

## Melanie E.S. Kohnen | Video Essay Thesis Project for Television and American Culture

Class Vimeo Channel: <https://vimeo.com/channels/1438679>

### Timeline (abbreviated overview of individual assignments):

#### Videographic Exercises: Weeks 1-3

Exercise I: 60 seconds/10 clips of 6 seconds each

Exercise II: Trailer

Exercise III: Epigraph

#### Proposal due: Week 5

- Outline your topic, preliminary thesis, examples/case studies, five scholarly sources, answer to the "so what?" question, and the format of your project.

Week 6: Individual meetings with students to discuss their thesis proposal.

#### Vid or Video Case Study: Week 7

- If you choose the video essay, you will create a 3-4min remix video/fan vid that introduces the major themes of your source text. This format forces you to hone your editing skills and think about how you can convey ideas using only images and music.
- If you choose the research project, you will create a video of 2-3 clips representing your source text and write a 500-word analysis of these clips. This format forces you to think about how to write concisely about details of your case studies.

#### Literature review: Week 9

- In 2,000 words, address 2 books and 3 peer-reviewed articles or book chapters from essay collections on your topic. You should mention each author and book/essay title, then provide a brief summary of their book/article, and then highlight more specific arguments that are particularly relevant to your case studies. The purpose of a literature review is to inform readers of the significant knowledge and ideas that have been established on a topic.

**We will discuss examples of proposals, vids/video case studies, and lit reviews in class.**

#### Week 11: Video Essay Deep Dive

This week, we will watch and discuss select video essays together to prepare you for the final push in finishing your thesis projects.

**Week 12:** First 5min/5 pages due (Pass/Fail). We will workshop and peer review your first sections.

**Week 13:** First 10min/10 pages due. (Pass/Fail)

**Week 14:** Full draft due. (Graded)

**Capstone presentations:** Monday, April 28, and Wednesday, April 30.

**Final thesis project due:** May 7 at 11:55pm. For video essays, submit a link to your video and your statement on Moodle. For research papers, submit the paper on Moodle.

## **Project Overview**

You will create a research project that draws on and expands arguments and themes we discuss this semester. The goal of the project is to craft an original and innovative argument about American television based on an analysis of primary and secondary sources.

While your project may stray from the central topics of our class, you need to demonstrate how your project relates to the overarching ideas advanced in the readings. In other words, you should refer to ideas and arguments put forth by authors we have read. If for any reason you feel that you cannot craft such a direct connection, you need to discuss this with me before turning in your proposal.

You can finalize your research in the form of a traditional academic essay (6,500 words) or in the form of a 15min video essay (plus a short statement summarizing your main argument and theoretical framework). You will receive detailed assignment guidelines for the vid/video case study, literature review, draft, and presentations as we continue through the semester.

### **Option #1: Video Essay**

For the draft and final version of your video essay, you will create a 15min video essay about American television. The final video essay is accompanied by a statement that expands the scholarly context beyond what you presented in the video essay.

#### The video essay:

- Employs editing and videographic techniques we have studied (feel free to explore more; you are not confined to what we studied together)
- Your video essay should have a clear concept and argument that you show through your editing choices
- Please include a title card and credits (credits should acknowledge your visual sources, music, and any texts from which you quote)

For the draft and final draft, upload your video essay to Vimeo. Use the title of your project as title of your video, include your name, and post a 500-word project statement in the text field on Vimeo.

The statement:

- Expands the scholarly context of your video essay
- You may draw on portions of your lit review (but this statement should not simply be a shortened version of the lit review)
- Needs to include a bibliography (bibliography is not included in the word count)

One of the challenges of this assignment is figuring out how and what kind of information is best conveyed in the video essay and which is best expressed through written words in the statement.

Videographic criticism uses editing modes that range from the poetic to the explanatory, and in the best cases, combine both. The poetic mode relies on associations and juxtapositions between images or images and music to evoke a reaction in the viewer whereas the explanatory mode relies on voice-over and on-screen text to guide the viewer's reaction in how to interpret the media texts discussed in the video essay. In other words, the poetic mode leaves more room for the viewer to draw their own conclusions whereas the explanatory mode often clearly states an argument and walks viewers through an analysis of a TV show/theme. One goal for the video essay is to strike a balance between clearly conveying an analysis (using the explanatory mode) while also allowing images to speak for themselves (using the poetic mode).

Your statement goes hand-in-hand with your video essay. Your statement should not simply repeat the information you present in your video essay, but offer additional insights.

**Option #2: The Research Paper**

For the draft and final version of your paper, you will write an essay on American television that is illustrated with images and links that enhance your writing and provide additional information.

Your final paper should take the form of a Google doc; submit a link to it on Moodle.

Format:

- 6,500 words, excluding the bibliography (you may go over this word limit, but should not be under it)
- Entire essay, including header, in-text references, and bibliography should be formatted in a recognizable academic style (e.g. MLA)

- At least five images or screenshots that illustrate your paper (please include image sources in your bibliography). You are also encouraged to include links to articles, websites, blogs, or videos to enhance your paper