

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
Department of Film & Television
COM FT 584E HW - The Creative Life in Television
Los Angeles Internship Program
5700 Wilshire Blvd – Suite 675
Los Angeles, California 90036
Fall 2015

Instructor: Marcia Lewis Smith
Office Telephone: 323.571.4535
E-mail: mls@sbcglobal.net
Schedule: Thursday 7:30pm-10:00pm

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Overview:

This is a "real-time" class that will follow the life and death of a television season. We will study what makes it on the air, why it gets there, who creates it, who sells it, who buys it and who is going to pay for it. The cultural forces that influence and shape creative choices; cultural, political and commercial, will be examined. The discussion is overlaid with the struggle of the networks to survive in a rapidly changing environment and in the face of new technologies. And as the networks and creators work to transform and adapt, we will look at the new opportunities this era of change offers for fresh talent.

Class will meet once a week for three hours. There are two formal papers: The Broadcast Day and the final paper, Show Redevelopment. There are also homework assignments that include written work and required viewing with assigned criteria for evaluating programs. In addition there will be reading that comes from current news and events in the industry. Recent examples are:

"Twitter Going Public", theverge.com, by Casey Newton - <http://www.theverge.com/2013/9/16/4735780/going-public-how-the-ipo-could-change-twitter>; "As TV Ratings Fall" by Brian Selter, New York Times - http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/13/business/media/tv-networks-face-falling-ratings-and-new-rivals.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 ;
"Netflix, the Secrets Behind the Coolest Kid on the Block", by Maria Elena Fernandez, NBC News - <http://www.nbcnews.com/entertainment/netflix-secrets-behind-coolest-kids-tv-block-8C11132450>;
"ABC Executive: Second Screen Apps Can be a Distraction", by Janko Roettgers, Gigaom - <http://gigaom.com/2013/09/11/abc-executive-second-screen-apps-can-be-a-distraction/>;
"The Showrunner Fallacy" by Craig Fehrman, New Republic - <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/113374/why-tv-critics-should-stop-focusing-showrunners>; "Post Water Cooler TV", by Lorne Manly, New York Times - <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/11/arts/television/how-to-make-a-tv-drama-in-the-twitter-age.html?pagewanted=all>

These are examples of timely articles that I will find and send to you for class study. You are expected to read, digest the material, analyze, and come in prepared to discuss.

NB: Your reading assignments will come from what I send you by email. There will be news articles, analysis and feature pieces sent to you for discussion in class. This comes to you by e-mail because it is current; CHECK YOUR E-MAIL daily for the specifics. The material is about what is happening in the industry as it happens. You will be expected to come in prepared for a rigorous dialogue of the reading that was sent. We will have guest speakers, working professionals, to share their creative and business experiences and do our own exercises in creative thinking.

Because of availability of speakers and the fact that all reading is pulled from current news and events, the syllabus will be adjusted accordingly. Breaking news and events will take precedence.

Course Objectives:

- To integrate and enhance internships by educating students about the current conditions and realities of television in terms of the creative process
- Become conversant in the television industry, familiar with names, positions and flow of the business from the creative side
- Provide a global view of the industry from professionals
- Expose students to the intricacies of decision making on a network and studio level
- Prepare students for opportunities in their chosen field

Contributing to the discussion is critical to your success in this course. If you want to earn a good grade, read what is assigned, think about it and come in prepared to discuss. Respond to my emails and articles. Take the initiative and send articles for the class. This class is a lot like life: you have to show up on time prepared to succeed.

Methodology

Class will include lecture, discussion, guest speakers, assigned writing projects, assigned viewing and reading. Based on availability, speakers might include: Sabrina Wind, Executive Producer, Desperate Housewives; Chuck Saftler; President of Program Strategy and COO of FX Networks; Jay Roewe, Sr. VP HBO; Justin Killion, VP Development - Original Productions; John Kelly, Co-Executive Producer – The Blacklist; Jennifer Celotta - Exec Producer, Writer, The Office; Brooke Karzen, Senior Vice President, Warner Horizon Television; Jason Sarlanis, VP ABC, Alternative Programming.

Because our speakers are working professionals, the order of this syllabus and the actual speakers booked are subject to change depending on their availability. The speakers indicated in this syllabus are intended to show the direction and subjects. They have all spoken to this class many times over the years and look forward to your participation.

Attendance

Attendance at all sessions (lectures, guest speakers, field trips) is mandatory. You are expected to be punctual. Absences are permitted with either a physician's note, a note from your supervisor at work or by permission of the instructor. Twenty-four hour notice is required via email. Unexcused absences will result in a loss of points per the teacher's discretion and could result in a half grade or more penalty.

Reading

Required Reading will be sent to you. It will be articles, analysis and features I choose to compliment and frame class discussions. Please check your email regularly. Refer to syllabus for examples indicated above. You will also be expected to read Weekly Variety; Daily Variety; The Hollywood Reporter; TV Week; Deadline Hollywood.

Suggested Reading:

These books are for context and an overview of the industry – books will be referenced throughout the semester:

"DisneyWar" by James Stewart, Simon & Shuster; ISBN 0-7432-8390-2

"The War for Late Night" by Bill Carter, Viking Penguin, ISBN 978-1-101-44342-2

"Desperate Networks" by Bill Carter, Broadway Books, ISBN 978-0-7679-2786-4

GRADING CRITERIA

Broadcast Day Schedule & Essay	15% (15 points)
Speaker Questions	15% (15 points)
Final Project: Show Redevelopment:	50% (50 points)
Attendance & Contribution*	20% (20 points)

*Contribution is defined as class interaction; email responses; initiative in finding articles for class to share
Per COM grading guidelines - percentage-based Grade Scale (%): A: 93 – 100 A-: 90 - 92.99 B+: 87 - 89.99
B: 83 - 86.99 B-: 80 -82.99 C+: 77 - 79.99 C: 73 - 76.99 C-: 70 - 72.99 D: 60 - 69.99 LATE WORK WILL BE

MARKED DOWN AT INSTRUCTORS DISCRETION.

PLAGIARISM - READ THIS, WE ARE SERIOUS

Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. Any kind of academic misconduct (cheating, plagiarism, buying a paper etc.) will result in the filing of academic misconduct charges. Any suspicious act/material/ etc. will be investigated to the fullest extent possible and those found guilty will be punished accordingly. YOU MUST READ AND COMPLY WITH BOSTON UNIVERSITY'S UNIVERSAL ACADEMIC CONDUCT CODE. It is available at: bu.edu/academics

Note: It is very easy for me to check for plagiarism on the Internet.

9.3.15 Class #1 Introduction: Defining Goals

Welcome and overview of course. Review grading matrix, assignments and expectations. Introduction of instructor and meeting fellow students. Discussion of internships and expectations for the semester from both students and teachers. Survey of the TV landscape: what they are watching, how they are watching.

READING: Check email for next week's reading and be prepared to discuss in next week's class. Reading will focus on the debuting TV season; anticipated hits and misses; overview of creators and producers

ASSIGNMENT: BROADCAST DAY - Grid + analysis; assume no creative restrictions - Create your own broadcast day from sign-on to sign-off. Create a channel, pick a day to program. Make a decision as to whether you are commercial broadcast, basic cable or premium HBO style cable. Think about who your audience is. Name your channel. Ideally, create original programming ideas for shows that are signature to your network and audience. Include a brief description of the show in the schedule. You can also choose from anything ever produced. Visit the Paley Center for Media to view shows in their library. **Do not use big hunks of sports programming, back to back blocks of the same show, repeat your morning programs from the day before in the morning and then add a new episode in the evening or movies to fill in real estate in your day.** That's lazy. Schedule should be presented in a typical TV grid format. It should be accompanied by a short essay explaining your channel, and flow from day part to day part, who your audience is and what day you are programming and why. Essay should be no less than 1,000 words. Broadcast Day will be presented in class. Be prepared to explain your choices.

DUE DATE: 9.17.15 BY EMAIL NO LATER THAN 7:30 PM

9.10.15 Class #2 The Season

DISCUSSION: We will discuss the reading sent and conduct a general appraisal and overview of what is going on in television as the new season rolls out. What are the trends? What are the anticipated breakout shows? Evaluation of creative content and direction of new shows: do they reflect the trends of previous seasons or break new ground? Would you have put it on the air? Class will select 2 shows to watch, one drama, one half hour comedy and then discuss in class.

ASSIGNMENT: Broadcast Day due next week. Expect to pitch it in class and explain your day.

READING: Check email for the week's reading and be prepared to discuss in next week's class.

9.17.15 Class #3 Broadcast Day

DISCUSSION: We will discuss the reading that was sent. Then you will pitch your broadcast day to the class and be prepared to explain and defend your choices.

READING: Check email for the week's reading and be prepared to discuss in next week's class.

9.24.15 #4 Class #4 Table Read

DISCUSSION: We will do a table read of a pilot script for a show premiering this season. This will be followed by a breakdown of story, characters, plot points, and other factors. If we were the producers or studio/network, what note might be given? Who would you cast? What kind of director would you look for?

READING: Check email for the week's reading and be prepared to discuss in next week's class.

10.1.15 Class #5 Watch Pilot and Table Read Show Analysis

Discussion: Having now watched the finished pilot, how did the executed show match up to the pilot script? Did the produced pilot exceed or fail the written script and how so? What changes were made? Why do you think they were changed? What influence did budget have? Did Standards and Practices require changes? What audience are they targeting?

ASSIGNMENT: Send three well thought out questions pertaining to next week's announced speaker. Do the research and be prepared to engage with speaker. I will read and send my notes and thoughts on your questions.

DUE DATE: 10.7.15 No later than noon.

10.8.15 Class #6 Speaker

Speaker will either be FX-FXX-FXM President of Program Strategy and COO, Chuck Saftler, or HBO Sr VP Series Production, Jay Roewe - Discussion will center on the creative process they go through in developing and producing a show. Challenges of producing series creatively and within a budget. How their studio development process works. How they work with producers and writers in the on-air phase. We will also have an in-depth discussion of their views and experience in the current state of television. Ask submitted questions.

ASSIGNMENT: Confirm your selection of show for final paper via email. It must be a show that debuts this season. The assignment: Final paper will be an examination of a show that you think can be improved with creative redevelopment. It is an exercise in reverse engineering. You will choose a show, evaluate and redevelop. All creative issues are on the table: casting, film v. tape, time slot, point of view, characters and their arcs, story structure, joke structure. This is an assignment about creative thinking. Paper should be double spaced, 12 pt. font and no more than 2,000 words and no less than 1,500 words. Do not use pictures. I don't need ratings - it is not about that. **Also - do not tell me what is wrong with a show without offering a solution. This isn't a critique, but a positive demonstration of imagination.** You will need to watch at least six episodes to be able to do this assignment and reference specific scenes to make your suggestions clear. If you have questions, ask me.

DUE DATE: 10.15.15

FINAL PAPER DUE 12.3.15

READING: Be prepared to discuss **10.15.15**

"Why We Don't Keep Our Copyright", by Craig Mazin -

<http://cc.bingj.com/cache.aspx?q=%22The+Way+It+Is+Without+Copyright%22&d=4530246747622954&mkt=en-US&setlang=en-US&w=Xyd4ALEvynEMHkDZZf4BW5sUHKOHPxnb>

"Authorship in the Digital Age – a talk by Howard Rodman" - <http://johnaugust.com/2007/authorship-in-the-digital-age>

"Public Domain Works Can be Copyrighted Anew, Supreme Court Rules" by Adam Liptak, New York Times - <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/19/business/public-domain-works-can-be-copyrighted-anew-justices-rule.html>

10.15.15 Class #7 Copyright

Discussion: Copyright is a core issue in terms of your creative life. Who owns your material? How do you get paid for it? What protections do you have? What are the rights and responsibilities of the public, the studios, the unions and the creator? We will discuss the pros and cons of work for hire, the impact of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) and the ramifications of copyright on creativity.

ASSIGNMENT: Send three well thought out questions pertaining to the next announced speaker. Do the research and be prepared to engage with speaker. I will read and send my notes and thoughts on your questions.

Due Date: 10.21 no later than Noon

10.22.15 Class #8 Speaker:

Speaker will either be Allyson Seeger [President of Sunday Night Films] and Mike Metz [writer], Bridget Kyle, [staff writer] or Jen Celotta [The Office].

ASSIGNMENT: Watch 1st selected show and be prepared to discuss. Class will focus on character introductions, plot set-up, execution of production, writing and direction. We will be able to evaluate its ratings and future.

DUE DATE: 10.29.15

10.29.15 Class #9 Analysis of 1st Premiering Show

DISCUSSION: Analysis of 1st selected premiering show. Class will focus on character introductions, plot set-up, execution of production, writing and direction.

ASSIGNMENT: Send three well thought out questions pertaining to the next announced speaker. Do the research and be prepared to engage with speaker. I will read and send my notes and thoughts on your questions.

DUE DATE: 11.4.15 No later than noon.

11.5.15 Class #10 Speaker:

Speaker will be either Jason Sarlanis, VP Development, ABC Alternative or Brooke Karzen, Sr VP Development, Warner Horizon Television. Discussion will be centered on Reality TV. Love it or hate it, this genre occupies nearly 50% of programming. Speakers will discuss how shows are cast and plotted, their approach to character development, the technical challenges of shooting as well as budget and other factors. Reality TV has the same core requirements of scripted: compelling characters, good storytelling and production value. Ask submitted questions.

ASSIGNMENT: Watch 2nd selected show and be prepared to discuss. Class will focus on character introductions, plot set-up, execution of production, writing and direction. We will be able to evaluate its ratings and future.

DUE DATE: 11.12.15

11.12.15 Class #11 – Why did they make this show? Or Speaker

DISCUSSION: Analysis of 2rd selected premiering show. Class will focus on character introductions, plot set-up, execution of production, writing and direction. We will be able to evaluate its ratings and future.

ASSIGNMENT: Reminder – FINAL PAPER DUE 12.3.15 by email no later than 7:30

11.19.15 Class #12 - NO CLASS – MANDATORY BU EVENT

11.26.15 Class #13 THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS –

12.3.15 FINAL CLASS Ask me anything. TURN IN YOUR FINAL PAPER BY EMAIL NO LATER THAN 7:30 pm

Last class - ask final questions, prepare for the future.

