

**New York University | Department of Media, Culture, and Communication
MCC-UE 1302-001: Senior Seminar: Transmedia Television, Fall 2013**

Monday, 5:00-7:30pm
Location: GODD B04

Instructor: Melanie Kohnen
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Office: East Building, 239 Greene St., Room 723
Office hours: Wednesday, 4:15-5:30pm and by appointment

Course Description and Goals:

In this class, we will take an in-depth look at how the production, distribution, promotion, and consumption of television has changed over the past decade. We will examine the television industry and television programming in the context of post-network television (a term that comprises, among other things, the emergence of original programming in basic and premium cable) and convergence culture (the increasing overlap of television and digital media, including DVDs, streaming video, DVRs, and the changing relationships between producers and viewers of television). Specifically, we will look at the increasing use of transmedia storytelling as part of television programming.

Henry Jenkins defines transmedia storytelling in the following way:
Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get *dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels* for the purpose of creating *a unified and coordinated entertainment experience*. Ideally, each medium makes its own *unique contribution* to the unfolding of the story ([source](#)).

Our main case studies include transmedia for *Lost* (ABC, 2004-2010) and *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011-present). Both programs feature ensemble-driven serialized narratives that take place in expansive storyworlds; these factors make them ideal candidates for transmedia storytelling. We will examine how the context of network and premium cable shapes each program's transmedia, and how, in turn, each program's transmedia reaffirms or transforms its network's/channel's brand. In addition, we will collaboratively analyze several other transmedia campaigns to gain a deeper understanding of the goals and characteristics of transmedia storytelling. We will also examine if transmedia helps to address television's lingering problems with representing diversity. If transmedia storytelling expands the storyworld of a TV program, does it also offer new ways of imagining or representing race, gender, and sexuality? Finally, we will take a look at the tensions that arise when audience and industry investments in transmedia clash and diverge.

Required Texts:

All readings are available online or as PDFs on NYU Classes.

Assignments and Requirements:

Reading Responses:

You will complete weekly reading responses that serve as foundation for our discussions.

Research Paper

An original research paper on a topic of your choice related to transmedia television. Your paper will present a critical analysis of your chosen program and its transmedia extensions. You can focus either on officially produced transmedia or on fan-authored transmedia.

Transmedia Project

For your final project, you take up the roles of transmedia producers with the goal of creating a transmedia component for a television show that is currently on the air. For this project, you will also write a project statement that contextualizes your decisions and plans in the academic discussion of transmedia and post-network television. This project requires you to address different audiences (an academic community and an imagined community of TV producers), to craft convincing arguments based on primary and secondary sources, and to create a website. You will draw connections among all previous units of the course and thus gain a deeper understanding of television as a medium, as a cultural force, and as an economic institution.

Participation and Collaborative Analyses:

In-class discussions are an important aspect of this course. Consequently, your participation is crucial to the overall success of the class. You are expected to keep up with the readings and come to class prepared for discussion. This means you should not only have completed the readings, but be ready to discuss and engage the reading's major arguments—the reading responses will help you with accomplishing that. During class discussions, I will frequently ask you to suggest passages that we should examine in more detail; you should be able to identify these passages quickly by either underlining, marking the page, or taking notes in advance of class.

Good participation means contributing thoughtful comments and questions that refer to readings, screenings, and core concepts during our class discussion. The quality of your remarks is at least as important as the quantity of your remarks.

During a number of classes, we will collaborate on analyses of transmedia storytelling campaigns. During class, you will work in groups to analyze various aspects of a specific campaign and compile your findings in a shared Google doc that consists of text, images, screenshots, links, and video. Your contributions to these collaborative analyses also count toward your participation grade.

Assignment Schedule

If not specified otherwise, all assignments are due at 11:59PM on the due date.

Extensions are only available in the case of dire personal circumstances, and you must contact me at least 24 hours before the deadline. If you don't contact me 24hrs before the deadline and don't submit an assignment, you will not receive any points.

Assignment	Due Date	Points
Participation	Ongoing	100
Reading Responses	Ongoing	200

Research Paper Outline+Annotated Bibliography	10/11/13	100
Research Paper Final	11/01/13	200
Transmedia Project Draft	11/25/13 (in class)	100
Transmedia Project Final	12/11/13	200
Transmedia Pitch	12/09/13	100
Total		1,000

Grade Breakdown:

1,000 points = 100%

A = 94-100

A- = 90-93

B+ = 87-89

B = 84-86

B- = 80-83

C+ = 77-79

C = 74-76

C- = 70-73

D+ = 65-69

Overall Evaluation Criteria:

A= Excellent

This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions, lectures and readings. Writing is clear, analytical and organized. Arguments offer innovative insights, specific examples, and concisely evaluate evidence.

Students who earn this grade for participation are consistently prepared for class, synthesize course materials effectively, and relate it to relate it to other material (e.g. other course readings, discussions, experiences, etc.). They also keep the in-class analysis focused, respond very thoughtfully to other students' comments, and contribute to the cooperative argument-building during discussions and transmedia campaign analyses.

B=Good

This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly, but leans toward broad analysis rather than innovative perspectives.

Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful. Students offer questions, interpretations, and analysis of reading (more than just facts) to class; they also actively participate in transmedia campaign analyses.

C=Average

This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague, tangential and/or features significant grammar and spelling mistakes. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis, and features misunderstandings of key concepts/theories.

Classroom participation is inarticulate, superficial, infrequent and/or distracted (by texting or internet usage unrelated to class during discussions and group work). Students who earn this grade offer straightforward information (e.g. straight from the reading) without elaboration or interpretation.

D= Unsatisfactory

This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattention to detail, misunderstand course material and overlook significant themes.

Classroom participation is spotty, unprepared, and off-topic.

F=Failed

This grade indicates a failure to participate and/or incomplete assignments

Course Policies:

A Note on Laptops and Cell Phone Usage

You are encouraged to bring an internet-enabled device to every class--many of our readings are available in digital formats, after all. It is your responsibility to monitor your use of the internet, texting, etc. in class. You should be mindful of where your attention is during class time (hint: it should be focused on the discussion that's happening among the people in the room). You should feel free to look up information online that is relevant to in-class activities and share this information with the class.

I will ask you to put away your laptops etc. during certain screenings to make sure your entire focus is on the TV program we are watching together.

Please also consult [the Laptop Facts PDF](#). This hand-out was put together by former MCC student Ben Zweig.

Absences

Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed one unexcused absence during the semester (if your unexcused absences exceed that limit, you put yourself at risk of failing the course). All other absences must be for valid, non-academic reasons, such as medical emergencies (confirmed by a doctor's note) or religious holidays.

If you miss class, it is your responsibility to catch up on the work we have done during class. Also note that showing up more than ten minutes late to class automatically translates into an unexcused absence for that class meeting.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do, from taking exams to making oral presentations to writing term papers. It requires that you recognize and

acknowledge information derived from others and take credit only for ideas and work that are yours.

You violate the principle of academic integrity when you

- cheat on an exam,
- submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors,
- receive help on a takehome examination that calls for independent work, or
- plagiarize.

Plagiarism is failure to properly assign authorship to a paper, a document, an oral presentation, a musical score, and/or other materials that are not your original work. You plagiarize when, *without proper attribution*, you do any of the following:

- copy verbatim from a book, an article, or other media;
- download documents from the Internet;
- purchase documents;
- report from others' oral work;
- paraphrase or restate someone else's facts, analysis, and/or conclusions; or
- copy directly from a classmate or allow a classmate to copy from you.

Please consult Steinhardt's policy for more information:

http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity

Student Resources:

Students with physical or learning disabilities are required to register with the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities](#), 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980) and are required to present a letter from the Center to the instructor at the start of the semester in order to be considered for appropriate accommodation.

Reading Schedule

The essays and books listed under "further reading" allow you to get a deeper insight into the topic of the week and are useful for your research paper and final project. You can find PDFs for essays listed under "further reading" on NYU Classes.

Week 1: Defining Transmedia

9/9

Screening: The Hollywood Geek Elite Debates the Future of Television

Jenkins, Henry. [Transmedia Storytelling 101](#) and [Transmedia 202: Further Reflections](#)

Johnson, Derek. [A History of Transmedia Entertainment](#). Online supplement to Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green. *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked World*. NYU Press, 2013.

Further Reading:

Henry Jenkins' [blog post](#) on the Hollywood Geek Elite Panel (includes partial transcript)

Week 2: Transmedia in the Context of Post-Network Television

9/16

Collaborative Analysis: Transmedia for the new TV season

Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green. "The Value of Media Engagement." In: *Spreadable Media*: 113-152.

Clark, M.J. "Introduction." In: *Transmedia Television: New Trends in Network Serial Production*. Bloomsbury, 2013: 1-25.

Gillan, Jennifer. "Introduction: It's Network TV." In: [Television and New Media: Must-Click TV](#). (e-book available via Bobcat) Routledge, 2010: 1-26.

Manly, Lorne. [Post-Water Cooler TV: How to Make TV Drama in the Twitter Age](#) (Showrunner roundtable). New York Times, 08/09/2013.

Further Reading/Viewing:

Caldwell, John. Introduction to *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*. Duke University Press, 2008.

Lotz, Amanda. [The Television Will Be Revolutionized](#). (e-book available via BobCat). NYU Press, 2007.

Newman, Michael and Elana Levine. Introduction to [Legitimizing Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status](#). (e-book available via BobCat) Routledge, 2012.

Ross, Sharon. [Television's Invitation to Participate](#). Online supplement to *Spreadable Media*. 2013.

[The End of Television as We Know It?](#) (video from the Annenberg Innovation Lab Summit at USC, May 2013).

Week 3 Transmedia and Network Television: The Case of *Lost*

9/23

Screening: *Lost*, Pilot.

Mittell, Jason. "Transmedia Storytelling." In: *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling*. Forthcoming from NYU Press. (24 pages)

Abbott, Stacey. "How *Lost* Found Its Audience: The Making of a Cult Blockbuster." In: *Reading Lost* (2009), 9-27.

Further Reading:

Abba, Tom. "Hybrid Stories: Examining the Future of Transmedia Narrative." *Science Fiction Film and Television* 2.1 (Spring 2009): 59-75.

Forensic fandom/ARG websites: argnet.com; <http://forums.unfiction.com/forums/>

Reminder: Friday, 10/26, is Digital Day at the New York Television Festival.

Week 4 Transmedia and Network Television: The Case of *Lost*, II

9/30

Screening: *Lost*, "Orientation" or "A Tale of Two Cities"

Aaron, Smith. Ch. 4, [Lost in a Transmedia Universe](#) and Ch.5, [Lost's Transmedia Lessons: Five Takeaway Techniques](#). In: *Transmedia Storytelling in Television 2.0* (2009)

Further Reading/Viewing:

Long, Geoffrey. *How To Ride a Lion: A Call for a Higher Transmedia Criticism*. [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#). (2012).

[We're Looking for Characters](#). Panel at [Transmedia, Hollywood 2](#) (2011).

Week 5 Transmedia Behind the Scenes

10/07

Collaborative Analysis: *Bag of Bones* (A&E, 2011)

Gray, Jonathan. "In the DNA: Creating Across Paratexts." In: *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts*. NYU Press, 2010: 207-223.

Gray, Jonathan. "Transmedia Architectures of Creation: An Interview with Ivan Askwith." In: Gray, Jonathan and Derek Johnson (eds). *A Companion to Media Authorship*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2013: 314-324.

[Transmedia Storytelling, Fan Culture and the Future of Marketing](#) (an interview with Andrea Phillips, author of *A Creator's Guide to Transmedia Storytelling*). Knowledge@Wharton, 07/03/2012.

Further Reading/Viewing:

[Glossary: Terms and Resources](#). Transmedia Multiplatform Convergent Kit.

[The Future of Serialized Storytelling](#). Panel at Futures of Entertainment 5, MIT, 2011.

Friday, 10/11: Research Paper Outline and Annotated Bibliography due at midnight

Week 6

10/14 Fall Break

Week 7 Transmedia and Premium Cable: The Case of *Game of Thrones*

10/21

Guest Speaker: Myles McNutt

McNutt, Myles. [Achieving Authenticity: Unboxing the \(Unboxing of\) *Game of Thrones*' Maester's Path](#). February 2011.

McNutt, Myles. [A Box of Influence: *Game of Thrones*, Social Media, and the Uncertain Quest for Social Capital](#). March 2013.

Making of *Game of Thrones*: Official Production Diary. [A Taste of Westeros Coming to a City Near You](#). March 2011.

Kellog, Carolyn. [Game of Thrones Food Trucks Head to NY and LA](#). *LA Times* Blog, March 2011.

Further Reading/Viewing:

['Game of Thrones' – An Interactive Case Study](#). (Video)

Game of Thrones Transmedia White Paper (PDF)

Week 8 Transmedia and Branding: HBO and *Game of Thrones*

10/28

Screening: *Game of Thrones*, "Winter is Coming"

McCabe, Janet and Kim Akass "Sex, Swearing and Respectability: Courting Controversy, HBO's Original Programming and Quality TV." In: [Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond](#). (e-book available via BobCat). I.B. Tauris, 2007: 62-77.

Friday, 11/01: Research Papers due at midnight

Week 9 Transmedia Tensions: When Industry and Audience Interests Collide

11/04

Transmedia Project Overview + Brainstorming.

Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green. Excerpt from "Designing for Spreadability." In: *Spreadable Media*: 195-204.

Scott, Suzanne. "Authorized Resistance: Is Fan Production Frakked?" In: *Cylons in America: Critical Studies in Battlestar Galactica* (2007), 210-224.

Wood, Meghan, and Linda Baughman. "Glee Fandom and Twitter: Something New or More of the Same Old Thing?" *Communication Studies* 63:3 (2012): 328-344.

Kohnen, Melanie. [Creating a Spark: Official and Fan-Produced Transmedia for The Hunger Games](#). *Antenna*, May 2012.

Further Reading:

Hanna, Erin. The Fan Convention as Industry Space, [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#). *Antenna*, July 2013.

Russo, Julie Levin. [Hera Has Six Mommies \(A Transmedia Love Story\)](#) *Flow* 7:14 (January 2008).

Week 10: Inclusions and Exclusions in Transmedia Storytelling

11/11

Guest speaker: Suzanne Scott

Johnson, Derek. "Devaluing and Revaluing Seriality: The Gendered Discourses of Media Franchising." *Media, Culture, and Society* 33:7 (2011): 1077-1093.

Further Reading:

McNutt, Myles. [One World, Two Ways In \(For Some\): SyFy's Defiance](#). *Antenna*, February 2013.

Week 11: Beyond Divides? Collaborative Transmedia Storytelling

11/18

Screening: *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*

Stein, Louisa. "#BowDown to Your New God: Misha Collins and Decentered Authorship in the Digital Age." *A Companion to Media Authorship*: 403-426.

Stein, Louisa. [Embracing Fan Creativity in Transmedia Storytelling](#). *Antenna*, August 2013.

Week 12 (Thanksgiving)

11/25

Draft Meetings

Week 13

12/02

Guest Speaker: Steve Coulson, Creative Director, Campfire NYC

Collaborative Analysis: *Hunted* (Cinemax and BBC, 2012)

Week 14

12/09 Transmedia Project Presentations