Instructor: Prof. Susan Murray

Office hours:

Class schedule/Location:

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will survey the cultural and industrial history of American television. Students will come to understand how technological innovation, regulatory bodies, advertisers, network heads, creative producers, audiences have interacted with economic, social, and political forces to shape television over time. In this class we will also discuss the methodological practices and concerns involved in the writing of media histories and specifically the history of broadcasting.

LEARNER OBJECTIVES:
By the end of the course, students will:
- Have an intellectual map of the cultural and industrial history of American television
- Analyze and be able to employ the methodological practices involved in the writing of the history of broadcasting
- Synthesize and critique the cultural discourses that circulated around the object of television within their historical context
- Be able to employ the theoretical tools used to place television within a historically specific political, social, economic context.

REQUIRED READINGS:
Additional weekly readings available at Blackboard site.

ASSIGNMENTS & RESPONSIBILITIES
1. Attendance and Participation (20% of final grade): Students must attend every class and participate in discussion.
2. Two exams: (each worth 20% of final grade): One midterm and one final (final is not cumulative) will be given in class. Each one will consist of 2-3 essay questions.

3. Paper proposal (worth 10%): must include thesis questions, 1-2 paragraph description of project, bibliography of at least three secondary sources that you plan to use in your paper.

3. Research paper on a topic in television history (worth 30% of final grade). Due: December 12th. Must involve both primary and secondary sources.—15 pages.

Grading:

- 90 – 100 = A range
- 80 – 89 = B range
- 70 – 79 = C range
- 60 – 69 = D range
- 50 & below = Fail

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introductions/Approaches to Television
Selections from: Carolyn Kay Steedman, Dust: The Archive and Cultural History

Week 2: Where it all Began: Radio—Networks, Legislation, Commercialization
Reading: Michele Hilmes, “NBC and the Network Idea: Defining the American System” (NBC book)
Michele Hilmes, “Radiating Culture” (blackboard)
Socolow, “Always in Friendly Competition: NBC & CBS” (NBC book)
Christopher Sterling, “NBC and the FCC Inquiry” (NBC book)

Week 3: National Narratives—Radio pt 2
Listening: My Favorite Husband, Burns & Allen, Jack Benny, Fred Allen
Reading: Susan Douglas, “The Invention of the Audience”
Margaret T. McFadden, “America’s Boyfriend Who Can’t Get a Date: Gender, Race, and the Cultural Work of the Jacky Benny Program.”
Leah Lowe, “IF the Country’s Going Gracie, So Can You”
Lynn Spigel, “Domestic Ideals and Family Amusements” (Chapter One of “Make Room for TV”)

Week 4: 1950s TV
Screening: The Goldbergs, Texaco Star Theatre, I Love Lucy, Burns & Allen
Reading: Lynn Spigel, pp. 36-181.
Thomas Schatz, “Desilu, I love Lucy and the Rise of Network TV”
Week 5: Late 1950s—Public Relations Crises
Screening: *Twenty One, Marty, Queen for a Day, The Comedian*
Reading:
Charles Van Doren, “All the Answers”
Douglas Gomery, “NBC Loses its Leadership in the 1950s”
William Boddy, “TV’s Public Relations Crisis of the Late 1950s William Boddy, “The Honeymoon is Over”

Week 6: 1960s
Screening: *Smother Brothers, I Dream of Jeannie, Mod Squad*
Reading: Mark Alvey, “Too Many Kids and Old Ladies’: Quality Demographics and 1960s U.S. Television”
Jeffrey S. Miller, “What Closes on Saturday Night” (NBC book)
Lynn Spigel, “The Fantastic Family Sitcom”
Steven Classen, “Blacking Out: Remembering TV and the Sixties”

Week 7: 1970s

Week 8: MIDTERM

Week 9: Screening: *Maude, All in the Family, Flip Wilson, Laugh-In, Three’s Company*
Victoria Johnson, “You’re Gonna Make it After all”
Elena Levine “Sex with a Laugh Track”
Christin Acham, “What you See is What you Get: Soul Train and the Flip Wilson Show”

Week 10: Public Broadcasting, Public Access & Alternative TV
Screening: *Joan Does Dynasty, Paper Tiger Retrospective, Ombibus, etc.*
Reading: Eric Freedman, “Public Access/Private Confession” (NBC book)
Deirdre Boyle, “A Brief History of American Documentary Video”
Laurie Ouellette, “Oasis of the Vast Wasteland”

Week 11: Cable TV & 1980s programming
Screening: TBA
Reading: John McMurria “A Taste of Class” (cable book)
Megan Mullin, “The Moms ‘n’ Pops of CATV” (cable book)
Berreta E. Smith-Shomade, “Target Market Black” (Cable book)
Kompare, “TV Land: Cable and Satellite as Boutique Television”
Janet Staiger, “The Cosby Show”

Week 12: 1990s—2000s Programming
Screening: *Friends, Ellen, Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*
Reading: Ron Becker, “Prime-Time Television in the Gay 90s”
Amanda Lotz, “Must See TV” (NBC book)
Katherine Sender, “Dualcasting: Bravo’s Gay Programming and the Quest for Women Audiences (cable book)
Dana Polan, “Cable Watching” (Cable book)
++++Paper Proposal due at the beginning of class++++

**Week 13: Convergence and Conglomeration**
Screening: TBA
Reading: Christopher Anderson, “Creating the Twenty first Century Television Network: NBC in the Age of Media Conglomerates. (NBC book)
Kevin S. Sandler, “Life without Friends” (NBC book)
Francois Bar and J. Taplin, “Cable’s Digital Future” (cable book)
Week 14: Reality TV
Screening: TBA
Reading: Anna McCarthy, “Stanley Milgram, Allen Funt and Me”: Postwar Social Science and the First Wave of Reality TV”
John Corner, “Documentary Diversions”
Mark Andrejevic, “Visceral Literacy: Reality TV, Savvy Viewers and Autospies”
Ted Magder, “Television 2.0”

Week 15: FINAL

+++++++++++Paper due: xxxxx ++++++++++++++
Schedule, readings, and screenings are subject to change