Contemporary Television and the Cultural Public Sphere

Hilde Van den Bulck

Course schedule (including tentative reading list)

1 (Van den Bulck) Introduction : Television Studies In a Post-Broadcast Era
Content:
What is television? How has the medium changed over time? What technological, economic, political and cultural issues have influenced this development? What is meant by and how are we to evaluate claims about 'post-broadcast' and 'post-linear' television? How have these changes affected the position of television in the cultural public sphere?
What (all) is television studies? Which angle on television studies will this course focus on? Which key concepts/frameworks will guide this course? What (inter)national angle will be taken?

Reading:
Born, G. (2000) 'Inside Television: Television Studies and the Sociology of Culture', *Screen*, 41 (4): 404-424.
Cunningham, S. (2005) 'Culture, Services, Knowledge: Television between Policy Regimes', pp. 199 – 213, in J. Wasko (ed.) *A Companion To Television*. London: Blackwell.
Fiske, J. (1987) Television Culture. London: Routledge. Ch 1 : 'Some Television, Some Topics, Some Terminology' (p 1-20)
Kellner, D. (2005) 'Critical Perspectives on Television: From the Frankfurt School to Postmodernism', pp. 29-47 in J. Wasko (ed.) *A Companion To Television*. London: Blackwell.
Miller, T. (2000) 'Hullo Television Studies, Bye-Bye Television?', *Television & New Media* 1 (1): 3-8
Turner, G. and Tay, J. (eds) (2009) *Television Studies After TV. Understanding Television in the Post-Broadcast Era*, New York and London: Routledge. Ch 1: 'Introduction'.

2 (Trappel) Production: How to enhance television and radio (aspects of innovation)
Television has been remarkably stable over more than four decades, from its beginnings in 1950s. Additional ways and means of distribution have been added over time (such as cable and satellite, later online/Web TV) but the underlying business model has proved to be robust and responsive to the requirements and (created) needs of the audience. But the second wave of Internet based options are likely to shake up the old order. In this lecture we look back to technology induced and socially accepted changes in the past and we discuss recent changes and opportunities.

Reading:
Williams, R. (1974) *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. New York: Schocken.
Kleinsteuber, H. (1998) 'The Digital Future', pp. 60-74 In D. McQuail & K. Siune (Eds.), Media Policy. Convergence, Concentration and Commerce. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage.
Hellman, H. (2010) 'Liberal turn in media policy: the case of Finland's digital television', *International Journal of Digital Television*, 1 (2): 193-213.

3 (Trappel) Production: What rules are required? (outline of broadcasting policy)

Television started out as highly regulated businesses with a clear and well justified remit. In this lecture we explain this high regulation level less by analysing technological requirements (such as frequency scarcity) but rather by socio-political requirements. The tradition of strict regulation was again picked up in the late 1980s when both the Council of Europe and the European Union developed their vision of television regulation. Today, the internal market framework is at the core of contemporary television regulation, with binding rules both for public service television as well as private-commercial television providers.

Reading:

Van Cuilenburg, J., & McQuail, D. (2003) 'Media Policy Paradigm Shifts. Towards a New Communications Policy Paradigm'. *European Journal of Communication*, 18(2): 181-207.

Pauwels, C., & Donders, K. (2011) 'From Television without Frontiers to the Digital Big Bang: The EU's Continuous Efforts to Create a Future-proof Internal Media Market', pp. 525-542. In R. Mansell & M. Raboy (Eds.) *The Handbook of Global Media and Communication Policy*. Chichester: Blackwell.

Trappel, J. (2014) 'Small States and European Media Policy', pp. 239-253 In K. Donders, C. Pauwels & J. Loisen (Eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of European Media Policy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

4 (Van den Bulck) Production : How the television sector works (political economy)

Content:

This lecture explores the key characteristics of the television sector as an industry and its impact on television as part of the cultural public sphere. It discusses the key economic characteristics of television production (high first copy cost, prototype industry, low reproduction cost, zero marginal cost, economies of scale and scope), the shifting television value chain, difference between in house production model and factory production model, difference between original production, programme trade (markets like MIPCOM) and formats. It then looks at the key cultural implications hereof, evaluating longstanding but debated theories such as cultural imperialism versus free market, cultural homogenisation versus cultural complexity, least objectionable programme versus the HBO-factor, cultural discount, and cultural hierarchies versus cultural omnivores.

Reading:

Doyle, G. (2013) *Understanding Media Economics*. London: Sage. Ch 1: Introduction.

Jaramillo, D.R. (2002) 'The Family Racket: AOL Time Warner, HBO, The Sopranos, and the Construction of a Quality Brand', *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 26 (1): 59-75.

Picard, R.G. (2005) 'Unique Characteristics and Business Dynamics of Media Products', *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 2 (2): 61-69.

Van Elteren, M. (1996) 'Conceptualising the Impact of US Popular Culture Globally', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 30 (1): 47-89.

Waisbord, S. (2004) 'McTV: Understanding the Global Popularity of TV Formats', *Television and New Media*, 5 (4) : 359-383.

5 (John Ellis) Production : Format television

6 (Van den Bulck) Production: Continuity and Scheduling In Linear And Non-Linear Television

Content:

One of the key characteristic of traditional television is its linear nature and flow; i.e. a top down decided and carefully arranged and branded, seemingly natural flow of AV content, following a set of goals (commercial or public service). This involved key processes of scheduling and developing continuity techniques. Linear television thus fulfilled a number of key functions in the cultural public sphere, such as creating a feeling of 'community' as people watch live events. However, various factors have resulted in a move away from this traditional model, leading some to speak of a post-linear television. The lecture will discuss to what extent schedule and continuity techniques remain relevant, the extent to which convergence has turned television into content providers, the impact of multiple screen viewing, paratexts and social media, and how all these developments impact on the cultural and social functions of television.

Reading:

Aronson, J. E., Reddy, S. K. and Stam, A. (1998) 'SPOT: Scheduling Programs Optimally for Television', *Management Science*, 44 (1): 83–102.

Chan-Omsted, S. & Youngwook, K; (2002) 'The PSB Brand Versus Cable Brands: Assessing the Brand Image of Public Television in a Multichannel Environment', *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, June: 300-230.

Ellis, J. (2000) 'Scheduling: the Last Creative Act in Television?', *Media, Culture & Society*, 22 (1): 25-38.

Förster, K. (2011) 'Key Success Factors of TV Brand Management: An International Case Study Analysis', *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 8 (4): 1–22.

Simons, N., Dhoest, A. and Malliet, S. (2012). 'Beyond the Text: Producing Cross- and Transmedia Fiction in Flanders', *Northern Lights*, 10 (1): 25–40.

Van den Bulck, H. and Enli, G. (2013) 'Bye bye "Hello Ladies?" In-Vision Announcers As Continuity Technique in a European Postlinear Television Landscape: The Case of Flanders and Norway', *Television and New Media*.

Van den Bulck, H.; Tambuyzer, S. & Simons, N. (2014) 'Scheduling and continuity techniques in a changing television landscape: A case study in Flanders', *International Journal of Digital Television*.

7 (Van den Bulck): Content and Meaning: Key Concepts and a Quiz Shows As Case In Point
Content:
Starting from a quick reminder of the concept of encoding (vs decoding), this lecture discusses the cultural meaning creation in television content. It focuses on concepts such as ideology and hegemony, representation and stereotyping, that together help explain how meaning is created in television content. It will then illustrate these concepts and the ' reality' thereof in television production by focusing on the seemingly 'ordinary' genre of television quiz and game shows. It will unravel how such apparently ideology-free entertainment in fact harbours views on consumer society and the value of commodities, on the central ideology of competition and winning, on the societal relevance of different types of knowledge. It will further illustrate how quiz and game shows can go beyond the key aspects of its format by analysing quiz shows as expressions of national identities and, love games, as articulations of societal views on relationships.

Reading:

Bernstein, A. (2002) 'Representation, Identity and the Media', pp. 259-317 in C. Newbold; O. Boyd-Barrett & H. Van den Bulck (eds.) *The Media Book*. London: Edward Arnold.

Hetsroni, A. (2004) 'The Millionaire Project: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Quiz Shows From the United States, Russia, Poland, Norway, Finland, Israel, and Saudi Arabia', *Mass Communication & Society*, vol. 7(2): 133-156

Moorti, S. (2004) 'Fashioning a Cosmopolitan Tamil identity: Game shows, Commodities and Cultural Identity', *Media, Culture and Society*, vol. 26(4): 549-567

Teurlings, J. (2001) 'Producing the Ordinary: institutions, discourses and practices in love game shows,' *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, vol. 15(2): 249-263

Van den Bulck, H. & Sinardet, D. (2006) 'The Nation: Not Yet the Weakest Link? The Articulation of National Identity In a Globalised Popular Television Format', pp. 101-125 in *Northern Lights*, 4.

8 (Van den Bulck): Content and Representation : Aspects of Society

Content:

Television programmes present a certain view of the world. This lecture will further explore how this is done in both fictional and non fictional television content. It will do so by considering two cases: televised crime and televised world relations.

Reading:

Bergin, T. (2013) 'Identity and Nostalgia In a Globalised World: Investigating the International Popularity of *Midsomer Murders'*, Crime Media Culture, 9 (1): 83-99.

Gerbner, G.; Gross, L. (1976) 'Living With Television: The Violence Profile', *Journal of Communication*, 16(2): 172–194.

Ley, B.L.; Jankowski, N. & Brewer, P.R. (2012) 'Investigating CSI: Portrayals of DNA Testing On a Forensic Crime Show and Their Potential Effects', *Public Understanding of Science*, 21 (1): 51-67.

Van den Bulck, H.; Claessens, N. & Panis, K. (forthcoming) 'Looking at Development Issues and World Relations through a Pair of Prada Sunglasses: A Framing Analysis of Celebrity Philanthropic Documentaries' in Celebrity Philanthropy.

9 (Van den Bulck): Content and Representation : Groups in Society

Content:

One particular way in which television content articulates ideological messages is in the representation of certain groups in societies, often working from stereotypes. Focusing on the televised non-fictional representation of ethnic groups, this lecture explores not just how the ethnic groups are represented but discusses the isssues at stake in the production of these representations and the way in which ethnic minority audiences deal with these representations.

Reading:

Mastro, D.E. & Bchm-Morazvifz, E. (2005) 'Latino Representation on Prime Time Television', *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82 (1): 110-130.

Van den Bulck, H. & Broos, D. (2009) 'When "Us" Meets "Them": An Analysis of the Representation and Reception of Muslim Women in a Flemish Documentary. In E. Castello et al. (eds.) *The Nation On Screen: Discourses of the National On Global Television*. Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Van den Bulck, H. & Broos, D. (2011) 'Can a Charter of Diversity Make the Difference In Ethnic Minority Reporting? A Comparative Content and Production Analysis of Two Flemish Television Newscasts', *Communications : the European Journal of Communication Research,* 36 (2): 195-216.

10 (Van den Bulck): Content meets Audiences : Television Celebrities

Content:

Television produces its own type of celebrities, often referred to as 'television personalities', ranging from the traditional public service broadcasting's Hello Ladies (announcers) to reality tv stars such as

the Kardashians. This lecture will explore the specific characteristics of television celebrities, how they differ from movie stars and famous people from other domains such as music or politics. It will also explore the role of these television personalities fulling both economic and cultural functions. It will further elaborate on the way people deal with these television celebrities and the functions they fulfil in people's lives.

Literature:
Bennett, J. (2011) *Television Personalities: Stardom and the Small Screen*. London: Routledge. Ch 1
Bennet, J. & Holmes, S. (2010) 'The "Place" of Television in Celebrity Studies', *Celebrity Studies*, 1 (1): 65-80.
Hoffner, C. (1996) 'Children's Wishful Identification and Parasocial Interaction with Favorite Television Characters,' *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, vol. 40 (3): 389-402.
Riegel, H. (1996) 'Soap Opera and gossip', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 28 (4): 201-209.
Sood, S. & Rogers, E. M. (2000), 'Dimensions of Parasocial Interaction by Letter-Writers to a Popular Entertainment-Education Soap Opera', *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, vol. 44 (3): 386-414.
Turner, G. (2008) 'The Mass Production of Celebrity : 'Celetoids', Reality TV and the 'Demotic Turn', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*: 9(2): 153–165.

11 & 12 (Van den Bulck): Audiences in linear and post-linear television: Passive (effects) versus Active (constructivist) paradigms, time shifters and prosumers
Content:
One of the biggest 'schisms' in communication studies, is to be found in the debate about the relationship between television and its audiences: are television viewers passive recipients of television content, thereby influenced in considerable way, or do audiences actively decode television content in a variety of ways. Taking some key examples, this lecture will focus on these two different approaches to understanding television audiences.

While technological developments make a move to post-linear television possible, the reality of it is situated not at the industry level but at the level of the audiences. Audiences today are no longer 'mass' or 'linear' viewers but instead deal with television content in new ways: time shifting, video on demand, binch viewing... According to some, this has shifted the power from the top down institutions to the bottom up audiences, with real implications for television as part of the cultural public sphere. The various arguments in this regard will be discussed.

Reading:
Van den Bulck, J. (2002) 'The Impact of Television Fiction On Public Expectations of Survival Following Inhospital Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation By Medical Professionals', European Journal of Emergency Medicine, 9(4) : 325-329.
Van den Bulck, J. (2004) 'Research Note: the Relationship between Television Fiction and Fear of Crime: An Empirical Comparison of Three Causal Explanations', *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 19 no. 2 239-248
Hill, A. (200) *Restyling Factuality: The Reception of News, Documentary and Reality Genres*. Keynote.
Cooper, E. (2003) 'Decoding Will and Grace', *Sociological Perspectives*, 46 (4).
Bellman, S.; Schweda, A. & Varan, D. (2010) 'The Importance Of Social Motives for Watching and Interacting With Digital Television', *International Journal of Market Research,* 52 (1): 67-87.
Simons, N. (2013) 'Watching TV fiction in the age of digitization: a study into the viewing practices of engaged TV fiction viewers', *International Journal of Digital Television*, 4: 2, pp. 177–91.