English 877: seminar in Film Theory
Storytelling and the Television Industries

Tues, 3:30-6:10
Curtin 405

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Office hours: Tues, Thu and Fri by appointment
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Television—once a derided form of commercial lowest-common-denominator programming—has ascended to new cultural heights as a critically-acclaimed source of long-form storytelling. Just as new technologies, platforms and industries threaten TV’s very existence as a cohesive medium, we are enjoying (or are overwhelmed by) “peak TV”: unprecedented numbers of original programs, critical accolades, viewing venues and audience engagement.

The course takes up the burgeoning sub-field of “Industry Studies” along with more traditional scholarly approaches to contemporary television to examine how theoretical and analytical engagement with television narrative, genre and form is enhanced (and often complicated) by scholarly studies of the industry in the US and global contexts.

How are new technologies and evolving viewing habits changing what we mean when we say “TV”? How are notions of “story” and “narrative” changing in light of TV’s evolution and our global, networked, media environment? How are evolving viewing habits reshaping our theories of audiences, styles and viewing pleasures? This seminar examines television as a technology, an industry, and most importantly, a story-telling medium, to investigate what is “Peak TV”, how we got here, and where we are headed.

We will examine many aspects of the business and pleasure of making and watching television through a focus on story creation, changing genres, programming conventions and global trends, shifting technologies, social media, TV fans and streaming content—and how all these factors influence television narratives and our overflowing media culture. As always, the course will also include a paper-development workshop.

All weekly readings and many screening will be available on our D2L site.