

Syllabus [Fall 2023] CIMS 1030.401 | | ENGL 1950.401 | | ARTH 1070.401 | | COML 1031. 401

(Introduction to) Television and New Media (Wed: 1:45-4:45pm)

Provisional Syllabus: This syllabus will be further updated and the final version will be posted on Canvas and distributed in class on the first day of class (Aug 30).

Office Hours: Tuesday, 10:30-11:30am and by appointment (FBH 243 or Online Zoom).

Instructor: Rahul Mukherjee (mrahul@sas.upenn.edu)

Grader/TA: Knar Gavin

Course Description

Media Technologies never quite remain fixed, they always co-emerge in their interactions with human actors, and debates erupt about whether their transformations are brought by technical innovations or shifts in socio-cultural usage patterns. We begin the course with some of these debates including arguments about the limitations of describing a particular technology as “new” or “digital.” Is “new media” same as “digital media”? How and when do media become digital? What does digitization afford and what is lost as worlds become digitized? As lots of things around us turn digital, have we started telling stories, sharing experiences, and replaying memories differently? Does digitization transform television, earlier construed as a broadcast medium, into a network or a post- network medium? What role do algorithms and interfaces play in the success of Netflix?

Should we approach “television” as an industry and content provider or as a technology and set of audience relations? We discuss the history of television and how issues of race and gender have been entangled with televisual representations? Does digitization transform television, earlier construed as a broadcast medium, into a network or a post- network medium? What role do algorithms and interfaces play in the success of Netflix? While digital distribution platforms like Hulu and Amazon promise interactive and participatory forms of spectatorship, have they fundamentally changed televisual watching experience?

This is an introductory survey course and we discuss a wide variety of media technologies and phenomena that include: cloud computing, Internet of Things, hacking, trolls, distribution platforms, net neutrality and optical fiber cables. We also examine emerging television and mobile phone cultures in the Global South.

Course Expectations:

- a) This is a MEDIA STUDIES course.
- b) This is a course to understand television and digital media, their histories, practices, and infrastructures, and distribution and consumption cultures.
- c) This is an introductory course, but the number of readings will be substantial, and the level of readings is sophisticated. The course is better understood as a survey or exploratory course.

University Policy on Secular and Religious Holidays: <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/secular-religious-holidays/> (please follow the guidelines)

Assignments and Grade Breakdown:

Participation in Class Discussions	-	10%
Posting Questions and Comments	-	10%
Comparative Thought Piece	-	30%
Mid-Term Exam (Short-Answer Type questions)	-	20%
Final Take Home Exam (Long-Answer type questions)	-	30%

Comparative Thought Piece involves a short essay (800-1000 words) you will write comparing two of your favorite/academic/insightful shows (one contemporary and another broadcast in 60s or 70s or 80s or early 90s). You will be comparing them for their genre, aesthetics (style), narrative, and also form/platform of TV consumption (analog/digital interfaces). This will be written in a semi-academic format, which will involve you assembling together personal anecdotes/experiences of watching the shows along with academic readings about these shows. You will be meeting with the instructor or grader at least once to discuss your plan for the essay.

We will have a **mid-term exam in the first half of the class**. It will consist of Short Answer Type questions (50-80 words each).

And finally, there will be a **take home final exam**, where you will be asked long-answer type answers to questions and given about a week to respond. Each question will have to be answered in about 400-600 words and you will have to answer 3 out of 5 such questions.

More specific instructions about these assignments shall follow.



Image from *Honeymooners* (1955-56)

Week 1 (Aug 30)

Syllabus Discussion

Lisa Parks, "Field Mapping: What is the "Media" of Media Studies," *Television & New Media*

Paul Hodkinson, "Chapter 2: Media Technologies," *Media, Culture and Society: An Introduction*

Week 2 (Sept 6)

Understanding Media: Old Media/New Media

Marshall McLuhan, Excerpts from *Understanding Media*

Raymond Williams, Excerpts from *Television*

Mara Mills, "The Audiovisual Telephone: a brief history"

Katie Day Good, "From Facebook to scrapbook: A history of personal media assemblage and archives"

Suggested:

**Thomas Denison, Modified Version of an article on "The Telephone Newspaper" in the 1901 issue of *Electrical Review*: <https://earlyradiohistory.us/telenew1.htm>

**New York Times, McLuhan Disciples Crowding the Web:

<https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/cyber/techcol/060997techcol.html>

Week 3 (Sept 13)

Televisual Representations: Gender and Race

(skim) Lynn Spigel, "The Suburban Home Companion: Television and the Neighborhood Ideal in Post-War America"

Bonnie Dow, "Hegemony, Feminist Criticism, and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*

Aniko Bodroghkozy, "Is This What You Mean by Color TV?: Race, Gender and Contested Meanings in NBC's *Julia*,"

Herman Gray, "Television, Black Americans, and the American Dream"

**Emily Nussbaum, "Difficult Women," *The New Yorker*,

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/07/29/difficult-women>

Recommended: Paul Hodkinson "Chapter 12: Media, Race, and Ethnicity," *Media, Culture and Society: An Introduction*

Screening: Excerpts from *Father Knows Best* (CBS/NBC, 1954-1963), *Honeymooners* (CBS, 1955-56), *America in Primetime: Independent Woman* (PBS, L Kramer, Sept 2011) and *OITNB* (Jenji Kohan/Netflix, 2013-),

Screening: CBS January 1985 special report *The Vanishing Family: Crisis in Black America*, Clips from *Color Adjustment* (Marlon Riggs, 1987) and *Atlanta* (Donald Glover, 2016-).



MTM (ABC, 1970-77)



Atlanta, TV show, FX (Donald Glover, 2016-)

Week 4

TV Genres | Intersectionalities (Sept 20)

Elana Levine, Excerpts from *Her Stories: Day Time Soap Opera and US Television History*

Jason Mittel, "Audiences Talk Genres-Talk Shows and the Intersections of Taste and Identity"

Sarah Moon Cassinelli, "'If we are Asian, then we are funny?'" Margaret Cho's All-American Girl as the First (and Last?) All Asian-American Sitcom"

Tanya Gonzalez, "Is Ugly the New Sexy: the Complexities of Latina sexuality in Ugly Betty"

Jane Feuer, "'Quality' Reality and the Bravo Media Reality Series" *Camera Obscura*

**Salamishah Tillet, "What TV says about Race and Money," *The New York Times*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/06/arts/television/what-tv-says-about-race-and-money.html>

Week 5

Global TV: Locating Television and Transnational Flows (Sept 27)

Anna Cristina Pertierra and Graeme Turner, "Television and the Nation"

Punathambekar and Sundar, "The Time of Television: Broadcasting, Daily Life, and the New Indian Middle Class," *Communication, Culture & Critique*

Lila Abu-Lughod, "Egyptian Melodrama: Technology of the Modern Subject" in Ginsburg et al. *Media Worlds*

Excerpts from Youna Kim edited *The Korean Wave: Korean Media Go Global*

Suggested: **Simon Maybin, "The other big Korean Drama right now" *BBC News*, available:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-44453310>

*Midterm Exam Rubric Discussion

Week 6

Mid-Term (Oct 4)

Transnational Flows

Kim Toft Hansen, "Nordic Noir from Within and Beyond: Negotiating geopolitical regionalization through SVoD crime narratives," *Nordicom Review*

Lisa Coulthard, "The Listening Detective: Thinking Music, Gender, and Transnational Crime's Affective Turn," *Television & New Media*

Omar al-Ghazzi et al., "Neo-Ottoman Cool 2.0: Turkish Nation Branding and Arabic-Language Transnational Broadcasting," *International Journal of Communication*

Week 7 (Oct 11)

*Midterm Exam Submission

Work on your Thought Piece Assignment – talk to TAs and/or Instructor about assignment



Our World featured babies from different countries born live on global satellite television. Courtesy of the European Broadcasting Union.

Global TV, *Our World* (Lisa Parks)

Week 8 (Oct 18)

Infrastructures Week - TBD

Week 9 (Oct 25)

Streaming Video Genres/Formats/Stories

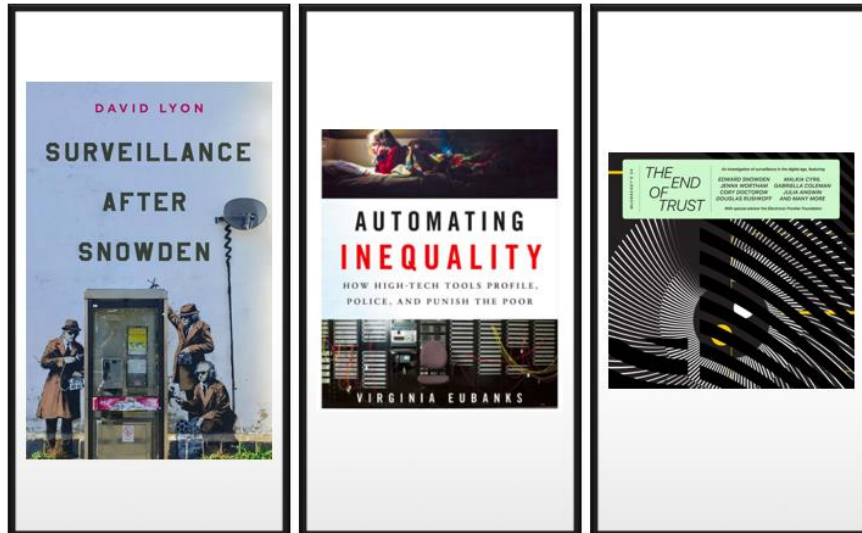
Ishita Tiwary, “OTT is Exactly what TV is not”: Structural Adjustment and Shifts in Indian Scriptwriting

Asli Ildir, Challenging Cultural and Political Taboos: A Turkish SVOD’s Experiments in Taboo Comedy

Paul Julian Smith, “Netflix’s *The House of Flowers* and the New Telenovela,” *Film Quarterly*

Screening: Clips from *Mirada de mujer* (Azteca Trece, 1997-) and *La Casa de las Flores* (Netflix, 2018-)

*Further Discussion of Thought Piece Assignment – Talk to Instructor and TAs during class time



Week 10 (Nov 1)

Interfacing Television & Social Networks

Daniel Chamberlain, “Scripted Spaces: Television Interfaces and the Non-places of Asynchronous Entertainment”

Ramon Lobato, Excerpts from *Netflix Nations: The Geography of Digital Distribution*
Clay Shirky, Excerpts from *Cognitive Surplus*
Jose Van Dijk, “Users like you? Theorizing agency in user-generated content”
Mark Andrejevic and Mark Burdon, “Defining the Sensor Society”
Lisa Parks, “Cover Yourwebcam: Unencrypting Laura Poitras’ *Citizenfour*,” *Film Quarterly*
Screening: *Citizenfour* (Laura Poitras, 2014)



Snapshot from “Nosedive” (*Black Mirror*)

Week 11 (Nov 8)

Attention Economy, Apps & Algorithms

**danah boyd, “Hacking the Attention Economy,” <https://points.datasociety.net/hacking-the-attention-economy-9fa1daca7a37>

Gabriel Perera et al., “Zap Zap, Who’s There? WhatsApp and the Spread of Fake News During the 2018 Elections in Brazil”

Sarah Jackson et al. Excerpts from *#Hashtag Activism*

Screening: *Stay Woke* (Laurens Grant, 2016).

Aubrey Anable, “Platform Studies”

Tarleton Gillespie, “The Politics of ‘Platforms,’” *New Media & Society*

**Tarleton Gillespie, Can an algorithm be wrong?: <http://limn.it/can-an-algorithm-be-wrong/>

Taina Bucher, “Want to Be on the Top? Algorithmic Power and the Threat of Invisibility on Facebook”

Screening: Clips from “Nosedive,” *Black Mirror*, Season 3, Episode 1

*Thought Piece Assignment Due

Week 12 (Nov 15)

Platform Labor

Duffy, Brooke Erin. “The romance of work: Gender and aspirational labour in the digital culture industries.” *International Journal of Cultural Studies*

Arturo Ariagada and Francisco Ibanez, ““You Need At Least One Picture Daily, if Not, You’re Dead”:
Content Creators and Platform Evolution in the Social Media Ecology,” *SM+S*

Julie Chen and Sun P. "Temporal Arbitrage, Fragmented Rush, and Opportunistic Behaviors: The Labor Politics of Time in the Platform Economy." *New Media and Society*

Erin Greer, "Wages for Face-Work: *Black Mirror*'s "Nosedive" and Digital Reproductive Labor," *Camera Obscura*

Week 13 (Nov 22): Thanksgiving

Week 14 (Nov 29)

Subversive Frivolities, Swiped Intimacies, and Endless Scrolls

**Crystal Abidin, "Aren't These Just Young, Rich Women Doing Vain Things Online?: Influencer Selfies as Subversive Frivolity," *Social Media + Society*

Giulia Ranzini, "Love at first swipe? Explaining Tinder self-presentation and motives," *Mobile Media & Communication*

Alice Marwick, "Instafame: Luxury Selfies in the Attention Economy"

Zulli and Zulli, "Extending the Internet Meme: Conceptualizing Technological Mimesis and Imitation Publics on the TikTok Platform," *New Media and Society* 24 no.8 (Aug 2022): 1872-1890.

Week 15 (Dec 6)

Final Assignment Submission