

Bellevue College

SOC 215 Television, Culture, and Society

Fully Online Course

Dr. Sara Sutler-Cohen

Fall Term: September 19 – December 8

Office Hours: Online Only. Email for appointment.

[Email](#)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is an introduction to Television Studies. The focus of the course is on visual text as culture-defining. How are stories told and retold, imagined, held up, or at times confronted and directly (or indirectly) challenged through television? Additionally, we will consider how different forms of television and technology (downloading shows online or cable television on a plane) affect forms of knowledge, ways of thinking, and core elements of social life and what defines us as interactive, social beings. The course material is broken up into two “threads”: There will be some emphasis on the technological side of television, its historical development, and its future; this course will also be devoted to critical sociology and cultural studies through analyses of television and society. Here, it is my hope that you will gain critical skills that can be applied to your work both within and beyond academic subjects as television permeates life and culture in significant ways – ways that we will discover together in this course. In the words of several of my students: “You’ll never watch TV the same way again!” I hope you echo that sentiment at the end of term.

A NOTE ABOUT COURSE CONTENT: Since interdisciplinary academics examine just about every aspect of the social world, we talk about the provocative material. When we explore controversial topics, I frame them within an academic context. Keep in mind that when we find ourselves in a space outside of our comfort zone, it's an opportunity for learning, no matter the difficulty of the subject matter. Please note that you are responsible for any course material you miss if you choose not to participate. If you have questions or concerns about content or climate, feel free to speak with me about it right away.

READING REQUIREMENTS:

- *Television & American Culture* by Jason Mittell
- *How To Watch Television* eds. Ethan Thompson & Jason Mittell
- *Black Television Travels: African American Media around the Globe* by Timothy Havens

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Oxford Dictionary of the English Language

- *A Writer's Reference* by Diana Hacker.

LEARNING AND COURSE OUTCOMES: At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- 1) Demonstrate a general knowledge and comprehension of the area of Television Studies through the fields of Sociology and Cultural Studies.
- 2) Demonstrate your comprehension and utilization of some of the basic tools of “reading television.”
- 3) Demonstrate a general understanding of the history of Television.
- 4) Show your critical understanding of the field of Television Studies, its history and its future, including the understanding of a Cultural Sociological approach to inquiries regarding the impact of Television on our private and public lives.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: If you have medical information to share with me in the event of an emergency, please contact me via email or come to see me during office hours. Emergency preparedness is important! If you need course modifications, adaptations, or accommodations because of a disability, I can refer you to our Disability Resource Center (DRC). If you prefer, you may contact them directly by going to B132 or by calling 425.564.2498 or TTY 425.564.4110. Information is also available on their [website](#).

EXPLORE THE LMC! The Library Media Center is at your fingertips! I *strongly* encourage you to visit the LMC at least once a week, but you can also access it via the web. Talk to a Reference Librarian at the Library (D-126), by calling (425) 564-6161, or by [email](#).

- [Main Library Media Center](#)
- [For article databases](#)

GENERAL RULES & EXPECTATIONS:

- Check in on our online classroom no less than *four times per week* (yes – I do keep track!), meaning you log on and surf around the site. No need to check in with me. Make this work for you on your own time.
- Complete readings and homework assignments *on time*. I do not check whether you complete your readings; this is on the honor system! You do need to read your required material to complete homework assignments. Skimming is not an option.
- Late homework assignments *are accepted*. **Do not email me asking for special treatment or favors. You're responsible for your work.**
 1. Late homework is docked 10% for every day the work is late, including Saturdays and Sundays.
 2. Late Discussion Boards that do not include responses to colleagues are eligible only for half credit. Responses to your colleagues are due three days after the Initial Posts are due (see schedule for details). A large part of these assignments is your communication with other students. I assess late points separately. So, if you turn in your Initial Post and Responses on Saturday, your Initial Post is two days late, but your responses are on time.
- I expect that your behavior in our virtual classroom is respectful. Continued disrespectful behavior in my class will result in your grade lowering. Please keep your postings to discussion boards (DBs) thoughtful and polite. One-on-one conversations go off-board and onto email, so our DBs don't get clogged. If you find at any point that you are uncomfortable with anything posted to a DB, please email me right away. Be wary of soapboxing in this class; you may be tempted to present your opinion and editorialize, but refrain from doing this.

Remember: Falling behind can be hazardous to your health!

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: In this course you will be completing assigned readings, participating in discussion board assignments, and completing short homework assignments. The work you do for this class will keep you critically engaged with the world around you from a sociological perspective. There are no exams for this course. Expect to be writing every week. The key to this course is your thoughtful reflection on course material. The first seven weeks of the course include your review of assigned readings and films. The remaining weeks are for you to engage in the research process, reviewing articles you've found for your research paper, sharing them with the class (and with me), and wrapping up your Incremental Assignments.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and Participation*:	100 points
Critical Reflections (4):	200 points
Main Discussion Boards (3):	150 points
Midterm Exam (1):	150 points
Final Research Paper Increments (4):	100 points
Final Research Paper (1):	150 points
TOTAL:	850 points

The Fine Print:

*Participation points accrue with various short assignments in the Discussion Area, such as your Introductory DB. These are labeled **PARTICIPATION DBs**. The Main DB assignments are labeled **MAIN DBs**.*

Attendance & Participation: Check in no less than four times per week. Be engaged with all of your discussion board assignments. Provoke energetic and polite discussion. Listen, read, and comprehend actively. Work respectfully with your colleagues in class. Take loads of notes from your readings. Look up words you don't understand. Ask questions. Think critically about the world around you. Make use of the Q&A Board.

Critical Reflections: You will be investigating Race and Ethnic Relations through a wide variety of mediums, including film, music, art, recorded lectures, and critical writing/essays. The intention of the Critical Reflections is to engage you deeply with the course content, some of which might be very new to you regarding how you understand race and racism. We engage a variety of experiences from multiple perspectives, so you should expect to be often challenged. Stay open to learning new things and different ways of thinking about the world. Critical Reflections *are not editorials, opinion pieces, or space for you to soap box*. Please keep that in mind as you prepare thoughtful pieces of writing throughout the course material. Critical Reflections are either 1-2 paragraph answers to questions I pose to you or short free-form essays.

Main Discussion Board Assignments: The work done in the Discussion Board area will have you engage course material and work closely together. You are expected to participate in these assignments to generate critical discussion amongst one another. Be aware that some of these require a few days, or even a week, of preparatory work. Make sure you look ahead at your homework! This method of learning gets you going socially! These assignments are always due on Thursdays and Sundays (your initial post goes up Thursday, and your responses to one

another are due Sundays). I grade DBs based on two things: your original post and your responses (usually two of them) to colleagues of yours in the class. You must do both to earn full credit. A submission with no responses posted earns ½ credit at most, and responses without an original submission receive zero credit.

Participation Discussion Board Assignments: These are meant to support you throughout the course and are required; the grades get folded into your overall Participation Grade.

Final Research Paper + Incremental Assignments: Throughout the course of the quarter, you will be working on a research paper to do with the theme in our course. You may make this about anything you want, having to do with the theme of our course. You will submit five assignments for this:

1. Topic
2. Proposal + Annotated Bibliography
3. First Draft + Annotated Bibliography
4. Peer Review
5. Final Submission

More information about this project is in the course handouts area.

For *all* of your written work: Submit proofread work **only**. Work not proofread will be returned **once** for a rewrite, expected to be handed in within 48 hours. If you need help with your writing, please make use of the following student support services:

- [Academic Success Center](#)
- [TRiO Student Support Services](#)

Required Writing Guidelines:

- Twelve-point sized Times font, double-spaced
- 1" margins all around
- APA Citations where appropriate – credit must be given even where any *ideas* presented in the paper are not your own (see notes below about avoiding plagiarism)
- Title pages and bibliographies do not count as pages due
- Student information is at the top left of the page, single spaced
- There are no extra spaces between paragraphs.
- Paragraphs contain no less than four sentences.
- Magazines, newspapers, journals, and books are *italicized*. Movie titles, article titles, song titles, etc. are “in quotation marks.” Quotes inside of a quotation use ‘single quotation marks.’
- Avoid the universal “we”, “our”, “us” – ask yourself: Can I speak for everyone? If you cannot, do not write it. Also, avoid phrasing such as “nowadays...” and “since the beginning of time.” Be accurate. Know what you’re writing and why.
- Do not ever use Wikipedia, CliffNotes, or other such encyclopedic references. Wikipedia is not peer-reviewed and therefore unreliable. Do your own research. If you’re going to research online (which is encouraged and totally legit), make sure you understand what you’re looking for. Do a deep dive into the internet to find your stuff.
- Be sure that no more than 20% of your papers are outside sources. You must be providing your own analysis while you draw from material presented to you in class.

I evaluate your work on the following:

1) Content

- a. Fulfilling the entire assignment, without leaving anything behind. Doing the minimum amount of work expected will likely get you a passing grade, but not an outstanding one. You're expected to go the extra mile.
- b. Fully developing your argument(s) and making use of examples and evidence to support your argument(s).
- c. The flow of thought throughout the paper, with strong analyses and conclusions.
- d. Assignments eligible for high marks must present evidence that all material has been reviewed.

2) Writing Style

- a. Excellent command of the written English language. In other words, most excellent grammar. NOTE: If you struggle with grammar and spelling or are an ESL student, *please* let me know! I'm happy to work with you and point you in the right direction.
- b. Clarity of thought.
- c. Good organization and attention to detail.
- d. The persuasiveness of your argument/s.
- e. Creativity. Make it an interesting read!
- f. PROOFREAD your work. Please do a spell/grammar check before you hand it in. Read it out loud to yourself, too! It helps.
- g. Dude, like totally don't write **colloquially**. A conversation is a conversation. A paper is an entirely different way of presenting your research and ideas. ☺

Preventing Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty occurring when students use information or material from outside sources and do not properly cite those sources. This is grounds for disciplinary action. It is your responsibility to understand plagiarism and its consequences. Plagiarism occurs if:

- a. You do not cite quotations and attribute borrowed ideas.
- b. You fail to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks.
- c. You do not write summaries and paraphrases in his/her own words and doesn't document a source or sources.
- d. You turn in work created by another person.
- e. You submit or use your prior work for a current or past course, or work from one current course in another course *without express permission* from your professors. This may also be considered academic dishonesty.
- f. Consequences: If it is determined that you have plagiarized or engaged in other forms of academic dishonesty, you will likely fail the assignment and possibly the course, despite points earned through other work. Acts of academic dishonesty are reviewed for disciplinary action.

Grading:

Please use the following to help explain the grade you receive for a given assignment. Please do not hesitate to come to me with any questions you ever have on a grade you receive. There is no limit to how many times you email me! My email door is *always* open, and I'm happy to go over grades with you.

A: 94-100
 A-: 90-93
 B+: 87-89
 B: 84-86
 B-: 80-83
 C+: 77-79
 C: 74-76
 C-: 70-73
 D+: 67-69
 D: 64-66
 D-: 60-63
 F: 59 and below

90-100 = A-Range. “A” work shows me you’re engaged with all course material by utilizing quotes and ideas. It is writing *completely free* from grammar and spelling errors, demonstrating your command not only of the English language but the form and flow of a solid piece of written work. I also like to see/read/hear your “writing voice.” That is, I want your style to come through! Your arguments should be solid and backed up with intellectual ammunition. You should demonstrate a strong understanding of our readings and the in-class media and how they intersect with one another. Your ideas should be “fleshed out” and not just a series of statements, in other words.

80-89 = B-Range. The “B” tells me you’re doing very good work. You may have a couple of grammar issues, but your work is still tidy, and the writing is still strong. You have a firm grasp on the themes in the course, but you may not be as well-versed in the readings and media and lecture material as you could be. I should see that you’re being challenged and that you’re struggling with the course issues and themes, and what they represent to you in an interconnected way. Your understandings of some of the course materials are stronger than others.

70-79 = C-Range. “C” work means that you’re not as invested in the material as I would like to see. Your writing is relatively weaker than it could be and you’re not thinking as critically as I would like you to. You write the bare minimum of the length requirement. Some of what you point out I may not follow logically, and your use of the course materials may not be as solid as it could be. You omit some of the important points raised in class.

60-69 = D-Range. Ah, the “D.” “D” is for “Don’t be Discouraged.” I will work closely with each of you as much as time allows, getting you up to speed in class. Your struggles should not be with writing so much at this point, but if they are, please see me immediately. “D” work is not proofread, nor does it deal critically with the themes in the course. It responds, perhaps, to one part of one of the readings but there is little-to-no integration of material, and you’re not responding to the questions raised in the assignment. Demonstrated understanding of the course materials is not presented clearly, or at all. (NOTE: A “D” and below may be rewritten **once** if you choose to do so. It must be turned in within 72 hours, and I enter the better grade.)

COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE:

Week One: September 19

Readings:

- *How To Watch Television: Introduction*
- *Television and American Culture: Introduction*
- *Black Television Travels: Introduction*

Assignments:

- Participation DB I: Introductions & Practice Discussion. Due Sunday, 9/25
- Participation DB 2 – The Public Imagination & Television. Due Sunday, 9/25

Week Two: September 26

Readings:

- *Television & American Culture*
 - Chapter 5: Making Meaning
- *How To Watch Television*
 - Chapter 4: TV Industry: Industrial Practices & Structures
 - Choose any five of the eight articles to read

Television:

- Choose two shows from *How to Watch Television* to watch, based on the readings you've chosen. Any show, any episodes; watch a couple episodes at least. Most (if not all) are available on YouTube.

Assignments:

- Main DB I: Why Study Television? Due Thursday, 9/29, responses by Sunday, 10/2
- Critical Reflection I: Making Meaning in the Trickery. Due Sunday, 10/2
- Incremental Research Assignment I: Topic Submission. Due Sunday 10/2

Week Three: October 3

Readings:

- *Television & American Culture*
 - Chapter 1: Exchanging Programming
 - Chapter 2: Exchanging Audiences
- *How to Watch Television*
 - TV Form: Aesthetics & Style
 - Choose any five of the eight articles to read.

Television:

- Choose two shows from *How to Watch Television* to watch, based on the readings you've chosen. Any show, any episodes; watch a couple episodes at least. Most (if not all) are available on YouTube.

Assignments:

- Main DB 2: Initial Submission Due Thursday, 10/6; Responses Due Sunday, 10/9
- Critical Reflection 2: The Span of Popular Culture. Due Sunday 10/9

Week Four: October 10

Requests for Midterm Film due. I will send out the announcement this week.

Readings:

- “The Mississippi of the North: Trailer Park Boys and race in Contemporary Nova Scotia” by Peter Thompson

Film:

- [“Trailer Park Boys: The Movie”](#)—Strong language, nudity, adult situations, drug use, explicit sexuality.

Assignments:

- Critical Reflection III: Trailer Park Boys and Subverting the Dominant Paradigm due Sunday 10/16
- Incremental Research Assignment 2: Draft Proposal, Two Annotated Bibliographies, Working Bibliography due Sunday 10/16

Week Five: October 17

Midterm Week

Assignments:

- Your exam is due on 10/23, by 11:59pm, PST. Late Exams *are not accepted*. As you can request your exam via email in the beginning of Week Four, you have nearly two weeks to complete it. Do not wait until the last minute.
- This exam is open note and open “book.” You are held to the same standards in the syllabus for writing guidelines and plagiarism.
- Post your questions to the Q&A Board.

Week Six: October 24

Readings:

- [“Why Popular Culture Matters in Politics”](#) by Jennifer Rubin
- (Video) [“The Pop Culture Politics of 2016”](#) on *WSJ Video*
- [“Is Popular Culture Influencing our Perception of Justice?”](#) in *Culture Decanted*
- (Film) [Operation Hollywood](#)

Assignments:

- Critical Reflection 4: War and the Popular Imagination. Due Sunday 10/30
- Participation DB 3: Sharing Topics. Due Sunday, 10/30

Week Seven: October 31

Readings:

- [“\(Chapter 1\) Introduction to Gender & Pop Culture”](#) in *Gender & Popular Culture* by Patricia Leavy & Adrienne Trier-Bieniek

Film:

- [This Film Is Not Yet Rated](#). This film is on YouTube as parts. Watch all of them (there are seven). *Please note there is explicit violence, sex, and language in this film.*

Assignments:

- Main DB 3: Initial Post due Thursday, 11/3. Responses to at least two colleagues’ Initial Posts due Sunday, 11/6.

Week Eight: November 7

Holiday, 11/11 – Campus closed

Readings:

- Your research
- Peer Evaluation Form
 - You will use this for your Week 9 submission.

Assignments:

- Incremental Research Assignment 3: PART A: First Draft due to your Assigned Reading Partners Sunday, 11/13 (*no rough drafts, please*). Submit to your partner via email and copy me in the email. I will give you credit only after I've seen you've submitted your paper to your partner. This is the only step you need to take for Part A (see Week Nine).

Week Nine: November 14

Readings:

- Your research

Assignments:

- Incremental Research Assignment 3: PART B: Peer Review Form due via email to your Assigned Reading Partners *and me*, Sunday 11/20. Do not send me *your draft*, just the Form.

Week Ten: November 21

Holiday 11/24-25—Campus closed.

Readings:

- Your research

Assignments:

- Incremental Research Assignment 4: First Draft to Professor, Two Additional Annotated Bibliographies, and Working Bibliography. Due Sunday, 11/27

Week Eleven: November 28

Readings:

- Your research

Assignments:

- Participation DB 4: Outro. Due Sunday, 12/4.

Finals Week: December 6-8

Assignments:

- Final Research Paper due Thursday, 12/8. *No late assignments accepted. No exceptions.*

Let's have a wonderful term!