

SYLLABUS & Guidelines

Texts:

Fowles, Jib, (1992). *Why Viewers Watch*. Sage: Newbury Park
Paul Thaler, (1994). *The Watchful Eye*. Praeger: Westport, CT
Postman, Neil, (1985). *Amusing Ourselves To Death*. Penguin: NY
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I. ASSIGNED READINGS

Each class session will be devoted in part to class discussion of assigned readings. You will be advised regarding which book or chapters therein will be covered. You will be expected to have read the material and be prepared to discuss it.

II. NEWS ARTICLES AND SUMMARIES AND ANALYSES

A. Five times during the quarter you will hand in an article from any magazine, newspaper or other print medium which covers a topic that relates to television and its impact on viewers and our local or national culture. Articles dealing with demographics of casting, for example, are appropriate. (But television casting and subject matter change, often quite dramatically, from season to season. So, make sure that you are commenting on an article about casting that pertains to programs no earlier than 2001.)

B. What's an appropriate media psychology article as it pertains to television?

1. Specifically, newspaper or magazine reviews of television shows without some attempt to discuss its broader social significance would not be an appropriate submission. But a review which looks at a broader issue exemplified by the content of a storyline or casting or related matters would be appropriate. So too, news or magazine shows which cover socially significant issues are not by themselves appropriate submission topics. But if the show covers something about how television explores or portrays social issues, then it would be appropriate.

2. To further illustrate, innovations in how television presents or covers programs or breaking news such that this innovative way of coverage or presentation affects the future of how people will watch or appreciate television, might also constitute appropriate submissions. For example, how TV covers wars and how viewers have their attitudes and opinions shaped by this coverage would be a proper submission topic. To demonstrate the point further, an article about a crime reported on the news in L.A. is not appropriate for submission; but, an article about how the television portrays crime and its implications for viewers in L.A. is appropriate for submission.

3. Thus, the article should relate how, from a media psychology point of view, what is covered on television affects or has implications for individuals and society. This may be explicit in the article or you may be the one to see its relevance. (However, you must persuade me that your take on the article is, indeed, media psychology-relevant.) Either way, the explicit connection to media psychology must be made. Failure to include a section explicitly indicating that the next paragraph(s) cover why this is a media psychology article concerning television may lead to a poorer evaluation of the overall worth of the submission.

4. Articles are to be gleaned from the popular press not academic journals..

C. Technical Details

1. Each submitted article should be accompanied by a one-page TYPE-WRITTEN summary on a separate piece of paper along with your analysis of how the subject of the article relates to the psychological impact of television on viewers or on culture. Each of the five articles submitted should be at least 200 words in length (this refers to the news article, NOT YOUR SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS). You must hand in the complete article, including single or multiple-page articles, with your summary and analysis

2. The more thoughtful and informed your summary and personal analysis of the meanings and implications of the submitted article, the greater the likelihood for a higher grade to be received for that submission. Grades for each summary submission include: NA (not acceptable), OK, G (Good), VG (Very Good), and E (Excellent). It's a good idea to try and apply principles of media psychology or media literacy to your analysis of the article's meanings and implications. If you receive a grade of NA or OK, you may submit a revised or alternative article to improve your submission grade.

3. Some non-academic print sources that frequently contain articles about television and its impact on or reflection of society and social currents are: The L.A. Times, Variety, Hollywood Reporter, Boxoffice, Premier Magazine, The Washington Post, New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, St. Petersburg Times, USA Today, Boston Globe, Boston Herald, Ft. Worth Telegraph, Chicago Tribune, Time, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Reports, BrandWeek, MediaWeek, as well as most network .com sites, e.g., ABCNEWS.com. Many of these magazines and newspapers can be found online. Articles about television are most often found in entertainment sections and business sections of newspapers and magazines. Additional on-line sites as www.poynter.org/medianews and www.mediachannel.org are excellent resources. The total of five news articles must be submitted by the last week of regularly scheduled class. No more than two articles can be submitted in any given week. Hence, if you've missed handing in three articles by the end of the quarter, you can only hand in two and would get a zero for the third outstanding article.

4. All actual hard copy print articles should be stapled to a blank sheet of paper. On the paper there should be the complete reference to the article (e.g., publication, date, pages). Article facsimiles can contain the references on the margins.

III. QUIZZES

There will be three brief quizzes, each covering a book you have been assigned to read. Quiz dates will be announced in advance. Students who miss a quiz must make it up during the next week or receive a zero. A penalty of 10% off obtained score will be applied to a missed quiz unless a doctor's note is provided to account for the missed quiz.

IV. GROUP PROJECT AND FINAL TERM PAPER

There are 4 broadcast networks, CBS, NBC, ABC, FOX, and two "netlets" WB, UPN, that air programming during prime time television hours (8-11 PM). Your assignment ("should you accept it...") will entail monitoring prime time programs, e.g. fictional shows including series, Movies of the Week (MOWs) -- but not theatrical motion pictures --, animated shows appearing in prime time, so-called "Reality TV" and news magazine shows such as 20/20, 60 minutes 1 & 2, etc. Monitoring and tabulating aspects of show is designed to determine how the various social demographic groups are portrayed in terms of absolute numbers (frequency counts) and percentages or proportions.

A. Examples of Demographic Groups and Analyses:

Proportion of males vs. females
Ethnicity representations: Caucasian, Asian/Pacific African
American, Latino/Hispanic, American Indian.
Under 40 vs. Over 40
Socioeconomic status of leads
Ethnicity of upper, middle, low income characters.

B. Analysis would be broken down by

Lead Roles
Supporting Roles
Speaking Bit Parts

C. Other Breakdowns of possible interest

Demographics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity) of villains/bad people.
How small and big business people are portrayed.
How religion or clergy are portrayed.
How families are portrayed, e.g., nuclear, single-parent, unmarried couples, etc.
You may also as a group, or individually, choose to track the ways in which other groups than the ones mentioned above (e.g., Gays, Lesbians, disabled, body types, non-beautiful, etc.) and report them in your own individual analysis, more about which will be said below

D. Monitoring Groups

1. Class will break up into 4-5 monitoring groups.

2. Each group will take one of the networks or a group will take both netlets (as they don't have full programming ordinarily).
3. You will tape one week of programming in Prime Time (8-11) weekdays, randomly taking one day of the week each week such that in 5 weeks you will have 5 days of program content to analyze. This will end up yielding 15 hours of programming, excluding any showing of theatrically produced motion pictures.
4. You would begin your analysis and continue with a running analysis after the first day of programming is taped. This way you don't end up with all analysis having to be done AFTER the 5th week.
5. If, for some reason, such as dominating news or sports events, a network's usual program or programming is pre-empted, tape the usual shows the following week.

V. News Programs Alternative

Instead of tracking entertainment shows, groups can choose to monitor local news and network news on ABC, NBC, and CBS for one week, again, randomly picking one day of the weekday for five weeks. You would cover the late afternoon (5-6:30) and evening (11 PM) news programs, for a total news time of 2 hours per night per station.

A. You would record the following aspects or parameters of such news programs:

1. Gender and ethnicities of anchors and reporters (field, weather, sports, entertainment, etc.).
2. Total time devoted to actual news vs.. time devoted to commercials and bumpers and teasers (what stories will be covered in next segment or on next news show, i.e., attention-getting news coverage forecasts).
3. Proportion of news that is local vs. regional vs. national vs. international.
4. Proportion of news program that is devoted to actual news vs. sports vs. entertainment.
5. Age, ethnicity, gender of subjects featured in news stories, interviews, etc.
6. Age, ethnicity, and gender of on-camera experts interviewed for reports.
7. Any other demographic characteristic that your find relevant or interesting.

B. You will analyze programming in terms collected demographic criteria. I will provide you with relevant demographic statistics against which to compare your results, e.g., age of population, ethnic breakdown, gender breakdown.

C. Data analysis will be in terms of frequency counts and percentages or proportions. Based on material covered in class and in your review of previous research and literature on the subject, you will discuss your results in terms of how democratic or non-democratic television is in terms of proportionate and diverse representation of different groups AND whether or not proportionate or near-proportionate representation of significant demographic groups is necessary or desirable and, if so, why.

D. Each group will, ultimately, come up with common data for each of its members. But each group member will do individual write-ups and present it as their term paper. You will want to look at previous history of such demographics.

I will provide some material on that. And you will make your interpretations of the data and draw your own conclusions.

VI. Term Paper Particulars

Each student will do a term paper, minimum 10 pages in length, excluding title page and reference section. All papers must be typewritten, double-spaced with 1 inch side, top and bottom margins in 12 pt. font size. Reference style must!!! conform to APA publication style. If you don't know what this style is, look at any APA journal or check the APA publications manual available in the library. This is true especially as regards citing sources or references in body of paper as well as on Reference Page. Scrupulous attention should be paid to spelling, grammar and typing errors as they will significantly affect paper grade. Each paper is worth 100 points. Each grammatical, spelling or other related error will subtract one point from the paper. Each page less than 10 pages will reduce your total points by 10. You must have at least 5 separate references for you paper.

Final papers must be handed during the last day of regularly scheduled class, June 6th i.e., in the week before finals.. You will submit two copies of your paper. One will be returned to you with grade and comments, the other will be retained by me. Late papers will be marked down one/half a letter grade if one week late, one whole letter grade of two or more weeks late. The latter applies also to students who request and are granted an Incomplete grade.