

AMH3931/(26547)
Television's Pasts
Fall 2021

Instructor: Professor Louise Newman

Course Meets T, R periods 5/6, 6 in Keene Flint 117

Office Hours: Via zoom, Mon, 8-9:30 am; in person (Keene Flint 212) Thurs, 3:30-4:00

Course Description

This course, Television's Pasts, is so named because it looks at the intersection of television and history in a number of different ways, hoping to deepen how students think about the complex relationships between this medium, cultural practices, and social change. The course is *not* designed to distinguish between "better" or "worse" shows, nor to influence students' viewing tastes, but rather to assist students in thinking more analytically about the historical significance and meanings of the shows they do watch.

Scripted television shows that everyone must become familiar with include those listed below. These shows, chosen to introduce students to the main themes of the course, are both important artifacts of their era as well as influential on the development of television programming overall.

- *I Love Lucy*
- *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (or *Julia*, *All in the Family* or *M*A*S*H*)
- *The Bill Cosby Show*
- *The Wire*
- *Mad Men*

In addition, students will choose a serial drama to focus on a group project done at the midterm and another show to study for their final project so roughly seven shows in all.

Course Objectives

- First, to make students aware of (and to look for) crucial moments when television played a significant role in shaping U.S. history and culture, and vice versa. (For example, identifying moments when fictional events that took place on a scripted television program had an unforeseen impact on public discourse. Or assessing the impact that televising civil rights demonstrations of the 1960s had on public support for civil rights legislation.)
- Second, to help students reflect on TV's representations of specific issues, including women's changing social roles, masculinity crises, racial/sexual representations, and historical (re)imaginings.
- Third, to familiarize students with the variety of methods used by scholars to discuss television (e.g., textual, audience-reception, and industry analyzes), encouraging students to bring as many approaches as possible to bear in order to enhance their appreciation for how

production and reception, text and context, and history and culture function interdependently: As one scholar, Julie D'Acci, has written, "In television, the interworkings of textual representations, narrative and generic norms and conventions, audience constructions, industry imperatives, spectator positionings, viewer readings and contextual forces reveal the dense complexity of the whole enterprise.... (D'Acci, 208)

Readings

Required textbooks

There are three texts written by popular television critics, two of which are available for free from Course Reserves, although you may first have to install and then activate the [Cisco Anyconnect VPN \(Links to an external site.\)](#) client before you will be able to download these books to your computer. We will be reading multiple chapters from each of them.

- **Austerlitz**, Saul. *Sitcom: A History in 24 Episodes from I Love Lucy to Community*. Chicago Review Press, 2014. E-book available from Course Reserves, downloadable for free. Inexpensive used copies are also currently available from Amazon. This book contains thoughtful commentary on many of the shows covered in the course. Chapter 1 on *I Love Lucy* is required for Module 2 (and chapters 2, 4 and 5 could be useful for the first assignment); Chapter 7 on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, Chapter 8 on *All in the Family* and chapter 9 on *M*A*S*H* are assigned in Module 3; and Chapter 12 on *The Cosby Show* is required for Module 4.
- **Bianculli**, David. *The Platinum Age of Television... How TV Became Terrific*. Anchor Books, 2016. This book is not available as an e-book through Course Reserves. Inexpensive used copies are available from Amazon and enterprising students may be able to find free copies elsewhere. This is a quirky, engaging book, with television shows organized by genre. There are short, insightful sections on many of the shows covered in the course, including, *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, *Sesame Street*, *I Love Lucy*, *All in the Family*, *The Cosby Show*, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *Deadwood*, *Mad Men*, and *M*A*S*H*, along with wonderful material about some of the creators of these shows.
- **Sepinwall**, Alan. *The Revolution was Televised*. Touchstone, 2012, 2015. E-book available from Course Reserves, downloadable for free.

Popular television critics, like those listed above, are paid for their reviews and tend to be huge fans of the shows they write about. To expand our understanding of television as a commercial and cultural enterprise, we will also be reading many scholarly articles, written by academics. These articles are available from Course Reserves in the form of E-books or PDFs; full bibliographic details are given in the modules. Again, you may first have to install and activate the [Cisco Anyconnect VPN \(Links to an external site.\)](#) client before you will be able to view or download these articles.

Articles and Book Chapters (PDFS available on Canvas/Course Reserve)

- Alley and Brown, "Beth Sullivan" in *Women Television Producers*, (2001), pp. 198-217.
- Austerlitz, Saul. "I Love Lucy," in *Sitcom: A History in 24 Episodes* (2014), 7-23.
- Bodroghkozy, Aniko. "Is This What You Mean by Color T.V.?: Julia," in *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement*. University of Illinois Press, 2012, 180-202.

- D'Acci, Julie. "Negotiating Feminism," in *Defining Women: Television and the Case of Cagney & Lacey*, 1994, 142-167.
- Dow, Bonnie J. "The Other Side of Postfeminism: Maternal Feminism in *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*," in *Prime Time Feminism*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996, 164-202.
- Doherty, Thomas. "The Army-McCarthy Hearings (April 22-June 17, 1954)," in *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism and American Culture*. Columbia University Press, 2003, 189-214.
- Douglas, Susan. "Mama Said," and "Genies and Witches," in *Where the Girls Are*.
- Jacobs, Jason. "Arriving in Deadwood," in *Deadwood* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1-21.
- Kennedy, Liam and Stephen Shapiro, ed. *The Wire: Race, Class and Genre* University of Michigan Press, 2012), 15-32.
- Kutulas, Judy. "Liberated Women and New Sensitive Men," in *the Sitcom Reader: America Viewed and Skewed*, eds. Mary M. Dalton and Laura R Linder, 2nd ed. State University of New York, 2005, 217-226.
- Lipsitz, George. "The Meaning of Memory," *Cultural Anthropology* (February 1986)
- Metz, Walter. "Love the House, Hate the Work," in *Bewitched*
- Milch, David. "Dramatis Personae" and "Intoxicants," in *Deadwood: Stories of the Black Hills*. Melcher Media, 2006, 6-9, 64-79.
- Morreale, Joanne. "Introduction," in *The Donna Reed Show*. Wayne State University Press, 2012, 1-17.
- Morrow, Robert. W. "A New Bloom on the Wasteland," in *Sesame Street and the Reform of Children's Television*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, 47-66.
- Watson, Mary Ann. "Prologue: The Kennedy-Television Alliance," in *The Expanding Vista: Television in the Kennedy Years* (Duke University Press, 1994), 3-17.

Reference

Classic TV Database: <http://www.classic-tv.com/shows> contains lists of the top-rated shows for every year from 1950, along with the number of viewers for each program and the number of households with television sets.

A Disclaimer: What this course does not cover...

This course does not provide a comprehensive survey of the history of television as a commercial industry or as a culture-making enterprise, nor does it trace the evolution of even a few distinct forms/genres of television programming. Because I have drawn from programs that seem well suited to the course's primary themes, there are gaping holes in this syllabus. Certain genres are missing entirely – there are no soap operas, no sci/fi (how can there be no *Star Trek*?); no superheroes (*Batman & Robin*, *Superman*, etc.) only a few brief nods to the great crime shows and police procedurals that many of us love so dearly (*Hill Street Blues*, *NYPD Blue*, *The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, *The Shield*, *Breaking Bad*, *Bosch*, etc.) and which revolutionized television programming in the 1990s and early 2000s, no medical shows (what? No *E.R.*, no *Grey's Anatomy*, no *House*?), no prison shows (my apologies to fans of *Oz* and *Orange is the New Black*), no Fantasy or Horror, none of the beloved workplace sitcoms (*Cheers*, *The Office*), none of the wonderful spy shows (*Get Smart*, *Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, *Mission: Impossible*, *Alias*, *Homeland*, *The Americans*), and only a limited examination of comedies (alas, no *Seinfeld*).

With the exception of Ken Burns' work, there is no mention of the many historical documentaries that have been made for television, even before Netflix got into the business-- even though this might seem an obvious choice for a course about television and history. Furthermore, great animated series, such as *The Simpsons* and *Bojack Horseman*, as well as the original programming of streaming services, such as Netflix, Amazon, and Hulu, get short shrift for no good reason, other than I couldn't see how to fit any more stuff into the course. Perhaps most egregious of all the omissions are the wide-ranging variety/sketch programming and late-night talk shows that have provided so much valuable political commentary and social criticism (shows like *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, *The Colbert Report*, *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*, and most notable of all *Saturday Night Live*, which deserves a whole course to itself.)

Assignments and Grading

Graded assignments (1000 total points)

- Written instructions for major assignments (those worth more than 100 points) will be distributed several weeks before the assignment is due.
- Students should keep electronic copies of all their work in case any problems arise in the submission, grading, or the recording of assignments.

The final course grade is based on 1,000 points, determined as follows:

- Module 1: Viewing Habits (0 points)
- Module 2: *I Love Lucy* and Gender Norms of the 1950s (100 points)
- Module 3: Discuss one of the following: *Julia*, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *All in the Family* or *M*A*S*H* (100 points)
- Midterm: Create a Website (Group Work)-- 200 points
- Modules 7-12: Discuss two series from among the following: *The Wire*; *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*; *Deadwood*, *Mad Men*; *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*; *Pose*; *New Girl* (100 points each, 200 points total)
- Final Project: Design a new Module for the course -- 400 points

Grading Scale

Letter grades for the course will be assigned according to the following point scale: Please note that in this course, to receive a full A, you must earn at least 950 out of 1000 points.

| Letter Grade | Total Points | GPA Equivalent |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| A | 940-1000 | 4.0 |
| A- | 900-939 | 3.67 |
| B+ | 875-899 | 3.33 |
| B | 840-874 | 3.0 |
| B- | 800-839 | 2.67 |
| C+ | 775-799 | 2.33 |
| C | 740-774 | 2.0 |

| | | |
|-----------|----------------|-------------|
| C- | 700-739 | 1.67 |
| D+ | 675-699 | 1.33 |
| D | 640-674 | 1.0 |
| D- | 600-639 | 0.67 |
| E | <600 | 0 |

Policies regarding participation and assignments

- Students are expected to have completed all reading and writing assignments by the beginning of class on the date specified on the course website. Whenever possible, students should have hard copies of the readings (books, articles, photographs, book reviews, etc.) in front of them.
- In general, no late work will be accepted unless accompanied by documentation from the Dean of Students or Health Services of a serious illness. However, in the case of exceptional or unforeseen circumstances, students needing an extension of a deadline may request one from the instructor, in advance of the deadline.

General course policies

- Students requesting accommodation must register with the Dean of Students Office (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/>) and obtain proper documentation to be submitted to the instructor. Instructors are not obligated to grant accommodations after the first week of the semester.
- All students must adhere to the University of Florida's standards of academic honesty. UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code." A copy of the student code of conduct/honor code may be found at <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

The student code of conduct forbids plagiarism, which includes the following:

- Turning in a paper that was written by someone else (i.e., papers written by another student, a research service, or downloaded off the Internet); or written by you for another course.
 - Copying work written by another author without using quotation marks and without acknowledging the source through a commonly accepted style of footnoting.
 - Paraphrasing text written by another author without referencing that author within the text and by using a commonly accepted style of footnoting.
 - Using someone else's idea or concept without acknowledging the original author and source in the text and by using a commonly accepted style of footnoting.
-

**Schedule—See Canvas for fuller description of assignments and dates.
The following is an overview of topics, along with instructor's notes.**

Week 1: Introduction—Overview and Impact of television on U.S. politics, culture & society

Main Points

- Initial concerns of elites—pundits were concerned about television's potential influence, feared its power to make audiences passive, television derisively called the "boob tube."
- Scholars in a new field called "television studies" pose difficult ambitious questions: to explain how mass culture (television) shapes political participation; to determine television's impact on the democratic workings of public life. What cultural work does television perform? (answer: for the 1950s, sitcoms provide containment; attempt to normalize social relations in the immediate post-war period)
- Popular TV critics today feel that television did not come into its own until 1999, when *The Sopranos* aired on HBO—Sepinwall expresses it as a "revolution" in television; exponential growth since 2000, with as many scripted tv shows made in the 20 years since as there were in the previous 50 years. (data from Bianculli, 10) But this revolution was not just an explosion in quantity but a sea change in quality. *The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, *Deadwood*, *The Shield*, *Lost*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *24*, *Friday Night Lights*, *Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad*, etc. (What the shows have in common is their complexity—nuanced characters and long narrative arcs over multiple seasons).
- There were technological changes that made this complexity accessible to large audiences; this revolution in television (argues Sepinwall, 5) was accompanied by the invention/sale of DVRs, On Demand, DVD boxed sets, and video streaming via the internet, which made it easy for people to catch up with "that great but complicated new show." (At the same time, there was a gradual but noteworthy change occurring in commercial filmmaking—there once had been blockbusters, art films, and lots in between. But in the 21st century, a film had to be either very cheap to make or else guarantee an opening weekend of \$50 million or it wouldn't get made. As David Chase, creator of the *Sopranos* who once wanted to get out of the TV business and write films, puts it, "Movies went from something really interesting to what we have now," (quoted by Sepinwall, 5)—so adults who wanted thoughtful drama no longer went to the movies, they stayed home and watched television.

Basic Narrative

- Broadcast technology on display at the 1939 World's Fair; suspended during WW2; then after the war, in 1946, television sets were manufactured for the public and programming, very limited at first, was developed

- ABC, CBS, NBC, DuMont were the four initial networks subject to the rules of the FCC and in need of corporate sponsorship. The executives who worked for these networks sought to have the widest appeal possible for any show they considered airing.
- Initial genres adopted from radio (drama, western, comedy, news analysis, variety show) and theatre (vaudeville)
- Television was a conservative medium because of its dependency on sponsors, and then advertisers, who depended in turn on the Nielsen Ratings to identify who was watching which particular shows; because shows needed to attract the largest audience possible, anything likely to offend a viewer was not broadcast.
- Within the industry, tv executives saw their job as delivering audiences to corporate sponsors (Band Aid, Coke, Gillette, Camel smoked by doctors and an elegant woman <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFrkSiCvBo0&pbjreload=10> Campbell's soup, Phillip Morris)

Watch *Color Adjustment*—first segment

Read (35pp):

- Bianculli, "Introduction" in *The Platinum Age of Television*, 1-14.
- Sepinwall, "Introduction" in *The Revolution was Televised*, 1-17.

Week 2: 1950s—Containment: The Cold War on Television

Main Points

- Two opposing viewpoints: "During the Cold War, through television, America became a more open and tolerant place" (Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium*, 2003): 2. In contrast, Kutulus argues that in the 1950s, television "reinforced social hierarchies, majority norms and traditional values" (138). Might both be true?
- The concept of containment captures television's complex cultural work in the 1950s, in managing the tensions that arose as the U.S. was trying to return to "normalcy" after WW2.
- Three women who had important roles as producers/creators (Gertrude Berg, Lucille Ball, Donna Reed) despite the images they presented of themselves in their domestic sitcoms; also true of Gracie Allen

Basic Narrative

- Army-McCarthy Hearings aired April 22, 1954-June 17, 1954 (36 days of coverage by ABC and DuMont networks); it was the first time a Senate inquiry was televised. (See Doherty, chapter 9, "The Army-McCarthy Hearings," 189-214)
- Nixon's embrace of the medium, with Roger Ailes' guidance (All politicians aspiring to hold national office since have had to master the medium.)
- Toast of the Town/the Ed Sullivan Show (1948-71, CBS) Variety show, grew out of vaudeville, introduced Elvis Presley 3 times in 1956-57; 60 million viewers

Featured TV Show

- ***I Love Lucy (1951-57, CBS)***-- implicit critique of domesticity. Philip Morris, the manufacturer of cigarettes, agreed to a non-cancelable contract for an unprecedented \$8 million; company president put the huge sum in perspective: "Dollar-wise, although the entire sum sounds huge, it is probably one of, if not the most, efficient advertising buys in the entire country" (51)...(3 times more efficient dollar-wise than placing ads in *Life* or ... a newspaper. "Three times more people see every Monday night's *I Love Lucy* show than watched all the major league baseball games last year." (1951, quoted in Doherty, pp. 50-51.) The episode that contained the birth of Lucy's second child, a son, Desi Arnez IV on Jan 19, 1953 was watched by an estimated 44 million viewers, receiving a Nielsen rating of 68.8, which far surpassed the ratings/audience for the televised inaugural address of Dwight D. Eisenhower the next day (52).

Other TV Shows of the 1950s (Family sitcoms, westerns, variety, comedy shows)

- *Jackie Gleason Show (1949-1957), Honeymooners (1956-1957)*
- *George Burns & Gracie Allen (1950-1958)*
- *Amos & Andy (1951-1960)*
- *Father Knows Best (1954-1960)*
- *Leave it to Beaver (1957-1963)*
- *Donna Reed Show (1958-1966)*
- *Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*
- *Gunsmoke*
- *Lassie*
- *Danny Thomas Show*

Weeks 3-4: 1960s: Television in the Era of Revolutions & Social Movements**Main Points**

In the 1960s, networks asserted more control over content, established Standards and Practices offices to monitor scripts, assuming a protective role. By the late 60s, series like *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* and *Laugh-In* pushed hard against TV taboos, and their popularity meant that the networks loosened up some. The success of *All in the Family* furthered open up television's possibilities. (Kutulus, 139)

Readings

- Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, chapters titled "Mama Said," and "Genies and Witches,"
- Aniko Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement* (University of Illinois Press, 2012).
- Walter Metz, *Bewitched* (chapter titled, "Love the House, Hate the Work," (2005). (UF has an electronic copy.)

Featured shows

- *M*A*S*H* – critique of Vietnam War (although set during Korean War)
- *Bewitched/I Dream of Jeannie*—critique of patriarchy (assign chapter from Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, titled “Genies and Witches”)
- *Julia* (chapter from *Equal Time*)

Weeks 5-6: 1970s-1980s**Main Points**

- From the late 1960s on, media framed the evolution from Negro to Black, revealing... an increasingly assertive black voice commenting on the limits of white-majority culture. The first blacks in lead roles in movies and television during the 1960s (Sidney Poitier in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, and Diahann Carroll in *Julia*) were white-defined and inoffensive. Black playwright Clifford Mason complained of the “Sidney Poitier syndrome”: “A good guy in a totally white world...helping the white man solve the white man’s problem” (good description of Bill Cosby in *I Spy*). In the 1970s, there were more black characters with fully fleshed out lives—although most were engaged in pursuing some version of the American dream in difficult circumstances. *Sanford and Son* (another Lear creation) was set in Watts in LA; the family in *Good Times* lived in the Chicago Projects. Only the Jeffersons succeeded in “moving on up” as their theme song said. Fred Sanford had elements of the “consummate Trickster, shiftless and lazy; the actor who played George Jefferson, Sherman Hemsley had to be careful to keep George from being a cartoon. There was also the sassy African American woman who verbally undermined her man (evident in *Amos & Andy*, in the *Jeffersons*, in *Doonesbury*); early 1970s culture often emasculated black male characters into comic impotence to reassure white audiences that no race war or riot was forthcoming. Overall, white society remained more comfortable with achievement and assertion by black women than by black men (Kutulus, 112)

Nostalgia for the 1950s

In the wake of Watergate, other themes of Fifties life were again explored on screen, particularly the McCarthy blacklist, which was portrayed in the television docudrama, *Fear on Trial* (1975). These new depictions of McCarthyism in the 1970s offered the opportunity to investigate Nixon’s political origins and the beginnings of the national security state, after revelations of presidential and CIA abuses of power (in what was known as Watergate) had dominated the political life of the nation for several years. (Marcus, 230)

Featured Shows

- A Comic Look at Bigotry: *All in the Family* (1971-1979, CBS, creator Norman Lear)
- Educational Programming on PBS: *Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood* (1968-2001, NET, PBS, *Sesame Street* (1969-present, PBS and 2016-present-HBO, creator Joan Ganz Cooney)

(Can educational programming be entertaining? Does the entertainment value take away from the educational content?)

- Single Career-Girl Phenomenon: *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970-77, CBS)
- *Roots* (January 1977, ABC, 13-episode mini-series); revised popular cultural understanding of slavery, which had been indelibly shaped by the film *Gone With the Wind* (1939, first aired on television in 1976.) When Haley began his research for his family memoir, *Roots*, on which the mini-series was based, black history was just becoming a separate academic subfield; by the time he finished *Roots*, the academic subfield had come into its own (John Blassingame's *The Slave Community*, 1972, Lawrence Levine's *Black Culture, Black Consciousness* (1977); Eugene Genovese's *Roll Jordan Roll* (1974) Herbert Gutman's *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom* (1976)
- *Cagney and Lacey* (1982-88, CBS)
- *The Cosby Show*, 1984-1992, NBC, creators Bill Cosby, Ed. Weinberger, Michael Leeson)

Readings

- Elana Levine, *Wallowing in Sex: The New Sexual Culture of 1970s American Television* (UF has an online copy.) Best chapter is on how 70s soaps deal with rape.
- Josh Ozersky, *Archie Bunker's America: T.V. in an Era of Change*.
- Bonnie Dow, *Prime Time Feminism* (1996)
- Judy Kutulus, "Roots," *After Aquarius Dawned: How the Revolutions of the Sixties Became the Popular Culture of the Seventies* (2017)
- Morrow, Robert. W. "A New Bloom on the Wasteland," in *Sesame Street and the Reform of Children's Television*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, 47-66.

Week 7: 1980-90s: Looking Forward

(Innovation in Programming as cable TV begins to emerge)

Shows

- *Hill Street Blues* (1981-1987, NBC, Seven Bochco, creator; introduced multiple continuing subplots David Milch was a writer for it). Critics loved it but it was moderately rated.
- *Cheers* (1982-1993, NBC, Glen and Les Charles). A flop at first but it eventually became one of the most popular sitcoms of all time; although still traditional in that episodes were self-contained, nonetheless it was always aware of what had already happened to its characters, which is used in constructing jokes and character development. It paved the way for more heavily serialized sitcoms, like *Friends* and *Seinfeld*, and HBO comedies like *Arrested Development*, *the Office*, *Parks and Recreation*. "It helped condition viewers to the basic idea that TV shows were disposable, that it was possible to see characters transform beyond just seeing sitcom kids get older with each season." (Sepinwall, 11)
- Roseanne (1988-1997, ABC, Creator Matt Williams) premiered at the start of the 1988-89 season and by the end it was ranked as the No. 2 show in the country, right behind *The Cosby Show* (see Bianculli, p. 281)

- *Frank's Place* (1987, CBS, creator Hugh Wilson)
- *Lonesome Dove* (1989, 8 -hour mini-series. based on novel by Larry McMurty, western)
Could move it to the next week to pair with Dr. Quinn

Weeks 7- 8 Midterm

Weeks 9-11: 1990s

Main Points

- Impact of Fox and Cable networks on traditional television networks revolutionizes television programming—much broader range of programming (cable networks not beholden to corporate sponsorship market/audience fragmentation worked to their advantage—did not have to generate mass audiences, could create niches, could use profanity, nudity, sexuality and violence), War Channel, Sports Channel, Arts & Entertainment, etc., Emergence of 24-hour news cycle (CNN, Fox News)
- Sea change in structure of series— nuanced characters and story arcs that extend over a season and then multiple seasons

Featured Shows

- *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman* (1993-1998, CBS, created by Beth Sullivan, now avail thru Amazon Prime—still a “family show”)
- *The Simpsons* (1989-present, Fox, creator Matt Groening)
- *I'll Fly Away* (1991-1993, NBC)

TV Shows

- *The Simpsons* (1989-present, Fox, creator Matt Groening)
- *The Civil War* (Ken Burns, PBS, 1990 aired over five successive nights in late Sept 1990; there had been six previous Ken Burns documentaries televised on PBS, beginning with *Brooklyn Bridge*, 1981); this miniseries drew an unprecedented 31 million viewers.
- *Twin Peaks* (1990-91, ABC, creators Mark Frost, David Lynch)
- *OZ* (HBO)
- ***Homicide: Life on the Street* (1993-1999, NBC, Tom Fontana, producer David Simon writer, never a hit but it expanded the level of artistry.**
- ***NYPD Blue* (1993-2005, ABC, Stephen Bochco and David Milch). Protagonist, cop Andy Sipowicz was a deeply flawed character who in an earlier age would have been the villain but instead was portrayed with such shading, depth and empathy that audiences began rooting for him. A cop drama that was more adult in its use of language and nudity than anything before it.**
- *Ellen* (1994-98, ABC; DeGeneres character and then the actress came out as gay in 1997, “Puppy Episode,”)
- *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2001, WB, 2001-2003, UPN, creator Joss Whedon)— which it seems is the most studied TV show in history (Bianculli p. 405)

Weeks 12-13. 2000s. Imagined/rewritten histories**Main Points**

- Impact of HBO as an emerging premium channel changed programming on Cable/Streaming channels in significant ways—breakthrough programs for HBO were *The Sopranos* (1999-2007), *The Wire* (2002-2008) and *Deadwood* (2004-2006) (very good article by Jason Mittell, “The Wire in the Context of American Television” in Liam Kennedy and Stephen Shapiro, ed. *The Wire: Race, Class and Genre* University of Michigan Press, 2012), 15-32.

Featured Shows

- *Mad Men* (2007-2015, AMC, Creator Matthew Weiner)
- *Deadwood* (2004-6, HBO; Creator David Milch (Attempt to recreate with historical accuracy actual place and personages from the past. Gold discovered in 1874 in the Black Hills, and two years later miners established the town of Deadwood)
- *The Good Wife* (2009-2016, CBS, creators Robert and Michelle King)

Readings

TBD

Other TV Shows

- *The West Wing* (1999-2006, NBC, creator Aaron Sorkin)
- *The Sopranos* (1999-2007, HBO, creator David Chase)
- *The Wire* (2002-2008, HBO, creator David Simon)
- *Grey's Anatomy*, 2005-present, ABC)
- *Friday Night Lights* (2006-2011, NBC, creator Peter Berg)
- *Longmire* (A&E, Netflix; based on books by Craig Johnson)
- *Justified* (based on books by Elmore Leonard)
- *Damages* (2007-2012, FX)
- *Modern Family* (2009-present, ABC, creators Steve Levita, Christopher Lloyd)
- *Louie* (2010-, FX, creator Louie C.K.)
- *Downton Abbey* (2010-15, ITV (UK) and 2011-16, PBS, creator/writer Julian Fellowes)
- *Boardwalk Empire* (2010-2014, HBO)
- *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019, HBO, creator David Benioff)
- *This is Us* (2016-present, NBC, creator Dan Fogelman)

Weeks 14-15: 2019-**Main Point**

- There's so much good television, too much for even a professional critic to watch, making it increasingly difficult for “the best new shows,” to quote David Bianculli, “to be found, and sampled, much less supported and embraced” (8). In January 2016, FX's

researchers estimated the total number of prime-time scripted series on broadcast, cable, and streaming services in 2015 at 409, the most in television history, compared with 280 in 2010.

Week 16. **Last Week of Class (final assignment due)**