

ENC 1145 – Writing About Television

Instructor: Tania Darlington
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Course Blog: <http://writingabouttv.wordpress.com/>

REQUIRED MATERIALS

ENC 1145 Course Pack (available at Xerographic Copy Center)
(Additional readings will be found online)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Course Description:

ENC 1145 takes a special topics approach to learning the skill necessary to write clearly and efficiently and to conduct effective research. You will learn how to formulate a coherent thesis and defend it logically with evidence drawn from secondary research. The course encourages students to investigate the relationship between writing, critical thinking, and visual media. Our discussions will provide a forum for critical assessment of the media which pervades our daily lives and which we often take for granted. Students will learn to write concisely, engagingly, and effectively about media and its impact on personal development and culture as a whole.

The focus of this particular section of ENC 1145 is television – its history, its programming and its fans. Students will develop critical thinking and research skills as they explore the history of television studies, examine television genres and major issues in television criticism, and consider how fan culture and internet communities have changed the way fans view television and television producers view fans. The course will be divided into three sections: television studies, genres and issues in contemporary television, and television fan culture. Each week, students will read at least one critical essay on an issue in television studies and one or more scholarly article(s) about television programming and be asked to apply the concepts addressed in these readings to a show (or shows) we view in class.

Aims:

Using television studies as a lens, students will learn to critically view, analyze and write about contemporary media. Students will practice several methods of academic writing, including genre studies, criticism and audience analysis. Additionally, students will practice online criticism, one of the most potent forms of engagement with new media, and constructive critical debate through weekly blog posts and responses.

The student learning outcomes for this course are as detailed in the Undergraduate Catalog at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/advisingened.html#requirements>.

Composition and Humanities Credit:

This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities. For more information, see: <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/advisingened.html>

Writing Requirement:

This course can satisfy the UF requirement for Writing. For more information, see: <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/advisingordon.html>

COURSE POLICIES

Assignment Formatting:

Though many of your assignments will be posted on the course blog, appropriate use of MLA citation conventions and bibliographic formatting as well as attention to neatness, spelling and grammar and conformance to required word counts will be both expected and required.

Attendance:

Because much of our work depends upon group discussion of the texts, you should plan to attend every class session. Prolonged absences, even for medical reasons, will not be excused. You may miss up to five classes without penalty EXCEPT that you will lose credit for whatever in-class work you miss. **Every absence over the allowed five will reduce your overall grade by 50 points (½ of a letter grade).**

Tardiness, like sporadic absences, disrupts the class. Of course, you should come to class on time. If you do arrive late, please come in as quietly as possible and begin work quickly. I understand that lateness is occasionally unavoidable, and thus have no specific policy to penalize for being tardy, but I will speak with you if it becomes a problem.

Inform me as early as possible in advance if you will miss class due to a university-approved reason (i.e. varsity athletics, etc.). Similarly, you should inform me in advance if you will miss class to observe a religious holiday. Your first absences (for whatever reason) will count toward your "allowed" ones.

Conduct:

Students are expected to behave respectfully and professionally when interacting with their instructor and fellow students, whether during discussion, screenings, or via email. Failure to comply with these guidelines will result in a failing grade and/or dismissal from the class.

Cell Phones and Computers:

Cell phones should not be used during class—this includes receiving phone calls, text messaging, photographing or filming the class, surfing the Internet, or any other magical innovation taking place on the cellular horizon. The instructor reserves the right to require those who break this rule to: A) lead discussion in the next class; B) bring doughnuts or popcorn for the entire class; or C) perform an interpretive dance. The choice will not be yours.

In the event of a personal situation that requires your cell phone be on, please notify me before class. Students are free to use laptop computers and other portable electronic devices in class for the purposes of taking notes during class discussion or for in-class presentations. WWW browsing, emailing, chatting, etc., unrelated to class activities is, however, inappropriate and will not be tolerated. In the event of a violation of this policy, I reserve the right to prohibit the use of all electronic devices in class by individual students and/or the class as a whole.

Conferences:

I encourage you to make an appointment to see me during my office hours, especially when you have questions about an assignment, need help with a particular writing problem, want extra feedback on a draft, or have questions about my comments on your work. Of course, we can also correspond via e-mail.

Content:

This class may cover material that can be considered offensive. Some of the texts and/or shows you will be asked to analyze may contain material that is racially, politically, religiously, or sexually controversial. If you are unable or unwilling to participate in mature discussion about material that makes you uncomfortable or even offends you, and will not engage in discussion that goes beyond the simple fact of whether or not you personally were offended, this is not the class for you, and you are recommended to drop the course. Substitute materials will not be provided.

Contesting Grades:

If a student has a complaint about a grade on a single assignment, it should be discussed with the instructor, not the Director of Writing Programs nor the Chair. A student whose complaints have accumulated and is sure his or her final grade will be lower than desired is to contact Carla Blount, Program Assistant in the English Department. A final grade appeal may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower grade for the course.

Deadlines:

Late assignments **will not be accepted** unless the student has made arrangements with the instructor prior to the submission of the late work.

Disability:

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. For

more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

E-Mail and Course Websites:

Students are expected to regularly check their University of Florida e-mail account and the course website—regularly here means email at least once every 24 hours, and the websites at least twice per week. Students should not expect the instructor to possess a bioport, psychic powers, or the magical ability to remain in constant contact with the computer; thus, students are asked not to complain that the instructor does not reply to email at once.

Course grades cannot, due to University policy, be conveyed via email. Should you have questions or concerns about your grade, set up a conference with the instructor.

Grade Point Equivalencies:

UF has recently instituted minus grades. As a result, letter grades now have different grade point equivalencies. For more information, see:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

Harassment:

Every student in this class is expected to participate in a responsible and mature manner that enhances education. Any conduct that disrupts the learning process may lead to disciplinary action. Because this course requires much contact, collaboration, and dialogue among students, it is essential that each student work to create an environment of respect and tolerance.

UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentconductcode.php#s4041>

Statement on Academic Dishonesty:

All students are required to abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Text Requirements:

All assignments, including visuals, should be computer generated and should be rendered in the most professional-caliber method available to students. All reading assignments should be completed before class on the day they are listed.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation:

A vital part of understanding media is sharing impressions and opinions with fellow viewers in order to come to a fuller understanding of the text. You will be not only expected, but required, to frequently respond to your classmates' opinions and share your own. Failure to participate not only deprives your classmates of a critical voice, it deprives you of critical points.

Blog Postings:

Due: Weekly, Posting (500 words) – Thursday 11:59 p.m., Response (150+ words) – Sunday 11:59 p.m.

Each week, you will be expected to post one blog entry per week to our course blog. You will also be required to respond to at least two of your peers' blog entries. Entries are expected to engage critically with the assigned readings and viewing for the week and should demonstrate understanding of how the readings apply to the weekly viewing.

Essay 1 – Critical Analysis:

Due: Via email by 11:59 pm, January 28 (1200-1500 words)

For your first assignment, you will apply one of the critical approaches to television studies we have discussed to a show of your choosing. Consider the issues the critical approach in question tends to engage – i.e., for a Marxist critique you might focus on class, economics or consumerism; for a Semiotic critique, you might look at how language and signals in the show send overt or covert messages. Since your goal for this paper is to demonstrate your understanding of how a branch of criticism might be applied to television viewing, you may use your television show and works that explain the theory you

will apply as sources. You may not, however, use secondary sources which apply your chosen critical perspective to the show.

More complete assignment details and/or modifications will be posted on the course blog.

Essay 2 – Genre Study:

Due: Via email by 11:59 pm, April 1 (1200-1500 words)

For your second essay, you will conduct a study of the formal qualities and critical issue associated with any one of the television genres we have considered in class or another genre approved by me. Your study should elucidate the genre you are studying, explain the formal qualities that identify a program as part of the genre, and discuss programs which best exemplify the genre. Additionally, you should explain the primary critical issues associated with the genre and postulate where critical studies of the genre are poised to go in the immediate future. You must use both primary sources and secondary critiques in this essay.

More complete assignment details and/or modifications will be posted on the course blog.

Essay 3 – Online Fandom Research:

Due: Via email by 11:59 pm, April 22 (1500-2000 words)

For your final assignment, you will research online fan responses to a single show. There are many possible approaches to this study. You might explore online fan creations and how they expand on their source. You might consider how viewers in online chatrooms establish authority and develop knowledge bases. You might investigate how online databases and information repositories decide what to include and how fans use that information. You might scrutinize how internet fandom has changed the relationship between producers and fans. You must engage with at least on online fan community and conduct research both online and in scholarly sources. Your topic must be approved by me before you begin research.

More complete assignment details and/or modifications will be posted on the course blog.

Presentation:

Due: Sign-up sheet will be circulated on the second day of class

Each student will be responsible for giving a 10-15 minute presentation on a television program of his or her choosing. The presentation should include background on the program, a discussion of its genre, and a summary of critical issues associated with the program. Students are encouraged to incorporate clips from the show and handouts in their presentation.

More complete assignment details and a final presentation schedule will be posted on the course blog.

Grading:

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

<u>Component</u>	<u>Points Possible</u>	<u>% of Grade</u>
Blog Posts (15)	450	45
Assignment 1	100	10
Assignment 2	100	10
Assignment 3	200	20
Presentation	50	5
Attendance and Participation	100	10
Total points possible:	1000	100

Grade Scale:

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	E	0-59

Grade Meanings:

Here is the meaning behind the grades I assign to your papers; you can use these statements to determine how you might work toward a higher grade:

- A You did what the assignment asked for at a high quality level, and your work shows originality and creativity. Work in this range shows all the qualities listed below for a B, but it also demonstrates that you took extra steps to be original or creative in developing content, solving a problem, or developing a style. Since careful editing and proofreading are essential in writing, papers in the A range must be free of typos and grammatical or mechanical errors.
- B You did what the assignment asked of you at a high quality level. Work in this range needs revision; however, it is complete in content, is organized well, and shows special attention to style.
- C You did what the assignment asked of you. Work in this range needs significant revision, but it is complete in content and the organization is logical. The style is straightforward but unremarkable.
- D You did what the assignment asked of you at a poor quality level. Work in this range needs significant revision. The content is often incomplete and the organization is hard to discern. Attention to style is often nonexistent or chaotic.
- E An E is usually reserved for people who don't do the work or don't come to class. However, if your work is shoddy and shows little understanding of the needs of the assignment, you will receive a failing grade.