Boston University Study Abroad
London

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British Television Studies
COM FT 318 (Elective A)
Spring 2018

Instructor Information
A. Name
Dr. Christine Fanthome
B. Day and Time
Mondays and Tuesdays, 9am-1pm (plus Wednesday 17 January 9.00am – 1.00pm, Friday 16 February 9am-11am and an additional field trip on the afternoon of Tuesday 23 January 2.30 pm – 4.00 pm as well as the usual morning class.)
C. BU Telephone
D. Office Telephone
E. Email
F. Office hours
By appointment

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 film and TV adaptations of 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 Blackboard: http://learn.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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graded</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examination (2 sections to the exam)</td>
<td>50% (25% plus 25%)</td>
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<td>(Students will also take a mock examination in an earlier class which will not affect their final grade)</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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(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. Students are expected to submit independent work as per the BU Code of Honour which can be found in the Academic Handbook. The deadline for essay submission is 08.50 on Friday 16 February 2018. Essays should be submitted in hard copy to the main office at 43 Harrington Gardens by the deadline. Electronic copies will not be accepted.

NB Students who are undecided whether or not to take COM FT 318 should attend session 1 in any case (Wednesday 17 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 20 February 2018. Before this date, students will be given a mock examination in class, which will indicate what will be expected in the final exam. This will be peer marked in class and will not count towards the final grade.

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

* Final Grades are subject to deductions by the Academic Affairs Office due to unauthorised absences.

Attendance Policy

Classes
All Boston University London Programme students are expected to attend each and every class session, seminar, and field trip in order to fulfil 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 more than one day. In this situation students should submit the Authorised Absence Approval Form with the required doctor’s note as soon as possible). The Authorised Absence Approval Request Form is available from: [http://www.bu.edu/london/current-semester/](http://www.bu.edu/london/current-semester/)

**Please note:** Submitting an Authorised Absence Approval Form does not guarantee an authorised absence

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

- **Illness (first day of sickness):** If a student is too ill to attend class, the student must phone the BU London Student Affairs Office (who will in turn contact the student’s lecturer).
- **Illness (multiple days):** If a student is missing more than one class day due to illness, the student must call into the BU London Student Affairs Office each day the student is ill. Students must also provide the Student Affairs office with a completed Authorised Absence Approval Form and a sick note from a local doctor excusing their absence from class.
- 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 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.

**Religious Holidays**
Boston University’s Office of the University Registrar states:

‘The University, in scheduling classes on religious holidays and observances, intends that students observing those traditions be given ample opportunity to make up work. Faculty members who wish to observe religious holidays will arrange for another faculty member to meet their classes or for cancelled classes to be rescheduled.’

**Special Accommodations**
Each student will need to contact the Office of Disability Services to request accommodations for the semester they are abroad. Students are advised by BU-ODS not to expect the same accommodations as they receive on campus.

BU London can only uphold special accommodations if we have received the appropriate
documentation from the BU-ODS. We cannot accept letters from other universities/centres.

All disabilities need to be known to the ODS in Boston if they are to be used as a reason for requiring a change in conditions, i.e. reduced internship hours or special accommodations for the internship schedule.

**Lateness**

Students arriving more than 15 minutes after the posted class start time will be marked as late. Any student with irregular class attendance (more than two late arrivals to class) will be required to meet with the Associate Director for Academic Affairs and if the lateness continues, may have his/her final grade penalised.

**SCHEDULE**

**SESSION 1 - Wednesday 17 January (9.00 am – 1.00 pm)**

**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?

**Required reading for the class:**


**Suggestions for additional reading:**


**SESSION 2 – Monday 22 January (9.00 am – 1.00 pm)**

**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?

**Required reading for the class:**


**Suggestions for additional readings:**

Fanthome, C. (2003), *Channel 5 – the early years*, Luton: University of Luton Press, parts 2, 3 and 4


**PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE ARE TWO SESSIONS TODAY (TUESDAY 23 JANUARY) – MORNING AND AFTERNOON**

Also, please note that at 11.30 am (immediately after the tea break) there will be a presentation by the Head Librarian, Ms Morgan Bailas-Ferry, about library resources, with a focus on academic and authoritative sources.

**SESSION 3A – Tuesday 23 January 9.00am – 1.00pm (morning session)**

**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.

**Required reading for class:**


**Suggestions for additional readings:**
SESSION 3B – Tuesday 23 January (2.30 pm – 4.00 pm)
Science Museum, SW7
Meet at 14.30 at the museum’s group entrance. Go to the main museum entrance in Exhibition Road and then ask directions to the Group Entrance around the corner – approx 400 metres away. Gather inside the group entrance.
We shall be visiting The Information Age gallery, which celebrates more than 200 years of innovation in information and communication technologies. Further details to be given in class.

SESSION 4 – Monday 29 January (9.00 am – 1.00 pm)
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’?

Required reading for the class:

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

Suggestions for further reading:


SESSION 5 – Tuesday 30 January
Field trip to ITN – to be confirmed
NB EARLY START! We are likely to have to be there by 8.15 latest!

ITN
200 Gray’s Inn Road
WC1X 8XZ
(nearest tube stations are Kings Cross and Chancery Lane)
Arrangements to be discussed in class, but students will be expected to travel in small groups. Dr Fanthome will meet you at ITN.

SESSION 6 – Monday 5 February (9.00am – 1.00pm)

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?

**Required reading for the class:**


**Suggestions for additional reading:**


SESSION 7– Tuesday 6 February (9.00 am – 1.00 pm)

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?

**Required reading for the class:**

OFCOM (2016) Children and parents: media use and attitudes report
Please read the Executive Summary (pages 3 – 12)
**Suggestions for additional reading:**


*Contingency Class Date: Friday 9 February.* Students are obligated to keep this date free to attend class should any class dates need to be rescheduled.

**SESSION 8 – Monday 12 February (9.00 am – 1.00 pm)**
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 - To be confirmed**

**Required reading for class:**


**Suggestions for additional reading:**


**SESSION 9 – Tuesday 13 February (9.00 am – 1.00 pm)**
Drama: *Televisioning 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?

Required readings for the class:

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


SESSION 10 – Friday 16 February (9.00 am – 11.00 am)
PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS A SHORT SESSION
09.00 – 11.00 – New Media - New Audiences?
This final session will begin with a discussion about changes in audience behaviour arising from the development of the internet, social media and the impact and proliferation of user-generated content. In the light of online and mobile viewing together with timeshift technologies, we shall question whether television viewing in the traditional sense will soon be obsolete. In addition, there will be an opportunity during this session for students to ask questions about the forthcoming examination.

Reading:
Bury, R. & Li, J. (2015) Is it live or is it timeshifted, streamed or downloaded? Watching television in the era of multiple screens, New Media & Society, 17 (4) 592 - 610

FINAL EXAM: The exam will be on Tuesday 20 February. Exam times and locations will be posted on the BU London Programmes Blackboard course page and will be emailed to students, a week before the final exam.

Terms & 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 Student Affairs Office or via e-mail.