



Boston University Study Abroad London

British Television History and Genre **COM FT 318 (*Elective A*)**

Course Description

As a fundamental medium for both information and entertainment, television—its funding and delivery structures, its journalistic and creative programming—has been a barometer for changing social values and economic conditions. This course traces the historical development of British television, focusing on the BBC monopoly in 1936, the ‘golden age of television’ in the years of the BBC/ITV duopoly, the introduction of Channel 4, Channel 5, cable and satellite, and the arrival of global streamers. Students will evaluate key technological and socioeconomic influences and analyse the impact on British culture. In so doing, they will examine the structure of the television industry and its programme output, with particular emphasis on a range of genres including news, soap opera, reality TV and children’s programming, before addressing questions as to the future of broadcasting. Field trips, including a visit to Netflix UK, and industry guest speakers will augment students’ learning on this course.

HUB Learning Objectives

Area: Historical Consciousness

Learning Objective 1

Students will create historical narratives, for example about how definitions of quality in television have changed over time, and how advances in technology have shaped communication development. Students will evaluate interpretations based on historical evidence from a wide range of appropriate academic readings, and construct historical arguments. These will focus on the past, present and future of UK broadcasting, considering topics such as audience, marketing, consumption and the production economy. In so doing they will incorporate historical and contemporary perspectives from media studies, sociology, and cultural studies to evaluate the rise of the BBC/ITV duopoly and the “golden age” of television. In each session, students will view material from the BBC and other archives and evaluate this within its historical context in the light of selected class readings, using their analytical skills, particularly in terms of textual deconstruction combined with scholarly historical research to understand the rationale underpinning developments. This will be demonstrated in class debate every session, and tested in all assessments.

Learning Objective 2

Students will demonstrate an ability to interpret primary source material (textual, visual and aural) using a range of interpretive skills and situate the material in its historical and cultural context. Each session will be augmented by viewings of relevant archive and contemporary material followed by in depth discussion and question and answer sessions. Examples shown in class include a televised interview with the first director general of the BBC, Sir John Reith, documentary extracts and promotional materials that illustrate historical milestones in television,

and extracts of and material relating to specific genres of programming that show development over time, such as soap opera, news etc. As well as sharing their interpretations in class, students will be able to demonstrate their interpretive skills in class and in their assessments.

Learning Objective 3

In piecing together the history of television from 1936 to the present day through interactive lectures, viewings, absorption of the class readings and debate, and in discussing in class the reasons for changes and developments, students will have the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of socio-economic forces and how these have changed over time. We shall focus on the technological advances, together with socioeconomic development, which repositioned the viewer from 'citizen' to 'consumer' and shifted the focus from viewer's perceived 'needs' to their 'wants'. Students will combine their interpretive skills from deconstructing key viewings with their analyses of set readings in order to evaluate and understand the changing ecology underpinning British television. They will understand the historical trajectory of the UK media landscape more widely through sharing interpretations in small group discussions and the class forum, and will also demonstrate their knowledge in this field in all formative and summative assessments, e.g. class contribution, midterm exam, final presentation and coursework essay.

Area: Aesthetic Exploration

Learning Objective 1

Students will demonstrate knowledge and appreciation of notable works (archive and contemporary) of British television, including the cultural contexts in which those works were created, and be able to identify their ongoing significance and relevance. These might include early BBC news footage, archive interviews with Sir John Reith, current and archive promotional material from all major channels, footage of longstanding programmes over time such as *Coronation Street*, and examples of British literary adaptations that illustrate how both historical and cultural contexts have changed since the early days of television. By the end of the course the students will have experienced a very broad range of television texts, which will all have been subjected to extensive analysis and class discussion.

Learning Objective 2

Students will be taught the appropriate vocabulary, used within the industry, and necessary to interpret a range of British television programmes. This will include terminology used to denote shot sizes and transitions as well as words and phrases associated with script development, commission, distribution, etc. Students will have multiple opportunities to practise using this vocabulary in class discussions. Students will also be able to hone their reasoning skills, assisted by tutor and peer input, as they interpret the wide range of examples of television programming shown in class.

Learning Objective 3

Students will produce evaluative, analytical or creative works that demonstrate an understanding of the characteristics such as the genres, styles and cultural history, of British television. In class, the cultural history of British television, together with examples of the developments within specific genres such as news, soap opera, children's television period drama, sitcom and reality TV will be covered. Each session, student comment via small group discussions and feedback to the class forum will be an essential component of the underlying learning strategy. Students will gain insight about the conventions, objectives and structures of a range of programme genres. In addition to this ongoing formative work, each student will produce an evaluative and analytical coursework essay on the BBC, submit an exam essay on genre, and contribute a summative oral presentation placing British television within the wider context of communication culture and history.

Additional Learning Objectives

- Students will have an understanding of the origins and approach to audiences for each of the major UK broadcasters and the implications for output from these sources today.
- Students will gain an awareness of the roles and responsibilities of professionals in the British television industry.
- Students will have been able to enhance their own life skills, particularly in terms of organising and presenting, studying independently whilst adhering to deadlines, maintaining good timekeeping and planning their study timetable within the constraints of an intensive 5-week course.
- Students will be able to think more creatively and with confidence about a broad range of future career paths.

Grading

The following Boston University table explains the grading system that is used by most faculty members on Boston University's Study Abroad London Programmes.

Grade	Honour Points	Usual %
A	4.0	93-100
A-	3.7	89-92
B+	3.3	85-88
B	3.0	81-84
B-	2.7	77-80
C+	2.3	73-76
C	2.0	69-72
C-	1.7	65-68
D	1.0	60-64
F	0.0	Unmarked

Grading Criteria

'Incomplete' or **I** grades are not permitted because of the obvious difficulty in making up missed work once the student has left the country. All work must be completed on time. We also do not allow **'Audits'** (AU), **'Withdrawals'** (W), or **'Pass/Fail'** (P) grades.

The grades reflect the quality of the work. Lecturers and students should use the following criteria for an understanding of what each grade means.

A This exceptional grade is assigned only to work that has persistently outstanding quality in both substance and presentation. The student must demonstrate a sustained capacity for independent thought and extensive study, producing rigorous and convincing analyses in well-ordered prose.

A- Awarded to work that is clearly focused and analytical, and based on wide reading. The student must cover all the principal points of a question and systematically develop a persuasive overall thesis, allowing for one or two venial omissions or inapt expressions.

B+, B, B- This range of grades indicates that the student has shown some evidence of original thought and intellectual initiative. The student has cited sources beyond the class materials, and shown a degree of originality in perception and/or approach to the subject. The work will show thoughtful management of material, and a good grasp of the issues. The differences between a B+, a straight B and a B- may reflect poor presentation of the material, or mistakes in punctuation, spelling and grammar.

C+, C, C- Work in this grade range is satisfactory, but uninspiring. If the work is simply a recitation of the class materials or discussions, and shows no sign of genuine intellectual engagement with the issues, it cannot deserve a higher grade. Should an essay fail to provide a clear answer to the question as set, or argue a position coherently, the grade will fall within this range.

Quality of presentation can lift such work into the upper levels of this grade range. Work of this quality which is poorly presented, and riddled with errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation, will fall into the lower end of the range. To earn a C grade, the work must demonstrate that the student is familiar with the primary course material, be written well enough to be readily understood, be relevant to the assignment, and, of course, be the student's own work except where properly cited.

D A marginal pass can be given where some but not all the elements of the course have been completed satisfactorily.

F The failing grade indicates the work is seriously flawed in one or more ways:

- Obvious lack of familiarity with the material
- So poorly written as to defy understanding
- So brief and insubstantial that it fails to properly address the subject
- Material presented is not relevant to the assignment
- Demonstrates evidence of plagiarism (see following section in Academic Conduct Code)

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria and policies on plagiarism. This can be accessed via Blackboard Learn: <http://learn.bu.edu>

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

Attendance Policies

Classes

All Boston University London Programme students are expected to attend every class session, seminar, and field trip 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:

The Authorised Absence Approval Request Form is available through the Academic Affairs section of the BU London Personal Page: <https://fm.bu-london.co.uk/fmi/webd/>

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

Students who expect in advance to be absent from any class should notify a member of Academic Affairs and complete an Authorised Absence Approval Request Form ten working days in advance of the class date.

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 notify Academic Affairs as soon as possible by submitting an Authorised Absence Approval Request Form in advance of the class. If it is the student's first absence of the semester (from any class) a doctor's note is not required.
- **Illness (multiple days):** If a student is missing more than one class day due to illness, the student must complete an Authorised Absence Approval Request Form and a sick note from a local doctor excusing their absence from class. Once well enough, the student will need to meet with Academic Affairs.
- 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 Academic Affairs 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 Disability & Access Services to request accommodations for the semester they are abroad. Students are advised by BU-DAS 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-DAS. We cannot accept letters from other universities/centres.

All disabilities need to be known to the DAS 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 Academic Affairs and if the lateness continues, may have their final grade penalised.