

## **LSP 112 – Focal Point Seminar: Soap Operas**

Instructor: Prof. Blair Davis

Office: 1102, 14 E. Jackson Blvd.

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs Noon to 1 pm.

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### **Course Description:**

This course will use the phenomenon of the soap opera as a way of exploring larger issues of culture, literary studies and visual media. Soap operas have had a longstanding media presence across multiple forms – several soap operas that began on radio in the 1930s and 40s made their way to television in the 1950s, numerous programs that began on television in the 1970s are still ongoing decades later, while the 1970s soap opera *Dark Shadows* was recently adapted into a feature film. Furthermore, soap opera aesthetics have made their way into such diverse media forms as prime-time television dramas and comic books, as the combination of serialized narratives and melodramatic plot structures has proven increasingly popular among a wide range of audiences.

Undertaking a threefold approach through cultural studies, literary studies and media studies, students will examine what soap operas can tell us about how we understand such issues as gender, class, race, sexuality, love and death. We will also use the soap opera as a way of analyzing how readers engage with imagery and meaning via the written word, and by comparison how representation is constructed in media such as film and television. Students will be required to participate regularly in class discussions with both the instructor and their peers, as we engage in close readings of a variety of literary and visual texts. This course will emphasize seminar discussion, both among students and with the instructor. Students will also ‘workshop’ completed papers as well as work-in-progress with their peers and the instructor in various weeks as a way of building skills in essay outline and thesis development, preparation and editing of essay drafts, and the considerations involved in the use of primary and secondary sources.

NOTE: Students are required to regularly watch the daytime soap opera *The Young and the Restless* on CBS for the duration of the course. Students should therefore have regular access to the show via cable television or the internet (I.e. CBS.com).

### **Readings**

- 1.) *To Be Continued... Soap Operas Around the World*, Ed. Robert C. Allen, Routledge, 1995.
- 2.) *She-Hulk by Dan Slott: The Complete Collection Vol. 2*, Marvel Comics, 2014
- 3.) Select articles will also be made available on electronic reserve for certain weeks

### **Assignments**

Short ‘Warm-Up’ Assignment – 2 pages (10%): This assignment requires students to write a subjective reflection of why this course topic appeals to them (I.e. why do soap operas interest you personally). We will use this piece later in the course as a way of comparing subjective writing with the objective process inherent in academic essay writing.

Cultural analysis assignment – 4 pages (25%): This assignment requires students to critically examine the cultural significance of soap operas, using course texts in conjunction with other scholarly sources. Students will revise their assignment in response to the instructor’s comments. Students will also ‘workshop’ their papers with their peers and with the instructor.

Media analysis – 6 pages (30%): This assignment requires students to critically evaluate one soap opera, using a combination of primary and secondary sources in support of their analysis. Students must use at least one of the two readings from weeks 8 & 9 available on reserve in addition to other scholarly sources.

Group Presentation – 20%: In small groups, students will prepare a 15-minute presentation in which they compare and analyze the connections between each member’s media analysis essay topic.

Professionalism – 15%: Students are required to participate in both large and small group discussions, as well as attend class regularly. It is required that each student will also post two discussion questions based on each week’s readings to D2L. Students also must bring sufficiently developed drafts of upcoming assignments to share with their peers during particular ‘workshop’ weeks. There will also be unannounced quizzes in certain classes to ensure that screenings of *The Young and the Restless* and/or class readings are being completed.

## **Grade Scale**

93-100 A, 90-92 A-, 88-89 B+, 83-87 B, 80-82 B-, 78-79 C+, 73-77 C, 70-72 C-, 68-69, D+, 60-67 D, 0-59 F

## **Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students will discuss and analyze work from at least three different fields in their written work for the course.
2. Students will participate actively in advancing the collective intellectual understanding of the course topic through class discussions.
3. Students will be able to distinguish between primary and secondary sources, and to assess varying degrees of mediation and interpretation in specific source materials.
4. Students will construct arguments based on evidence and the work and interpretations of other sources.
5. Students will revise papers in response to the instructor’s comments.
6. Students will produce a project with a central argument, in which all parts of the project support the central argument.

### **Writing Expectations:**

The Focal Point Seminar is designated a writing intensive course in the Liberal Studies Program; assignments are designed to develop writing skills. A minimum of 12-20 pages of writing is required with at least one piece of formal writing that goes through a revision process based on feedback from the instructor.

### **Course Schedule**

#### **Week 1 – Introduction to Focal Point / Why Soap Operas?**

Readings: Robert C. Allen, “Introduction” (*To Be Continued...*)

#### **Week 2 – The Culture of Soap Operas: Representation, Gender and Sexuality**

Readings: Charlotte Brundson, “The role of soap opera and the development of feminist television scholarship” (*To Be Continued...*); Joy V. Fuqua, “There’s a Queer in my soap!: The homophobia/AIDS story-line in *One Life to Live*” (*To be Continued*)

#### **Week 3 - The Culture of Soap Operas: Globalization, Race and Identity**

Readings: Ana M. Lopez, “Our Welcome Guests: Telenovas in Latin America” (*To Be Continued...*); Jesus Martin-Barbero, “Memory and Form in the Latin American Soap Opera” (*To Be Continued...*)

#### **Short Assignment Due**

#### **Week 4 - The Culture of Soap Operas: Fandom and Spectatorship**

Readings: Louise Spence, “‘They killed off Marlina, but she’s on another show now’: Fantasy, reality and pleasure in watching daytime soap operas” (*To Be Continued...*); Daniel Miller, “The consumption of soap opera: *The Young and the Restless* and mass consumption in Trinidad” (*To Be Continued...*)

#### **Workshop #1 – Essay preparation**

#### **Week 5 – Soap Operas and Literary Studies: Narrative, Characterization**

Readings: Jeremy G. Butler, “‘I’m not a doctor, but I play one on TV’: Characters, actors and acting in television soap opera” (*To Be Continued...*); Louise Spence, *Watching Daytime Soap Operas*, Chapter 3,

pp. 114-139 ('Characters,' 'Dialogue and its Performance,' 'Common Rhetorical Tropes') - available on D2L.

Cultural analysis assignment due

### **Week 6 – Soap Operas and Literary Studies: Superheroes & Romance**

Readings: *She-Hulk*

Workshop #2 – Essay revision

### **Week 7 – Soap Operas & Media Studies: Radio Soaps**

Readings: Roger Hagerdorn, "Doubtless to be continued: A brief history of serial narrative" (*To Be Continued...*)

Revision of Cultural analysis assignment due

### **Week 8 – Soap Operas & Media Studies: Television Soaps from Daytime to Primetime**

Readings: *No End to Her*, Chapter 3 ('The Fantasy Female Subject After 1978') – available on D2L

### **Week 9 – Soap Operas & Media Studies: *Dark Shadows* from TV to Film**

Readings: Rick Worland, "*Dark Shadows* 1970: Industry, Anxiety and Adaptation," *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 2012 – available on D2L

Workshop #3 – Group Presentation preparation

### **Week 10 – Conclusions / Group Presentations**

Media analysis assignment due / Group Presentation due

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## **CLASS POLICIES**

### **CELLPHONES**

With the exception of scheduled breaks, the use of cellphones not permitted in class, including screenings. Please turn off your cell phones prior to the start of class unless you have the permission of the instructor. Cellphone use of any kind in class will negatively affect your Professionalism grade.

## **PREPARATION & READING STRATEGIES**

Please complete all readings assigned for a given week prior to the start of class, so that you will already have a context for understanding the course material before we discuss it. I recommend taking notes while you read, such as key ideas and concepts, as well as making a list of questions regarding aspects of the material that are unclear to you or that you find interesting, challenging or enlightening. Note that completing the readings prior to each class is part of your professionalism grade. If it becomes clear to me during class that you haven't done the readings you will lose part of that grade.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Class attendance is required. Promptness is expected as a general rule. If you are consistently late to class your grade will be negatively affected. Attending class means arriving on time and staying until class is finished. Arriving late to class or leaving class early will negatively affect your Professionalism grade, and two such instances will count as one absence. Changes in work schedules, personal celebrations (e.g., birthdays, etc.), assignments due in other classes, car problems/transit congestion, etc. are NOT considered to be legitimate reasons for being late/missing class/missing deadlines, etc. Please allow extra time in your travel schedule to accommodate things like transit delays, traffic, etc.

If you miss a class, even due to illness, I am not able to give you the lecture notes, so please make arrangements with someone in the class to get their notes from them.

You are allowed one unexcused absence in this class, and two absences total if at least one of those is excused (e.g., you have documentation about a medical illness/emergency, legal issue/civic responsibility, or due to an official DePaul function). Further absences will result in the following actions:

2 absences                      Professionalism marks lowered by two letter grade (i.e., A- => B)

3 absences                      Professionalism marks lowered by three letter grades (i.e., A- => B-)

***Students who miss more than three days of class will receive a zero on their Professionalism grade.***

## **MAKE-UP EXAMS, TESTS, QUIZZES, ETC.**

There will be NO makeup tests, exams, presentations, quizzes or other class activities. If you miss a class activity you will receive zero marks. Exceptions may be made at the instructor's discretion for legitimate and unforeseen *documented* medical reasons or extenuating circumstances such as a death in the family or

official DePaul function. In such a case, it is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor immediately and make arrangements to provide any required documentation (I.e. a doctor's note, death certificate, etc.). Exceptions cannot be made if the student does not submit such documentation within a reasonable time frame.

Note that alternative arrangements for scheduled final exams will NOT be made for anything other than unforeseen *documented* medical reasons or extenuating circumstances such as a death in the family. Travel plans such as vacations, family functions, or the need to book a less expensive travel ticket are not legitimate excuses and will not be accommodated. If you are unable to write an exam during the scheduled time you should choose another course that better fits your schedule.

### **ASSIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS/DEADLINE**

Assignments must be handed in on time, at the start of the class in which they are due. Assignments handed in after the start of class will be considered late. Late penalties will be applied at the instructor's discretion to any assignments handed in late. ***You will lose one letter grade per day late on the assignment.***

***Assignments that are more than one week late will NOT be accepted and you will receive a zero.***

Please allow yourself sufficient time to complete the last-minute details and to arrive in class on time: late assignments due to computer and printing problems and transportation troubles will unfortunately not be exempt from receiving a late penalty.

All papers should be typed, double-spaced throughout the entire essay, and use a consistent style (e.g., MLA, APA, etc.). Use one-inch margins and 12-point font.

***All assignments must be submitted to the appropriate D2L dropbox. Assignments will automatically be run through a plagiarism detector.***

***Assignments will typically be graded/returned to you within one week of their due date.***

### **ACCOMODATION FOR DISABILITIES**

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussion will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most reasonable accommodation based on your needs, contact me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week or two of the course – note that accommodations cannot be made retroactively once assignments, exams etc. have already been completed) and be sure to contact the following office for support and additional services:

Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD)

#370, Student Center, LPC, [773.325.1677](tel:773.325.1677)

## **RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR**

Please respect the contributions of others in the classroom and/or online by not using insulting/inflammatory or discriminatory rhetoric. Class space (both in person and online) is intended to be a safe space for personal reflection and growth, so it is essential that the opinions of others be treated respectfully even if you do not agree with them. Students must therefore engage in respectful and professional in-class and online conduct (which also includes the use of proper grammar when replying online - I.e. please avoid excessive use of abbreviations, emoticons, etc. – full sentences should be used.)

When the instructor or another student is addressing the class, everyone else in the room is expected to listen attentively and to refrain from engaging in conversations or any other activities that constitute distractions. Students who do not abide by this guideline will not be permitted to continue with the course.

## **E-MAIL**

I often send e-mail announcements to the class. You need to (1) make sure your preferred email address in Campus Connect is the address you check regularly so messages do not bounce back and (2) make sure my email address will pass through your spam filter. Please be aware that to avoid DePaul's spam filters, it is recommended that you send me messages using a DePaul email account, as messages sent through Hotmail, Yahoo and other such accounts regularly get quarantined.

I typically respond to emails within 24 hours, Monday to Friday. I do my best to respond to emails on the weekend, but this time is reserved first and foremost for my family, so cannot guarantee an immediate response. If you have not heard from me within this timeframe, you should assume that your email has not reached me and resend.

## **ONLINE EVALUATIONS**

One of your responsibilities in this course is to complete an online teaching evaluation for this class. This course will be available for you to review during the 9th and 10th week of the quarter. Close to that time, you will receive a notification to this effect via email.

As instructors, we really appreciate learning what we are doing well in the classroom and where we can continue to improve. Your feedback really makes a difference.

## **DEPAUL UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY**

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of

knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html> for further details.

The DePaul Student Handbook defines plagiarism as follows: "Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following: (a) The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or in part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's. (b) Copying of any source in whole or in part with only minor changes in wording or syntax even with acknowledgement. (c) Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment which has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency. (d) The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement." If you are unsure of how to cite a source, please ask!

Violations of DePaul's Academic Integrity Policy will be reported to the Academic Integrity Board. Violation will result in severe penalty, up to and including failure of the assignment/exam or the entire course, at the instructor's discretion.

## **CITATION STYLE**

Students must cite in their papers according to the Chicago Manual of Style, which is the primary citation style in the field of media studies. The use of other citation styles are not permitted. See the following website for specific examples of how to cite your sources using Chicago Style:

[http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

## **POLICY ON INCOMPLETE (IN) GRADES**

Undergraduate and graduate students have two quarters to complete an incomplete. At the end of the second quarter (excluding summer) following the term in which the incomplete grade was assigned, remaining incompletes will automatically convert to "F" grades. In the case of the Law School incompletes must be completed by the end of the semester following the one in which the incomplete was assigned. Ordinarily no incomplete grade may be completed after the grace period has expired. Instructors may not change incomplete grades after the end of the grace period without the permission of a college-based Exceptions Committee. This policy applies to undergraduate, graduate and professional programs. NOTE: In the case of a student who has applied for graduation and who has been approved for an Incomplete in his or her final term, the incomplete must be resolved within the four-week grace period before final degree certification.



## **ASSISTANCE WITH WRITING**

For help with organizing your ideas, grammar, citing sources, and avoiding plagiarism, I encourage you to consult DePaul's Center for Writing-Based Learning. The center offers both on-campus and online tutoring. See <http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/>