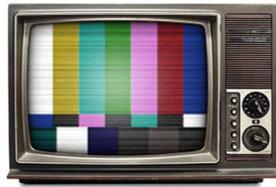


English 105-0-21: Expository Writing
Instructor: Maria Dikcis
Email: mariadikcis2014@u.northwestern.edu
Office: University Hall 420
Office Hours: Tues. 10am-11am/Thurs. 12:30pm-1:30pm



Writing Television: Theory, Poetics, Politics

Spring 2018 {T/Th 11:00am-12:20pm, University Hall 112}

Theme

In this class we will survey a wide range of late 20th/21st century U.S. literary works that engage with television. Throughout our explorations we will attempt to define what exactly a theory, poetics, and politics of TV entails, as well as how these categories enhance our understanding of television's role in both reflecting and constituting American society. We will first consider television's status as a medium of expression or thematic obsession that has appeared in a variety of written texts over the past three decades. Next, our analysis will turn towards the ways in which television can be said to serve as a symbol of much larger social, cultural, and historical phenomena. Our inquiries will consider television's role within American democracy, the formal attributes of a variety of television genres, the economics of the TV industry, television as a site of gender and racial identity formation, television's role in everyday life, and finally its technological impacts. Throughout, we will be paying close attention to how representations of TV take shape in a wide variety of genres by examining poetry (both lyric and prose), creative nonfiction, memoir, quasi-academic personal essay, the novella, and the novel.

Course Objectives

The aim of this course is to help you become a better writer, reader, and critical thinker. To that end, the specific objectives we will focus on throughout the quarter include:

- 1.) Reading critically and actively. You are encouraged to take informal notes as you read the texts on our syllabus, outlining the progression of a scholar's argument in secondary texts as well as questions that the primary texts raise for you.
- 2.) Engaging in lively discussion of the assigned readings with your classmates. This entails both offering your thoughts on the material during our sessions together and listening thoughtfully and respectfully to the positions of your peers.
- 3.) Developing your writing and argumentation skills. Throughout the quarter you will be composing three essays that ask you to formulate compelling and complex thesis statements, locate and use appropriate textual evidence to support an argument, compose clear and well-organized sentences and paragraphs, and anticipate and address possible counterarguments and objections.
- 4.) Revising your essays. Before submitting the final version of each piece of writing, we will be conducting in-class critiques during which you will comment constructively on your peers' work and revise your drafts into more polished pieces.

Expectations

- 1.) Arrive to class and conferences on time. I expect you to attend all class sessions, but if you absolutely must miss class for a **valid** reason, please plan on making arrangements with me beforehand. Having more than one unexcused absence will have a negative impact on your participation grade.
- 2.) Have all the readings completed **before** the class session for which they are assigned and bring all texts (in hard copy or on your laptop) with you to class.
- 3.) Be prepared to participate in an engaged and respectful manner with lively questions, comments, and responses to your peers. Giving voice to your own thoughts and having conversations with one another will undoubtedly help you to gain a better understanding of the texts discussed in this course. This is a safe space to be experimental with your approach to spoken dialogue, analysis, and interpretation. Feel free to share unusual ideas, disagree with a viewpoint that differs from your own, and develop your own personalized readings. There is no such thing as a stupid comment! If you feel that you will have difficulties speaking in class, please meet with me early in the quarter so we can discuss possible strategies for participation.
- 4.) Hand in all assignments **on time** on their due dates. Late papers will be graded down by one-third of a letter grade per day late (A to A-, A- to B+, etc.). Extensions will be granted only in extreme circumstances and with advance notice.
- 5.) All cellphones must be silenced or turned off during our sessions. Although I will allow laptops for taking notes and accessing documents electronically, the use of laptops for any other purpose is **strictly prohibited**. This means no emailing, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, online surfing, etc.

Required Texts

- 1.) *Don't Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric*, Claudia Rankine
- 2.) *Insomnia and the Aunt*, Tan Lin
- 3.) *White Noise*, Don DeLillo
- 4.) *"They Say/I Say": The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, 3rd edition (labeled in the syllabus as *TSIS*)
- 5.) All other texts will be available electronically on Canvas in the "Files" section

Recommended Texts

- 1.) *The Craft of Research*, Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, 3rd edition
- 2.) *MLA Handbook*, The Modern Language Association of America, 8th edition
- 3.) *The Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://www.oed.com.turing.library.northwestern.edu>

Peer Critiques

In the process of becoming better writers, all of you will be helping one another by providing thoughtful and informed feedback on each other's writing. With this goal in mind, you will critique a peer's paper during each round of formal essay writing. This process is meant to help you respectfully engage with your peers' ideas and writing, and to help each other become better thinkers and writers. There will be three in-class directed peer critique workshops throughout the quarter designed to develop your critical voice while also enabling you to receive valuable feedback on the first full draft of each formal essay assignment. While I will provide you with specific instructions to help guide you in crafting your remarks, you will be responsible for giving honest, constructive, and respectful written and conversational feedback to your peers.

Office Hours

After in-class peer review workshops, I encourage you to meet with me for an individual writing conference to discuss the feedback you received from your peers and the first draft of your essay. During office hours, I will help you to reflect on your peers' comments and on your progress in the writing process. These meetings are meant to give you individual guidance and advice on your papers, as well as to help me better tailor the assignment to your particular needs, goals, and strengths. Please prepare for these meetings just as meticulously as you would prepare for class discussion.

Grading Breakdown

Participation: 15%

Informal Writing Assignments: 10%

In-Class Peer Critiques: 15%

Essay 1: 15%

Essay 2: 20%

Essay 3: 25%

Accessibility

I am committed to creating a class environment that is accessible to all student needs. Any students requiring accommodations related to a disability or other condition are required to register with [AccessibleNU](mailto:accessiblenu@northwestern.edu) (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu, 847-467-5530) and provide professors with an accommodation notification, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All correspondence with me will, of course, remain confidential.

Academic Integrity

As outlined in the NU brochure "Academic Integrity: A Basic Guide," plagiarism is a serious offense that can result in serious consequences, such as failure of the class, a permanent notation on your transcript, or even expulsion. To familiarize yourself with the official policies on plagiarism, please visit: [Academic Integrity](#)

Informal Written Assignments

In addition to the three formal essays, throughout the quarter I will ask you to complete short, informal writing assignments (usually in class). Each assignment will be designed to help you build up to the requirements of the larger formal essays and give you room to experiment with different writing styles and genres. Additionally, each response will ensure that you are keeping up with the readings in our course.

Formal Essay Assignments

1. Critical Review (4 pages)

First draft due: April 17th, Final draft due: April 24th

This assignment asks you to analyze the argument of a critical essay carefully. You will write an analysis of one of the critical/theoretical texts you have been assigned to read for this class, or you may choose your own scholarly article, essay, or book chapter that discusses some aspect of television that interests you. Your essay should do two things: 1) Carefully outline the essay's claims about television. Start by distinguishing the governing thesis of the text and discuss the premises and supporting evidence that reinforce the author's conclusions. How does the writer conceptualize television (i.e., its purpose, how it works, how it relates to human experience)? What are some problematic issues inherent to the discussion of television? 2) Respond to the essay. Do

you think the essay presents a successful, persuasive, or coherent argument? Why or why not? You may respond in any number of ways—you might agree with the essay and expand on what it has to say, or disagree by taking issue with the essay's conclusion or the premises and evidence supporting that conclusion, or alternatively take some sort of neutral, middle stance on the piece's positives and negatives. Regardless, your analysis should provide well-supported reasons for your position on the text. Overall, your task will be to unite these two parts into a single, coherent essay.

2. Close Reading Analysis (4-5 pages)

First draft due: May 8th, Final draft due: May 15th

For your second paper you will be analyzing one primary text and developing an argument about the way in which the language functions to give shape to the piece's representation of television. In order to do this you will choose *one* particularly interesting, salient, thought-provoking, or challenging page from the text and conduct a close reading analysis of how the material on that page is speaking to the text as a whole, as well as the larger themes of our class. This is *not* a plot summary or list of themes in the work—you are using the primary text as a lens for examining the questions about TV that we have been grappling with in class. When conducting your close reading, constantly ask yourself: What? How? And Why? Point out some unique feature that is relevant to your claim and offer an in-depth close reading of the details, language, techniques, significance of that feature, etc. Focus not just on the "*what*" of the textual details you are analyzing, but the "*how*" and "*why*" as well. How does this text conceive of and represent television? How does it deploy language, images, metaphors, etc. to convey this specific representation? Why are these precise stylistic choices being deployed? Why is it so significant that these features are able to achieve a certain effect? Your paper should formulate some kind of thesis statement. If you have an *original, argumentative* claim made at the beginning of your paper, your close readings will then be able to coherently support a central idea. The thesis statement tells your reader how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter.

3. Research Paper (7-8 pages)

1-page proposal due: May 24th, First draft due: June 5th, Final draft due: June 12th

Throughout this course we have explored new trends and texts that have influenced theories of media and opened up new possibilities for what television can be and do. Now that you have considered many proposed definitions, issues, and creative explorations of TV's forms and boundaries, in this paper you will draw from these received notions of television and take a stab at proposing your own reading of the medium, conducting research and entering into current debates in media studies with your own carefully crafted argument. Your paper will be a well-informed treatment of a specific topic that examines what others have said about it and formulates an argument that refutes or further develops previous scholarship. You must use at least 4 secondary sources and show how your own argument respectfully engages with the perspective of others. Based on your research, explain what is at stake in various writers' accounts of television—what are their strong points, where are their blind spots, how does your own argument intervene in their ongoing debate? This paper is meant to be a culmination of the skills you have been developing all quarter. In addition to advancing your own unique thesis statement, offering close readings of primary texts, and supporting your claims with evidence, you will now be integrating those skills within an analysis that aims to further develop, complicate, or enhance previous scholarship.

Unit 1: Theory

Week 1

Thursday, April 5

Introduction

Al Jazeera [“Media Theorised”](#) series: Roland Barthes, Stuart Hall, Marshall McLuhan, Edward Said

[“Television,”](#) from *Varieties of Disturbance: Stories*, Lydia Davis

Week 2

Tuesday, April 10

“Introduction: Why Television?” from *Television and American Culture*, Jason Mittell

[“The Reality of Reality Television,”](#) from *n+1*, Mark Greif

TSIS Chapters 1 & 2 (“They Say” & “Her Point Is”)

Thursday, April 12

“What If?: Charting Television's New Textual Boundaries,” from *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, Jeffrey Sconce

The TV Sutras, (pp. 1-41), Dodie Bellamy

TSIS Chapters 3 & 4 (“As He Himself Puts It” & “Yes/No/Okay, But”)

Week 3

Tuesday, April 17

Paper 1: First Draft Due in Hard Copy (In-class Peer Critiques)

CP Straub, “Responding—Really Responding—to Other Students’ Writing”

Thursday, April 19

“The Search for Tomorrow in Today’s Soap Operas: Notes on a feminine narrative form,” Tania Modleski

[“The Careless Language of Sexual Violence,”](#) from *The Rumpus*, Roxane Gay

[“Especially Heinous: 272 Views of Law & Order SVU,”](#) (Seasons 1-3), Carmen Maria Machado

TSIS Chapter 5 (“And Yet”)

Unit 2: Poetics

Week 4

Tuesday, April 24

Paper 1: Final Draft Due by 5:00pm on Canvas

Don’t Let Me Be Lonely (pp. 1-73), Claudia Rankine

TSIS Chapters 7 & 8 (“So What? Who Cares?” & “As A Result”)

Thursday, April 26

Don’t Let Me Be Lonely (pp. 74-154), Claudia Rankine

TSIS Chapter 9 (“Ain’t So/Is Not”)

Week 5

Tuesday, May 1

Insomnia and the Aunt, Tan Lin

TSIS Chapters 10 & 13 (“But Don’t Get Me Wrong” & “IMHO”)

Thursday, May 3

Poetry Selections (“The Revolution Will Not Be Televised,” Gil Scott-Heron;

“Lessons from Television” from *Columbarium*, Susan Stewart)

TSIS Chapter 14 (“What’s Motivating This Writer?”)

Unit 3: Politics

Week 6

Tuesday, May 8

Paper 2: First Draft Due in Hard Copy (In-class Peer Critiques)

The Craft of Research Chapter 7 (“Making Good Arguments”)

Thursday, May 10

“E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction” (pp. 151-174), David Foster Wallace

The Craft of Research, “Sources,” pp. 68-82

Week 7

Tuesday, May 15

Paper 2: Final Draft Due by 5:00pm on Canvas

“E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction” (pp. 174-194), David Foster Wallace

The Craft of Research, “Sources,” pp. 83-101

Thursday, May 17

White Noise (pp. 1-79), Don DeLillo

The Craft of Research, “From Topics to Questions,” pp. 35-41

Week 8

Tuesday, May 22

White Noise (pp. 80-156), Don DeLillo

The Craft of Research, “From Topics to Questions,” pp. 42-50

Thursday, May 24

Paper 3: 1-Page Proposal Due by 5:00pm on Canvas

Library Visit (Room Location TBD), Tools and Techniques for Research

Week 9

Tuesday, May 29

White Noise (pp. 157-230), Don DeLillo

The Craft of Research, “From Questions to Problems,” pp. 51-58

Thursday, May 31

White Noise (pp. 231-310), Don DeLillo

The Craft of Research, “From Questions to Problems,” pp. 59-67

Week 10

Tuesday, June 5

Paper 3: First Draft Due in Hard Copy (In-class Peer Critiques)

Thursday, June 7

Individual conferences

Paper 3: Final draft due Tuesday June 12th by 5:00pm on Canvas

*** This syllabus is subject to minor changes. The course is designed to help you become a more effective writer, and depending on our progress I will alter the schedule of readings, assignments, and peer critique workshops as needed.**