

## FTT 30461: History of Television Spring 2008

Prof. Christine Becker

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Office Hours: MW 1:30-2:30 & Thur 3-4 or by appointment

**Class Meetings**    MW 11:45-1:00    232 DeBartolo

**Screenings**        Mon 6:30-8:30    232 DeBartolo

### Course Description

This course analyzes the history of television, spanning from its roots in radio broadcasting to the latest developments in digital television. In assessing the many changes across this span, the course will cover such topics as why the American television industry developed as a commercial medium in contrast to most other national television industries, how television programming has both reflected and influenced cultural ideologies through the decades, and how historical patterns of television consumption have shifted due to new technologies and social changes. Through studying the historical development of television programs and assessing the industrial, technological, political, aesthetic, and cultural systems out of which they emerged, the course will piece together the catalysts responsible for shaping this highly influential medium.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Review the history of radio and its influence on television
- Discuss the industrial format of U.S. television and how it came to be that way
- Explain the history of the major networks and the significance of the network structure through various periods of television history
- Assess the impact of changing technologies on the form, industrial operations, and viewer experience of TV
- Appreciate how TV is influenced by and also influences social and cultural trends
- Recognize different programming strategies and their implications

### Required Texts

- *Only Connect*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, by Michele Hilmes
- Library E-reserves and Concourse articles

### Grading Breakdown

Class preparation, participation & quizzes	15%
Primary Research Paper (due Mon, Feb. 25)	15%
Exam I (on Wed, Feb. 27)	15%
Exam II (on Wed, April 2)	15%
Contemporary TV Paper (due Wed, April 30)	20%
Final Exam (on Mon, May 5, 8am)	20%

## **Important Details:**

### ***Attendance***

You are expected to attend all class meetings. I will, however, grant you two free class absences (whether “excused” or “unexcused”) and one screening absence across the semester. For every absence in excess of these limits, the class participation/preparation grade will be lowered by a grade level (e.g. A- to B+, B to B-, etc.) at the instructor’s discretion.

### ***Participation***

Participation is important to the success of this class. The more people we hear from on any given day, the more ideas we will be able to explore and the more we will all enjoy and benefit from the course. Just keep up with the readings and screenings, and you will have plenty to add to the class. I don’t mind class discussions that go in unexpected directions (in fact I encourage them), so speak your mind, ask questions and answer questions. Also keep in mind that my definition of participation is not isolated to only verbal participation. Anything that shows that you are engaged in the course and striving to engage with the material counts as participation. Thus, listening intently to me and your peers during class, participating in free writes, coming to my office hours, and writing or e-mailing me questions outside of class also counts for participation, as by doing these things you are exhibiting your engagement with the course material.

### ***PowerPoint Slides***

All of the PowerPoint slides I use during class will be available to you before each class session on our online Concourse space (oit.nd.edu/concourse). Please note that the slides do not contain everything you need to know for the course. In fact, they probably don’t even contain half of what you need to know—I only use them when I have a bunch of info that easily lends itself to bullet-pointing or some pretty pictures to show you. So don’t feel that you can nap through lectures since the PowerPoint slides will be available; they are merely there to facilitate your note taking and supplement exam studying.

### ***Readings***

In addition to the textbook reading, there are additional individual articles assigned on many days. Because of the prohibitive expense to students, I no longer use a printed course packet. Instead, these articles are available on a library e-reserve page, with a few additional articles placed on our Concourse space. On the syllabus, each article is prefaced by an indication of its location, and you should read each article for the day it’s listed on the syllabus. The URL for library e-reserves is <https://www.library.nd.edu/reserves/ereserves/search.cgi>. There will also be a link to this page from our Concourse space.

### ***Quizzes & Exams***

There may be occasional announced quizzes on the readings and screenings. At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest quiz grade; because of this, I do not offer make-up quizzes. There are also two in-semester exams and one final exam. Any “make-ups” must be cleared with the college dean before they are approved by the instructor.

### ***Papers***

You will be assigned two papers. You will receive information about these assignments well before they are due. Late papers will lose a grade level for every late day; an A will be reduced

to an A-, an A- to a B+, etc., for each late day. If you hand in a paper to my mailbox or e-mail it to me, it is your responsibility to confirm that I received it on time. “You mean you didn’t get my paper? I e-mailed it to you but must have sent it to the wrong address” is not an acceptable excuse for a late paper. If you need an extension, you must request it at least a week before the due date for any assignment.

**Honor Code:** You are beholden to the tenets of the Honor Code for every aspect of this class. Plagiarism, copying, and other forms of academic dishonesty will be handled in accordance with University policy. Plagiarism is any instance of presenting the ideas and/or words of others as your own, whether they are from published sources, web sources, or your peers, without citation. Check the student handbook for University policies, and review the Honor Code at [www.nd.edu/~hnr/code](http://www.nd.edu/~hnr/code).

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### *Week 1 Course Overview*

#### **Jan. 16: Introduction to the Course and to Television History**

Hilmes: Ch. 1

### *Week 2 Radio Roots I*

#### **Jan. 21: The Invention of Radio**

Hilmes: Ch. 2

NO SCREENING

#### **Jan. 23: Creating Commercial Broadcasting**

Hilmes: Ch. 3, 62-76, 140-141

### *Week 3 Radio Roots II*

#### **Jan. 28: Radio Programming**

Hilmes: Ch. 5, 118-125

E-reserves: Douglas, “Radio Comedy and Linguistic Slapstick”

NO SCREENING

#### **Jan. 30: Cementing Commercial Broadcasting’s Structure**

Hilmes: pp76-83

E-reserves: Hilmes, “Who We Are, Who We Are Not”

### *Week 4 The Beginnings of Television*

#### **Feb. 4: TV Predictions, Inventions, and Public Introductions**

Concourse: Desmond, “Seeing Round the World”

E-reserves: Winston, “The Development of Television”

SCREENING: *Life With Luigi, I Remember Mama*

#### **Feb. 6: Early Television Programming**

E-reserves: Lipsitz, “The Meaning of Memory”

Mathei, “Inventing the Commercial”

### *Week 5 The Rise of Network Television*

#### **Feb. 11: The Networks Take Over**

Hilmes: pp153-158

SCREENING: *Burns and Allen Show, The Honeymooners, Marty*

**Feb. 13: “Golden Age” Programming**

Hilmes: pp158-168

E-reserves: Spigel, “Installing the Television Set”

*Week 6 Television Takes Hold*

**Feb. 18: Network Consolidation**

Hilmes: 185-187

SCREENING: *I Love Lucy, Father Knows Best, Donna Reed, Mr. Adams and Eve*

**Feb. 20: The Domestic Sitcom**

E-reserves: Douglas, “Mama Said”

*Week 7 Paper & Exam I*

**Feb. 25: Discussion of Primary Research History Assignments**

\*\*\*PAPER I DUE\*\*\*

NO SCREENING

**Feb. 27: EXAM I**

SPRING BREAK!

*Week 8 Into the Sixties*

**March 10: The “Vast Wasteland”**

Hilmes: pp187-199

E-reserves: Minow, “The Vast Wasteland Speech”

SCREENING: *Twilight Zone, Have Gun Will Travel, East Side/West Side*

**March 12: Cold War-Era Television**

E-reserves: Newcomb, “The Opening of America”

Watson, “The Kennedy-Television Alliance”

*Week 9 Wars at Home and Abroad*

**March 17: Civil Rights & Vietnam on Television**

Hilmes: pp176-181, 200-204, 227-230

E-reserves: Torres, “Civil Rights and Televisual Information”

SCREENING: *Bewitched, Julia, I Spy*

**March 19: Gender and Race in the Sixties**

Hilmes: pp208-214

E-reserves: Kackman, “*I Spy* a Colorblind Nation”

Concourse: Metz, “Love the House, Hate the Work”

Bodroghkozy, “Is This What You Mean By Color TV?”

*Week 10 Television in the 1970s*

**March 24: EASTER BREAK, NO CLASS**

**March 26: The Turn Toward Relevance & Quality**

Hilmes: pp230-240

E-reserves: Gitlin, “The Turn Toward Relevance”

*Week 11 Television in the 1970s & Exam II*

**March 31: The Turn Away From Relevance & Quality**

Hilmes: pp260-268

E-reserves: Ozersky, "Return to Normalcy, 1975-77"

Feuer, "MTM Enterprises: An Overview"

SCREENING: *All in the Family, M\*A\*S\*H, Mary Tyler Moore Show*

**April 2: EXAM II**

*Week 12 The Networks Get Competition*

**April 7: The Arrival of New Competitors**

Hilmes: pp217-227, 251-260

SCREENING: *Roseanne, The Cosby Show, Frank's Place, Twin Peaks*

**April 9: Quality and Televisuality**

Hilmes: 305-313

E-reserves: Caldwell, "Excessive Style"

Gray, "Politics of Representation"

*Week 13 Television in the 1990s*

**April 14: New Networks**

Hilmes: pp294-305

SCREENING: *Will and Grace, Steve Harvey Show, Buffy*

**April 16: New Representations**

E-reserves: Becker, "Prime Time Television in the Gay Nineties"

Hunt, "Black Content, White Control"

*Week 14 New Regulation and Expansion*

**April 21: The 1996 Telecom Act & Conglomeration**

Hilmes: pp283-292, 344-349

SCREENING: *Family Guy, The Osbournes, The Shield*

**April 23: Contemporary Programming and Policy Trends**

Hilmes: pp362-379, 384-387

*Week 15 The New Century of Television*

**April 28: Global Changes**

Hilmes: pp 340-349, 356-361, 379-384

SCREENING TBA

**April 30: The Future of Television**

Hilmes: Ch. 14

E-reserves: Lotz, "Television Outside the Box"

\*\*\*PAPER II DUE\*\*\*

\*\*\*\* FINAL EXAM \*\*\*\*

MONDAY, MAY 5, 8-10AM