

Fall 2017
Professor Katherine Contess
CUNY Brooklyn College
Monday / Wednesday / 6:30-8:30 pm

From Mayberry to “Netflix and Chill”: Topics in Television, Race, Gender, and Class

David Lynch recently told the Sydney Morning Herald that *Inland Empire* (2006) would be his last feature film. The auteur said in the interview that, “Things that were doing well at the box office weren’t the things that I would want to do.” Meanwhile, television’s modes of content creation, distribution, and consumption are changing rapidly. Some, like Lynch, would argue that television has usurped film as the preeminent visual medium of our age. Alternative modes of production and distribution allow for a plethora of diverse shows that no longer have to “play in Peoria.” Concurrently, issues of race, gender, and class on television are more prominent and pervasive than ever. But is increased representation—of minority, female, and LGBTQ characters—enough? What is “good” representation? It is not the intention of this course to provide a broad history of television, a history of a televisual format, or a genre. Rather, we will be reading each object with a set of tools that can be used to crack future texts open as well. Television has long been viewed as too unwieldy for sustained textual analysis, so we will bounce around in a pantomime of changing the channel. Like a fine wine and a piece of dark chocolate, we will put these objects and texts together, but not necessarily in the ways we expect.

Requirements:

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| 1. Class participation, <i>one</i> teaching session, and <i>five</i> discussion board posts | 35% |
| 2. Creative Assignment, Fan Fiction Piece | 20% |
| 3. Mapping the Emmy Awards Project | 20% |
| 4. Wikipedia Article | 25% |

More information about requirements and assessments is available at the end of the syllabus.

Note About the Syllabus:

This syllabus is a living and breathing Google Document. Each week includes a number of suggested texts, but these are by no means the limits of the course. One class per week will be taught by the instructor, while the second class will be turned over to students. Students will be responsible for deciding which of the texts most interest them, what they want to focus on, and what they want to subtract or remove.

Week 1: INTRODUCTION

Ethan Thompson and Jason Mittell. "Introduction: An Owner's Manual for Television." *How to Watch Television*, edited by Ethan Thompson and Jason Mittell. NYU Press, 2013, pp. 1-9.

Jeremy G. Butler. "Chapter 2: Narrative Structure: Television Stories." *Television: Critical Methods and Applications*. 4th ed., Routledge, 2012, pp. 21-54.

Amanda D. Lotz. *Portals: A Treatise on Internet-Distributed Television*. Michigan Publishing, 2017.

Week 2: RACIAL ERASURE ON *THE ANDY GRIFFITH SHOW*

James Flanagan. "Deconstructing Mayberry: Utopia and racial diversity in the *Andy Griffith Show*." *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, vol. 23, Jun. 2009, pp. 307-319.

Allison Graham. "Chapter 5: Civil Rights Films and the New Red Menace: The Legacy of the 1960s." *Framing the South: Hollywood, Television, and Race during the Civil Rights Struggle*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, pp. 147-195.

TV EPISODE: "Andy and The Marriage Counselor." *The Andy Griffith Show*. Columbia Broadcasting System, 1961.

TV EPISODE: "The Inspector." *The Andy Griffith Show*. Columbia Broadcasting System, 1961.

DOCUMENTARY FILM: Marlon Riggs, director. *Color Adjustment*. Public Broadcasting Service, 1992.

Week 3: JEWISH-GENTILE INTERMARRIAGE IN *BRIDGET LOVES BERNIE*

Jack Kugelmass. "First as Farce, Then as Tragedy: The Unlamented Demise of *Bridget Loves Bernie*." *Key Texts in American Jewish Culture*, edited by Jack Kugelmass. Rutgers University Press, 2003, pp. 147-160.

Eric Lott. *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class (Race and American Culture)*. 20th ed., Oxford University Press, 2013.

Michael Rogin. *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot*. University of California Press, 1996.

Robert Stam. *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.

TV EPISODE: "Pilot." *Bridget Loves Bernie*. Columbia Broadcasting System, 1972-3.

TV EPISODE: "Who's Minding the Store?" *Bridget Loves Bernie*. Columbia Broadcasting System, 1972-3.

TV EPISODE: "How to Be a Jewish Mother." *Bridget Loves Bernie*. Columbia Broadcasting System, 1972-3.

TV EPISODE: "'Tis the Season." *Bridget Loves Bernie*. Columbia Broadcasting System, 1972-3.

Week 4: COLORBLIND CASTING AND THE SHONDA RHIMES ERA

Kristen J. Warner. "The Racial Logic of *Grey's Anatomy*: Shonda Rhimes and Her 'Post-Civil Rights, Post-Feminist' Series." *Television & New Media*, vol. 16, no. 7, 2014, pp. 631-647.

Kristen J. Warner. *The Cultural Politics of Colorblind TV Casting*. Routledge, 2017.

Diane Negra. "Hollywood film and the narrativization of ethnic femininity." *Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom*. Routledge, 2001, pp. 1-25.

Maryann Erigha. "Shonda Rhimes, Scandal, and the Politics of Crossing Over." *The Black Scholar*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2015, pp. 10-15.

TV EPISODE: "I Am a Tree." *Grey's Anatomy*. American Broadcasting Company, 2005-Present.

TV EPISODE: "The Lawn Chair." *Scandal*. American Broadcasting Company, 2012-Present.

Week 5: BLACK RESPECTABILITY IN *BLACK-ISH*

Candice Marie Jenkins. *Private Lives, Proper Relations: Regulating Black Intimacy*. University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

Carolyn Moxley Rouse, John L. Jackson, Jr., and Marla F. Frederick. *Televised Redemption: Black Religious Media and Racial Empowerment*. New York University Press, 2016.

TV EPISODE: "Hope." *Black-ish*. American Broadcasting Company, 2014-Present.

TV EPISODE: "Churched." *Black-ish*. American Broadcasting Company, 2014-Present.

Week 6: PARTICIPATORY VIEWING: FAN FICTION, QUEERNESS, AND "SHIPPING"

Louisa Ellen Stein. "'They Cavort, You Decide': Transgenericism, Queerness, and Fan Interpretation in Teen TV." *Spectator*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2005, pp. 11-22.

Elena Maris. "Hacking *Xena*: Technological innovation and queer influence in production of mainstream television." *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2016, pp. 123-137.

Noelle R. Collier. "*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Xena: Warrior Princess*: Reception of the Texts by a Sample of Lesbian Fans and Web Site Users." *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 56, no. 5, 2009, pp. 575-609.

Kathryn L. Lookadoo and Ted M. Dickinson. "Who Killed @TheLauraPalmer?: Twitter as a Performance Space for *Twin Peaks* Fan Fiction". *Television, Social Media, and Fan Culture*, edited by Alison F. Slade, Amber J. Narro, Dedria Givens-Carroll. Lexington Books, 2015.

WEBSITE: www.FanFiction.net

TV EPISODE: "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun." *Xena: Warrior Princess*. NBCUniversal, 1995-2001.

TV EPISODE: "Who Are You?". *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. 20th Century Fox, 1997-2003.

TV EPISODE: "The Letting Go." *Transparent*. Amazon Studios, 2014-Present.

Fan Fiction Creative Piece Due

Week 7: NOIR, ABSENT MOTHERS, AND FEMINISM IN *VERONICA MARS*, *ALIAS*, AND *JESSICA JONES*

Lisa M. Dresner. *The Female Investigator in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture.* McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2007.

Christine Gledhill. "Klute 1: A Contemporary Film Noir and Feminist Criticism." *Feminism and Film*, edited by E. Ann Kaplan. Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 66-86.

Alison Horbury. *Post-feminist Impasses in Popular Heroine Television: The Persephone Complex.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Rebecca Feasey. "Absent, Ineffectual and Intoxicated Mothers: Representing the maternal in teen television." *Feminist Media Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2012, pp. 155-159.

TV EPISODE: "Pilot." *Veronica Mars*. UPN, 2004-2006, CW, 2006-2007.

TV EPISODE: "Truth Be Told." *Alias*. ABC, 2001-2006.

TV EPISODE: "Ladies Night." *Jessica Jones*. Netflix, 2015-Present.

Week 8: REPRESENTATION BEHIND THE CAMERA

Erin Hill. *Never Done: A History of Women's Work in Media Production.* Rutgers University Press, 2016.

Cristal Williams Chancellor. "Women Underrepresented in Behind-the-Scenes Roles in 2016 Primetime Emmy Nominations." *Women's Media Center*, 15 Sept. 2016.

TV EPISODE: Thomas, Betty. "Audrey: Episode 1 of 6." *YouTube*. YouTube, 29 Oct. 2012. [Web](#).

TV EPISODE: Thomas, Betty. "Audrey: Episode 2 of 6." *YouTube*. YouTube, 29 Oct. 2012. [Web](#).

Emmy Awards Project Due

Week 9: ASPIRATIONAL CLASS AND TELEVISUAL PLACE

Edward W. Soja. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places.* Blackwell Publishers, 1996.

William J. Sadler and Ekaterina V. Haskins. "Metonymy and the Metropolis: Television Show Settings and the Image of New York City." *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2005, pp. 195-216.

Ann Fletchall, Chris Lukinbeal, and Kevin McHugh. *Place, Television, and the Real Orange County.* Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012.

Paula Massood. *Black City Cinema: African American Urban Experiences in Film.* Temple University Press, 2011.

David Harvey. *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution.* Verzo, 2012.

TV EPISODE: "Sex and the City." *Sex and the City*. HBO, 1998-2004.

TV EPISODE: "Pilot." *The O.C.* Fox, 2003-2007.

TV EPISODE: "Pilot." *Gossip Girl*. The CW, 2007-2012.

Week 10: THE CLASS WAR WILL BE TELEVISED

Nolan Feeney. "Veronica Mars: One of TV'S Realist Depictions of Wealth Inequality." *The*

Atlantic, 13 Mar. 2014. <<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/03/-em-veronica-mars-em-one-of-tvs-realest-depictions-of-wealth-inequality/284383/>>.

Matthew Flisfeder. "Class Struggle and Displacement: Slavoj Zizek and Film Theory." *Cultural Politics*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2009, pp. 299-324.

TV EPISODE: "I Wasn't Ready." *Orange is the New Black*. Netflix, 2013-Present.

TV EPISODE: "Credit Where Credit's Due." *Veronica Mars*. UPN, 2004-2006, CW, 2006-2007.

TV EPISODE: "Cheatty Cheatty Bang Bang." *Veronica Mars*. UPN, 2004-2006, CW, 2006-2007.

Wikipedia Article Due

Assessments:

1. Class participation, *one* teaching session, and *five* discussion board posts -35%
 - Discussion board posts may be done prior to any class session. You should complete five by the end of the semester, no more than 200 words each.
 - You will teach half of one class session with a partner and are encouraged to utilize cutting-edge pedagogical techniques (which we'll discuss in class!). You and your partner are in charge of determining the reading and focus for that class session. The weekly reading list is merely a suggestion, and you are welcome to riff upon it or add to it. Please edit this syllabus to reflect your focus so that students can come to the class session prepared.
2. Creative Assignment, Fan Fiction Piece -20%
 - After exploring the website www.fanfiction.net, you will be tasked with writing your own piece of fan fiction for the television show of your choice (approximately 1500 words). Please use a piece of existing fan fiction as your model, but otherwise, let your creativity reign! (See above, Week 6).
3. Mapping the Emmy Awards Project -20%
 - This is a short article modeled off of the Women's Media Center report on the 2016 Emmy Nominations. You will write one for the 2017 Emmy Nominations (See above, Week 8). Further instructions to follow (approximately 1000 words).
4. Wikipedia Article -25%
 - The objective of the Wikipedia article is for you to contribute to the current dialogue on television. You will be tasked with selecting a television episode of your choice and writing a short Wikipedia article for that episode (examples will be provided). The article should include a brief synopsis of the episode, as well as a short critical analysis of some of the race, gender, and/or class issues raised by the piece (approximately 1500 words).