

ENG 1131: Writing About American Prestige TV (sec 4841)

Milt Moise

MWF/R: Period 4: 10:40-11:30; E1-E3: 7:20-10:10

Classroom: WEIL 408E

Office Hours: W, R Per. 7-8, or by appointment, TUR 4342

Course Website: CANVAS

Instructor Email: mmoise@ufl.edu

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Course Description, Objectives, and Outcomes:

This course examines the emergence of what is now called “prestige TV,” and the discourse surrounding it. Former FCC chairman Newton N. Minow, in a 1961 speech, once called TV “a vast wasteland” of violence, formulaic entertainment, and commercials. Television has come a long way since then, and critics such as Andy Greenwald now call our current moment of television production “the golden age of TV.” While television shows containing the elements Minow decried decades ago still exist, alongside them we now find television characterized by complex plots, moral ambiguity, excellent production value, and outstanding writing and acting performances. In this class, our discussions will center around, but not be limited to the aesthetics of prestige TV, and how AMC’s *Mad Men* and TBS’s *Search Party* conform to or subvert this framework.

Students will learn to visually analyze a television show, and develop their critical reading and writing skills. By the end of the semester, students will be able to make substantiated arguments about the television show they have seen, and place it into greater social and historical context. They will also learn how to conduct formal research through the use of secondary sources and other relevant material to support their theses, analyses and arguments.

General Education Objectives:

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) or Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university’s 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.

- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyse writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement* (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

General Education Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned viewings and readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Required Texts:

Netflix Subscription

Amazon Prime Subscription

Zoller Seitz, Matt. *Mad Men Carousel: The Complete Critical Companion* (2015). 1419720635. ISBN

Assignments (see below for Grading Rubric):

Analytical Recap (500 words, 100 points)

This will be a recap of an episode of your choice. For this assignment you will not merely rehash what you have seen, but discuss key plot developments, performance, formal elements and historical context in an assessment of the episode.

Four Critical Viewing Entries (500 words each, 200 points)

These short response papers will be on any of the episodes and should demonstrate knowledge and engagement with the show. These viewings are **critical** and as a result, you are expected to make an argument about what you have watched.

Group Assignment (1000 words, 100 points)

This assignment requires you to work as a group and make a 10 minute oral presentation on an aspect of the show you find intriguing. You are not limited to a conventional Power Point, Prezi or any similar medium to present, although this format is acceptable. You are welcome to use video technology, or any other creative outlet for this assignment, however, a written report of 1000 words must accompany your presentation. ¹

Essay Prospectus/Annotated Bibliography (500 words, 100 points)

This assignment contains both a formal abstract for your Researched Critical Essay and an annotated bibliography of at least 5 sources.

Essay 2: Researched Critical Essay (2000 words, 400 points)

This essay will be a sustained, formally researched critical analysis in which you will make an original argument about the series through a particular theoretical, historical, or critical lens.

Attendance/Daily Participation (100 points)

Daily and engaged participation is a priority in this course. All students should participate every day in some fashion by offering points of view, raising questions, asking for clarification, and/or writing when it is required. Attendance is mandatory.

Grading Scale

A 4.0 93-100 930-1000	C 2.0 73-76 730-769
A- 3.67 90-92 900-929	C- 1.67 70-72 700-729
B+ 3.33 87-89 870-899	D+ 1.33 67-69 670-699
B 3.0 83-86 830-869	D 1.0 63-66 630-669
B- 2.67 80-82 800-829	D- 0.67 60-62 600-629

¹ Since there are six students in the class, the assignment will be done in pairs, and each student will contribute 500 words, thus meeting the individual writing requirement.

C+ 2.33 77-79 770-799

E 0.00 0-59 0-599

A: Student fulfills all required aspects of assignment and work shows superior levels of originality, creativity, and critical insight.

B: Student fulfills all required aspects of assignment to adequate degree. Work in this range needs revision.

C: Student fails to complete all required aspects of assignment. Work is incomplete in content. Work in this range requires significant revision.

D: Student neglects basic requirements of the assignment.

E: Student fails to complete the assignment.

Course Policies:

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance*: is an essential aspect of this course. You will automatically fail this course if you are absent on six or more occasions, which include evening sessions. Please consult the following regarding UF's attendance policies:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>
3. *Paper Format and Submission*: You will submit your assignments through the portal in CANVAS. The exception will be your four short response papers which you will submit in hard copy on the day they are due.
4. *Late Papers/Assignments*: Assignments should be submitted on the day they are due. Late submissions will result in a cumulative 10 point penalty for each day the paper is not submitted.
5. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities*: Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
6. *Plagiarism*. Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.
7. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu.drc/), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.

8. For information on UF Grading policies, see:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
9. *Grade Appeals*: In 1000- and- 2000 level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
10. *Course Evaluations*: Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course:
<https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>
11. Students who face difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352) 392-1575, or contact them online:
<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>
12. *UF's policy on Harassment*: UF provides an education and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty: <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equity-diversity/resources/harassment/>

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

(Subject to Change)

Complete viewings/readings/assignments before class on the day they are listed

Week One: Introductions

Mon. Jan. 8 – Course introduction and Syllabus

Tues. Jan. 9 - ***Mad Men, Season 1 Episode 1***; Brett Martin, “In This Much Maligned Medium” *Difficult Men*; “Smoke Gets Into Your Eyes”

Wed. Jan. 10 - What is Prestige TV? ” Katheryn VanArendonk
“13 Signs You’re Watching a Prestige TV Show”

Fri Jan 12 – Episode 5 “5G”

Week Two:

Mon. Jan. 15 – **No Class/Holiday**; watch Nunnally Johnson’s, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*

Tues. Jan. 16 – Writing Activity and discussion of *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*

Wed. Jan. 17 – Episode 8 “The Hobo Code;”

Friday. Jan. 19 – Episode 12 “Nixon vs Kennedy;” **First Short Paper Due**

Week Three:

Mon. Jan. 22 – Episode 13; Jason Mittel, “Telling Television Stories,” *Television and American Culture*, “The Wheel”

Tue. Jan. 23 – **Season 2 Episode 5**; Betty Friedan “The Problem that has No Name” *The Feminine Mystique*, “The New Girl”

Wed. Jan 24 – Episode 13; Frank O’ Hara, “Mayakovsky”; “Meditations in an Emergency”

Fri. Jan. 26 – **Season 3 Episode 5**; Tanner Colby “Mad Men and Black America,” “The Fog”

Week Four:

Mon Jan. 29 –Episode 11 “The Gypsy and the Hobo,” **Second Short Paper Due**

Tues. Jan. 30 – Episode 12 “The Grown Ups,” Episode 13 “Shut the Door. Have a Seat”

Wed. Jan. 31 – Season 3 Review

Fri. Feb 2 – **Season 4 Episode 1** “Public Relations”

Week Five:

Mon. Feb. 5 – Episode 2 “Christmas Comes But Once A Year”

Tues. Feb. 6 – Episode 4 “The Rejected;” **Third Short Paper Due**

Wed. Feb. 7 – Episode 5 “The Chrysanthemum and the Sword”

Fri. Feb 9 – Episode 6 “Waldorf Stories”

Week Six:

Mon. Feb. 12 – Episode 7 Todd VanDerWerff AV Club Review of “The Suitcase” “The Suitcase”

Tues. Feb. 13 – Episode 9 “The Beautiful Girls”

Wed. Feb. 14 – Episode 11 “Chinese Wall”

Fri. Feb. 16 – Episode 13 “Tomorrowland”

Week Seven:

Mon. Feb. 19 – **Season Five Episodes 1 & 2** Tom and Lorenzo “Mad Style” (5.1/5.2) “A Little Kiss”

Tues. Feb. 20 – Episode 3 “Mystery Date;” **Group Assignment Due**

Wed. Feb. 21 – Episode 4 “Signal 30”

Fri. Feb 23. – Episode 5 “Far Away Places”

Week Eight:

Mon. Feb. 26 – Episode 6 “At the Codfish Ball”

Tues. Feb. 27 – Episode 8 Brett Martin “See You at the Emmys,” *Difficult Men* “Dark Shadows”

Wed. Feb. 28 – Episode 9 “Christmas Waltz”

Fri. Mar. 2 – Matt Zoller Seitz “About Recaps” *Mad Men Carousel* ; How to Write a Recap

Spring Break:

Week Nine:

Mon. Mar. 12 – Episode 10 “The Other Woman” **Recap Due**

Tues. Mar. 13 – Episode 11 “Commissions and Fees”

Wed. Mar. 14 – Episode 12 “The Phantom”

Fri. Mar. 16 – Elliot Logan “The Ending of Mad Men’s Fifth Season: Cinema, Serial Television and Moments of Performance”

Week Ten:

Mon. Mar. 19 – Joseph Adalian and Maria Elena Fernandez “The Business of Too Much TV;” **Fourth Short Paper Due**

Tues. Mar. 20 – Sergio Dias Branco “Situating Comedy: Inhabitation and Duration in Classical American Sitcoms” *Television Aesthetics and Style*; (Comedy Episodes TBD)

Wed. Mar. 21 – **Search Party Season 1 Episode 1**; “The Mysterious Disappearance of the Girl No One Knew,” Episode 2 “The Woman Who Knew Too Much”

Fri. Mar. 23 – Episode 3 “The Night of One Hundred Candles;” **Revision Due**

Week Eleven:

Mon. Mar. 26 – Episode 4 “The Captive Dinner Guest,” Episode 5 “The Mystery of the Golden Charm”

Tues. Mar. 27 – Episode 6; Alex Clayton “Why Comedy is at Home on Television” *Television Aesthetics and Style*, “The Secret of the Sinister Ceremony”

Wed. Mar. 28 – How to Write an Annotated Bibliography

Fri. Mar. 30 – Incorporating Research Into Your Writing

Week Twelve:

Mon. Apr. 2 – Episode 7 “The Riddle Within the Trash,” Episode 8 “The Return of the Forgotten Phantom;” **Annotated Bibliography Due**

Tues. Apr. 3 – Episode 8 “The Return of the Forgotten Phantom”

Wed. Apr. 4 – Episode 9 “Password to the Shadows,” Episode 10 “The House of Uncanny Truths”

Fri. Apr. 6 – “Cast of TBS’s *Search Party* on Making the First Season”: The Vulture TV Podcast

Week Thirteen:

Mon. Apr. 9 – **Season 2 Episode 1**; “Murder!” Episode 2 “Conspiracy”

Tues. Apr. 10 – Episode 3 “Paralysis” Episode 4 “Suspicion”

Wed. Apr. 11 – Episode 5 “Paranoia” Episode 6 “Obsession”

Fri. Apr. 13 – Episode 7 “Denial,” Episode 8 “Hysteria”

Week Fourteen:

Mon. Apr. 16 – Episode 9 “Hysteria;” **First Draft of Researched Critical Essay Due**

Tues. Apr. 17 – Episode 10 “Psychosis”

Wed. Apr. 18 – Matt Zoller Seitz “*Search Party* Season 2 Is a Twist on Antihero Drama;” Series Wrap up

Fri. Apr. 20 – Conferencing

Week Fifteen:

Mon. Apr. 23 – Conferencing

Tues. Apr. 24 – **No Screening**

Wed. Apr. 25 – **Last Day of Class**; final thoughts

Wed. May 2 – **Final Paper Due**

Grading/Assessment Rubric:

Please note that this is the general rubric that applies to all student work. Individual assignments will have additional requirements, which are thoroughly explained in the assignment sheet in CANVAS.

	SATISFACTORY (Y)	UNSATISFACTORY (N)
CONTENT	Assignments exhibit evidence of ideas that respond to the topic with complexity, critically evaluating and synthesizing sources, and provide an adequate discussion with basic understanding of sources.	Assignments either include a central idea(s) that is unclear or off- topic or provide only minimal or inadequate discussion of ideas. Lack of sufficient or appropriate sources.
ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE	Documents and paragraphs exhibit identifiable structure for topics, including a clear thesis statement and topic sentences.	Documents and paragraphs lack clearly identifiable organization, may lack any coherent sense of logic in associating and organizing ideas, and may also lack transitions and coherence to guide the reader.

REVISION	Work exhibits evidence of continuous, substantial, and critical revision of all your work based on peer and instructor feedback.	Absence of revision or insufficient revision in student’s work. Disregard of peer and instructor feedback.
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STYLE & FORMAT	Documents use a writing style with word choice appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline. Documents are presented according to the specific formatting guidelines (including appropriate usage of hyperlinks and citations).	Documents rely on word usage that is inappropriate for the context, genre, or discipline. Sentences may be overly long or short with awkward construction. Incorrect formatting of documents.
MECHANICS	Papers will feature correct or error-free presentation of ideas. At the weak end of the satisfactory range, papers may contain a few spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors that remain unobtrusive and do not obscure the paper's argument or points.	Papers contain so many mechanical or grammatical errors that they impede the reader's understanding or severely undermine the writer's credibility.

"A" work is strong in all of the above five (5) areas.

"B" work warrants improvement in at least one (1) of the above areas.

"C" work needs considerable improvement in, but shows potential for, at least two (2) of the above areas.

"D" work requires significant revision in order to be improved upon in at least two (2) of the above areas.