RTD 489--002: Reality Television
Spring 2014

Professor:       Dr. E. R. Meehan
Class meets:     11-1:50 p.m., Wednesday, in Comm 1046
                We will take 2 breaks – please, no food or beverages in Comm 1046
Office hours:    Comm 1056C drop in: Tuesday 1-4, Wednesday 2-4, Thursday 2-3
Mailbox:         Comm 1048 (RTD main office)
Email:           meehan@siu.edu

Course description and overview:
In this class, we undertake advanced work addressing television as a cultural force and
economic undertaking, both of which depend on legal constraints, regulatory processes,
and corporate relationships. Our particular focus is reality television programming, which
includes such subgenres as: “dating shows, make-overs, job competitions, gamedocs, reality
soaps, interventions, lifestyle demonstrations” (Ouellette and Hay, p. 2).

To learn more about reality TV, we will also read and discuss Ouellette and Hay’s book
Better Living through Reality TV. To prepare for discussion, you will submit discussion
questions on Tuesdays by email. I will select questions or rework questions so that our
discussion addresses the group’s concerns as well as the arguments made by Ouellette and
Hay. The final questions will be emailed to you by 5 p.m. on Tuesday along with the name
or names of students who will facilitate the discussion. On most Wednesdays, we will begin
with discussion. Facilitators should confer by email or before class to clarify the questions
and decide who will lead what parts of the discussion. Facilitators will trade off who takes
the lead but both should work together to keep the discussion going. The discussions
should be open and discussants should be ready to try on different points of view. We will
work together in discussion to create answers to our questions.

Each student will research a reality program and generate written and oral reports of their
findings throughout the semester. You should select one series that interests you and make
sure that you have consistent access to a group of episodes that you can watch repeatedly.
If you are not interested in reality television, or have no access to a reality series, or cannot
re-watch a group of episodes from the reality series in which you are interested, then you
will have a difficult time doing the written and oral assignments. You will receive handouts
describing those assignments and we will also discuss them in class. Unless otherwise
noted in the course schedule, you will have a written assignment and short presentation on
your reality series each week.

In class, we will undertake various creative or observational exercises. The observational
exercises are designed to help you do the written and oral assignments. The creative
exercises are designed to simulate corporate creativity in the media industries. Your
participation will be evaluated. Because these exercises require working as a group in class
and in consultation with me, a missed exercise cannot be made up. However, if you have an
excused absence, then you will be excused from the exercise as well. (Please see attendance policy and late work below.)

Finally, in class, I will provide you with information that supplements *Better Living through Reality TV* or provides further information regarding reality television as a genre, connections between reality television and neoliberalism, media economics and regulation, and so forth. You should take notes so that you have this information and can review it. You will have opportunities to ask questions. Your mastery of this information will be valued by quick quizzes.

**Readings**
Ouellette, Laurie and James Hay. 2008. *Better Living through Reality TV*. Blackwell Publishing: Malden MA. (Available at the bookstore in the Student Center.)

Various articles about your program that you read in order to do the written and oral assignments.

**Being prepared for class**
To be prepared for each class meeting, you need to have done any assigned readings and emailed your questions to me by noon on Tuesday. You need to have checked your email after 5 p.m. on Tuesday in order to read my email stating the questions that will be discussed and identifying the discussion facilitators. Print out that email and make notes regarding ideas you would like to discuss. Bring that document to class and be ready to participate in discussion. Be an active participant in each and every discussion by suggesting answers to the questions, commenting on other people’s answers or asking them clarifying questions, helping others get their ideas across, bringing up examples, etc.

Bring your notebook to every class and take notes in class. Pay particular attention to the information that I write on the board. Do not use any mobile technology in this class: no cell phones, laptops, tablets, netbooks, e-readers, iPads, etc.

Prior to class, you should review your class notes in order to do well on the quick quiz.

Handouts will be provided for written or oral assignments. Use the handouts to create your written documents or to create and practice your oral reports.

You may use a printed outline to give an oral report but you may NOT read from a script. No Power Point presentations.

Written assignments should be printed out on Tuesday morning at the latest. Avoid the frustration created by technical problems that make it impossible to print out at the last minute.
Keep up with the assignments so that you do not fall behind. If you miss class, contact me by email and we will make an appointment to go over the material that you missed. Bring your note from Student Health or other source so that you can get an excused absence. 
(See: attendance policy, late work policy.)

**Student learning objectives**

By the end of the semester, you should have a good understanding of reality TV in terms of its history, cultural significance, politics, and economics. Through your work on a reality series, you will gain some experience in conducting and reporting research. I will use seven measures to assess and grade your learning, which are described below.

**Grading**

List of graded activities

1.) your questions for discussion based on the assigned reading
2.) your participation in discussions and your facilitation of a discussion
3.) your attendance, appropriate behavior, and participation
4.) your brief, written research reports
5.) your presentations based on your research reports
6.) your participation in exercises
7.) your performance on quick quizzes

Distribution of credit across by per centage

10%: Attendance; being on time; appropriate behavior
15% Quick quizzes
25%: Facilitating a discussion; participation and contribution to discussion; timely completion and quality of work in discussion and exercises
25%: Group exercises; class participation (asking questions, offering comments, responding to each other); close viewing and participation in observational exercises
25% Your investigation of a reality series: research documents and presentations; timely completion and quality of work in research reports and presentations

Total: 100%
Distribution of grades:
100-90% = A  89-80% = B  79-70% = C  69-60% = D  59-0% = F

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any work that is plagiarized automatically fails the assignment. By plagiarism, I mean the use of other people's words without quotation marks and the citation of the source. I also mean using other people's words but substituting similar words so that it seems as if you had written the sentence yourself. Here's an example based on the third sentence of this paragraph:

When I say plagiarism I mean typing in author's terms without using quotation marks or telling where the words come from.

That type of paraphrasing is plagiarism. For full information, consult:
http://libguides.lib.siu.edu/plagiarism
**Attendance policy (see also: late work policy)**

Unless you have an excused absence, you need to attend every class. Come to class shortly before 11 a.m. so that you can be prepared to start work at 11 a.m. When we take a break, return to class on time. Missing class or being late will count against you.

We will have a break around 12 or 12:30 so that you can snack or go to the bathroom, etc. However, no food or beverages are allowed in the classroom. Please eat in the area by the vending machines. We will also have a brief second break.

If you miss class for any reason, contact me by email and explain your absence. Some absences will be excused if proper documentation is provided. For example, if you were ill and show me a note from Student Health, then your absence is excused. However, if you were ill, did not seek medical care, and do not have a note from a medical care provider, then the absence is not excused. In response to your email, I will email you to set up a meeting during my office hours.

If you are supposed to attend an event sponsored by SIUC that would involve missing class, then you need to fill out the Registrar’s Absence Policy form and email me prior to January 31 to schedule a meeting. In that meeting, you will present your form and explain why you need to miss class. While professors generally try to work with students to resolve the problem, a professor may not be able to excuse the student. The form recognizes that possibility. The form is at: http://registrar.siu.edu/pdf/AbsencePolicyForm.pdf

If you miss class, get the notes from a colleague in the class and go over them with that person so that you understand what we did. Then, see me, preferably during office hours, so that I can read your documentation and we can go over the notes. If your absence is excused and we had a quick quiz when you were absent, you can make up the quick quiz during our meeting. If your absence is not excused, you cannot make up the quick quiz.

Don’t schedule other activities during our class. Don’t schedule meetings with advisors, other instructors, or graduate teachings assistants during our class. Don’t schedule interviews or shoots for alt.news, River Region, the DE, or production classes during our class. If you miss class for any of these reasons, your absence will not be excused.

Academic advisors, instructors, SRO advisors, and GTAs know that you are not supposed to schedule such appointments during class time.

**Late work policy**

If you are unable to do an assignment because of illness or other difficulty, e-mail me immediately and tell me why you are missing class and why your work will be late. Then, see me during office hours and bring your documentation verifying your reason for the absence as well as any written work that is late.

I cannot guarantee that your reason for missing class will result in an excused absence. Here is an example of an excuse that would not be accepted: “My best friend’s 21st birthday
was on Tuesday and we went out to celebrate. I got home late that night and didn’t wake up on Wednesday until 6 p.m.” Here is an example of an excused absence: “I had to miss class to testify in court about a story that I wrote for River Region. Here’s my subpoena.”

Even with an excused absence, I cannot guarantee that you would be able to make up all of the work that was missed. For example, if you missed an in-class group exercise, there is no parallel activity that can substitute for the process of working with your classmates in real time to creatively solve an assigned problem.

In order for the class to discuss the readings, you must meet the deadlines for submitting questions. Late questions cannot be used and, hence, do not contribute to your record of achievement in this class.

If you will miss class due to attendance at a University-recognized event, then please consult the second paragraph in the section above entitled Attendance policy.

If you miss an in-class activity because you are late for class or return late from a break, you cannot make up that activity.

**Accommodations**

Colleagues who require accommodations due to disability should inform me of their situations by January 31 by email. You should also see me during office hours so that we can discuss your situation. For information on available services or to check eligibility, contact the Office of Disability Support Services by phone (453-5738), in person (Woody Hall, room 150), or by on the web (http://disabilityservices.siu.edu/).

Colleagues who require accommodations due to religious observance must comply with SIUC’s stated policy: “Students must notify the instructor at least three regular class periods in advance of an absence from class for a religious holiday and must take the responsibility for making up work missed.” (Source: SIUC 2011-2012 Undergraduate Catalog, p. 494. Emphasis in the original.)

**Attention and Interaction**

We will engage in various activities during each meeting and colleagues need to focus their full attention on the work of the class. Hence, students may not use laptops, iPads, netbooks, e-Readers, smart phones, or any other technology that might distract us from the work of the class. Similarly, multitasking is banned. The research shows that we can’t successfully read a book, watch TV, and listen to music. The research also shows that we feel we can but that we end up with no memory of the book’s content and scant memory of the TV program. As for the music, that generally gets “tuned out” after the first few minutes or, alternatively, becomes what we focus on so that the other activities cease.
Professional Behavior
Most students in the College of Mass Communication and Media Arts want to be employed in one of the media industries and in some professional capacity. Many careers are possible and the range is quite varied as suggested by this brief list: screen writers, camera operators, investigative reporters, audio specialists, on-camera performers, fine and commercial artists, directors, producers, web designers, managers, chief operating officers, moguls, or some combination thereof. The transition from student to professional can be difficult. Everything that we do in class is designed to address that transition.

As a professional, you will interact with many kinds of people. You need to express your ideas in a manner that engages other people. You need to listen to others’ ideas with respect and to offer competing views in a thoughtful manner. You also need to develop collaborative skills. Despite what we often see on reality programs, we can interact without hurting each others’ feelings, exhibiting “attitude,” or creating “drama.” In this class, we use class discussions and exercises in order to become more effective communicators and collaborators. We work at becoming effective presenters through research and group presentations in class. We practice being on time, being prepared, and managing our time because media professionals are punctual, prepared, organized, and ready to work.

COURSE SCHEDULE
This schedule may change.

Except for spring break, we will have a written and oral assignment each week. These are brief reports focused on your reality series. The oral report is based on the written report. A handout will be provided for each assignment on the Wednesday that it is assigned. Each written assignment will be due at the beginning of class. When you come into our classroom, please place your document on the table in the front of the classroom. You are responsible for handing in your written assignment.

Each colleague will make a brief presentation from the podium. You may use an outline or fact cards. You may not read a script. No Power Point presentations.

Course outline:

JAN 15 Introductions; overview of the class; first assignment

For our next class, read Ouellette and Hays, “Introduction,” pages 1-18 (stop at “Reinventing Government”) – email your questions to meeihan@siu.edu by noon on Tuesday, 22 JAN, and check your email after 5 p.m. on that day for the questions that we will discuss and the names of our facilitators

JAN 20 SIUC and Carbondale celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day!
JAN 22  Discussion – pages 1-18
Reports on assignment 1; handout for assignment 2
For next class, read 32-47 (stop at “Casting Needy Individuals”); your questions are due on Tuesday at noon; in your email by 5 p.m., discussion questions and facilitators

JAN 29  Discussion – 32-47
Reports on assignment 2; handout for assignment 3
For our next class, read 47-62 -- questions due on Tuesday at noon; discussion questions and facilitators announced by 5 p.m.

FEB 5  Discussion of pages 47-62
Reports on assignment 3; handout for assignment 4
For our next class, read 63-81 (read to the end of the last paragraph about Dr. Phil on 81) -- questions due on Tuesday at noon; discussion questions and facilitators announced by 5 p.m.

FEB 12  Discussion of 63-81
Reports on assignment 4; handout for assignment 5
For our next class, read from the bottom of 81 (stop at “In 2004, another life intervention appeared....”) to 98 -- questions due on Tuesday at noon; discussion questions and facilitators announced by 5 p.m.

FEB 19  Discussion of pages 81-98
Reports on assignment 5; handout for assignment 6
For our next class, read 99-118 (stop at “The Male Makeover and the Feminization of Work”) -- questions due on Tuesday at noon; discussion questions and facilitators announced by 5 p.m.

FEB 26  Discussion of 99-118
Reports on assignment 6; handout for assignment 7
For our next class, read 118-133 -- questions due on Tuesday at noon; discussion questions and facilitators announced by 5 p.m.

MAR 5  Discussion of 118-133

Reports on assignment 7

You have no assignments over spring break.

MAR 8-16  Enjoy the break!

MAR 19  No discussion today due to spring break.

Handout for assignment 8

For our next class, read 134-151 (stop at “Care of the Self as Spying on Oneself”) -- questions due on Tuesday at noon; discussion questions and facilitators announced by 5 p.m.

MAR 26  Discussion of 134-151

Reports on assignment 8; handout for assignment 9

For our next class, read 151-169 -- questions due on Tuesday at noon; discussion questions and facilitators announced by 5 p.m.

APR 2  Discussion of 151-169

Reports on assignment 9; handout for assignment 10

For our next class, read 170-184 (stop at “Games of Group Governance”)-- questions due on Tuesday at noon; discussion questions and facilitators announced by 5 p.m.

APR 9  Discussion of 170-184

Reports on assignment 9; handout for assignment 10

For our next class, read 184-202 -- questions due on Tuesday at noon; discussion questions and facilitators announced by 5 p.m.
APR 16  Discussion of 184-202

Reports on assignment 10; handout for assignment 11

For our class on April 30, read 203-224 -- questions due on Tuesday at noon; discussion questions and facilitators announced by 5 p.m.

APR 23  We will not meet today because I’ll be at the conference “What Is Documentary?” presenting research on the reality series World’s Dumbest. The conference is hosted by the University of Oregon’s School of Journalism and Mass Communication and held at the Whitestag Center in Portland.

APR 30  Discussion of 203-224

Reports on assignment 11

Thank you for your work in this class! Congratulations to graduates! Cheers to continuing students! Have a great summer!

MAY 5-9  Final examinations: there is no final exam in this class.
SIU Policy on “Incomplete” as a Course Grade: The following text is taken from the 2011-2012 Undergraduate Catalog, p. 32:
An INC is assigned when, for reasons beyond their control, students engaged in passing work are unable to complete all class assignments. An INC must be changed to a completed grade within a time period designated by the instructor but not to exceed one year from the close of the term in which the course was taken, or graduation, whichever occurs first. Should the student fail to complete the course within the time period designated, not to exceed one year, or graduation, whichever comes first, the incomplete will be converted to a grade of F and the grade will be computed in the student's grade point average. Students should not reregister for courses in which an INC has been assigned with the intent of changing the INC grade. Re-registration will not prevent the INC from being changed to an F.

Building Emergency Response Protocols for Syllabus: University’s Emergency Procedure Clause:
Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Because some health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, we ask that you become familiar with the SIUC Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) program. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, available on BERT’s website at www.bert.siu.edu, Department of Public Safety’s website www.dps.siu.edu (disaster drop down) and in the Emergency Response Guideline pamphlet. Know how to respond to each type of emergency.

Instructors will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting your location. It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency. The Building Emergency Response Team will provide assistance to your instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.

Students With a Disability:
Instructors and students in the class will work together as a team to assist students with a disability safely out of the building. Students with a disability will stay with the instructor and communicate with the instructor what is the safest way to assist them.
**Tornado:**
During the spring semester we have a **Storm Drill**.

Pick up your belongings and your instructor will lead you to a safe area of the basement. No one will be allowed to stay upstairs. Stay away from windows. The drill should not last more than 10 minutes. You must stay with your instructor so he/she can take roll. Students need to be quiet in the basement as the BERT members are listening to emergency instructions on handheld radios and cannot hear well in the basement.

**Fire:**
During the fall semester we have a **Fire Drill**.

Pick up your belongings and your instructor will lead you to either the North or South parking lot depending on what part of the building your class is in. You must stay with your instructor so he/she can take roll. As soon as the building is all clear, you will be allowed to return to class.

**These drills are to train instructors and the Building Emergency Response Team to get everyone to a safe place during an emergency.**

**Bomb Threat:**
If someone calls in a bomb threat, class will be suspended and students will be asked to pick up their belongings, evacuate the building and leave the premises. Do not leave anything that is yours behind. We will not allow anyone back into the building until the police and bomb squad give us an all clear. **DO NOT USE YOUR CELL PHONES.** Some bombs are triggered by a cell phone signal.

**Shooter in the Building:**
If it is safe to leave, move to a safe area far from the building away from where the shooter is located. If anyone has any information about the shooter, please contact the police after they have gone someplace safe.

If it is not safe to leave, go into a room, lock the door and turn out the lights. Everyone should spread out and not huddle together as a group. Don't stand in front of the door or in line of fire with the door. Students' chair and desks should be piled in front of the glass and door as a barricade and the teacher's desk, podium and anything movable can be pushed against the door. This is intended to slow down any attempts to enter the classroom. If it looks like the shooter is persistent and able to enter, make a lot of noise and have the students use everything in their backpacks to throw at the shooter to distract him.

Silence all cell phones after one person in the room calls the police and informs them of their location and how many people are in the room. Be quiet and wait for the police to arrive. The police are looking for one or more shooters, and they have no way of knowing if the shooter is in the room people are hiding
For this reason, when the police enter the room, no one should have anything in his/her hands and each person **MUST** raise his/her hands above his/her head.

**Earthquake:**
In the event of an earthquake, you are advised to take cover quickly under heavy furniture or crouch near an interior wall or corner and cover your head to avoid falling debris. Outside the building are trees and power lines and debris from the building itself that you will need to stay away from. In the building, large open areas like auditoriums are the most dangerous. Do not try to escape on a stairway or elevator. Do not hide under a stairway. We do not recommend that you stand in a doorway because the door could shut from the vibrations and crush your fingers trapping you there.

**Women's Self Defense Classes** are offered to female students faculty and staff by the Department of SIU Public Safety. For more information, contact Officer Russell Thomas russellt@dps.siu.edu.