

# SOCIOLOGY 2308-001: Television as a Sociological Object



## Course Description

(NOTE: Not all topics listed here may be covered)

This is a "Special Topics" course that celebrates the sociological imagination by providing a wide range of perspectives on television as a "social fact" (Durkheim). Our primary focus will *not* be on programming; while the content of television programs will often be relevant, the course will prioritize TV's significance for the sociology of technology, of medicine, of law, of the family, and more.

## Course Logistics

- Instructor: Bill Kirkpatrick, [billkirkp@gmail.com](mailto:billkirkp@gmail.com) (preferred) or [b.kirkpatrick@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:b.kirkpatrick@uwinnipeg.ca). Do not use the Nexus email client to email me—I do **not** guarantee any response, much less a timely one, to messages sent through Nexus.
- Drop-In Hours: Tuesdays 1:00-2:00 p.m. and Fridays 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., or by appointment. My office is 2RC34 (in the Richardson building, 599 Portage), but I hold drop-in hours in different locations; [to see where I will be for office hours on any given day, click here](#).
- Schedule: The class meets Tu./Th., 4:00-5:15 p.m. The first day of class is Jan. 9; the last is Apr. 4, 2024. The last day to withdraw from the course without academic penalty is Mar. 15.
- Format: The class will meet in person. A permitted or necessary change in mode of delivery may require adjustments to important aspects of course outlines, like class schedule and the number, nature, and weighting of assignments and/or exams.

## Learning Goals

By the end of this course, you should:

- Have a solid understanding of a range of influential sociological approaches to the media generally and television specifically.
- Be able to think in sophisticated ways about the sociological implications of television *beyond* news and entertainment, including television's intersections with gender, the family, medicine, the law, etc.
- Understand television not simply as a delivery device for content but also as a site of economic, political, and social struggle, as well as a material technology in global political and environmental contexts.
- Be able to think critically and ethically about your personal, cultural, and political engagement(s) with television as a citizen, a consumer, and a socially-produced subject.
- Improve your ability to engage with original sociological research, including your ability to read relevant scholarship and produce effective analyses of television as a sociological object.

## Required Materials

All course materials will be available through Nexus or the University of Winnipeg library.

## Assignments

Late assignments will be penalized ½-grade per day (e.g. B+ to B).

Midterm Exam (due Feb. 27)	25%	Team Roles (see below)	10%
Final Exam (due Apr. 19)	30%	Summary of the Week	10%
Homework assignments	15%	Engagement	10%



1956



2022

# Daily Schedule

Readings/screenings should be completed by that day's class, and you should come prepared to discuss them.

**Please don't work too far ahead:** I reserve the right to change readings within a week of the assigned date in order to optimize student learning. Therefore, we may not get to all the topics listed on this course outline.

However, exam dates and assignment due dates will not change.

Jan. 9 Introduction

## Unit One: The Fact of Television

- Jan. 11 The Fact "of" Television Read: Wasko & Meehan, "Introduction," pp. 3-9 and pp. 12-13
- Jan. 16 Television as a Technology Read: Winston, "How are Media Born?"
- Jan. 18 Science and the Senses Read: Dreher, "The Place of Television in the Progress of Science"  
Sewell, *Television in the Age of Radio*, pp. 30-43 (begin w/  
"The Order of Media"; stop at "Pondering the Electron")

## Unit Two: Television and the Canadian Experience

- Jan. 23 Television and Canadian Nationalism Read: Charland, "Technological Nationalism"  
Turn In: Homework #1
- Jan. 25 Television Comes to Canada Read: "The Massey Report" (1951), Section on Television  
Rutherford, "Expectations," pp. 10-26
- Jan. 30 Winnipeg's Rock-Star Theorist  
of Television Read: McLuhan, "The Playboy Interview," pp. 233-251  
Rutherford, "Expectations," pp. 26-33 (stop at "McLuhan  
always claimed ...")
- Feb. 1 Canadian Effects Literature Read: McMillen, "The Town Without Television": Part 1, Part 2  
Fowles, *The Case for Television Violence*, pp. 25-34

## Unit Three: Television and Social Theory

- Feb. 6 The Mass Media and Its Critics Read: Sturken & Cartwright, "Media in Everyday Life" pp. 223-234  
and 240-243  
Turn In: Homework #2 by 10:00 p.m.
- Feb. 8 The Propaganda Model Read: Herman & Chomsky, "A Propaganda Model," pp. 257-277  
Hearn-Branaman, "What the Propaganda Model Can Learn  
from the Sociology of Journalism"  
Note: Midterm Exam handed out
- Feb. 13 Theorizing the Audience Read: Hills, "Audiences" (you may skip the case study pp. 190-1)
- Feb. 15 Phenomenology Read: Letak, "The Promise of Sociology of Television"

### — READING PERIOD: FEB. 19-23 —

- Feb. 27 No Class (extra office hours) Turn In: Exam by Feb. 28 at 5:00 p.m.
- Feb. 29 Reading a Text

## Unit Four: Issues in the Sociology of Television

Mar. 5	Television as Material Technology I	<u>Read:</u>	Mayer, " <a href="#">Producers as Creatives</a> ," pp. 31-62
Mar. 7	Television as Material Technology II	<u>Read:</u>	Miller, " <a href="#">The Effluent Citizen</a> "
Mar. 12	Television as Social Technology	<u>Read:</u>	Spigel, " <a href="#">Television in the Family Circle</a> " McCarthy, " <a href="#">The Rhythms of the Reception Area</a> ," pp. 183-195
Mar. 14	No Class	<u>Note:</u>	March 15 is the last day to withdraw without a academic penalty
Mar. 19	Television and Social Capital	<u>Watch:</u>	<i>Kim's Convenience</i> , "Frank & Nayoung" (S1E4)
		<u>Read:</u>	Yu, " <a href="#">Cultural Diversity in Canadian Television</a> "
		<u>Turn In:</u>	Homework #3
Mar. 21	Television and Health/Medicine/ Disability	<u>Watch:</u>	<i>Grey's Anatomy</i> , "How to Save a Life" (S11E21)
		<u>Read:</u>	Chartrand, " <a href="#">Dying on Television</a> "
Mar. 26	Television and Law & Order I	<u>Read:</u>	Bernabo, " <a href="#">Copaganda and post-Floyd TVPD</a> "
Mar. 28	Television and Law & Order II	<u>Read:</u>	Pohl, " <a href="#">Stop Resisting</a> "
Apr. 2	Television and Globalization	<u>Read:</u>	Lotz, " <a href="#">In Between the Global and the Local</a> "
		<u>Note:</u>	Final Exam handed out
Apr. 4	Summary and Wrap-Up		

— APR. 19: FINAL EXAM DUE BY 5:00 P.M. —

---

## Team Roles and Summary of the Week

Many days, you will have a "Team Role" intended to help class go well (see [this sheet](#) for the schedule):

### **RTT = Rizz the Thesis (40 points out of 1000, or 4% of your final mark)**

Responsible for giving an engaging/entertaining 3-5-minute "overview and connection" for the reading(s) at the start of class.

*Ex. If you are signed up for RTT for Jan. 11, you should be prepared to summarize the readings at the beginning of class on Jan. 11.*

Criteria: To do well on this assignment, you must:

- Make a good-faith effort to *teach* the material in an engaging way, using images, humour, examples, etc. to help get the ideas across.
- Provide a clear, coherent, and accurate statement of the thesis of the reading(s) in your own words, striving to help your classmates really understand the reading.

- Make at least one meaningful connection between the reading(s) for the day and something else that we have covered in readings/discussion: keep the dialogue between ideas going across the term.

**MM = Meme-maker (20 points out of 1000, or 2% of your final mark)**

Responsible for preparing a meme for the day based on that day's reading and posting it to Nexus 24 hours ahead of class. You are free to use [sites like this](#).

*Ex. If you are signed up for meme maker for Jan. 11, you should do the readings ahead of time and prepare a meme that illustrates a key idea from the reading. Upload your completed meme as a JPG or PNG by 4:00 p.m. on Jan. 10. You will also introduce/explain it in class on Jan. 11.*

Criteria: To do well on this assignment, you must demonstrate solid understanding of one or more of the key points of the argument of the reading and a show an effort toward creativity in your choice of meme.

**RS = Respondent (20 points out of 1000, or 2% of your final mark)**

Responsible for being the sparkplug for discussion by being ready with responses to discussion questions and jumping in with questions and ideas of your own.

*Ex. If you are signed up as respondent for Jan. 11, you must be in class on Jan. 11 and be an **active and supportive** participant in class discussion, having done the reading and worked through the reading notes, bringing questions about what you didn't understand in the reading, being proactive in volunteering to answer, etc.*

Criteria: To do well on this assignment, you must:

- Be among the first to respond to questions and take the initiative to prevent the conversation from lagging.
- Demonstrate preparedness and understanding, showing through your contributions that you have read and tried to understand the reading(s), including by asking questions about points and concepts you know you *didn't* understand; finding connections between that day's readings, other ideas from the course, real-world examples; etc. (Of course, you should be doing this every day, but one day you can get extra-special gold-star credit for it.)
- Contribute to a positive class atmosphere by visibly and audibly demonstrating interest, enthusiasm, and engagement.

**NT = Note-taker (20 points out of 1000, or 2% of your final mark)**

Responsible for posting detailed notes on class lecture and discussion to Nexus, at the latest by 10 p.m. on the day *after* class.

*Ex. If you are a note-taker for Jan. 11, you must be in class and take detailed notes, then upload them to Nexus by 10:00 p.m. on Jan. 12.*

Criteria: To do well on this assignment, you must include any important announcements and key bits of housekeeping in addition to capturing the key themes, discussion points, and debates that occurred in class. Your notes do not need to be a transcript of who said what, but the most important points and the gist of the conversations should be obvious. Marks of A- and above will be reserved for notes that are uploaded by the deadline and that demonstrate attention to editing and proofreading for clarity and correctness prior to uploading.

**SW = Summarizer of the Week (100 points out of 1000, or 10% of your final mark)**

Responsible for posting a roughly 600-word *synthesis and reflection* of the previous week's readings, screenings, lectures, and discussion at the latest by 10 p.m. on the Monday *following* your week.



*Ex. If you are summarizer for the week of Jan. 16, you must write up a roughly 600-word synthesis and reflection on all of the readings/screenings and both class sessions for Jan. 16 and Jan. 18, then upload them to Nexus by 10:00 p.m. on Jan. 22.*

Criteria: To do well on this assignment, you must include:

- A thoughtful and thorough synthesis of all readings and class sessions from your week: not a point-by-point summary, but a holistic overview of the main questions, issues, insights, approaches, grounding assumptions, etc. that we encountered that week.
- A reflection on how this week fits into the course a whole and advances our broader understanding of television as a sociological object, making connections to past readings and future topics on the course outline, showing relationships among ideas, and thinking creatively about the content of the "big picture" of the course.

These roles will be assigned on a rolling basis, and you will be expected to keep up with your role for any given class period. To keep the marking manageable, I will **not** be providing extensive unsolicited feedback, but you are **always** welcome to come to drop-in hours in order to get feedback on your performance of each role.

## Policies and Expectations

Your Attendance: Attendance is highly encouraged and will greatly enhance your own and others' class experience; it is also a major component of your "class engagement" grade. Furthermore, the in-class exercises (team roles) will not be possible to make up if you are absent.

My Attendance: When it is necessary for me to cancel a class due to exceptional circumstances, I will make every effort to inform students via Nexus and email as soon as possible.

Public Health: Students can find answers to updates and frequently asked questions related to COVID-19 here: <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/covid-19/index.html>

Participation/Engagement: The main responsibilities of creating a productive and enjoyable class rest with you, and that is why class engagement is part of your final course grade (10%). Your active contributions affect not only what you get out of the course but also what your classmates get out of the course.

Assessment Criteria For Participation: Merely showing up and taking notes is not enough for your success in this class: I'll be looking for evidence of preparedness (e.g. referencing the readings), ability to make connections to other readings/discussions, effort to listen to and build on classmates' comments, and willingness to engage in critical thinking and dialog. You can also demonstrate class engagement in ways other than speaking in class (e.g. sending me your thoughts via email; coming to office hours to talk about ideas; sending me relevant items of interest; etc.). I am happy to provide periodic feedback during office hours as we progress through the course so that you can make adjustments as necessary.

Preparation: Always have the day's readings ready to consult during class. The course outline will always state clearly what you should read prior to each class, which assignments you should hand in, and what else you must do or bring for a given day. Late assignments will be penalized by a half-grade for each 24 hours of lateness (e.g. from B+ to B). If you know that you will have difficulty completing an assignment on time, let me know before the deadline and I will work with you to the extent possible.

Written Work: Unless otherwise specified, all written work must be typed in twelve-point font, with one-inch margins on all sides, and double-spaced. Your name and the date of completion must be given at the top.

Marks: The calculation of your mark will be based on a 1,000-point scale, and the weight of each assignment is listed above. Final grades shall be approved by the Department Review Committee and may be subject to change. If you are concerned about your mark, please come talk to me as early as possible. I will use the following scale:

A+	90-100%	EXCEPTIONAL. Demonstrated exceptional mastery of course material, together with exceptional skill and/or great originality in using knowledge and concepts from the course.
A	85-89.9%	EXCELLENT. Demonstrated thorough understanding of course material, together with very high degree of skill and/or considerable originality in using knowledge and concepts from the course.
A-	80-84.9%	OUTSTANDING. Demonstrated very high level of understanding of course material, together with high degree of skill and/or originality in using knowledge and concepts from the course.
B+	75-79.9%	VERY GOOD. Demonstrated high level of understanding of course material, together with reasonably high degree of skill and/or originality in using knowledge and concepts from the course.
B	70-74.9%	GOOD. Demonstrated above-average level of facility with course material, together with reasonable skill and/or originality in using knowledge and concepts from the course.
C+	65-69.9%	COMPETENT. Demonstrated acceptable level of facility with course material, together with fair skill and/or originality in using knowledge and concepts from the course.
C	60-64.9%	FAIRLY COMPETENT. Demonstrated acceptable familiarity with course material, together with adequate skill and/or originality in using knowledge and concepts from the course.
D	50-59.9%	PASSING. Demonstrated minimal grasp of course material, together with minimal skill and/or originality in using knowledge and concepts from the course.
F	0-49.9%	FAILING. Demonstrated insufficient knowledge of course material, together with inadequate skill and/or originality in using knowledge and concepts from the course.

Communication Policy: I will regularly use email and/or Nexus to send out announcements, changes in the schedule, reminders about due dates, etc. It is your responsibility to check your email regularly to keep up-to-date with these announcements. I prefer billkirkp@gmail.com but b.kirkpatrick@uwinnipeg.ca will work too. Do NOT email me through Nexus: I do not guarantee any response to messages sent via the Nexus email client. Except when I have given you advance notice, or in rare cases of personal or family emergency, I promise to answer all email from students within 24 hours (36 hours on weekends) and will hold you responsible for any announcements made via email within 24 hours of the announced change (36 hours on weekends). Please keep in mind that more involved questions should be asked in office hours, not over email.

Exams: The course has two take-home, essay-style exams.

Absences for Religious Observance: Students may choose not to attend classes or write examinations on holy days of their religion, but they must notify me at least two weeks in advance. A list of university-recognized religious holidays can be found at <http://uwinnipeg.ca/academics/calendar/docs/important-notes.pdf>.

Accessibility and Special Accommodations: I am striving to make the class and my teaching materials as accessible as possible. Access needs will be addressed pre-emptively through the following strategies:

- Captions for in-class videos, and transcripts of audio material, will be provided whenever possible.
- Classes may be recorded with advanced notice to the instructor and the consent of the other students.
- Flexible deadlines are possible with advance notice.
- Participation will be evaluated through a variety of modalities: in-class discussion, contributing to Nexus, drop-in hours, etc.

It is important that the course be accessible to all students. Students with documented disabilities, temporary or chronic medical conditions, requiring academic accommodations for tests/exams (e.g., private space) or during lectures/laboratories (e.g., note-takers) are encouraged to contact Accessibility Services (AS) at

204-786-9771 or [accessibilityservices@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:accessibilityservices@uwinnipeg.ca) to discuss appropriate options. All information about a student's disability or medical condition remains confidential <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/accessibility>. If you need any alternative accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or evaluation procedures in order for you to be able to participate fully in the course, or if there are any external issues that may affect your work in this course, please contact me privately as soon as possible.

Academic Honesty and Non-Academic Misconduct: Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the regulations and policies found in the University of Winnipeg's Academic Calendar [here](#). Special attention should be given to subsections 8 (Student Discipline), 9 (Senate Appeals), and 10 (Grade Appeals). Please note, in particular, the subsection of Student Discipline pertaining to plagiarism and other forms of cheating. Detailed information can be found at the following:

<https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/policies/docs/policies/academic-misconduct-policy.pdf>

<https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/policies/docs/procedures/academic-misconduct-procedures.pdf>

<https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/policies/docs/policies/student-non-academic-misconduct-policy.pdf>

<https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/policies/docs/procedures/student-non-academic-misconduct-procedures.pdf>

I also encourage you to view the University of Winnipeg library video tutorial "[Avoiding Plagiarism](#)."

Misuse of AI and Filesharing Sites: Unless otherwise explicitly stated, students are not permitted to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT) at any stage of their work in this class, and you may face an allegation of academic misconduct if you use such tools in your assignments.. Uploading essays and other assignments to essay vendor or trader sites (filesharing sites that are known providers of essays for use by others who submit them to instructors as their own work) is highly problematic, and students who do this can be charged with Academic Misconduct. I'm happy to have a conversation with you about the ethics of participating on such sites.

Respectful Learning Environment: Students are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful manner on campus and in the learning environment irrespective of platform being used. Behaviour, communication, or acts that are inconsistent with a number of UW policies (e.g., [Respectful Working and Learning Environment Policy](#), [Acceptable Use of Information Technology Policy](#)) could be considered "non-academic" misconduct. Detailed information can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Privacy: You have rights in relation to the collection of your personal data by the University; [see here](#). There are also protections in place regarding in-class testing, so you should also be aware of policies in that regard.

Copyright: The University requires me to including the following: "Course materials are owned by the instructor who developed them. Examples of such materials are course outlines, assignment descriptions, lecture notes, test questions, and presentation slides. Students who upload these materials to filesharing sites, or in any other way share these materials with others outside the class without prior permission of the instructor/presenter, are in violation of copyright law and University policy. Students must also seek prior permission of the instructor/presenter before photographing or recording slides, presentations, lectures, and notes on the board." Unfortunately, this UW-provided statement is not an entirely accurate invocation of Canadian copyright law. For example, in claiming that prior permission must *always* be sought, the statement fails to acknowledge "fair dealing" exceptions when no prior permission is required. I wish the University's statement would emphasize fair dealing as strongly as it asserts the supposed extent and sanctity of copyright. In any case, in keeping with the University's mission as an educational institution, I encourage you to freely share my course materials, your class notes, etc. as you see fit.

Holidays: The University is closed for the following holidays: February 19 (Louis Riel Day), March 29 (Good Friday).



# My Office

(but note: always check Where Is Bill Today? for where to find me in office hours):

**RICHARDSON BUILDING  
599 PORTAGE AVENUE  
OFFICE 2RC34**

**PORTAGE AVENUE SIDE**

