

CO 4433—TELEVISION CRITICISM

COURSE SYLLABUS

SUMMER 2019

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Required Texts: O'Donnell, Victoria. *Television Criticism* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2017). 3rd Edition. ISBN #: 978-1483377681

Course Objectives

This course will introduce students to basic methods of critical analysis and theories to use when critically analyzing televised content (hour long and half-hour programs of various genres available through various broadcasting and web-based/streaming platforms). The function of television criticism and the role of the critic also will be addressed. Specifically, this course will:

- (1) enhance students' understanding of television as a form of communication and its role in our social construction of reality.
- (2) educate students on the production and distribution of television content and other industry business practices.
- (3) introduce various critical methods of evaluation and theories that will help in that evaluation.
- (4) help students understand television from various ideological, historical, and cultural perspectives.
- (5) sharpen students' analytical skills by generating original and critical thought on television content.

Attendance Policy

Given the method of delivery, attendance will not be taken in the course. Although there is no formal attendance policy, it is important to note that students who enroll in the course are expected to complete all assignments and participate in the course when asked or required.

Course Difficulty and Completion

Taking an online course and succeeding in the online classroom environment requires diligence, integrity, and discipline. Accordingly, each online student must take responsibility for his or her own actions (meeting deadlines, etc.), and keeping up with

the course material and expectations. You will get to work at your own pace, of course, but everyone should come into the course with an understanding that I have similar expectations of my online and face-to-face students.

Computer/Technology Issues

When you sign up for an online class, you are assuming the responsibility for having the computer skills, equipment, and knowledge to work in this context. Your computer problems are not a justification for failing to access Canvas, taking quizzes, meeting deadlines, and submitting written assignments and exams.

On that note, please check for weekly class announcements/reminders on Canvas (see the “Announcements” link on the Canvas sidebar). Also, check your MSU e-mail account on a regular basis for any additional course information, for it will be the primary e-mail account I use to communicate with you.

Course Requirements and Expectations

Class delivery will consist of professor-led audio lectures. The class notes (via PowerPoint) are a summary of each book chapter. They will be posted on Canvas to help you organize your own notes and thoughts as you prepare for quizzes, exams, class discussions, and you end-of-the-semester written assignment.

The audio lectures (embedded in the slides) are meant to reflect and elaborate on that week’s reading and class notes, offer observations and additional information, and give you a few questions and ideas to think about. Be sure to listen to these lectures—they will help supplement the class notes, and will be mined for test material.

Course Assignments

(1) Students are expected to complete **two (2) exams**: one exam at the midterm and a final exam. These exams will consist of a combination of multiple choice and true/false questions. Each exam is worth **100 points**.

You may take the exams unobserved by a proctor, and use class notes, podcasts, or reading material while taking the exam. However, you **may not** take the exam with a classmate and you are prohibited from seeking or receiving any outside assistance on exams (or any other course requirement for that matter). Such assistance is a violation of the MSU Honor Code (see pages 6-7 of this document) and, if caught, you will be punished accordingly.

Also, please note the time limit for each exam; it is best to go into the exam having studied the information beforehand rather than relying on the course material without having studied it beforehand. Otherwise, you risk running out of time.

Exams will be uploaded to Canvas and can be accessed by clicking the “Assignments” link on main page sidebar and scrolling down to the appropriate link for the exam in question. You will have **five (5) days** to open each exam, and **one hour** to complete it once it is opened. Once you open the exam, you must finish it (I usually schedule each

exam to open at 12:01 AM on the first day, and close it at 11:59 PM on the last day that it is due.).

Do not wait until the last minute to take your exams, for I may still hold you responsible for any last-minute technology problems that prevent you from taking them. As indicated above, I've allowed for several days to take each exam (see course schedule for specific dates) in case of emergency, illness, or to solve any technology issues that may arise. If you wait until the last couple of hours on the last day to take an exam, you may find yourself a victim of "Murphy's Law" (anything that can go wrong, will).

If you have any questions, please, for your benefit, ask me before you open the exam (because once it is opened, it must be completed within the one hour time frame).

(2) Students also will complete **10 online quizzes**, each worth **10 points**, for a total of **100 points**.

You will have **five (5) days** to open each quiz. Once it is opened, you will have **30 minutes** to complete each quiz. Once you open the quiz, you must complete it. As with the course exams, I usually open up the window at 12:01 AM on the first day, and close it at 11:59 PM on the last day. Please see the course schedule for specific due dates.

On the Canvas main page sidebar, click on the link labeled "Quizzes." From there, simply click on the appropriate quiz (which will be labeled) to begin. If you have any questions, please, for your benefit, ask me before you begin the quiz (because once a quiz is opened it must be completed within one hour).

(3) Healthy communication is a two-way, active process. It is my belief that students, even those in an online environment, can and must contribute to the health and well-being of the classroom culture. Accordingly, I will post at least **five topics** on Canvas over the course of the semester, and you will have the opportunity to earn a total of **100 points** for offering comments and feedback on the board. Topics can include anything from the textbook, class notes, or any current news item that I think is relevant to what you're learning from the course.

To participate, simply click on the "Discussions" link found on the Canvas main page sidebar. I will monitor the discussion "threads" to make sure you are contributing to the discussion, and examine the length and depth of your postings before assigning a point value. If you want full credit for your post, you will need to offer feedback that is thoughtful, on-topic, and detailed enough for me to determine that you are taking this exercise seriously.

Also, don't use the board to attack another person or his or her position. I expect us to disagree, for debate and constructive criticism is important in any class discussion. However, let's remember that we're all adults here.

NOTE: Take this aspect of the class seriously, as I will when assessing your contribution to the discussions. If you "blow off" the discussions, your grade will show it. Please let me know if you have any questions. Deadlines are important! If you do

not post your comments by the appropriate deadline, you will not receive credit for that post without a valid excuse (See pages 5-6 of this document.).

As with the exams and quizzes, you will have five days to post your comment(s) on a particular topic. Please see the course schedule for specific dates for each discussion board topic.

(4) Students will write an essay analyzing a type of television content using one of the critical or theoretical approaches learned in class. The essay is worth **100 points** and will be explained in detail at a later date.

Grading Scale

A = 90-100%

B = 80-89%

C = 70-79%

D = 60-69%

F = below 60%

Note on end-of-the-semester written assignment

This is an upper division communication course, so I expect you to be able to express yourself in a clear and articulate manner. Accordingly, your writing assignment will be graded for accuracy, depth of analysis, examples used, citation of sources (if applicable), and for the quality of writing. More details for each written assignment will be posted on Canvas at a later date.

The assignment will be submitted to the course Canvas page by the student. I will then submit the assignment to “Turn-It-In” to check for both obvious and inadvertent evidence of plagiarism. It is important, then, to make sure your work is your own and to make sure you document your work according to either APA or MLA style. Plagiarism, whether turning in a paper that is not yours, taking portions of material that you have found online and “cut and pasted” it into your paper, turning in a paper that you’ve written for another class, or failing to cite any outside sources that you use in your paper, will be dealt with (and harshly so) according to the MSU Academic Honor Code. At the very least, you will receive a **ZERO** for the assignment.

If you have any questions about how to cite any source for your written assignment, it is important to ask me before the assignment is due—for the punishment may be severe (and saying, “I didn’t know that was plagiarism” will not win you any favors). Please make sure you read and understand the MSU Honor Code and abide by it accordingly (for more details on the Honor Code, see pages 5-6 of this syllabus).

Finally, make sure you submit your assignments to Canvas by the deadline. Failure to do so (without my permission) will result in a **ZERO** for the assignment in question!

Late or Missed Assignments/Exams

All assignments are due in a timely manner. The guidelines for late or missed assignments are as follows:

(1) You are expected to complete exams or assignments at the scheduled time. If you fail to do so—and you do not have a documented, valid excuse upon your return—you will receive a **ZERO** for the assignment or exam in question.

(2) Late assignments will not be accepted without a valid excuse and/or proper documentation (see below). You will not be able to make-up that portion of the exam without a valid excuse (and having computer/technical problems is not usually a valid reason for not completing online work).

Only the following reasons will be considered in determining whether or not an assignment may be taken or turned in at a later date:

(A) **ILLNESS:** Official documentation by doctor, emergency room, hospital, or other medical personnel. Official documentation by doctor, emergency room, hospital, or other medical personnel. They can be emailed to me directly. If I doubt the authenticity of the excuse, I reserve the right to call the doctor or medical professional in question. If said excuse is determined to be fake, your absence will be recorded as “unexcused,” and if you missed an exam or fail to turn in an assignment, you receive an “F” for the test in question. You may also be subject to harsher penalties as described by the MSU Honor Code.

(B) **MSU RELATED ACTIVITIES:** field trips, band trips, team trips, etc. This type of activity is scheduled in advance; therefore, you **MUST** make prior arrangements with me for make-up work to be allowed. Documentation before said events is required for the absence to be considered excused.

(C) **OTHER:** There are occasions which arise which do not fit the above categories but may be verified by a person in authority – death in the family, extreme illness, religious holiday, court summons, etc. Documentation of the reason for the absence is required and is subject to my acceptance.

MSU Honor Code: Mississippi State has an approved Honor Code that applies to all students. The code is as follows: “As a Mississippi State University student, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”

Upon accepting admission to Mississippi State University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor Code. Student will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the MSU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor Code.

Mississippi State University is dedicated to the discovery, development, communication and application of knowledge in a wide range of academic and professional fields and assumes as its historic trust the maintenance of freedom of inquiry and an intellectual environment nurturing the human mind and spirit. The MSU Honor Code is critical to these ideals, to the goal of assuming a place of

preeminence in higher education, and to the development of the whole student. For additional information please visit: <https://www.honorcode.msstate.edu/>.

Title IX: MSU is committed to complying with Title IX, a federal law that prohibits discrimination, including violence and harassment, based on sex. This means that MSU's educational programs and activities must be free from sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and other forms of sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know has experienced sex discrimination, sexual violence and/or harassment by any member of the University community, you are encouraged to report the conduct to MSU's Director of Title IX/EEO Programs at 325-8124 or by e-mail to titleix@msstate.edu. Additional resources are available at <http://www.msstate.edu/web/security/title9-12.pdf>, or at <http://students.msstate.edu/sexualmisconduct/>

Support Services: Students who need academic accommodations based on a disability should visit the Office of Student Support Services, 01 Montgomery Hall, call 662-325-3335, or visit the website at www.sss.msstate.edu.

Students with Disabilities

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, will make every reasonable accommodation for students with special learning needs, including hearing and visual impairments, diagnosed learning disabilities, and other classifications of disability specified in the Act. If you wish assistance under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, please contact me as soon as possible.

CO 4433

TENATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

SUMMER 2019

Week 1 (June 3-7)

- Part I: Chapter 1 (“The Work of a Critic”)
- **Monday, June 3—Syllabus quiz (Quiz #1) opens on Canvas.**
- **Friday, June 7—Syllabus quiz (Quiz #1) due by 11:59 PM.**

Week 2 (June 10-14)

- Chapter 2 (“Demystifying the Business of Television”)
- **Monday, June 10—Quiz #2 opens on Canvas (will cover material from Chapter 1).**
- **Friday, June 14—Quiz #2 due by 11:59 PM.**

Week 3 (June 17-21)

- Chapter 3 (“Production Techniques and Television Style”)
- **Monday, June 17—Quiz #3 opens on Canvas (will cover material from Chapter 2).**
- **Friday June 21—Quiz #3 due by 11:59 PM.**

Week 4 (June 24-28)

- Chapter 4 (“Television, the Nation’s Storyteller”)
- **Monday, June 24—Quiz #4 opens on Canvas (will cover material from Chapter 3).**
- **Friday June 28—Quiz #4 due by 11:59 PM.**

Week 5 (July 1-July 5)

- **Monday, July 1—Quiz #5 opens on Canvas (will cover material from Chapter 4).**
- **Friday July 5—Quiz #5 due by 11:59 PM.**
- **EXAM 1—Must be taken between Monday, July 1 and Friday, July 5 (by 11:59 PM). Exam 1 will cover Chapters 1-4.**

Week 6 (July 8-July 12)

- Chapter 5 (“Television Genres”)
- **Monday, July 8—Quiz #6 open on Canvas (will cover material from Chapter 5)**
- **Friday July 12—Quiz #6 due by 11:59 PM.**

Week 7 (July 15-19)

- Chapter 6 (“Rhetoric and Culture”) & Chapter 9 (“Guidelines for Television Criticism”)
- **Monday, July 15—Quizzes #7 & 8 open on Canvas (will cover material Chapters 6 & 9, respectively).**
- **Friday July 19—Quizzes #7 & 8 due by 11:59 PM.**

Week 8 (July 22-26)

- Chapter 7 (“Representations and Its Audience”)
- **Monday, July 22—Quiz #9 open on Canvas (will cover material Chapters 7).**
- **Friday July 26—Quizzes #9 due by 11:59 PM.**

Week 9 (July 29-August 1)

- and Chapter 8 (“Postmodernism”)
- **Monday, July 29—Quiz #10 open on Canvas (will cover material Chapter 8).**
- **Friday, August 1—Quiz #10 due by 11:59 PM.**
- **Thursday, August 1—TV criticism essays due by 11:59 PM via Canvas.**

Final exam

- **The final exam (Exam 3) must be taken between Monday, August 5 @ 8:00 AM and Tuesday, August 6 by 11:59 PM. This exam will cover Chapters 5-9.**

***In addition, here are the dates for participation in the class “discussions” on Canvas (Details on each topic to be given at a later date.):**

- **Monday, June 10**—Discussion topic #1 will be posted; student responses must be posted by **Friday, June 14 @ 11:59 p.m.**
- **Monday, June 24**—Discussion topic #2 will be posted; student responses must be posted by **Friday, June 28 @ 11:59 p.m.**
- **Monday, July 8**—Discussion topic #3 will be posted; student responses must be posted by **Friday, July 12 @ 11:59 p.m.**
- **Monday, July 22**—Discussion topic #4 will be posted; student responses must be posted by **Friday, July 26 @ 11:59 p.m.**
- **Monday, July 29**—Discussion topic #5 will be posted; student responses must be posted by **Thursday, August 1 @ 11:59 p.m.**