reflection of how well you have mastered the material, not how hard you have worked. I do not curve grades, though there may be opportunities for extra credit as the semester progresses.

Grading Procedures



Class Policies

Attendance This class depends on the participation and the mutual support of students. I do not take attendance in my class. However, failure to attend classes regularly will, without fail, adversely affect your scores on exams and written assignments, as well as lower your participation grade. Put simply, if you do not attend class, you cannot master the material. Attendance is vital to your participation grade in particular, as it is derived from work done directly in class. If you should miss a class during which a participation grade is given, you **cannot** make up this grade, **even if you have an excused absence**. You cannot receive credit for participating in an exercise you were not present for, even if you have a good reason for not being there. Punctuality is also required. Please come to class on time. Latecomers often interrupt the screening of a television show and distract the students who did show up on time. In addition, do not attend class without the intention of staying for the duration. Excessive tardiness and/or leaving early will also adversely affect your grade.

Originality According to The University of Memphis Student Handbook, your assignments must reflect your own effort. In situations where external sources are used, you must acknowledge your sources and add your own analysis; otherwise, it's plagiarism. If you plagiarize or cheat, the minimum penalty is an F on the assignment; other penalties could include an F for the course and/or suspension. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported to Judicial Affairs.

Disabilities Students with disabilities (including invisible ones) are encouraged to notify me of their condition within the first two classes of the semester. The college and I will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities.

Written Assignments The writing assignments for this course will be comprised of critical analyses of television programs based on the principles discussed both in your readings and in class. Specific details and requirements for each assignment will be distributed separately. I do not accept handwritten, faxed or e-mailed papers, nor do I accept late submissions, except in the cases of excused, documented emergencies. Being ill, printer malfunctions, and car trouble on the day the paper is due do not constitute emergencies. COMM 3003 is a writing intensive course, meaning that not only is a substantial amount of writing required, but also that improving your writing skills is a key objective of the course. That being the case, I will grade written work not only for conceptual clarity and mastery, but also for appropriate grammar and structure. The ability to express your ideas in written form is as important as the ideas themselves.

Content Disclaimer Some of the television shows we will view in this class may contain nudity, violence, sexual situations, or other graphic material. Since television cannot successfully be studied without looking at a wide variety of material, no programs have been eliminated (or selected, for that matter) solely on the basis of such content. If you should find the content of a particular program to be objectionable, I ask that you at least give the program a chance. If having done that, you still have a problem, I will not make you stay to watch the show. You will, however, still be required to master the concepts the program is displaying and its importance to the study of the medium.

Food, Drink, Smoking, & Laptops There is no eating, drinking, or smoking allowed in (Room) or any of the University's off-campus classrooms. Please turn OFF all cell phones during class, as they are an obvious distraction to both me and your fellow classmates. Vibrate mode does NOT count. PHONES OFF. Also, you may use laptop computers during lectures, but they are not to be used during TV screenings.

Course Schedule

Note All assignments in **bold** type are to be completed **BEFORE** class on that day. You are responsible for any assignments/readings that I may send to your @memphis.edu e-mail.

- January 20** Introduction to the course; Class introductions; Genre exercise
- January 27** Realism & Formalism: TV Drama
Case Study: *The Twilight Zone*
Reading: ***Glued to the Set*, Ch. 16**
- February 3** Realism & Formalism: Reality TV
Case Study: *Big Brother*
Reading: ***Thinking Outside the Box*, Ch. 8**
- February 10** TBA
- February 17** Television History & The Evolution of the Sitcom; GUEST SPEAKER FEATURED
Case Studies: *All in the Family* and *The Golden Girls*
Reading: ***Thinking Outside the Box*, Ch. 8; *Glued to the Set*, Ch. 33**
- February 24** The Sitcom as Reality: Class Distinctions
Case Studies: *Good Times*, *Roseanne*, and *The Cosby Show*
Reading: ***Glued to the Set*, Ch. 51**
- March 3** **PAPER ONE DUE**
- March 10** **No class:** Spring Break
- March 17** Setting the Agenda: Network & Local News
Case Studies: *The CBS Evening News* and *News Channel 3 at 6*
Reading: ***Glued to the Set*, Chs. 25 & 46**
- March 24** Semiotics in Television Advertising
Case Study: Various TV commercials
Reading: TBA
- March 31** Feminist Theory/Gender Criticism, Archetypes, and the Modern Soap Opera
GUEST SPEAKER FEATURED
Case Study: *Days of Our Lives*
Reading: ***Thinking Outside the Box*, Ch. 6; *Glued to the Set*, Ch. 41**
- April 7** Feminist Theory (cont.)
Case Study: *Sex and the City*
Reading: ***Thinking Outside the Box*, pp. 232-237**
- April 14** The Changing Face of Game Shows
Case Studies: *Match Game*, *The Price is Right*, and *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*
Reading: ***Glued to the Set*, Ch. 24**
- April 21** TBA
- April 28** Review for Final Exam
PAPER TWO DUE
- May 5** Final Exam (6-8pm)

Paper Guidelines

Paper One

The first major writing assignment for Television & Culture is a research paper that provides background for any of the programs studied during the first half of the semester (as listed below). This paper should analyze existing literature, both scholarly and pop culture-based, in terms of the show's history, importance to the medium and to American culture, and its overall effects on society, pro and con. Be sure to include appropriate historical background, ratings information as it relates to its widespread impact on society, as well as any issues related to controversies and/or dialogues that this series was responsible for creating within American popular culture.

This paper should be written in third person format and **MUST NOT** include any personal opinion. The paper will be graded as an informed review of existing literature about this program. References to specific episodes/events related to the program are encouraged.

Your choices for topics for this assignment are:

- *All in the Family* (CBS)
- *Big Brother* (CBS)
- *The Cosby Show* (NBC)
- *The Golden Girls* (NBC)
- *Good Times* (CBS)
- *Roseanne* (ABC)
- *The Twilight Zone* (CBS)

This paper will count as 20% of your final grade. The paper must be typed and double spaced, using a common 10-12 pt. font. It is due at the beginning of class on (insert date) and should be 6-8 pages long, not including the required bibliography or works cited page. Sources should be cited throughout the body of the paper.

Paper Two

The second major writing assignment for Television & Culture is an informal, journal-style collection of **10** personal responses to the topics and programs we discuss during class. With each class meeting, you are to write a one-page free-form response to [one of] the programs watched in a specific class session and/or the concepts we discussed in class as a result of said program. You will have free rein to approach the content of these writing assignments, although the most successful papers will include a variety of writing, some devoted to reactions to specific programs and others more concerned with the broader societal concepts and cultural theories discussed in class.

NINE of your 10 journal entries will be in this format; the 10th will be a response to the following comprehensive question:

One study of the influence of American public relations and mass media over an 80-year period has concluded that "the social fact of television is the glue that both holds together and undermines American public life."

Based on what you have read, viewed, and thought about for this course, would you agree or disagree with this statement? Arrive at a decision by discussing and evaluating, in no fewer than 750 words (2 pages), what you've learned this semester that would both support and contradict the statement. Your discussion must include a consideration of FIVE of the different topics we have covered during the semester.

As you write your answer, remember that you need to be demonstrating what you've learned and thought about this semester, not what you already knew or thought before the semester began. Beyond that, you are free to focus on any aspects of television and culture that you'd like (and that are relevant to our breadth of study this semester), and to make connections between this course and others you've taken.

This overall journal assignment may be informal in tone but should still be professional in presentation. Your journal may be written in FIRST or THIRD person format and **SHOULD** include personal opinion and valid factual support of that opinion. This paper will be graded for clarity of thought, creativity, and proper form/grammar.

This paper will count as 20% of your final grade. The paper must be typed and double spaced, using a common 10-12 pt. font. It is due at the beginning of class on (insert date) and should be 11 pages long at bare minimum (9 one-page writings for 1/27, 2/3, 2/17, 2/24, 3/17, 3/24, 3/31, 4/7, and 4/14, and one two-page response for the 10th entry).