

ENG 695: TV Aesthetics | Fall 2017 | 448 PLC | T 9:00-11:50

Professor Ovalle | povalle@uoregon.edu | office hours: T 2-4pm in PLC 266

This course focuses on the formal analysis of specific genres of mainstream U.S. television to determine how and why television programming looks and sounds the way it does. We will grapple with the terms “style,” “aesthetics,” and “form” to better understand how meaning is produced through television’s uses of mise-en-scene, videography, editing, sound design, etc. The goal of this introduction to sound/image techniques is to practice the descriptive and analytic work that anchors other approaches to the study of television often employed in the humanities (including discourses of race, gender/sexuality, etc). To this end, our work in this class practices unpacking “television style” while also considering how the framework of “nonwhiteness” can impact our reading of sound and style.

Learning Objectives

In this class, you will learn how to:

Analysis & Production

1. Identify and describe distinct aspects of television style
2. Analyze television style
3. Practice producing visual/aural evidence to support an argument
4. Conduct multi-faceted research to support analysis and argument
5. Historicize televisual form in relation to other media (radio, theater, film, newer media)
6. Identify some of the production practices and/or the human labor behind TV style

Collaboration & Execution

7. Collaborate mindfully and responsibly to produce a collective research agenda
8. Organize research into group discussions

Evaluation

10% Active Discussion and Participation

You are expected to attend every session prepared to actively engage in a discussion with your peers about the week’s readings and screenings. Bring hard copies of readings and notes on readings/screenings/listenings to class. The goal of our time together is to build a supportive and collaborative community of shared ideas. I expect to see as much active listening and engagement with others as I expect to hear you articulate your own ideas about the material. This thoughtful and generous engagement is a significant part of our course and will greatly enhance the classroom community (and your cohort).

15% Reading Response & Media Evidence

At the beginning of week 4, you will produce a short reading response that includes a breakdown of the images and/or sounds that support your reading of the course material.

25% Research Groups

Weeks 8 and 9 will be devoted to your collective research goals. Based on proposals, I will program 4 groups of 4 to curate the week’s seminar readings and screenings based on elements of your research project. Each group of 4 will have approximately 60-75 minutes to lead discussion based on questions they are working through for their final project. The goal of this assignment is to think aloud with a group of like-minded scholars on matters of television style.

50% Final Project

20% Proposal & Annotated Bibliography — Due Week 5

30% Final Project (10-12 page paper, including close reading) — Due Week 11 (exam week)

Course Readings

Course Reader will be available for purchase next week; other readings will be available via Canvas
Recommended Readings/Screenings will be on reserve in Knight Library

READINGS/SCREENING/DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

(subject to change based on class goals)

WEEK 1 (9/26) — Introductions & Goals

Readings:

- Spigel, Lynn. "TV's Next Season?" *Cinema Journal* 45:1 Fall 2005. 83-90.
- Mittel, Jason. "A Cultural Approach to Television Genre Theory." *Cinema Journal* 40:3 Spring 2001. 3-24

Tracking: What did you learn about your screening habits?

WEEK 2 (10/3) — Looking "Closely" at Television

Readings:

- Butler, Jeremy G. "Introduction" & "Chapter 1." In *Television Style*. 1-69.
- Cardwell, Sarah. "Television Aesthetics." *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies* 1:1 (Spring 2006). 72-80. (Canvas)
- "Legacies From the Past: Histories of Television." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 36(4) 276–287.
- Jaramillo, Deborah L. "Rescuing Television From 'the cinematic': The perils of dismissing television style." in *Television Aesthetics & Style*. 67-75
- Mills, Brett. "What Does it Mean to Call Television 'Cinematic'?" in *Television Aesthetics & Style*. 57-66

Screening: *Mad Men*

WEEK 3 (10/10) — Frameworks: Questions of "Quality" and Craft

Readings:

- "Introduction." *Watching While Black: Centering the Television of Black Audiences*, edited by Beretta E. Smith-Shomade, Rutgers University Press, 2012. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/lib/uoregon/detail.action?docID=1562490>.
- Stoeber, Jennifer Lynn. "Introduction." *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening*. New York: New York UP, 2016. Print. Postmillennial Pop.
- Banks, Miranda. "Gender Below-the-Line: Defining Feminist Production Studies." In *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Caldwell, John T. 'Both Sides of the Fence': Blurred Distinctions in Scholarship and Production (a Portfolio of Interviews). In *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Production Workshop: Frame Grabs and Sound Bites (Cinema Studies Lab)

WEEK 4 (10/17) — "Commercial" & Non-Narrative Form: Bodies/Style in Motion

Readings:

- Butler, Jeremy G. "The Persuasive Power of Style." In *Television Style*. 109-137.
- Acham, Christine. "Introduction" + "What You See is What You Get: *Soul Train* and *The Flip Wilson Show*." In *Revolution Televised: Prime Time and the Struggle for Black Power* (2004) 54-84.
- Jeffries, John. "Toward a Redefinition of the Urban: The Collision of Culture." *Black Popular Culture*. Eds. Dent, Gina and Michele Wallace. 1st New Press print. ed. New York: New Press, 1998. 153-63. Print.
- Documentary on *Soul Train*

Screening (Commercials):

- *Soul Train* episode & Afro-Sheen Commercials
- Sierra Mist "Pachanga" and Jell-O "Pure Desire"

Recommended Readings:

- Butler, Jeremy. "The Television Commercial." *Television: Critical Methods & Applications* (149-208).

WEEK 5 (10/24) — Bodies/Styles in Motion: Music Videos & Mise-en-Scene

- Grayson, Deborah R. "Is It Fake?: Black Women's Hair as Spectacle and Spec(tac)ular." *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 12.3 36 (1995): 12-31.
- Edmond, Maura. Here We Go Again: Music Videos after YouTube. *Television & New Media* 2014, Vol. 15(4). 305–32.
- Mercer, Kobena. "Black Hair/Style Politics." *new formations* Winter.3: 33-54.
- Moore, Madison. "[Beyoncé's New Weave Swing, or How to Snatch Wigs With Hair Choreography.](#)" *Sounding Out!: The Sound Studies Blog*. 29 September 2014. Web.
- Moore, Madison. "Chapter 5: Wind Machine." *How to be Beyoncé*.

Screening:

- Music Video Selections from Beyoncé's & Prince
- Selections from Kim Kimble's body of work
- Hair Care Commercials

Recommended Reading: Mise-en-scene ch 7 & Editing ch 9

WEEK 6 (10/31) — The Situation Comedy

Readings:

- Butler, Jeremy G. Chapter 5, *Television Style*. 173-223.
- [Newman, Michael Z., and Levine, Elana. "Legitimizing Television" and "Upgrading the Situation Comedy." Legitimizing Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status. Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2012.](#)
- Bronstein, Phoebe. "Primetime Pedagogies: Racism, Primetime TV, and the Limits of Dissent." <http://www.flowjournal.org/2017/04/primetime-pedagogies/>
- Vermeulen, Timotheus and James Whitfield. "Arrested Developments: Towards and Aesthetic of the contemporary U.S. sitcom." (102-111)

Screenings:

- *The Simpsons*, *30 Rock*, and *Black-ish* (subject to change based on availability) + Clips

Recommended: Camera (Butler ch 8) & Sound (Butler ch10)

WEEK 7 (11/7) — Group Workshops

WEEK 8 (11/14) — Reading/Screening Schedule Based on Research Groups

WEEK 9 (11/21) — Reading/Screening Schedule Based on Research Groups

WEEK 10 (11/28) — Catch-Up and Conclusions

FINAL PROJECT DUE noon Tuesday, December 5 via Canvas