



Boston University International Programs
London

Boston University British Programmes
British Television Studies
COM FT 318 (Elective)
Summer 2009

I. Class Description: COM FT 318

- A. Name of Class: “British Television Studies”
- B. Credit hours: Four
- C. Catalogue 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.

II. Instructor Information

- A. Name Dr Christine Fanthome
- B. Day and Time Monday and Tuesday, 9am – 1pm
- C. Location Wetherby room, 43 Harrington Gardens, SW7 4JU
- D. BU Telephone 020 7244 6255
- E. Office Telephone 020 7263 5618
- F. Email writingbychristine@yahoo.co.uk
- G. Office hours Phone or email to arrange
- H. Methods 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.

III. Textbooks/Supplies

Some items available in PDF form on the course webpage:

<http://www.bu-london.co.uk/academic/ft318> (you must be logged in to view materials). All key textbooks in library.

IV. 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

V. 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 8.45 am on Monday 22 June.

NB Students who are undecided whether or not to take COM FT318 should attend session 1 in any case (Tuesday 26 May) 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 23 June**. 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, attendance requirements and policies on plagiarism:

<http://www.bu-london.co.uk/files/images/ACADEMICHANDBOOKSU09.pdf>

VI. Schedule

SESSION 1 - Tuesday 26 May

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 – Friday 29 May

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 1 June

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 4 – Tuesday 2 June

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)

10.30 + Meet presenter Matthew Wright after the programme for short question and answer session (Have your questions ready!)
Short studio tour

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.

SESSION 5 – Monday 8 June

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.

Guest Speaker, Moira Stewart (former Producer/Director of *Wish You Were Here* and *Blind Date*) – to be confirmed.

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 6 - Tuesday 9 June

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?

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 7 – Monday 15 June

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'

Hannah Davies, David Buckingham and Peter Kelley, 'In the worst possible taste: children, television and cultural value', in Robert C Allen and Annette Hill, (2004) *The Television Studies Reader*, London: Routledge, pp 479 – 493

SESSION 8: Tuesday 16 June

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

**** Make-up Class Date: Friday 19 June.** Should any class dates need to be rescheduled, students are obligated to keep this date free to attend classes.

SESSION 9: Monday 22 June

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

FINAL EXAM: Tuesday 23 June. Exam times and locations will be posted on the BU London website and in the Student Newsletter two weeks before exam dates.

VII. Terms and Conditions

*****Attendance at all classes and visits is mandatory. Students missing lectures without a doctor's letter or authorisation from the Director or from the Placements' Team will automatically be docked a – or a + from their final grade. Persistent lateness will also be penalised in the final grade. A register of attendance will be taken at the beginning of each session and marks will be awarded for attendance. Absence can be conveyed either by advising a senior member of staff in the Academic Affairs Office with a request that the information be passed on to me; or by emailing me prior to class. Leaving it to another class member to convey messages will not be acceptable. Appointments for interviews for internships should not conflict with class times.***

Any student who is unable to attend a class, or take part in an assignment because of religious reasons, must give notice in advance of class. He/she will be required to make up for time lost. In this situation arrangements must be made with another student for class notes to be shared. Written papers must be delivered before agreed deadline, failure to hand in the paper will result in deducted marks.

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.