The course examines the history and character of two central institutions in American society—the family and television—to gain a deeper understanding of their formative and enduring role in our lives and in society. Topics include: the history of the family and the history of television and the intersection of those histories; the economic logic of the TV industry and its historical and contemporary effect on programming; how the family has shaped television and how television shapes the family; representations of the family in television programming, past and present; and how families use and interact with television.

Required Texts:
Ella Taylor, Prime-Time Families: Television Culture in Postwar America (1991)
Jason Mittell, Television and American Culture (2009)
Additional readings available on D2L site noted in syllabus with asterisk*.

Course Requirements:
The course is a combination lecture/seminar. It includes a substantial amount of reading (all readings should be completed before class on the date noted in the syllabus), writing and discussion. The quality of the class depends on your keeping up with the reading and participating in discussions. Course requirements include a midterm exam (short essay/short answer format based on lectures and readings), four written assignments, and one in-class presentation. Prior to the midterm exam, I will distribute a study guide and hold a review session. Note: there will be no late exams given except in cases of medical emergencies, which must be verified by a medical professional.

The weighting of the exam/assignments is as follows:
Program observation/family-TV history: 50 points
TV Industry report: 100 points
Family TV History paper: 50 points
Program analysis (report & oral presentation): 100 points
Midterm Exam: 100 points
Total: 400 points
Grades for the course will be calculated on a straightforward percentage basis. 93-100% of total points = A grade; 90-92% = A-; 87-89% = B+; 83-86% = B; 80-82 = B-; 77%-79% = C+; 74-76% = C; 70-72% = C-; 67-69% = D+; 63-66% = D; 60-62% = D-; below 60% = F.

Course (and University) Policies:
Attendance & Participation: The quality of the class for you and for me depends on your keeping up with the reading and participating in discussions. In each class meeting, I may ask a few students to comment briefly on the assigned readings, so it’s important to come to class prepared. If you must miss a class, please let me know beforehand. Please be aware that if you are absent for 3 weeks of the course or more (which on our T/Th schedule means 6 or more absences), you will automatically receive a failing grade for the entire course. Exceptions to this policy require evidence of unavoidable/dire circumstances, and must be negotiated in advance.

Assignments: All assignments should be typed, double-spaced and are due on the dates assigned; late papers will be accepted only in the case of genuine emergency and must be cleared with me beforehand. Incomplete Work: Incompletes are strongly discouraged and will be given only in special circumstances. If you find you’re having difficulty keeping up with the assignments, meeting deadlines, etc., please talk with me as soon as problems arise. Academic Honesty: All work for the course must be your own. Cheating or plagiarizing the work of another will be penalized with an automatic “F” for the assignment or exam. If you have questions about how to cite the work of others, please see me for clarification. For more information on the University’s policy on academic conduct and integrity, see the Honor Code website at http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/. Special Needs/Disabilities: Students with special needs (physical, learning, etc.) will be gladly accommodated. If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter to me from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Center for Community N200 and www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, guidelines at: http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/go.cgi?select=temporary.html.

Religious Observances: If, due to religious obligations, you have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance, you should notify me in advance to make arrangements. Learning Environment: Students and faculty have shared responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment, including treating others with respect, courtesy and fairness. University policies on acceptable classroom conduct are outlines at: http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html.

Course Competencies:
This course will focus on developing your ability to use concepts and theories to analyze the relationship between television and the family; increasing your visual literacy through the analysis of television programming; enhancing your understanding the economic logic and production practices of the television industry and television professionals; deepening your awareness of race, class and gender issues within the institutions of family and television; and providing opportunities to refine your research, writing and speaking skills.
Course Schedule: (D2L readings are noted with asterisk *)

I. Getting started: Thinking About the Family and TV

Tues. Aug. 27: Course structure and requirements; introductions

Thurs. Aug. 29: Television and Society
Readings:
S. Coontz, Chap. 1 “The Way We Wish We Were,” in The Way We Never Were (pp. 1-22)
*L. Aguilar, “Millennials Become a Generation to Watch,” Denver Post April 8, 2001

Tues. Sept. 3: Putting Television & Family in Historical Context
Readings:
*L. Spigel, “Making Room For TV” (pp. 272-280)
S. Coontz, Chap. 2: “Leave it to Beaver and Ozzie and Harriet: American Families in the Fifties” (pp. 23-41)

Thurs. Sept. 5: Families on Television/Families Watch Television **Program Observation Paper Due**
Readings:
S. Coontz, Chap. 3: “My Mother Was a Saint” (pp. 42-67)

Tues. Sept. 10: Putting Television & Family in Historical Context, cont.
Readings:
E. Taylor, Chap. 2 “Television as Family: The Episodic Series” (pp. 17-41)
S. Coontz, Chap. 4 “We Always Stood on Our Own Two Feet: Self-Reliance and the American Family” (pp. 68-92)

Thurs. Sept. 12: Changing Representation of Families on TV
Readings:
S. Coontz, Chap. 8 “First Comes Love, Then Comes Marriage” (pp. 180-206)
E. Taylor, Chap. 3 “Prime Time Relevance: Television Entertainment Programming in the 1970s” (pp. 42-64)

Tues. Sept. 17: Doing Television Research (**Library Orientation**) 
Readings:
II. Television as Institution

Thurs. Sept. 19: The Economic Logic of the TV Industry: The Network Era
Readings:
* T. Gitlin, “Triumph of the Synthetic” (pp. 62-85)

Tues. Sept. 24: The Economic Logic of the TV Industry: The Audience Commodity
Readings:
J. Mittell, “Television Institutions” (pp. 15-16) and Chap. 1 “Exchanging Programming” (pp. 17-53)

Thurs. Sept. 26: The Decline of the Big Three: The Post-Network Era
Readings:
E. Taylor, “All in the Work Family,” Chap. 5 (pp. 110-149)

Readings:
J. Mittell, Chap. 2, “Exchanging Audiences” (pp. 54-98)
*B. Stelter, “The Sofa Wars, Plenty to Watch Online, but Viewers Prefer to Pay for Cable,” New York Times, August 20, 2010

Readings:
J. Mittell, Chap. 5, “Making Meaning” (pp. 161-212)

III. Television as Text

Tues. Oct. 8: The Codes of Television **TV Industry Report Due**
Readings:
*J. Fiske, “Some Television, Some Topics and Some Terminology” (pp. 1-20)

Thurs. Oct. 10: The Codes of Television: Ideological Codes
Readings:
J. Mittell, Chap. 6, “Telling Television Stories” (pp. 213-268)

Tues. Oct. 15: Decoding Television Texts
Readings:
J. Mittell, Chap. 7 “Screening America” (pp. 269-304)

Thurs. Oct. 17: REVIEW FOR MIDTERM EXAM

Tues. Oct. 22: MIDTERM EXAM
IV. Television as Social Relationship: The TV Audience

Thurs. Oct. 24: Theories About the Media/TV Audience
Readings:
J. Mittell, Chap. 9 “Viewing Television” (pp. 357-382)

Tues. Oct. 29: Families Watch Television
Readings:
*D. Morley, “Television and Gender” (pp. 474-496)

Thurs. Oct. 31: Decoding Television
Readings:
*J. Fiske, “Active Audiences,” (pp 62-83)

V. Television, Society and Power Relations

Tues. Nov. 5: Media Stereotypes as Social Codes
Readings:
*US Commission on Civil Rights, “Window Dressing on the Set,”
(pp. 1-26 only), August 1977
J. Mittell, Chap. 8, “Representing Identity” (pp. 305-353)

Thurs. Nov. 7: Gender and Media
Readings:
S. Coontz, Chap. 9 “Toxic Parents, Supermoms and Absent Fathers”
(pp. 207-231)
*M. Guthrie, “Testosterone TV: What Shows are Watched by Men?”,
Hollywood Reporter, August 11, 2011

Tues. Nov. 12: Race, Media, Society **Family TV History Paper due**
Readings:
*H. Gray, “Television, Black Americans and the American Dream” (pp. 364-374)
*$95,000 Question: Why Are Whites Five Times Richer than Blacks?” Guardian,
May 17, 2010

Thurs. Nov. 14: Race, Family & Television
Readings:
S. Coontz, Chap. 10 “Pregnant Girls, Wilding Boys, Crack Babies and the
Underclass: The Myth of Black Family Collapse” (pp. 232-253)
*E. Deggans, “Why Do so Few Black or Brown Actors Snag Lead Network TV
Roles?”, St. Petersburg Times, November 12, 2010
Tues. Nov 19: Social Class in America
Readings:
*S. Aronowitz, “Television and Working Class Culture” (pp. 231-236)
*R. Butsch, “Ralph, Fred, Archie and Homer: Why Television Keeps Recreating the White Male Working-Class Buffoon” (pp. 403-412)

Thurs. Nov. 21: Social Class, the Family and Television
Readings:
*J. Lewis, “The Power of Popular Television: The Case of Cosby” (pp. 159-202) in Ideological Octopus

Tues. Nov. 26 & Thurs. Nov. 28: THANKSGIVING BREAK, NO CLASS

VI. Analyzing Television & the Family: Program Analysis Presentations

Tues. Dec. 3: Class Presentations

Thurs. Dec. 5: Class Presentations

Tues. Dec. 10: Class Presentations

Thurs. Dec. 12: Class Presentations

IMPORTANT DATES:
Thurs. Sept. 5: Television Observation Paper Due
Tues. Sept. 17: Library Orientation
Tues. Oct. 8: TV Industry Report Due
Thurs. Oct. 17: Review for Midterm Exam
Tues. Oct. 25: MIDTERM EXAM
Tues. Nov. 12: TV/Family History Paper Due
Mon.-Fri., Nov. 25-29: THANKSGIVING BREAK, NO CLASS THIS WEEK