



**Boston University Study Abroad
London**

**Boston University Study Abroad London
British Television Studies
COM FT 318 (*Elective A*)
Spring 2013**

Instructor Information

A. Name Dr. Christine Fanthome

Course Description

This course focuses on British television, tracing its historical development from the early years of the BBC to the present day, identifying key influences and analysing its impact on British culture. In so doing it examines the structure of the production industry and its programme output, with particular emphasis on news, soaps, reality TV, children's programming, and televised Shakespeare.

Methodology

Each teaching session will involve a lecture, illustrative material and a class discussion or workshop activity based on the set reading. Students should absorb as much television as they can out of class in order to participate fully in seminar discussions.

**Please note no laptops allowed in the classroom.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Understand British television's historical, cultural, political and economic contexts.
- Have an awareness of how professionals in the industry work
- Consider the implications of current economic and technological changes in the British television industry
- Show greater insight about the conventions, objectives and structures of specific programme genres

Textbooks/Supplies

Some items available in PDF form. Please visit <https://lms.bu.edu> and log in using your Kerberos username and password to view files. All key textbooks in library.

Evaluation Plan and Grading Criteria

Assessment

Graded	50%
Examination	50%
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>

(Poor timekeeping and/or unauthorised absence from class, e.g. due to late arrival of aircraft on the day of class, will result in a grade drop.)

The subject of the essay will be the BBC (title to follow). It should be approximately 2000 words in length and should draw on a minimum of 5 academic sources (text books, journal articles, etc). Websites may be used *in addition* to more traditional sources and *not instead* of them, and only academic or industry websites should be used. All quotations and citations should be referenced, and include appropriate page numbers. **The deadline for essay submission is 8.50am on Friday 15th February.**

NB Students who are undecided whether or not to take COM FT 318 should attend session 1 in any case (Monday 21st January) because all the necessary information for the essay will be given in the course of this class.

The exam will require an understanding of key concepts discussed during the module. Part one will be a 'quiz' requiring short answers to a list of questions. All questions must be attempted. Part two will be one extended essay from a choice of four. The exam will take place on **Tuesday 19th February**. Exam times and locations will be posted on the BU London website and in the Student Newsletter two weeks before exam dates.

Grading

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria and policies on plagiarism: <http://www.bu.edu/london/current-semester>

Attendance Policy

Classes

All Boston University London Programme students are expected to attend each and every class session, tutorial, and field trip in order to fulfill the required course contact hours and receive course credit. Any student that has been absent from two class sessions (whether authorised or unauthorised) will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their continued participation on the programme.

Authorised Absence:

Students who expect to be absent from any class should notify a member of Academic Affairs and complete an Authorized Absence Approval Form 10 working days in advance of the class date (except in the case of absence due to illness, for which students should submit the Authorised Absence Approval Form with the required doctor's note as soon as possible). **Please note:**

Submitting an Authorised Absence Approval Form does not guarantee an authorized absence

Students may apply for an authorised absence only under the following circumstances:

- Illness, supported by a local London doctor's note (submitted with Authorised Absence Approval Form).
- Important placement event that clashes with a class (verified by internship supervisor)
- Special circumstances which have been approved by the Directors (see note below).

The Directors will only in the most extreme cases (for example, death in close family) allow students to leave the programme early or for a significant break.

Unauthorised Absence:

Any student to miss a class due to an unauthorised absence will receive a **4% grade penalty** to their final grade for the course whose class was missed. This grade penalty will be applied by the Academic Affairs office to the final grade at the end of the course. As stated above, any student that has missed two classes will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their participation on the programme as excessive absences may result in a 'Fail' in the class and therefore expulsion from the programme.

Schedule

SESSION 1 - Monday 21st January

Introduction to the course

Historical overview part one: The early days of the BBC:

- origins of ‘public service broadcasting’
- definition and development of BBC standards
- legacy, influence and relevance in today’s multi-channel environment

Viewing: *Auntie: The Inside Story of the BBC*, programme 1 (BBC)

Initial seminar questions: How relevant is Lord Reith’s view to the BBC’s role today? What does this indicate about the future of the BBC?

Reading:

Crisell, Andrew, (2002), *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*, 2nd edition, London and New York: Routledge, Chapter 4: ‘The Golden Age of Radio and the Rise of Television’ pp. 68-82, and Chapter 5: ‘Television: The First Years of Competition’ pp. 84-105.

SESSION 2 – Tuesday 22nd January

Historical overview part two: from monopoly to multi-channelled environment:

- ITV and the ‘golden age’
- Channel 4 – narrowcasting for the masses
- BSkyB; Channel 5; Freeview
- Re-defining and maintaining quality standards

Viewing: Showreels from the BBC; ITV; C4 and Five which reveal each channel’s marketing stance and audience strategy

Initial seminar questions: How has the broadcasting landscape changed? What are the repercussions of the changes? How can quality be defined and maintained in today’s multi-channelled environment?

Reading:

Fanthome, Christine, (2003), *Channel 5 – the early years*, Luton: University of Luton Press, Part 1: The Context of Contemporary Broadcasting, pp 1 - 34

McGown, Alistair (Ed), (2004), *The Television Yearbook 2005*, London: BFI, pp 46 – 60 and pp 74 - 85

Mulgan, Geoff, (Ed), (1990), *The Question of Quality*, London: BFI pp 4 – 32

SESSION 3 – Monday 28th January

Industry insight and an overview of TV audiences:

- An overview of industry structure; producer-broadcasters; publisher-broadcasters; independent production companies; staffing
- The art of scheduling in today’s market
- An overview of quantitative and qualitative TV audience research to include the audience data collected by BARB. We shall also examine qualitative audience measurement such as questionnaires, surveys, interviews, diaries, focus and friendship groups and consider Ien Ang’s theories relating to the “unknowable” audience. Class activities will include either textual analysis of a selection of iconic advertisements or an exercise in scheduling.

Reading:

TV listings magazine, eg *Radio Times*

Gomery, Douglas, and Hockley, Luke, (Eds), (2006), *Television Industries*, London: BFI Chapter 4: 'Making Programmes' and Chapter 5: 'Selling and Television'.

Ien Ang, (1991), *Desperately Seeking the Audience*, Routledge, London, part one pp 15 – 41

SESSION 4 – Tuesday 29th January

News

- defining news values
- objectivity and perceived obstacles
- critical analysis and deconstruction of various news bulletins from diverse channels (class exercise)

Viewing: Examples of news bulletins from various channels; *Bethlehem Year Zero* (ITV), ('news' bulletin depicting the birth of Christ – which illustrates news conventions)

Initial seminar question: Can news ever be simply 'a window on the world'?

Reading:

Crisell, Andrew, (2006), *A Study of Modern Television: Thinking Inside the Box*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, Chapter 5

Creeber, Glen, (Ed), (2001), *The Television Genre Book*, London: BFI, pp108 - 124

SESSION 5 – Monday 4th February

Soaps:

- overview of development of British soaps
- key conventions of the soap genre
- key differences between British and American expectations

Viewing: *EastEnders* (BBC); *Coronation Street* (ITV); *Eldorado* (BBC)

Initial seminar question: Why did the BBC's new flagship soap *Eldorado* fail? What does this tell us about the expectations of British audiences?

Guest speaker: Nora Dennehy, former Senior News Producer, BBC - TBC

Reading:

Buckingham, David, (1987), *Public Secrets: EastEnders and its audience*, London: BFI, Introduction and Chapter 1: 'Creating the Audience' pp 1 – 34

Robert C Allen, 'Making Sense of Soaps', in Robert C Allen and Annette Hill, (2004) *The Television Studies Reader*, London: Routledge, pp 242 – 257

SESSION 6 - Tuesday 5th February

Field trip to Princess Productions – to be confirmed

NB EARLY START!

DRAFT SCHEDULE – TO BE CONFIRMED NEARER THE TIME

- 8.15 Make own way to Bayswater for recording of *The Wright Stuff* (daily news discussion show) and *The Wright Stuff Extra*. Meet Eric Johnson, who is in charge of finding and audience for the show, briefing them, and liaising on screen between audience and anchor, for an informal chat about careers in the media etc.

Make your own way home (tube Bayswater, or bus – number 70 goes from outside Whiteleys to Queen’s Gate) Further instructions will be given in class before the field trip.

**** Contingency Class Date: Friday 8th February.** Students are obligated to keep this date free to attend class should any class dates need to be rescheduled.

SESSION 7 – Monday 11th February

Reality TV:

- Overview of key British reality shows
- Identifying the source of component parts of this new hybrid genre
- Changing perceptions of ‘celebrity’
- The implications and consequences of interactivity, eg voting

Viewing: *I’m a Celebrity*, *Get Me out of Here* (ITV); *Big Brother*; (C4); *How not to get on Big Brother* (Channel 4)

Initial seminar questions: How real is reality TV? Does the rise of reality TV suggest that this genre is democratising or dumbing down TV output?

Reading:

Christopher Dunkley, ‘It’s not new and it’s not clever’, from Cummings et al (2002), *Reality TV: How Real Is Real?*, Institute of Ideas

Deborah Jermyn, Deborah, and Holmes, Su, (Eds), (2004), *Understanding Reality Television*, London: Routledge, Chapter 5 pp 111 – 135

SESSION 8: Tuesday 12th February

Children’s Television:

- traditional perception of children’s TV needs and wants
- moral panics
- active and passive viewers
- case study: the development of children’s programming on Five from launch to the present day

Viewing: *Teletubbies* (BBC); *Fifi and the Flowertots* (Five); *Peppa Pig* (Five) *Newsround* (BBC)

Initial seminar question: What do research findings indicate regarding British parents’ attitudes to the programming they want for their children? Is this an international view?

Reading:

Atwal, K, Millwood-Hargrave, A, and Sancho, J, (2003), *What Children Watch – An analysis of children’s programming provision between 1997 – 2001, and children’s views*, London: BSC and ITC, pp 71 – 100, starting ‘The Role of Television’
(Continued next page)

Messenger Davies, M. (2001), ‘Dear BBC’: *Children, television storytelling and the public sphere*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chapter 1: Children and broadcasting in the 1990s, pp 21 - 48

SESSION 9: Friday 15th February

Drama: Televising Shakespeare

- historical origins of the success of the single drama
- televising Shakespeare (pros and cons; adhering to the original text or adapting the stories for the contemporary audience;)

Viewing: *Shakespeare Re-Told* (BBC); *Macbeth* (BBC) *Macbeth* (Polanski)

Initial seminar questions: Is televised Shakespeare relevant to today's audiences? What are the commercial difficulties of producing and distributing the single play in today's multi-channelled environment?**Reading:**

Crisell, Andrew, *A Study of Modern Television: Thinking Inside the Box*, (2006), Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, Chapter 9

Davies, Anthony, and Wells, Stanley, (Eds), *Shakespeare and the Moving Image: The Plays on Film and Television*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press – Chapter 4 - Michele Willems, 'Verbal-Visual, Verbal-Pictorial or Textual Televisual? Reflections on the BBC Shakespeare Series' pp 69 - 85

Chapter 5 - Neil Taylor, 'Two Types of Television Shakespeare', pp 86 - 98

FINAL EXAM: Exam times and locations will be posted on the BU London website and in the Student Newsletter two weeks before exam dates. The exam will be on **Tuesday 19th February**. Exam times and locations will be posted on the BU London website and in the Student Newsletter two weeks before exam dates.

Terms and Conditions

Students must check their email and the weekly Student Newsletter for field trip updates and reminders.

I will make some time available in each session for students to raise questions etc. Should students wish to discuss matters with me in person I will also be available during the break mid-lecture and at the end of class. Alternatively, please feel free to e-mail me with questions. If you have problems with the availability of reading materials (all of which should be in the library) please contact me either through the Academic Affairs Office or via e-mail.