

Bellevue Community College

SOC 215 Television, Culture & Society

Sara Sutler-Cohen, Ph.D.

Fall Term September 22nd – December 10th
Monday and Wednesday 12:30 – 2:40 C-168
Office Hours Daily 10:30 – 11:30

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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.

Check out BCC Sociology’s MySpace page and add us as a Friend!

<http://www.myspace.com/bccsoc>

A NOTE ABOUT COURSE CONTENT: Sociologists examine just about every aspect of the social world and as such, we talk about provocative material. When we explore controversial topics, they will always be framed within an academic context. When we find ourselves in a space outside of our comfort zone, it's an opportunity for learning, and you may be confronted with subject matter that is difficult to watch, see, discuss, or listen to. You will be responsible for any course material you miss if you choose not to participate. If you have any questions or concerns about content or climate, feel free to speak with me about it right away.

READING REQUIREMENTS:

- Monaco, Paul. *Understanding Society, Television, and Culture*. 2000. Praeger Paperback.
- Handouts and articles uploaded to our MyBCC course page.
 - A note about handouts: I only make paper copies of your syllabi, in order to save paper. It is your responsibility to either read handouts, articles, and additional material online or print out your own copy. Please be advised that you need to be making notes of the readings, so for that material, I strongly suggest you do print it out.

STRONGLY RECOMMENDED:

- Any current Dictionary of the English Language
- *A Writer's Reference*, 6th Ed. By Diana Hacker. See the companion website here:
<http://www.dianahacker.com/>

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 at <http://bellevuecollege.edu/drc/>

EXPLORE THE LMC! BCC's Library and Media Center is at your fingertips! I *strongly* encourage you to visit the Library 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 bccref@bcc.ctc.edu.

Main Library Media Center: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/>
For the LMC online catalog: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/catalogs.html>
For article databases: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/periodicals.html>



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.

GENERAL RULES & EXPECTATIONS:

- Come to class every day and ***on time*** (yes – I do keep track!).
- Complete readings and homework assignments ***on time***.
- Emailed assignments ***are not accepted*** without prior arrangement.
- Late homework assignments ***are accepted***, but make-up exams and make-up in-class assignments ***are not*** allowed.
 - Late homework is docked 10% for every day the work is late, including Saturdays and Sundays. For example, if you have an assignment that is worth fifty points, and it is three days late, that grade is knocked down fifteen points (or, 30%), and does not include points off for errors in the assignment.
- I expect that your behavior in our classroom be respectful. Continued disrespectful behavior in my class may result in your being asked to leave and will result in your grade lowering. Please also see the handout “Ground Rules for Discussion in Class” to get a better idea of what constitutes as disrespectful.
- **There are no extra credit assignments for this class.**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: For this course, you will be writing short Critical Thinking essays that ask you to engage the reading materials, and completing in-class assignments. Expect to submit assignments nearly every week. There is a Midterm and a Final this quarter. You will also be doing one major project at the end of the term, which you can do in pairs, alone, or in a group. The project will be your brainchild – all you need to do is relate it to course material. What you decide to do is up to you and we’ll discuss this during the first couple of weeks into the course.

Remember: Falling behind can be hazardous to your health!

ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION, AND ASSIGNMENT DETAILS:

Attendance and Participation:	150 points
Critical Thinking Essays (3):	150 points
Final Project (1):	200 points
In-Class Assignments (3):	150 points
Course Midterm (1):	125 points
Course Final (1):	225 points
TOTAL:	1000 points

The Fine Print (or, what I really mean by that table above):

Participation: Come to class and on time regularly, provoke energetic and polite discussion, speak out, listen actively, work diligently and respectfully with your colleagues in class, take loads of notes in class and from your readings, look up words you don't understand or know, ask questions, etc. Think critically about the world around you. A lot.

Midterm and Final: Your Exams will cover everything up through the week they're scheduled and will usually include multiple choice and short-answer questions (either or both). Your responses should be clear and concise. Your short-answer responses must range from no less than one full (four-sentence) paragraph, to three full paragraphs. Study guides will be made available to you. You will *never* be asked a question out of "left field". Questions are based on readings, in-class discussion, and lecture material. Point distribution info will be on the exams.

Critical Thinking Essays: Each week we will be exploring televisual studies and the way in which its many subjects relate to current events, popular culture in general, and our daily lives. In your papers *and* in class, we'll be discussing these varying themes and these areas will drive our discussion around our readings. Your papers should reflect particular topics and themes we go over. You may be asked to bring in an article or report on the news. You are required to include attachments to your papers when you're asked to do outside research. Your Critical Thinking Papers are not graded on a "right" or "wrong" basis, but you are asked to respond to the Questions and Topics pointedly and show how you're engaging both the reading material as well as the general themes in question. Explore and question what's presented in class, and think about how they relate to our readings and the lecture material.

In-Class Assignments: The work done in class asks that you engage the readings and lecture material, as well as work closely together. You will be working in pairs or groups for these assignments in order to generate critical discussion to be reflected on in the assignments. Occasionally the assignments will take more than one class period so again, it's imperative that you do not miss class. **Assignments partially completed receive partial credit (if you miss 1/3 of the assignment, you get 1/3 of the grade).**

Final Project: This is a free-flowing and creative project for which you come up with the idea(s) on your own. You may work on this independently, or in pairs or groups. You will choose an area of Television Studies covered this quarter that is of interest to you. Lighting Techniques and other technical styles, Mass Media, The Election, Education, Soap Operas, Commercials, MTV, anything! You could do a collage or a painting. A television show analysis, the concept of symbolic annihilation, or the social historical arc of the talk show. What the project ends up looking like is also up to you (although I will help you stay on track to make certain it remains academically relevant). You could do a skit in class or make a film. Gain permission to do a public mural or start a club on campus; there really is no limit to applying your sociological imagination to a project and getting something educational out of it! We'll talk about this over the first couple of weeks of class. Most projects will have a writing component. If you want to do a straight research paper, that's great, too! Guidelines will be made available for research papers.

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: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/academicsuccess/>
- Academic Tutoring Center: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/tutoring/>
- TRiO Student Support Services: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/TRiO/>
- Writing Lab @ BCC: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/writinglab/>

Below is a checklist for you to go over before you hand in each written assignment.

- Twelve-point sized Times font, double-spaced
- 1" margins all around
- MLA Citations where appropriate – credit is given even where any *ideas* presented in the paper are not your own
- Title pages and bibliographies are not counted in final page count
- 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.’

Your written work is evaluated on:

- 1) Content
 - a. Fulfilling the assignment.
 - b. Developing your argument and making use of examples and evidence to support your argument.
 - c. Flow of thought throughout the paper, with strong analyses and conclusions.
- 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. 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.
 - g. Dude, like totally don’t write **colloquially**. A conversation is a conversation. A paper is an entirely different set of discussions. ☺

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/or 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/or doesn’t document his/her source.
- d. You turn in work created by another person.

- e. You submit or use your own prior work for a current or past course, or work from one current course in another course *without express permission* from your professors.
- f. Consequences: If it is determined that you have plagiarized or engaged in other forms of academic dishonesty, you will fail the assignment and possibly the course, despite points earned through other work. Acts of academic dishonesty are reviewed for disciplinary action.

Grading:

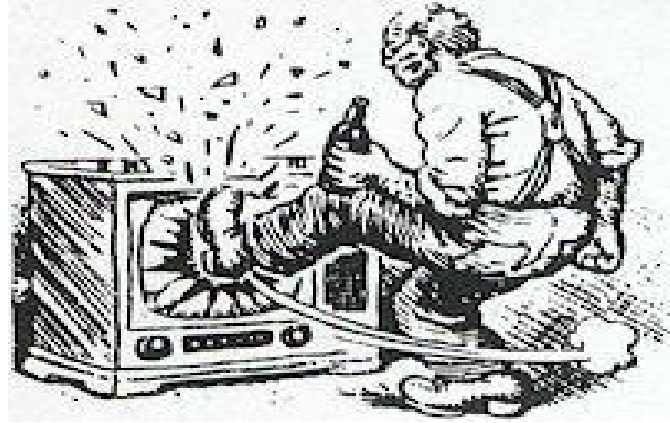
Please use the following rubric to help explain the grade you're given for a given assignment. You will receive a Numerical Grade from me, with little-to-no commentary. This is only because I've found that most students do not read written comments from their professors. Please do not hesitate to come 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 always happy to go over grades with you.

90-100 = A. The A paper shows me you're engaged with the readings, the media, and the lectures in class by utilizing quotes and ideas. It's a paper *completely free* from grammar and spelling errors, and demonstrates your command not only of the English language, but of 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. The B tells me you're doing very good work. You may have a couple of grammar issues, but your paper 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/or media and/or 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. The C paper 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. 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. Your struggles should not be with writing so much at this point but if they are please see me immediately. A D paper 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 no integration of material and you're not responding to the questions raised in class. 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.)



TEACHING PHILOSOPHY:

We will set the rhythm of the class in the first couple of weeks. I am a firm believer in being a lifelong learner and to that end I often carry away a lot more information from students than I ever expect. I'm most interested, for the purposes of this class, to see how well we can all wrap our minds around the idea of thinking critically about the various issues and themes presented about the social world in which we live and you should expect to be exposed to new and various ways of thinking and knowing. As a learning community, we'll be helping one another think through all of the ideas that connect back to course themes.

COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

READINGS DUE MONDAYS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

HOMEWORK DUE WEDNESDAYS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

Week One: September 22nd – 26th

Thematic Overview:

Introduction to the course
The Sociological Imagination
Why Study Television?
Ideology and Images

Readings (please have your reading done by Wednesday this week):

MONACO:

Chapter One: Storytelling and Television

Quote of the Week:

"All television is educational television. The question is: what is it teaching?" - Nicholas Johnson

Week Two: September 30th – October 3rd

****NO CLASS MONDAY, 9/29 – BCC REMAINS OPEN** See announcement on MyBCC.**

Thematic Overview:

Early Television
Television as Cultural Form

Readings:

MONACO:

Chapter Two: Television and the Aesthetics of Power, Virtuosity, and Repetition

Assignments:

In-Class Assignment

Quote of the Week:

"I wish there were a knob on the TV to turn up the intelligence. There's a knob called 'brightness,' but that doesn't work." - Unknown.

Week Three: October 9th & 10th

****NO CLASS This Week 10/6 & 8 – BCC REMAINS OPEN** See announcement on MyBCC**

Thematic Overview:

Feminism and Television: Hey! Did I Miss Something??

Television and the rhythm of today

Readings:

MONACO:

Chapter Three: Common Contemporary Themes

Handout:

"Madam President. Madam President." by Katha Pollitt

"Theorizing The Bachelorette: 'Waves' of Feminist Media Studies" by Lynn Spigel

Assignments:

Critical Thinking Essay #1 Due Friday

Quote of the Week:

"Television has proved that people will look at anything rather than each other." - Ann Landers

Week Four: October 13th – 17th

Thematic Overview:

Narrative and Genre

Television News

Media/ting Spectacle

The Current Election

CBC, BBC, NBC, ABC and the flavor of the country

Readings:

MONACO:

Chapter Four: Agendas, Politics, and Television

Assignments:

In-Class assignment

Quote of the Week:

"I find television to be very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go in the other room and read a book." - Groucho Marx

Week Five: October 20th – 24th

MIDTERM WEDNESDAY!

Thematic Overview:

Voices, Channels and Time

TV and the Internet: Globalizing Television

Readings:

MONACO:

Chapter Five: Globalization and Television

Assignments:

Prepare for Midterm

Final Project log due Friday

Quote of the Week:

“Television is an invention that permits you to be entertained in your living room by people you wouldn't have in your home.” - David Frost

Week Six: October 27th – 31st

****NO CLASS Wed. 10/29. ALL BCC CLASSES CANCELLED for College Issues Day****

Thematic Overview:

Media/ting the Spectacle

Race and Representation

Readings:

MONACO:

Chapter Six: Wellsprings of Our Discontent with Television

Handout:

“ALLY MCBEAL AND HER HOMIES: The Reification of White Stereotypes of the Other” by Tracey Owens Patton

“Margaret Cho Takes Aim at Homophobia and Hatred on Her New 'Assassin' Tour” by T.A. Gilmartin

Assignments:

Critical Thinking Essay #2 Due Friday

Quote of the Week:

“Television! Teacher, mother, secret lover.” - Homer Simpson, “The Simpsons”

Week Seven: November 3rd – 7th

****All eligible students VOTE TUESDAY!!!!****

****AMERICAN INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL W/TH/F. SEE HANDOUT FOR DETAILS****

Thematic Overview:

TV Indians

Images and Distortions of Indian Peoples

Readings:

Handouts:

“Word Healers and Code Talkers: Native Americans and The X-Files” by Barbara Hersey

“Ten Myths About Native Americans”

Quote of the Week:

“The only thing more pathetic than Indians on TV is Indians watching Indians on TV.” - Evan Adams (Coast Salish) as Thomas Builds-The-Fire in “Smoke Signals”

Week Eight: November 10th – 14th

Thematic Overview:

What they're selling us

How they're selling it

“Truth” and other campaigns

Commercially Yours: Awards for the greatest ads on earth

Watching the SuperBowl *just* for the advertising

Readings:

MONACO:

Chapter Seven: Television and Advertising

Handouts:

“Intoxicating Brands: Alcohol Advertising and Youth” by David Jernigan and Jennifer Wedekind

Assignments:

Critical Thinking Essay #3 Due Friday

Quote of the Week:

“The television, that insidious beast, that Medusa which freezes a billion people to stone every night, staring fixedly, that Siren which called and sang and promised so much and gave, after all, so little.” – Ray Bradbury, *The Golden Apples of the Sun*

Week Nine: November 17th – 21st

Thematic Overview:

Rock The Vote

TV’s role in the election

The vote’s over – now what?

Television’s role in politics and government

Readings:

MONACO:

Chapter Eight: Television and Government

Assignments:

In-Class Assignment

Final Project final drafts for feedback due Friday. Please print out Power Points, drafts, whatever you have.

Quote of the Week:

“I believe television is going to be the test of the modern world, and that in this new opportunity to see beyond the range of our vision, we shall discover a new and unbearable disturbance of the modern peace, or a saving radiance in the sky. We shall stand or fall by television - of that I am quite sure.” - E.B. White

Week Ten: November 24th – 28th

Thematic Overview:

Art as determining factor of culture

“Thanks Dr. Sara. Now I’ll never be able to watch television like I used to.” ☺

Where do we go from here?

Readings:

MONACO:

Chapter Nine: Art for Whose Sake?

Chapter Ten: What Everyone Must Know About Television

Assignments:

Tuesday and Wednesday: final touches, Final Project. In class, Library Media Center, or N-Building Computer Lab. See sign-n sheet for details

Quote of the Week:

“Art is moral passion married to entertainment. Moral passion without entertainment is propaganda, and entertainment without moral passion is television.” – Rita Mae Brown

Week Eleven: December 1st – 5th

Assignments:

Final Presentations and discussion

Quote of the Week:

“The triumph of machine over people.” - Fred Allen, about television

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, 12/10, 11:30 am-1:20 pm

EMAILING ME:

When you email me using my BCC EMAIL, ALWAYS put in the SUBJECT LINE the following, in this order: SOC 215 – YOUR NAME – SUBJECT

For example: SOC 215 – **Hanna Barbera** – **Question about Midterm Question #2.**

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR:

When I’m not teaching, I’m usually whipping up some sort of baked goodness in my kitchen, doing collage art, taking photos of the world around me, hanging out with my partner and my kid, watching horror movies, or going out to listen to live music. Mostly, I go to hear metal, bluegrass, punk, or local hip-hop shows. I received my Ph.D. in Sociology (with an emphasis in American Studies) from UC Santa Cruz. I received my first MA in Sociology from Humboldt State University and my second MA in Sociology from UCSC, my BA in Sociology and Journalism from Mills College, and my AA in English and Creative Writing from Vista Community College. This is my third year as Instructor of Sociology at BCC, and my first year as Chair of the Sociology Department. I am the Programmer for BCC’s Annual American Indian Film Festival. I love to write and am currently working on a memoir collection of poetry. More at: <http://sara.sutlercohen.com>

Thank you for a wonderful term!