

COURSE SPECIFICATION DOCUMENT

Academic School/Department:	Social Sciences and Humanities
Programme:	American Studies Film Studies Communications: Media Studies
FHEQ Level:	5
Course Title:	American Television Drama
Course Code:	AMS 5400
Total Hours:	120
Timetabled Hours:	45
Guided Learning Hours:	0
Independent Learning Hours:	75
Credits:	12 UK CATS credits 6 ECTS credits 3 US credits

Course Description:

The new 'golden age' of television, which has emerged since the beginning of the 21st Century, has become a significant and influential part of contemporary American culture. The course explores a number of cultural and technological shifts that have shaped the medium, and considers the ways in which writers are engaging with contemporary social and political realities and examining the values and myths of a society 'conversing with itself.' The course studies the reinvention of a variety of different genres, from crime fiction to science fiction, and students will have the opportunity to analyse some ground breaking series that offer portraits of a society undergoing crisis and change.

Prerequisites:

GEP 4180 Research and Writing 2

Aims and Objectives:

- To critically assess a variety of cultural, political, social, and gendered themes and how they both shape and are shaped by historical and contemporary American television drama
- To provide a framework for understanding the changing role of technology and the television industry (writers, producers and actors as well as networks and audiences)
- To provide a background for eventual careers in fields which require articulate, clear thinking individuals with a grasp of American Studies
- To foster the acquisition, development, and consolidation of a variety of inter-disciplinary and transferable skills through the study of particular themes in American Studies
- To promote critical engagement with a wide range of primary and secondary historical sources, and the development of both a succinct writing style and the ability to present complex arguments orally

Programme Outcomes:

AMS: A5(ii); B5(ii); C5(i); C5(ii); C5(iii); D5(i); D5(iii)

FLM: A5(i), A5(iii), B5(ii), C5(ii), C5(iii), D5(i), D5(ii)

COMMS: A5(i), A5(ii), B5(ii), B5(iii), D5(i), D5(ii)

A detailed list of the programme outcomes is found in the Programme Specification. This is maintained by Registry and located at: <https://www.richmond.ac.uk/programme-and-course-specifications/>

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, successful students should be able to

- Demonstrate a critical engagement with key theories/writers/debates in a cultural/political contextual framework.
- Demonstrate a detailed understanding of the ways in which the contemporary American television drama has evolved and been shaped by a range of political, cultural, and technological developments in American society
- Exercise a degree of informed critical judgement, develop thoughtful arguments, and pursue independent research using theories/texts from class and own reading.
- Engage with a wide variety of perspectives on television production and reception and deliver work with limited supervision, reflecting good critical thinking and time management skills.

Indicative Content:

- Key terms, debates, and theorists of television drama
- Historical contexts of television drama
- Emergent political and social themes post 9/11
- Masculinity and its discontents; new roles/rules for women
- The new structure of the television industry and the changes in storytelling architecture
- Literary and philosophical influences on writers
- Shifting technologies, audience viewing and reception

Assessment:

This course conforms to the University Assessment Norms approved at Academic Board and located at: <https://www.richmond.ac.uk/university-policies/>

Teaching Methodology:

The course will be taught through a combination of lectures and seminar classes. Lectures are primarily designed to give an overview of the issues and problems on a particular topic, and thereby provide guidance for seminar discussion. Seminars will be used for debates and group discussion, and are intended to provide an interactive and participatory learning environment. Clips/segments of film will be viewed and discussed in class; entire episodes should be viewed outside of class time in preparing for the appropriate week's discussion. Students are expected to do the set readings for each week, and to be prepared to contribute to class discussion. The general approach to classes is informal, and discussion is viewed as an essential part of learning.

Indicative Texts:

Bigsby, Christopher, *Viewing America: Twenty-First Century Television Drama*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Martin, Brett. *Difficult Men From The Sopranos and The Wire to Mad Men and Breaking Bad: Behind the Scenes of a Creative Revolution*. Faber and Faber, 2013.

Thompson, Ethan & Jason Mittell. *How to Watch Television*. NYU Press, 2013.

Please Note: The core and the reference texts will be reviewed at the time of designing the semester syllabus

Change Log for this CSD:

Nature of Change	Date Approved & Approval Body (School or LTPC)	Change Actioned by Academic Registry
Various updates as part of the UG programme review	AB Jan 2022	
Revision – Annual Update	May 2023	
Total Hours Updated	April 2024	