

Victoria

UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

*Te Whare Wānanga
o te Ūpoko o te Ika a Māui*



SCHOOL OF ENGLISH, FILM, THEATRE AND MEDIA STUDIES

MDIA 302 – TELEVISION NARRATIVE

TRIMESTER 2, 2006

COURSE GUIDE

Lecturers and tutors

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School of English, Film, Theatre and Media Studies
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Class times

Lectures: Wednesday 2.00 p.m. – 5.00 p.m. (two hours lecture, one hour screening) in Easterfield LT 006
Tutorials: Wednesdays / Thursdays (starting week 2) in Easterfield 001. Students will have the opportunity to enrol in a tutorial during the first lecture. Tutorial lists will be posted on the Blackboard site and the Media Studies notice board on Friday 14 July

“Whereas our ancestors used to listen to tall-tale spinners, read penny dreadfuls, tune in to radio dramas, or rush to the local bijou each Saturday, now we primarily satisfy our ever-constant yearning for stories by gathering around the flickering box in the living room.

Television is the principal storyteller in contemporary (...) society.”

(Sarah Kozloff, 1992: 67)¹

“Television functions as a social ritual, overriding individual distinctions, in which our culture engages in order to communicate with its collective self (...). To encompass this notion, which requires that we concentrate on the messages and their language as much as on the institutions that produce them, and on the audience response as much as on the communicator’s intentions, we have coined the idea of television as our own culture’s *bard*.”

(John Fiske and John Hartley, 1978: 85)²

Course aims

MDIA 302 investigates narratives in the leading fictional and factual genres of primetime television, with particular emphasis on drama, documentary and reality TV. Drawing on narrative theory and textual analysis of contemporary television programmes, we will analyse, firstly, which stories television tells us and how it tells us these stories and, secondly, what these stories mean for the culture we live in.

Course objectives

Having passed this course, students will:

1. be familiar with the concepts and approaches which focus on popular media and television within narrative theory
2. be familiar with current academic research into the leading fictional and factual television genres
3. be able to independently analyse and evaluate narrative structures within television programmes and present their findings in written or oral form
4. be able to reflect on the cultural meanings of television narratives and actively engage in the existing academic and public discussions about these

Course philosophy

MDIA 302 – Television Narrative is a relatively new course. It was offered for the first time last year. Both lecturers are very committed to this course and will put maximum effort into teaching at a high level. In return, you are asked to actively engage with this course. That involves, in our view: attending all lectures and tutorials; reading all the required texts on a weekly basis; actively searching for more information about topics that specifically interest you; preparing questions to ask in tutorials; actively engaging in discussions inside and outside tutorials, and aiming to perform at your best in the assignments. We are happy to receive feedback if you see possibilities for improvement regarding the way the course is taught.

¹ Kozloff, Sarah (1992). ‘Narrative Theory and Television’. In: Robert C. Allen (ed.). *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled. Television and Contemporary Criticism. Second Edition*. London: Routledge. (pp. 67-100)

² Fiske, John & John Hartley (1978). *Reading Television*. London: Methuen.

Lecture and tutorial outline

Week	Lecture theme	Lecture date	Tutorial number	Tutorial date
Week 1	Introduction	12 July		
Week 2	Narrative theory	19 July	1	19/20 July
Week 3	Series/serials	26 July	2	26/27 July
Week 4	Complexity	2 August	3	2/3 August
Week 5	Quality	9 August	4	9/10 August
Week 6	Realism	16 August	5	16/17 August
Mid-trimester break				
DUE DATE ASSIGNMENT 3: MONDAY 21 AUGUST, 4:00 P.M.				
Week 7	Comedy	6 September	6	6/7 September
Week 8	Crime	13 September	7	13/14 September
Week 9	Competition	20 September	8	20/21 September
Week 10	Transformation	27 September	9	27/28 September
Week 11	Representation	4 October	10	4/5 October
Week 12	Conclusion	11 October	11	11/12 October
DUE DATE ASSIGNMENT 4: MONDAY 16 OCTOBER, 4:00 P.M.				

Mandatory requirements, assignments, penalties and expectations

The course is internally assessed. In order to pass it, students are required to:

1. attend at least nine tutorials
 2. complete all four assignments
- Assignment 1 – weekly tasks – worth 10 % – to be uploaded to Blackboard every week on Tuesday before 4:00 p.m. (starting week 3). This assignment consists of summaries of the readings, lecture content and screenings. It tests predominantly course objectives 1 and 2.
 - Assignment 2 – tutorial presentation – worth 20 % – tutorials number 3 – 11. For this assignment, students work in pairs (but will be assessed individually). They will search for additional information (academic publications, examples, media coverage) about a particular theme and present their findings in their tutorial. This assignment tests course objectives 1, 2 and 4.
 - Assignment 3 – 2000 word essay – worth 30 % – due Monday 21 August 4:00 p.m. This assignment focuses on narrative theory and the television drama genres and tests course objectives 1, 2 and 3.
 - Assignment 4 – 3000 word essay – worth 40 % – due Monday 16 October 4:00 p.m. This assignment focuses on ‘reality’ genres. It tests all four course objectives.

More detailed assignment instructions will be given at appropriate points during the course in the lectures and tutorials.

Students who cannot attend a particular tutorial session or who require an extension for any of the assignments need to contact their tutor in advance. Extensions will not be given without a medical certificate or similar evidence.

Late essays which have not been granted an extension will be subject to a penalty of one grade per day. Plagiarism (see below) will, in most cases, result in an E grade, or, depending on the severity of the plagiarism, automatic failure.

Students are expected to be familiar with the New Zealand television landscape. Watching television is an indispensable part of this course. Students are encouraged to watch more television than they would normally do, especially in relation to the genres that are central to this course: television drama, documentary and reality TV.

For the assignments, students will need to use a television and a video recorder.

Workload

The course is designed on the assumption that students will commit an average of 18 hours a week to the course, which includes attending lectures and tutorials, watching TV, reading required texts and additional literature and preparing for assignments.

Consultation

Teaching staff will be available for a period of general consultation each week. These times will be announced during the first week of tutorials.

Additional information

There is a Blackboard site for this course, which we will use to post announcements and additional information such as a selection of Power Point slides taken from the lectures (these contain the key points of a lecture, but do not replace your own notes), reading lists, assignments and links to relevant websites.

Set texts

1. MDIA 302 – Television Narrative Course Reader. Available from Student Notes.
2. Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn (eds.) (2004). *Understanding Reality Television*. London: Routledge. Available from VicBooks at Kelburn Campus.

Reading list

The chapters and articles below are required readings. Students are expected to have read them before the tutorial session in which they are addressed. They can be found in either the course reader (labelled *) or in the set text (labelled ^).

Week 2: Narrative Theory

1. *Gripsrud, Jostein (2002). *Understanding Media Culture*. London: Arnold. Chapter 7, 'Narratology: The Forms and Functions of Stories'.
2. *Kozloff, Sarah (1992). 'Narrative Theory and Television'. In: Robert C. Allen (ed.). *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled. Television and Contemporary Criticism. Second Edition*. London: Routledge. (pp. 67-100)
3. *John Fiske and John Hartley (1978). *Reading Television*. London: Methuen. Chapter 6, 'Bardic Television'.

Week 3: Series/serials

1. *Feuer, Jane (1986). 'Narrative Form in American Network Television'. In: Colin MacCabe (ed.). *High Theory / Low Culture. Analysing Popular Television and Film*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. (pp. 101-114)
2. *Geraghty, Christine (1981). 'The Continuous Serial – A Definition'. In: Richard Dyer, Christine Geraghty, Marion Jordan, Terry Lovell, Richard Paterson and John Stewart. *Coronation Street*. London: BFI. (pp. 9-26)
3. *Buckingham, David & Sara Bragg (2004). *Young People, Sex and the Media. The Facts of Life?*. Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan. First half of chapter 7, 'Show and Tell: Learning from Television Drama'.

Week 4: Complexity

1. *Creeber, Glen (2004). *Serial Television. Big Drama on the Small Screen*. London: BFI. Introduction, 'From Small to Big Drama'.

2. *Nelson, Robin (1997). *TV Drama in Transition. Forms, Values and Cultural Change*. Houndmills: MacMillan. Chapter 2, 'Flexi-Narrative from Hill Street to Holby City. Upping the Tempo; Raising the Temperature'.
3. *Dunleavy, Trisha (2005). 'Popular "Series" Drama in TV's Multi-Channel Age'. *Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy*, 115: 5-22.

Week 5: Quality

1. *Nelson, Robin (1997). *TV Drama in Transition. Forms, Values and Cultural Change*. Houndmills: MacMillan. Chapter 9, 'For What It's Worth. Problematics of Value and Evaluation'.
2. *Brunsdon, Charlotte (1990). 'Problems with Quality', *Screen* 31(1): 67-90.
3. *Schröder, Kim Christian (1992). 'Cultural Quality: Search for a Phantom? A Reception Perspective on Judgements of Cultural Value'. In: Michael Skovmand and Kim Christian Schröder (eds.). *Media Cultures. Reappraising Transnational Media*. London: Routledge. (pp. 199-219)

Week 6: Realism

1. *Corner, John (2000). 'Civic Visions. Forms of Documentary'. In: Horace Newcomb (ed.). *Television. The Critical View. Sixth Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press. (pp. 207-236)
2. *Kilborn, Richard and John Izod (1997). *An Introduction to Television Documentary. Confronting Reality*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. Chapter 2, 'How Real Can You Get? Realism and Documentary'.
3. *Bruzzi, Stella (2000). *New Documentary. A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge. Chapter 3, 'New British Observational Documentaries: Docusoaps'.

Week 7: Comedy

1. *Neale, Steve and Frank Krutnik (1990). *Popular Film and Television Comedy*. London: Routledge. Chapter 9, 'Broadcast Comedy and Sit-com'.
2. *Mills, Brett (2004). 'Comedy Verite: Contemporary Sitcom Form', *Screen* 45(1): 63-78.
3. ^Gillan, Jennifer (2004). 'From Ozzie Nelson to Ozzy Osbourne: The Genesis and Development of the Reality (Star) Sitcom'. In: Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn (eds.). *Understanding Reality Television*. London: Routledge. (pp. 54-70)

Week 8: Crime

1. *Sparks, Richard (1992). *Television and the Drama of Crime. Moral Tales and the Place of Crime in Public Life*. Buckingham: Open University Press. Chapter 2, 'Moral Tales and Social Theory'.
2. *Creeber, Glen (2004). *Serial Television. Big Drama on the Small Screen*. London: BFI. Parts of chapter 3, 'Serial Killers. Murder, Masculinity and the Reinvention of the Crime Genre'.
3. ^Jermyn, Deborah (2004). "'This Is About Real People!": Video Technologies, Actuality and Affect in the Television Crime Appeal'. In: Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn (eds.). *Understanding Reality Television*. London: Routledge. (pp. 71-90)

Week 9: Competition

1. *Roscoe, Jane (2004). 'Big Brother in Australia. Performing the "Real" Twenty-Four-Seven'. In: Robert C. Allen and Annette Hill (eds.). *The TV Studies Reader*. London: Routledge. (pp. 311-321)
2. ^Holmes, Su (2004). "'All You've Got to Worry About is the Task, Having a Cup of Tea, and Doing a Bit of Sunbathing"'. Approaching Celebrity in *Big Brother*'. In: Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn (eds.). *Understanding Reality Television*. London: Routledge. (pp. 111-135)
3. ^Cavender, Gray (2004). 'In Search of Community on Reality TV: *America's Most Wanted* and *Survivor*'. In: Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn (eds.). *Understanding Reality Television*. London: Routledge. (pp. 154-172)
4. ^Foster, Derek (2004). "'Jump in the Pool": The Competitive Culture of *Survivor* Fan Networks'. In: Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn (eds.). *Understanding Reality Television*. London: Routledge. (pp. 270-289)

Week 10: Transformation

1. *Mosely, Rachel (2000). 'Makeover Takeover on British Television', *Screen* 43(3): 299-314.
2. ^Palmer, Gareth (2004). "'The New You": Class and Transformation in Lifestyle Television'. In: Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn (eds.). *Understanding Reality Television*. London: Routledge. (pp. 173-190)
3. ^Stephens, Rebecca L. (2004). 'Socially Soothing Stories? Gender, Race and Class in TLC's *A Wedding Story* and *A Baby Story*'. In: Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn (eds.). *Understanding Reality Television*. London: Routledge. (pp. 191-210)

Week 11: Representation

1. *Gray, Herman (2000). 'The Politics of Representation in Network Television'. In: Horace Newcomb (ed.). *Television. The Critical View. Sixth Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press. (pp. 282-305)
2. ^Pullen, Christopher (2004). 'The Household, the Basement and *The Real World*: Gay Identity in the Constructed Reality Environment'. In: Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn (eds.). *Understanding Reality Television*. London: Routledge. (pp. 211-232)
3. *Roscoe, Jane (2000). 'Documenting the *Immigrant Nation*: Tensions and Contradictions in the Representation of Immigrant Communities in a New Zealand Television Documentary Series', *Media, Culture & Society* 22: 243-261.

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 available in hard copy or under 'About Victoria' on the VUW home page at www.vuw.ac.nz.

Student and staff conduct

The Statute on Student Conduct together with the Policy on Staff Conduct ensure that members of the University community are able to work, learn, study and participate in the academic and social aspects of the University's life in an atmosphere of safety and respect. The Statute on Student Conduct contains information on what conduct is prohibited and what steps are to be taken if there is a complaint. For information about complaint procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct, contact the Facilitator and Disputes Advisor or refer to the statute on the VUW policy website at:

www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct

The Policy on Staff Conduct can be found on the VUW website at:

www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/staffconduct

Academic grievances

If you have any academic problems with your course you should talk to the tutor or lecturer concerned; class representatives may be able to help you in this. If you are not satisfied with the result of that meeting, see the Head of School or the relevant Associate Dean; VUWSA Education Coordinators are available to assist in this process. If, after trying the above channels, you are still unsatisfied, formal grievance procedures can be invoked. These are set out in the Academic Grievance Policy which is published on the VUW website at:

www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/academicgrievances

Academic integrity and plagiarism

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means *no cheating*. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. The University defines plagiarism as follows:

The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were one's own, whether intended or not. This includes published or unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other students or staff.

It is still plagiarism even if you re-structure the material or present it in your own style or words.

Note: It is however, perfectly acceptable to include the work of others as long as that is acknowledged by appropriate referencing.

Plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria and is not worth the risk. Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course
- suspension from the course or the University.

Find out more about plagiarism, and how to avoid it, on the University's website:

www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html

Students with Impairments (see Appendix 3 of the Assessment Handbook)

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities. The policy aims to give students with disabilities the same opportunity as other students to demonstrate their abilities. If you have a disability, impairment or chronic medical condition (temporary, permanent or recurring) that may impact on your ability to participate, learn and/or achieve in lectures and tutorials or in meeting the course requirements, please contact the course coordinator as early in the course as possible. Alternatively, you may wish to approach a Student Adviser from Disability Support Services (DSS) to discuss your individual needs and the available options and support on a confidential basis. DSS are located on Level 1, Robert Stout Building:

telephone: 463-6070

email: disability@vuw.ac.nz

Dr. Joost de Bruin (joost.debruin@vuw.ac.nz; (04) 463 6846) is the Disability Liaison Person (DLP) for the Media Studies, Film and Theatre programmes. He can be contacted by students who have special needs.

Student Support

Staff at Victoria want students to have positive learning experiences at the University. Each faculty has a designated staff member who can either help you directly if your academic progress is causing you concern, or quickly put you in contact with someone who can. In the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences the support contact is **Dr Allison Kirkman, Murphy Building, room 407**. Assistance for specific groups is also available from the Kaiwawao Maori, Manaaki Pihipihinga or Victoria International.

In addition, the Student Services Group (email: student-services@vuw.ac.nz) is available to provide a variety of support and services. Find out more at:

www.vuw.ac.nz/st_services/

VUWSA employs Education Coordinators who deal with academic problems and provide support, advice and advocacy services, as well as organising class representatives and faculty delegates. The Education Office (tel. 463-6983 or 463-6984, email at education@vuwsa.org.nz) is located on the ground floor, Student Union Building.

Assessment Criteria

A+ Outstanding/Academically Gifted (85-100%)

Exceeds the limits of what would normally be possible at this level. Excellent work with outstanding qualities to lift it clearly above an 'A.' Overall, a thoroughly polished essay: sophisticated, original, independent and publishable. Superior analysis, comprehensive research, sophisticated theoretical or methodological understanding, impeccable presentation – work that is (in some respects) erudite, original, exciting or challenging.

A Excellent (80- 84%)

Academically excellent, technically flawless work. 'A' essays are distinguished by their clarity of thought and argument. Question is answered skilfully, is meticulously structured and the argument is thoroughly convincing. Reveals sophisticated comprehension of the topic, a familiarity with scholarship and research in the area, and a clear understanding of related theoretical issues. A very high standard of critical analysis. Demonstrates a degree of creativity and independence of thought which distinguish it clearly from the B+ category. Presentation and organization are excellent with correct use of citation conventions.

A- Very Good/Qualities of Excellence (75- 79%)

Work of a high standard. In this A- category, the ideas could be of 'A' quality material but the overall effect was undermined by limitation or inconsistency in one area. It could also be 'A' material that was flawed by the quality or consistency of its technical presentation, research support, or theoretical understandings. This is still very strong work showing significant promise. Demonstrates independent thought, confidence in writing, effective selection / structuring of material, and a general clarity and sense of purpose which sets it well above the B range.

B+ Very Good (70% - 74%)

Well above average work that exhibits a higher quality of research and of writing and thus has clear tendencies toward excellence. Contains some perceptive analysis, and certainly will exhibit effective research, preparation and planning. This work can demonstrate insight and perception but this standard is not maintained through the essay. The argument, technical quality, and other elements may be inconsistent in quality, marking it as a category removed from 'A' grade work which does maintain its high quality throughout. It may require greater integration of theoretical or empirical analysis. Demonstrates some independence of thought. Some outstanding moments of high quality expression, thought and analysis.

B Good (65% - 69%)

Consistently good work and still above the average. Its merits may include a demonstrably strong level of analysis, theoretical understanding or contextual knowledge, but there may also be a failure to integrate these elements in a balanced response. The work may appear unchallenging or not entirely engaged with the content. It should be well researched and documented, but in this 'B' range there could well be a deficiency in some aspect of research or understanding. Some very promising work may find itself in this category due to a problem with technical presentation, structure, argument and/or research.

B- Highly Competent (60% - 64%)

Good work but may not be consistent and thus falls short of 'B' quality in one or more respects. In this grade area, essays will have easily exceeded the standard expected for passes at this level. The question is satisfactorily answered and has been appropriately informed by research, but there is less attention to the detail and complexity of issues. There will be problems with the essay structure, the writing style, the selection of material or the argument, but none of these is sufficient for the overall essay to be reduced to a 'barely adequate' position. There may be some problems with presentation, expression and grammar.

C+ Competent (55% - 59%)

The essay is limited in achievement due to an overall incapacity for independent research or thought – hence it will tend to demonstrate a reliance (even if this is not total) on lecture material. Essays in the C range will have paid insufficient attention to critical sources and will not be widely researched. Essays in this category will involve deficiencies in structure and organisation, the quality of argument, and writing style. However as a C+, none of these deficiencies is significant enough to place the overall essay below a satisfactory level of achievement. Achieving a C+ means that the essay falls just short of attaining a low 'B' grade, so must have some merits and show definite promise.

C Satisfactory (50% - 54%)

Satisfactory completion of set tasks only. Basic engagement with the subject matter, and lacking in critical analysis or a considered conceptual approach. Often poorly planned and constructed, with serious problems of clarity and expression. May not have used or have acknowledged an appropriate range of sources. Often purely descriptive. There may be some significant problems with writing, research or organisation.

D Unsatisfactory & Unworthy of Pass in Present Form (40% - 49%)

Misses the point of the exercise or has failed to respond adequately to it. The work is deficient in important respects to the extent that it cannot be regarded as either satisfactory or 'up to scratch' at this level. A 'D' grade essay is, in some of its elements, capable of attaining a pass grade and, if the student were permitted to re-write it (with the re-write addressing its key deficiencies) it would. The essay may involve limited (and minor) plagiarism.

E Unsatisfactory (0% - 39%)

This category implies that the essay is well below the achievement minimum (in either some or a range of respects) for work at this level. An E essay will demonstrate not one, but several of the 'D' essay's deficiencies – for example, it falls well short of the prescribed length, and/or is badly written, poorly conceived and structured, hastily prepared, replete with technical or other inaccuracies, and lacking in even basic understanding. The essay may be partly or largely plagiarised.