ARHU106: Practical Application in the Arts
The Honors Humanities Program, Second Semester Colloquium (1 credit)
University of Maryland

Social Issues, Popular Culture and Screenwriting for Television:
Representations of Race, Sexuality and Space

Spring 2008, Section 0101, Mondays 4:00pm - 4:50pm in JMW 3205 (Jimenez Hall)

Instructors: Patrick Grzanka
Assistant Director, Honors Humanities
1103 Wicomico Hall
(301) 405-6992
pgrzanka@umd.edu
Office hours by appointment.

Teaching Assistant: Rayyan Ghuma, ghumar@umd.edu
Office hours by appointment.

Course Description
Television is often dismissed as frivolous entertainment at best and brain-draining drivel at worst. Whatever your opinion on television shows and the state of the entertainment media is, it is undeniable that television is one of the most pervasive and influential aspects of American culture(s) today. In a nation where nearly every household has a TV, the dramas, comedies, dramatics, soap operas, reality shows and movies broadcast on television reach more people than any newspaper or radio show could hope to touch. From "The Office" to "The Simpsons" and "CSI" to "Grey's Anatomy," American television shows have a profound impact on American life (not to mention the "globalized" world). TV is the mass media.

This course will explore the complex relationship(s) between the concepts of "television" and "popular culture" as meaning and practice. We will examine how television is an integral part of the cultural circuit of our everyday lives. In the context of contemporary society, we will see how critical studies of television have a distinct place in the arts and humanities. Will we consider the contradictory ways in which difference, power and knowledge are articulated in cultural production. Through in-depth study of several primary texts, including Mad Men, The Wire, Will & Grace, Drawn Together, The Sarah Silverman Program, Grey's Anatomy and Weeds, will learn how screenwriters use and manipulate contemporary social issues as the building blocks for their art. Specifically, we will concentrate on how race, sexuality and space intersect in these representations to create meanings about contemporary U.S. cultures. Finally, we will apply screenwriting skills to create our own application of the art of screenwriting; students will be ask to work individually or in groups to craft an episode "teleplay" for an existing television series or write an original series' pilot.

By the end of this fifteen-week course, students should be able to:
1. See a range of ways in which television influences everyday life.
2. Recognize social, metaphorical, and philosophical themes in popular broadcast television and be able to critically analyze these shows as "texts."
3. Produce a thorough outline of a teleplay (either 22 or 44 minutes) that deals with one or more contemporary issues.

Most of the readings, viewings, and homework assignments for the class will take place in the first eight weeks of the course. The final weeks in April and May allow students the time to complete their final projects in time for the May 18, 2007, deadline.

Despite the one-credit aspect of this course, however, it should be understood that ARHU106 is an Honors course and a critical component of the Honors Humanities curriculum.
The reading and writing load may be considered heavy, though this course strictly follows the college-level standard of three hours of outside work per credit hour. Commitment to fulfilling the requirements of the course is essential to success in the class and will be reflected in students’ final grades. It should also be noted that many of the ideas presented in this course will be built upon in **ARHU205: Modes of Knowing and Doing in the Arts and Humanities.**

No previous knowledge of any series in the course is required (or even preferred.) Every student, regardless of her familiarity with these series, will have an equal opportunity to succeed in the course.

Patrick Grzanka will be your primary instructor for this course, though your Honors Humanities Keystone Project progress may be evaluated by Dr. Peter Mallios, Justin Maher or Sarah Hamilton (depending on who you have been working with up to this point). Honors Humanities alumna Rayyan Ghuma will serve as the teaching assistant.

**Evaluation**

Grading for the course is as follows:

- **20%: Class participation.** While attendance is not mandatory, thoughtful participation in class is a crucial part of succeeding in the course. The instructor will lead discussions, but it is each student’s responsibility to actively participate in class. Because summaries of the readings are not required every week, in-class participation is the only way for the instructor to know whether a student is doing the required reading. In-class participation is not limited to speaking in class -- short, written quizzes on the assigned material will be given throughout the semester.

- **5%: Assignments.** All written assignments, not including your analytic essay or final project, are due in hard copy form at the start of class for which they are due. Late assignments will not be accepted.

- **20%: Analytic essay.** During the semester, you will develop a 4-7 page essay analyzing one or more of television series using the analytical tools and frameworks we learn in class. This essay will be due toward the end of the semester, but you will work on it throughout the course.

- **35%: Final project.** This course is about practical applications in the arts. Thus, the practical application – development of a teleplay – is the most important part of this course. Students may work individually or in groups (of up to 4 people) for the final project. More details will be provided during the first half of the course.

- **20%: Annotated bibliography for the Honors Humanities Keystone Project.** All HonHum students are required to maintain satisfactory progress towards completion of their Keystone Project throughout ARHU106. By the end of the semester students will have expanded and annotated their bibliography to 20 sources.

The grading will be on a traditional scale of 90-100=A, 80-89=B, 70-79=C, etc.

**Required Texts:**
Course readings, available via Blackboard (www.elms.umd.edu)

**Viewing Nights:**
Several times during the semester, students will have the option of screening the required episodes as a group. Viewing nights are typically held immediately after regularly scheduled class meetings. For people who cannot attend the group viewing nights, the required episodes will be available for short-term loan from the Honors Humanities lounge in Wicomico Hall. It is important to remember that all of the episodes listed on the syllabus are required assignments, and each student is responsible for seeing the episodes – with the group or on an individual basis – on time for the class in which they will be discussed.

**Keystone Project Annotated Bibliography:**
Students are required to maintain satisfactory progress towards completion of their keystone project during the spring semester in ARHU106. This semester you will read the sources you identified in your bibliography during the fall semester, you will expand your bibliography from ten to at least 20 sources, and you will annotate all of your sources in the MLA style. Guidelines for annotation are available on the ELMS/Blackboard page. To access your Blackboard space, go to http://www.elms.umd.edu.

Final Project – An Original Teleplay
For the course’s final project, students may work individually or in groups of up to four members to create an original teleplay. The teleplay may be a completely original concept, or be a new episode of an existing television series (a "spec script"). The plot of the outline must deal with one or more contemporary social issues. The teleplay script must have a length of approximately 22 or 44 minutes, the length of the average TV sitcom or drama. The extensiveness of the project will depend on the length format chosen by the student and group size. For example, if working alone, the student will be expected – regardless of teleplay length – to submit a complete plot outline with at least one scene of dialogue. If four students work together, they must submit a thorough outline of a complete 22- or 44-minute script with at least six scenes of dialogue.

More details about the appropriate formatting for the teleplay and length requirements will be provided later in the course. Students may also have access to examples of these projects created by Honors Humanities students who participated in previous versions of this course.

Extra Credit
There is one extra credit opportunity built into the course, though other may become available throughout the semester (most likely including attendance at Honors Humanities popsARTs events).

To receive 100 percent on two quiz grades, students may read and annotate (1-2 pages) a scholarly article or book chapter dealing with race, sexuality and/or space in contemporary U.S. popular culture (not limited strictly to television). The recommended article (available on Blackboard) is: Lee, R. C. (2004). 'Where’s my parade?': Margaret Cho and the Asian American body in space. The Drama Review, 48, 108-132. The instructor must approve other scholarly articles in advance.

Documented Disabilities
Students who have documented disabilities and who wish to discuss academic accommodations within this course should contact the instructor as soon as possible after the beginning of the course.

Incompletes
In this course, the mark of "I" will be granted only to a student who meets both of the following criteria: (1) the student has satisfactorily completed a major portion of the work of the course and (2) the student has been unable to complete some small portion of the work of the course because of illness or other circumstances beyond the student's control. Examples of reasons for the inability to complete course work that will not qualify a student for an "I" mark include the following: employment or volunteer commitments, social responsibilities, travel plans, and unexpected difficulties in satisfying course requirements.

Academic Integrity
The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html
Assignments and Course Schedule
*All assignments, including readings, will be due the week they are listed unless otherwise noted.*

**Week One (1/28/08) – Pop Matters**
- Television and the Arts and Humanities, introduction to the course and current issues in contemporary television; key themes/terms.

**Week Two (2/4) – Representation & The Circuit of Culture**
- What is representation? How do we decode meanings in television?
- Assignment: *What is your favorite TV show and why?*
- Read:

**Week Three (2/11) – Race as Representation**
- Read:

**Week Four (2/18) – Sexualities and/in Popular Culture**
- Read:

**Week Five (2/25) – (One) Queer Space: *Will & Grace***
- Read:
  - Watch:
    - Season Six, Episode Seventeen, “East Side Story”

**Week Six (3/3) – Constructing the Past: *Mad Men***
- Read:
- Watch:
  - Season One, Episode One: “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes”

**Week Seven (3/10) – Race and Sex in Suburban Space: Weeds**
- Plus: Discussion of basic screenwriting techniques; introduction to the final project.
- Read:
  - Introduction and first 6 chapters of *The Screenwriter Within* by D.B. Giles.
- Watch:
  - Season One, Episodes One and Four: “You Can’t Miss the Bear” and “Fashion of the Christ”

**Week Eight (3/17) – Spring Break, no class.**

**Week Nine (3/24) – Race and Sex in Urban Space: The Wire**
- Assignment: Analytic Essay proposal (<1 page)
- Read:
- Watch:
  - Season One, Episode One: “The Target”

**Week Ten (3/31) – Multiculturalism and “Colorblind” Society: Grey’s Anatomy**
- Read:
  - Selections from Gilles’ *The Screenwriter Within*.
- Watch:
  - TBA

**Week Eleven (4/7) – Culture and the Abject: Drawn Together and The Sarah Silverman Program**
- Read:
- Recommended:
- Watch:
  - From *Drawn Together*: Season Two, Episode Eight, “Terms of Endearment”
  - From *The Sarah Silverman Program*: Season One, Episode Three, “Positively Negative”

**Week Twelve (4/14) – Presentations**
- Implications and effects...why pop matters?
- Assignment: Begin Final Project teleplay proposal presentations in class. ****Teleplay proposals due TODAY.****

**Week Thirteen (4/21) – Presentations**
- Assignment: Continue Final Project teleplay proposal presentations in class.

**Week Fourteen (4/28) – Script Readings**
- Assignment: Prepare rough draft of teleplay for reading in class.
Week Fifteen (5/5) – Script Reading/Editing
  ▪ Assignment: Prepare rough draft of teleplay for reading in class.

Week Sixteen (5/12) – Conclusions

Exam Week
  ▪ Turn in analytic essay to the Honors Humanities office in Wicomico Hall by 5:00 p.m. on May 14th.
  ▪ Turn in final project to the Honors Humanities office in Wicomico Hall by 5:00 p.m. on May 21st.
  ▪ Turn in annotated bibliography for Honors Humanities Keystone Project by 5:00 p.m. on May 21st.