

ENG 1131: Writing Through Media – Cinematic and Literary Adaptations on Contemporary U.S. Television (Class #13863), Fall 2018

Instructor Name: Thomas Johnson

Course meeting times & locations: MWF, Period 6 (12:50 P.M. – 1:40 p.m.), WEIL 0408E, Screening Period 9-11 (4:05 P.M. – 7:05 P.M.), WEIL 0408E

Office Location and Hours: Burlington 4337, M 1:50 P.M. – 3:50 P.M.

Course website: Canvas

Instructor Email: tdjohnson@ufl.edu

Course Description:

This course will examine how and why adaptation has become increasingly prominent in the current era of television programming known as “peak TV.” While television has turned to preexisting literary and cinematic properties for inspiration throughout its history, the rising number of scripted programs (487 in 2017) has resulted in adaptation becoming practically ubiquitous across a variety of networks and streaming platforms. The course will explore how the economic imperative for content during “peak TV” has both led to a proliferation of adaptations while granting showrunners more formal freedom in crafting televisual adaptations than they have previously enjoyed in the medium’s history.

Furthermore, this course will require students to engage with a range of scholarship and adaptation theory that will help them think and write critically about television adaptations. Crucial to this process is moving beyond simplistic fidelity criticism, i.e., “the television show is different from the source material, and therefore the source material is better.” By the end of the course, students will be able to compose scholarly arguments about how televisual adaptations enter into dialogue with their literary and cinematic sources, while accommodating the parameters of the medium. Students should be able to dissect and write about how televisual adaptations fit into a given networks’ brand identities and appeal to particular viewing demographics. Students will demonstrate, through a prospective adaptation pitch and a researched critical essay, how televisual adaptations sit at the intersection of art and commerce.

The pairing of the Coen Brothers’ 1996 film *Fargo* with the first season of Noah Hawley’s anthology television series of the same name will serve as an example of how a television writer can take themes, settings and visual iconography (as opposed to specific characters and plot points) central to a prestigious director’s filmography and interrogate and reinterpret them over the course of a serialized narrative. Tracing the progression from the 1962 French short film *La Jettée*, to the 1995 film *12 Monkeys*, to the 2014 television series *12 Monkeys* will reveal how narrative conceits (time travel and apocalypse) can be reinterpreted with different audiences in mind, from French cinephiles, to lovers of American arthouse film, to 21st century fans of science fiction television. Finally, we will examine how the first two seasons of HBO’s *The Leftovers* (based on Tom Perrotta’s 2011 novel) establish a new model for televisual adaptations of literature that is becoming increasingly common, in which the first season of a program relies heavily on the plot of the source material while later seasons depart from the novel entirely.

General Education Objectives:

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) or Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

General Education Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Required Texts and Subscriptions:

A Hulu subscription.

An HBO subscription (available as a Hulu "add-on") **for weeks 11 through 16.**

Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. ISBN: 0393617432.

Perrotta, Tom. *The Leftovers*. ISBN: 0312363559.

Wells-Lassagne, Shannon. *Serial Television and Adaptation* E-book. (Available through library website, and for purchase on Amazon or Google Books).

Showrunners: The Art of Running a TV Show documentary **for week 11**. Available to rent on YouTube and Amazon.

All other required readings are available on Canvas or linked to in the schedule below.

Assignments (see below for Grading Rubric):

Four Critical Reading/Viewing Entries (500 words each, 200 points)

These short response papers will be on any of the readings/viewings and should demonstrate knowledge and engagement with the novel, film, and/or show. These viewings are **critical** and as a result, you are expected to make an argument about what you have read/watched. The responses should incorporate terminology from the criticism/scholarship we read on the week of submission.

Write an Adaptation Pitch (1500 words, 200 points)

Write a pitch for a prospective television adaptation of an existing book or film to a network executive. The pitch should include a discussion of how the television show will adapt the source material to accommodate the episodic structure of television, including an outline of the first season that highlights changes from the source material and reasons for those changes. It should also include an explanation of how the show fits into the brand of the network to which you are pitching.

Essay Prospectus/Annotated Bibliography (500 words, 100 points)

This assignment contains both a formal abstract for your Researched Critical Essay and an annotated bibliography of at least **3** sources.

Presentation: Pitch your Adaptation to the Class (100 points)

Distill your written pitch for a prospective television adaptation into a five-minute oral presentation to give to the class during the screening period on Monday, 12/3. Students should be prepared to answer questions from the instructor about the pitch. The oral presentation should be accompanied by a visual aid (a poster or PowerPoint, for example).

Paper: Researched Critical Essay (2000 words, 300 points)

This essay will be a sustained, formally researched critical analysis in which you will make an original argument about how a television series of your choice adapts an existing work. You should engage with the adaptation theory we have discussed in class and bring in at least **3** outside secondary sources that relate to the television series, the source material, and/or adaptation theory in general.

Attendance/Daily Participation (100 points)

Daily and engaged participation is a priority in this course. All students should participate every day in some fashion by offering points of view, raising questions, asking for clarification, and/or writing when it is required. Attendance is mandatory.

Assignments and Grade Distribution	Points
Reading/Viewing Entries (500 words each) - 20%	200
Written Adaptation Pitch (1500 words) - 20%	200
Essay Prospectus/Annotated Bib. (500 words) - 10%	100
Adaptation Pitch Presentation - 10%	100
Researched Critical Essay (2000 words) - 30%	300
Class Participation - 10%	100
Total:	1000

Course Policies:

1. You must complete *all assignments* to receive credit for this course. You are expected to be prepared for every class, including completing all reading and writing assignments on time.
2. **Attendance:**
 - a)** ENG 1131 is a participation-oriented course, which means that you will build your skills and gain knowledge incrementally and systematically in each class throughout the semester. Attendance is crucial in engaging with other students about the reading and writing assignments. Much of the learning that takes place is spontaneous and difficult to reproduce outside of class. Consequently, if you miss six or more 50-minute periods, you will fail the entire course.
 - b)** Only those absences involving military service; court-mandated obligations, such as jury duty and court testimony; university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays, are exempt. Absences for illness or family emergencies will count toward your three allowed absences. Please provide a doctor's note. Each absence beyond three may lower your overall grade. If you are absent, it is still your responsibility to make yourself aware of all due dates. You are still responsible for turning assignments in on time.
 - c)** Please do not come late to class; arriving late disrupts the entire class. If you are more than 15 minutes late, you will be marked absent. Being tardy three times will equal one absence. Save your absences for when you really need them.
3. **Paper Format and Submission:** All papers must be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, and follow other MLA formatting and citation guidelines. All assignments will be submitted on Canvas.
4. **Late Papers/Assignments:** Papers and drafts are due at the beginning of class.

Extensions can be negotiated in advance of deadline; late papers will not be accepted. Failure of technology is not an excuse.

5. **Paper Maintenance Responsibilities:** Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned and/or graded work in this course until the semester is over.
6. **Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism:** Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code:
<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>
7. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565 <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.
8. For information on UF Grading Policy, see:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ungrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
9. **Grade Appeals:** In 1000-and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
10. **Course Evaluations:** Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course:
<https://evaluations.ufl.edu>.
11. Students who face difficulty completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center, (352) 392-1575, or contact them online: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwcDefault.aspx>
12. **Cell Phones and Laptops:** Cell phones must be silenced or on vibrate at the beginning of class. Laptops are not necessary for this class and must be kept shut and put away unless the instructor gives you permission to use them.
13. UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>. Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage with controversial topics and opinions. Diverse student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own.

SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION: EARLY TELEVISION AND ADAPTATION

Week 1

W, 8/22 – Introduction, Preliminary Discussion of Favorite Television Adaptations

F, 8/24 – Discuss *The Twilight Zone*, Season 3, Episode 35 “I Sing the Body Electric” and the short story on Canvas

Week 2

UNIT 1: ADAPTING AUTEUR FILM FOR TELEVISION

M, 8/27 – *Television and Serial Adaptation*, Chapter 1

4:05 P.M. Screening: *Fargo* (The Coen Brothers, 1996)

W, 8/29 – Discuss *Fargo* (1996)

F, 8/31 – Discuss Steven Carter, “*Fargo* and the Postmodern Turn” alongside *Fargo* (1996)

Week 3

M, 9/3 – **Labor Day – Watch *Fargo* (2014), Season 1, Episodes 1 and 2 on Hulu**

Commented [NP1]: Labor Day

W, 9/5 – Discuss Michael L. Wade, “Critically Acclaimed and Canceled” alongside *Fargo*, Season 1, Episodes 1 and 2

F, 9/7 – Discuss *Fargo*, Season 1, Episodes 3 and 4

Week 4

M, 9/10 – Discuss *Fargo*, Season 1, Episode 5 alongside Graff and Birkenstein, Introduction

9/10 DUE DATE: LAST POSSIBLE DUE DATE FOR CRITICAL READING/VIEWING ENTRY #1

4:05 P.M. Screening: *Fargo* (2014), Season 1, Episodes 6 and 7

W, 9/12 – Discuss *Fargo*, Season 1, Episodes 6 and 7

F, 9/14 – Discuss [Emily Nussbaum](#), “[Snowbound: The Minnesota Noir of Fargo](#)” alongside *Fargo*, Season 1, Episodes 8 and 9

UNIT 2: ADAPTING SCIENCE-FICTION FROM FILM TO TELEVISION

Week 5

M, 9/17 -- Discuss Allen H. Redmon, “The Refusal of a Master-Text in Noah Hawley’s *Fargo*” alongside *Fargo*, Season 1, Episode 10

4:05 P.M. Screening: *La Jeteé* (Chris Marker, 1962); *12 Monkeys* (Terry Gilliam, 1996)

W, 9/19 – Discuss *La Jeteé* and the French Left Bank Filmmakers

F, 9/21 – Discuss *12 Monkeys* (1996) and director/screenwriter collaboration as adaptation

Week 6

M, 9/24 – Discuss Elena Del Rio, “The Remaking of *La Jeteé’s* Time-Travel Narrative: *Twelve Monkeys* and the Rhetoric of Absolute Visibility” alongside Graff and Birkenstein, Chapters 1-3

4:05 P.M. Screening: *12 Monkeys* (2015), Season 1, Episodes 1 and 2

W, 9/26 – Discuss *12 Monkeys*, Season 1, Episodes 1 and 2

F, 9/28 – Instructor is away at conference

Week 7

M, 10/1 – Discuss *12 Monkeys*, Season 1, Episodes 3 and 4

4:05 P.M. Screening: *12 Monkeys*, Season 1, Episodes 5 and 6

W, 10/3 – Discuss Barbara J. Selznick, “Branding the Future: SyFy in the Post-Network Era” alongside *12 Monkeys*, Episodes 5 and 6

F, 10/5 – Discuss *12 Monkeys*, Season 1, Episodes 7 and 8

10/5 DUE DATE: LAST POSSIBLE DATE FOR CRITICAL READING/VIEWING ENTRY #2

Week 8

M, 10/8 – Discuss Graff and Birkenstein, Chapters 4-7 alongside *12 Monkeys*, Season 1, Episode 9

4:05 P.M. Screening: *12 Monkeys*, Season 1, Episodes 10 and 11

W, 10/10 – Discuss *Television and Serial Adaptation*, Chapter 2 alongside *12 Monkeys*, Season 1, Episodes 10 and 11

F, 10/12 – Discuss *12 Monkeys*, Season 1, 12 and 13

10/12 DUE DATE: WRITTEN ADAPTATION PITCH

UNIT 3: ADAPTING LITERARY GENRE FICTION INTO PRESTIGE GENRE TELEVISION

Week 9

M, 10/15 – *The Leftovers*, by Tom Perrotta, Prologue, Chapters 1 and 2

4:05 P.M. Screening: Finding sources, research paper workshop

W, 10/17 – *The Leftovers*, Chapters 3-6

F, 10/19 – Discuss *The Leftovers*, Chapters 7 and 8 alongside [Stephen King’s NYRB review of the novel](#)

Week 10

M, 10/22 – *The Leftovers*, Chapters 9-12

4:05 P.M. Screening: Watch the *Lost* pilot (Wri. J.J. Abrams and Damon Lindelof, 2004)

W, 10/24 – *The Leftovers*, Chapters 13-15

F, 10/26 – *The Leftovers*, Chapters, 16-18

Week 11

M, 10/29 – Discuss *Showrunners: The Art of Running a TV Show* (Doyle, 2014) alongside the *Lost* pilot

4:05 P.M. Screening: *The Leftovers*, Season 1 (created by Damon Lindelof and Tom Perrotta), Episodes 1 and 2

W, 10/31 – Discuss *The Leftovers*, Season 1, Episode 1 and 2 alongside Janet McCabe and Kim Akass, “Producing Quality TV”

10/31 DUE DATE: LAST POSSIBLE DATE FOR CRITICAL READING/VIEWING ENTRY #3

F, 11/2 – **Homecoming: No class**

Week 12

M, 11/5 – Discuss *The Leftovers*, Season 1, Episodes 3 and 4 alongside initial mixed reviews of the show by [Andy Greenwald](#), [Willa Paskin](#), and [Mo Ryan](#)

4:05 P.M. Screening: Watch *The Leftovers*, Season 1, Episode 5 and 6

W, 11/7 – Discuss *The Leftovers*, Season 1, Episode 5 and 6

F, 11/9 – Discuss *The Leftovers*, Season 1, Episodes 7 and 8

Week 13

M, 11/12 – Holiday

4:05 P.M. Screening: *The Leftovers*, Season 1, Episode 9 and 10

W, 11/14 – Discuss *The Leftovers*, Season 1, Episode 9 and 10

F, 11/16 – Discuss *Television and Serial Adaptation*, Chapter 5 alongside Graff and Birkenstein, Chapters 8 and 9

11/16 DUE DATE: PROSPECTUS/ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Week 14

M, 11/19 – Discuss *The Leftovers*, Season 2, Episodes 1 and 2

4:05 P.M. Screening: *The Leftovers*, Season 2, Episodes 3 and 4

W, 11/21 – Holiday

F, 11/23 – Holiday

***DUE DATE:* LAST POSSIBLE DUE DATE FOR CRITICAL READING/VIEWING ENTRY #4**

Week 15

M, 11/26 – Discuss *The Leftovers*, Season 2, Episodes 3 and 4 alongside [interview with showrunner Damon Lindelof](#)

4:05 P.M. Screening: *The Leftovers*, Season 2, Episodes 5 and 6

W, 11/28 – Discuss *The Leftovers*, Season 2, Episodes 5 and 6

F, 11/30 – Discuss *The Leftovers*, Season 2, Episodes 7 and 8

Week 16

M, 12/3 – Discuss *The Leftovers*, Season 2, Episodes 9 and 10

4:05 p.m. screening:

***12/3 DUE DATE:* PRESENT YOUR ADAPTATION PITCH TO THE CLASS**

W, 12/5 – Discuss [Todd VanderWerff. “New Horizons for TV Adaptations.”](#) Wrap-up

***DUE DATE:* CRITICAL RESEARCHED ESSAY DUE THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13 AT 11:59 P.M. ON CANVAS**

A: 94-100 (4.0)
 A-: 90-93 (3.67)
 B+: 87-89 (3.33)
 B: 84-86 (3.0)
 B-: 80-83 (2.67)
 C+: 77-79 (2.33)
 C: 74-76 (2.0)
 C-: 70-73 (1.67)
 D+: 67-69 (1.33)
 D: 64-66 (1.0)
 D-: 60-63 (.67)
 E: 0-59 (0)

A - You successfully completed the assignment at a high quality level, and your work shows originality and creativity. Your paper reveals that you have grappled deeply with the assignment's topic. Your paper is clearly structured, thoroughly supported, and persuasive. The assignment contains no errors in grammar, spelling, and/or syntax.

B - You successfully completed the assignment at a moderately high level. Your paper reveals that you have thought deeply about the assignment's topic and have developed a largely persuasive argument, although your work may need slight revisions in terms of structure and/or content. The assignment is almost completely without errors in grammar, spelling, and/or syntax.

C - While your paper reveals that you have given some thought to the assignment's topic, your paper seems more of a rough draft than a final version and requires substantial revisions, likely in terms of both structure and content, in order to persuade the reader. While your assignment may be readable, it contains some errors in grammar, spelling, and/or syntax.

D - You did what the assignment required of you at a poor quality level. Work in this range needs significant revision. The paper's main ideas are poorly supported, and an organizational structure is difficult to discern. Frequently, writing at this level may suffer from many problems in grammar, spelling, and/or syntax which are so serious as to render portions of the paper nearly unreadable.

E - Papers which earn E's fail to show that the writer has given any consideration to the assignment's topic. The paper offers slim to no support for its argument, and an organizational structure cannot be discerned. The paper contains an unsatisfactory number of errors in grammar, spelling, and/or syntax. Importantly, if any of the paper has been plagiarized, it will also receive a failing grade.