

EngLit 1752
Spring 2004
Wild, D.

Lit 1752

ENGLIT 1752: Television Analysis

CRN # 14577: Spring Semester 2004 (04-2): Tue 6:00 pm – 9:50 pm, CL 321

Instructor: **Daniel Wild**
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Personal office hours: Tue 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm and by appointment
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Mailbox: CL 501 (left side, towards the back)

Course Description

Is it necessary to “analyze” television? How do we watch and think about TV as a visual medium? What does television as an economic institution mean for social and cultural formations? In this course we will develop a critical terminology to address these issues. We will look at the medium television itself, its institutional history, and some of the formats and genres that it has given rise to. We will focus on specific case studies, which we will use to determine how we can account for a productive understanding of television and a critical sense of what might be termed “televisuality.” On the basis of this work, we will then turn to the question of how to represent such ideas and observations adequately in writing. Since this kind of work requires careful attention and frequent in-depth reflection, you can expect to write a minimum of 20 pages of text throughout the semester. Some of your writing may become part of our classroom discussions. Ready access to a television set outside of class is a requirement for this course, as you will be expected to continue and augment our classroom work while watching television on your own. You will also be expected to think creatively and productively about a whole range of different television shows and formats, to reflect on the issues and ideas they generate for us, and to incorporate our classroom work into your essays as the semester progresses.

Required Textbook: Glen Creeber, ed., *The Television Genre Book*, London: BFI Publishing, 2001. (Available at the Pitt Bookstore; abbreviated *TVGB* below.)

Course Procedures

Classes are structured into discussion sessions, short lectures and screenings with short breaks in between them. Attendance is mandatory for all classes, not just for the lecture and discussion sections, but also for the screenings. Missing two (2) or more

classes may be considered a conspicuous pattern of absence, which may jeopardize a passing grade. It is advisable to practice taking notes during screenings, as you may have difficulties relying solely on your memory later on. Assigned readings are due on the day for which they are listed, except for the first class. Occasionally, circumstances may necessitate schedule changes. In the event of such changes, you are responsible for updating your course syllabus and schedule as we proceed. Please keep any handouts and your class notes in a separate folder, so that you can reference them for the essay assignments and other work on your part.

You are expected to be in class on time. Because writing is an important element of this class, no essays or assignments will be accepted after their due dates, unless you present a formal medical or other legitimate excuse in writing or you have discussed potential difficulties with me in advance. I cannot guarantee adequate comments or careful responses to late materials. Please ensure that you keep a hard copy of your written work for your own protection.

A note on writing: This is a W-designated English course, which emphasizes the writing component of your academic education. This means that you can expect to do a fair amount of writing which productively analyzes and works closely with the television texts and programs in this course as well as the reading materials. All of your written work must be typewritten or computer-printed, stapled, and proofread carefully. Include your name on the first page. Any work that is sloppy in form or difficult to read will have to be resubmitted. You should also have a collegiate-level dictionary (e.g. *American Heritage* or *Webster's*) and a *Usage and Style Book* (most likely one from your previous writing classes) at your disposal. CAUTION: Your writing will reflect your critical and analytical thinking for this class, so be prepared to see your written work made public for classroom discussions.

No plagiarism will be tolerated! This means that you will have to acknowledge all of your sources according to the standards of academic integrity. If you have any doubts or questions about such reference procedures, please consult with me. In the last few years, online information retrieval and data accessibility has increased exponentially. This means that you are responsible for being especially careful about the problem of accidental or deliberate plagiarism. For your work and research in this class, you are allowed to use any available sources, but only with proper acknowledgment. Therefore, your work may be subject to random plagiarism checks. In some cases, you will be asked to resubmit your essays to the website <www.turnitin.com> for validation in order to prevent plagiarism and to ensure academic integrity.

Assessment of your work is based on 4 essays of 5 - 7 pages each (worth 20% each), occasional unannounced in-class tests, which cover reading, discussion, and screening materials, and your contribution to our class discussions (worth 20%).

Schedule

(screenings and excerpts subject to change)

Tue 1/6/04 – Class 1: Genre. Read *TVGB*, pp. 1 – 7. Screen: *The Daily Show*, *Da Ali G Show*, *MTV The Real World*, *VHI Goes Inside the Real World*.

Tue 1/13/04 – Class 2: Drama. Read *TVGB*, pp. 8 – 46. Screen: *Wiseguy*, *MI-5*, *24*.

Tue 1/20/04 – Class 3: Drama. Screen: *Seventh Heaven*, *The Singing Detective*.

Tue 1/27/04 – Class 4: Essay 1 due. Drama. Screen: *Twin Peaks*, *The Sopranos*, *Cracker*.

Tue 2/3/04 – Class 5: News. Read *TVGB*, pp. 108 – 123. Screen: *Al-Jazeera*, *Fox News*, *BBC*, *CNN*.

Tue 2/10/04 – Class 6: News. Screen: *Russian News*, *Japanese News*, *News Central*, *Local News*, *700 Club*.

Tue 2/17/04 – Class 7: Popular Entertainment. Read *TVGB*, pp. 65 – 95. Screen: *Will & Grace*, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, *Sex & the City*.

Tue 2/24/04 – Class 8: Essay 2 due. Popular Entertainment. Screen: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *The Office*, *Jackass*.

Tue 3/2/04 – Class 9: History. Screen: *TV under the Swastika*, *Amos & Andy*, *All in the Family*. Read TBA.

Tue 3/16/04 – Class 10: History. *Ozzie & Harriet*, *Dragnet*, *Moonlighting*.

Tue 3/23/04 – Class 11: Soap Opera. Read *TVGB*, pp. 47 – 60. Screen: *Dallas*, *General Hospital*.

Tue 3/30/04 – Class 12: Essay 3 due. Documentary and Event TV. Read *TVGB*, pp. 124 – 139. Screen: TBA.

Tue 4/6/04 – Class 13: Comedy. Read *TVGB*, pp. 61 – 75. Screen: *Monty Python*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *The Family Guy*.

Tue 4/13/04 – Last Class. Future of Television. Screen: *FLCL*, *Fuse*, *Kung Faux*, *QVC*, *G4*.

Tue 4/20/04: Essay 4 due in my mailbox in CL 501 at 1:00 pm.