AMS 311: America’s Reality T.V.
Class Time: MWF 11-12
Classroom: 436A
Unique Number: 30665
Instructor: Julie Kantor
Email: juliekanctor@gmail.com
Office: 408 Burdine
Office Hours: W/F 12-2

Description:
Reality Television is the most ubiquitous and popular programming on American Television, garnering 50 percent of prime time viewers in 2013. Though most Americans claim hatred of reality shows, the influence of the programming and its reflection of American culture is undeniable; the shows' mediated narratives reverberate with American’s desires, fears, and showcase our discourses and discursive production. Through the study of reality television, we can understand ideals and forms of American citizenship, race, gender, sexuality and class. This class will use a variety of disciplines, including American studies, media studies, anthropology, sociology, psychoanalysis, and theoretical lenses, such as affect, performance, and Foulcauldian genealogy to unpack the narratives produced by and around these shows. The class will look at a variety of reality programs, including makeover, identity-based (i.e. The Real Housewives, Shahs of Sunset), competition, and therapeutic shows (Hoarders, Intervention, Couples Therapy) to ask questions about American social life and culture. This class will also explore realms of culture and life where we can follow the bleed over of reality television; that these reality stars' real lives are continually followed on and off the shows speaks to cultural obsessions and fixations that are a part of the reality of American lives.

Readings: All readings will be posted on Canvas

Selections/Essays from Texts:
Burton P. Buchanan, Amber J., Narro, Alison F. Slade eds., Reality Television: Oddities of Culture
Rachel Dubrofsky, The Surveillance of Women on Reality Television:
Watching
The Bachelor and The Bachelorette
James Hay, Laurie Ouellette eds, Better Living Through Reality TV: Television and Post-Welfare Citizenship
Mischa Kavka, Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters
Susan Murray, Laurie Ouellette eds, Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture
Katherine Sender, The Makeover: Reality Television and Reflexive Audiences
Brenda R. Weber, Makeover TV: Selfhood, Citizenship, and Celebrity

Assignments:
6 one-page (single space) responses to reading: 30%
Final paper proposal (1 page): 10%
Annotated Bibliography (5-6 sources): 10%
Participation: 10%
Contribution to Zine (10 mins): 15%
Final paper (10-12 pages): 25%

Cell Phone Policy—No Cell Phones in Class; I will ask you to leave if you are on your phone and mark you absent.

Absence Policy—FIVE unexcused absences. YES, THAT IS ALL. Excused absences must be communicated to me (i.e. sickness, family emergency).

Jan 18 – First Day of Class/Introductions

Jan 20 –

Jan 23 – Readings on American Studies:

“Introduction” from American Studies An Anthology, by Janice A.
Radaway, Kevin K. Gaines, Barry Shank and Penny Von Eschen

“Introduction” from *The American Studies Anthology*, by Richard P. Horowitz

Jan 25: **Readings on Cultural Studies & Television:**
“Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture: An Introduction” from Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture by John Storey

Jan 27 – **Readings on Popular Culture**
“Introduction” from *Popular Culture: A Reader* by Raiford Guins & Omayra Zaragoza Cruz

“‘Culture’ and ‘Masses’” from *Popular Culture: A Reader*, by Raymond Williams

Jan 30 – **Primer Reading (Genre)**
“Introduction: Understanding Reality TV” by Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn, from *Understanding Reality Television*, edited by Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn

Feb 1– No Reading

Feb 3– **Readings on Candid Camera: Reality TV's Progenitor (Genre)**
Stanley Milgram, Allen Funt and Me”: Postwar Social Science and the "First Wave" of Reality TV" by Anna McCarthy from *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*, edited by Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette

"Candid Camera and the origins of Reality TV: contextualising a historical precedent" by Bradley D. Clissold, from *Understanding Reality Television*, edited by Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn

Feb 6- No Reading

Feb 8- **Readings on Documentary and Hybridity (Genre)**
“Performing the Real: Documentary Diversions,” by John Corner, from *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*, edited by Susay Murray and
Laurie Ouellette


Feb 13– No Readings


Feb 17- Readings on Reality/Hyper-reality/Post-Reality
“Paradox and the Consumption of Authenticity through Reality Television” by Randall L. Rose and Stacy L. Wood, 2005, by JOURNAL OF CONSUMER RESEARCH, Inc. • Vol. 32 • September 2005

Feb 20– “Why People Watch Reality TV” by Steven Reiss and James Wiltz, The Ohio State University

Feb 22– No Readings Due

Feb 24– Readings on Ordinariness/Celebrity
Prologue and Two Chapters, Chapters 1 & 8, from The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows by Laura Grindstaff

Feb 27– "The Unwatched Life Is Not Worth Living: The Elevation of the Ordinary in Celebrity Culture” by Joshua Gamson in Theories and Methodologies 126.4


March 1– “Reality Celebrity: Branded Affect and the Emotion Economy” by Laura Grindstaff and Susan Murray from Public Culture, 01/2015, Volume 27, Number 1 75: 109-135
"Reality TV and the Production of 'Ordinary Celebrity': Notes from the Field" by Laura Grindstaff, from Berkeley Journal of Sociology, Volume 56, 2012

**March 3** – No Readings

**Oct 10**- Chapter 1, “The American Dream: Celebrity, Class, and Mobility,” and Chapter 9, “Success Just for Being You: Opportunity in the Internet Age” from *Celebrity Culture and the American Dream* by Karen Sternheimer (available online from the library)

**March 6**– Readings on Governance, Govermentality and the Self
Introduction to *Better Living Through Reality* by Laurie Ouellette and James Hay

**March 8**– “The Disorder of Things: Hoarding Narratives in Popular Media” by Susan Lepselter, from *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 84, No. 4 (Fall 2011), pp. 919-947

**March 10**– No Readings

**March 20** - Annotated Bibliography Due In Class
“Neoliberalism and the Realities of Reality Television” by David Grazian Contexts, Vol. 9, No. 2, sociology for the masses (SPRING 2010), pp. 68-71

Chapter 2, “TV Interventions: Personal Responsibility and Techniques of the Self” from *Better Living Through Reality TV* by Laurie Ouellette and James Hay

**March 22**– “Reality TV, or The Secret Theater of Neoliberalism” by Nick Couldry from *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 30:1, 3-13
March 24 –
“Take Responsibility for Yourself” Judge Judy and the Neoliberal Citizen” by Laurie Ouellette from Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture edited by Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette

March 27 – Introduction & Chapter 1 from Makeover TV: Selfhood, Citizenship, and Celebrity by Brenda R. Weber

March 29 – Readings on Race -
Section “Race” in the chapter “Gender and Race” from June Deery’s Reality TV (this can be found online from the library).

March 31 – Final Paper One Page Proposal Due
Introduction: Race, Place, and Power by George Lipsitz from How Racism Takes Place

Apr 3 – “Country Hicks and Urban Clique: Mediating Race, Reality, and Liberalism on MTV’s The Real World” by Jon Kraszewski, from Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture, edited by Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette.


Apr 7 – Selections from Rachel Dubrofsky’s The Surveillance of Women on Reality Television: Watching The Bachelor and The Bachelorette


Apr 12 – Readings on Gender
“Real Mean Girls? Reality Television Viewing, Social Aggression, and
Gender-Related Beliefs Among Female Emerging Adults”, by Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz, Jennifer Lewallen, and Brandon Miller from Psychology of Popular Media Culture


Apr 19– “Gender Territories: House Hunting on American Real Estate TV”, by Mimi White, from Television & New Media 14(3) 228 –243

Apr 21 – Writing; Zine Contribution is Due

Apr 24– Writing

Apr 26 – Writing

Apr 28 – Review of Zine

May 1

May 3

May 5 – Last Day of Class