Topics on TV Times

- Key points from each of the topics we have covered
- References from the topics we have covered
- When to expect feedback from assignment 1
- Deadline date for assignment 2
- When to expect feedback from assignment 2
Defining cult TV

- What is cult TV?
  - Secondary texts are important
- Audience is also important (fans)
- Hyperdiegesis
  - Narrative world that transcends what we see on screen
  - Fantastic worlds are made normal/ordinary
  - Become familiar
Hills (2010, p. 67) ‘There is something ‘special’, something at least a little bit underground’ or even transgressive about cult media, cult TV included.’

- There complexities in defining what is and is not cult television
- Particularly in relation to mainstream versus niche.
- The role of the industry and fans are important
- Comparison of cult with soap operas
Cult TV References

Cruel TV

- Persistent pattern of humiliation – cruelty is obscured
- People may come to see themselves as inferior
- Victimiser may see themselves as superior
- Commitment obscures institutionalised cruelty
- Question of power
- Power of majority/weakness of minority
- Language reinforces power
- Cruelty is a power relationship – subjects of cruelty think of themselves as powerless
Humiliation

- Humiliation involves dehumanisation
- Humiliation = being put into lowly, debased, powerless position
- Humiliation is done to us
- Shame = reflection upon the self by the self
- We do shame ourselves.
- Humiliation dynamic or triangle with
  - Victim, victimiser and witness who observes the humiliation
  - E.g. witness by watching cruel television X-Factor auditions
Cruel TV Summary

- Draw on Hume and Kant to analyse morality, particularly humiliation and notions of shame.
- Relating these ideas to television programmes or television generally.
- Focus is on cruel television/humiliation and schadenfreude.
• World is no longer real but only a simulation
• Hyperreality, simulacra and mass media
• Simulation: Representation of things which may come to replace those things
  ◦ Exist in layers and hence become simulacra
• Simulacra: layers of simulation that exist – reality is not knowable
• Map story (Borges map)
Postmodernism and representation

- Postmodernism – no coherent, unified representation of the world
- Simulacra: *Simulacra et Simulation* 1981
  - Simulacra is the copy without an original
  - E.g. Disneyland’s Main Street USA
  - See clip of Olivander's wand shop
- Phases of representation
  - The image reflects reality
  - The image masks/changes reality
  - The image masks the absence of reality
  - The image is disconnected from reality
Baudrillard Summary

- News and creation of news stories
- Baudrillard – ideas such as hyperreality and simulacra
- Phases of representation – losing/replacing the real
- Context of postmodernism
- We can apply these notions to other television programmes such as food
- Other models of reality
References Baudrillard


Orientalism

- Orientalism – dominant, authority over the Orient
- Orientalism as a discourse in many different areas
- Said – Films and television
- Said’s ideas
- Can relate to many ‘others’
- Orientalist ideas on television programmes
  - More complex?
The Orient as other

- Notion of the Orient as a discourse with a particular history
- Involving a power relationship
- Permeates how the ‘other’ will be portrayed and represented on television
- The Occident/Orient may offer resistance to these ideas
- And there are re-interpretations (neo-Orientalism)
- The media –reinforce /challenge a binary divide (Occident/Orient)
Some Orientalist ideas perhaps shown in television programmes?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exotic</th>
<th>Different</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mystical</td>
<td>Villain</td>
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<td>To be feared</td>
<td>Foolish</td>
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<td>Shown as groups</td>
<td>Strange</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simpler way of life</td>
<td>Uncivilised</td>
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</tbody>
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Orientalism References


Panopticon and Reality TV

- Bentham - 18th century
- Inmates housed where every movement is observed by watchtower
- Foucault – disciplinary power exercised by individuals
- Surveillance society
- Gets individuals to monitor their own behaviour
  - Surveillance ingrained in contemporary life
Surveillance

• Media gaze – being watched
• Reality television as panoptic subject
  ◦ part of networked identity including through technology
• Images used for conditioning our behaviour
• Control imposed on watchers and watched
Media in relation to self surveillance – similar to the Panopticon

Reality television providing us with norms to monitor our behaviour

Not just media – part of surveillance society (Superpanopticon)

Where the images are part of control in relation to surveillance

We judge and are judged

The image has overtaken the structure (or architecture as Bentham first wrote about)
References Panopticon

Humour theories

Three areas

◦ Superiority – Plato and Aristotle (Hobbes)
  • Laughter reinforces power positions e.g. https://youtu.be/qSNK-9v7_JI

◦ Incongruity – Kant
  • Clash of incompatible discourses e.g. Terry Pratchett ‘Pets are always a help in times of stress. And in times of starvation, too, of course’

◦ Relief theory – Freud
  • Humour functions socially and psychologically as a vent for repression and hence questions social norm
Humour theories

- Trait perspective
  - Related to personality

- Evaluation of humour
  - Comprehension-elaboration
  - Motives, appropriateness, offensiveness to themselves and or others (or not)
  - Why some people find the same thing funny or offensive
In that session we looked at programmes such as *Little Britain* and *The Office*.

Harder to apply to television generally but maybe applies to *Dave* channel for example.

You could see if one theory tends to dominate in a particular programme – or whether the personality is the source of humour.

The theory really depends on the programme you choose to analyse e.g. if it is situated somewhere you might think about the representations of society (as I did with *Little Britain*).

You could look at whether ideology is challenged or reinforced through humour in the programme(s).
References Humour


Heroes

• Superheroes know there is no self-fulfilment without self-giving
• Sacrifice takes self-discipline and self-sacrifice
• Superheroes remind us of self-discipline and working from something good, noble is important
• Superheroes with superheroes are committed usually to what is right and good
• We can also include characters such as Merlin
• In the Republic, Socrates gives an argument that people should seek to be good
Double Danger

• Kierkegaard (1813-1855) we are called upon by God to love our neighbour as ourselves

• First danger – is our inner obstacle to goodness, justice and love

• Second danger – is external one

• Confronted with double danger in efforts to be good

• E.g. Marvel’s Daredevil

• Moral person – must engage in self-denial to overcome selfish desires

• To act in the interests of others
Utilitarianism

- Utilitarian – obliged to perform the greatest overall good
- E.g. Superman faces choice of representing his newspaper at press conference or rescuing a plane with engine failure
- Duty to remain a superhero
- But in Joker: Devil’s Advocate – the Joker finds himself on death row but is innocent of that crime
- Utilitarianism would still condemn the Joker to death
- But Batman knows it would be unjust to let him die
Plato’s Cave Analogy

- People live their entire lives in a dark cave
- Their reality
- Leaving the cave – they discover there is more to reality
- Plato = philosophers recognise higher dimension to reality
- Idea relates to vampire slayers – aware of higher and lower dimensions
Buffy

- **Buffy** chosen one to hunt vampires
- Destiny and responsibility
- Burden of duty
- Kant – duty - moral person does what they have to do, what duty requires
Superheroes

- So we can think about superheroes
- And other characters in fantasies and science fiction
- That we can consider as heroes
- And think about them in relation to different philosophies
- Including Kierkegaard’s double danger, Utilitarianism, Kant’s notion of duty, Plato’s Cave, morality.
References Superheroes


• Lawler, J. (2003) Between Heavens and Hells; The Multidimensional Universe in Kant and Buffy the Vampire Slayer In J. B. South, Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy. Illinois, Open Court.


Online and digital TV

- Digital systems are shaping television
- New companies online –
  - Experimentation and continuation
- Reception across various sites and screens
- Existential crises for television
- Post-television era
  - Changes to technology, audience, industry, content, culture
Online TV

- Digital television changing traditional television
- Netflix, Amazon Prime, YouTube and post-television era
- Watching online/traditional television doing more
- More content available
- More devices on which to watch
- Live television – definitions have changed
- Watching live/live broadcasts/events
- Online liveness
References online and digital TV


Flow theories

- **Categories of flow**
  - Listings – within particular evening/day/morning programmes
  - Flow of the actual items
  - Flow of the words and images

- **Criticisms**
  - Ellis – unrelated discrete segments
  - UK and US television
  - Focused on news
Concepts of flow

- Altman
  - household flow/daily routine
- Jensen
  - superflow across channels
Other concepts continued

- Newcomb and Hirsch – viewing strip
- Individual's sequence of viewing
- Budd, Craig and Steinman
- Flow within programmes - themes and images within programmes and other segments
Online TV and Flow

- Some believe the internet is the opposite of flow
- Small segments of distracted attention
- But easy to get lost on the net (surfing)
- Easier to binge watch
- YouTube may create snippets of TV that can be abandoned (staccato flow)
- Could argue this is similar to traditional TV flow)
Key ideas of Flow

- Flow of television though
  - Outpouring of images and sounds into homes
  - Raymond Williams – US news
  - Unites differently related units
  - Flow of schedules

- Internet can be included in concept of flow
- Flow can create hidden messages
- Adorno – mass media consists of layers of meaning
- Flow can be used to explore these ideological messages
References flow


Existentialism

- Sartre, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche
- Relate to the outside world through our feelings
- Which may be love, joy or nausea, anxiety
- Awareness of existence of oneself
- And what is not oneself
- Choice is key
- Defined by what we do and what we choose to commit to
- Authentic/inauthentic

"We are our choices."
- J.P. Sartre
Existentialism

- Awareness of existence of oneself
- Choice is important – authentic/inauthentic
- TV Noir – themes that are found in film noir
- The Prisoner
  - What it means to be a person
- The Sopranos
  - Nihilism
- Miami Vice
  - Dilemmas regarding personal freedom and identity
References Existentialism

- (several chapters in the above book relate to television and existentialism)
Questions:

- Assignment?
- Feedback on assignment – will be uploaded to SOLE (I am hoping this around 6th May).
- If you want to come and talk to me about your feedback on assignment 1 then please come and see me (b.mitra@worc.ac.uk)
- If you have trouble accessing SOLE feedback I can email it to you.
- 2nd assignment due 23rd May at 3pm Online
- Feedback (deadline is Friday 3rd June)