TV Show Assignment (Paranormal-themed Courses)

For this assignment, students will review a television show related to the theme of the class. The review should be no less than 750 words (about the length of 3 double-spaced pages), and it might need to be significantly longer to fulfill the requirements. You must watch at least three episodes of the show. Take notes as you watch each episode, jotting down what the main characters are, what happens in each episode, and how the episode makes you feel (happy, sad, bored, etc.—or all of the above). In addition, you can probably find a lot of material about the show online. Make sure to cite your sources.

Students should include all of the following in the essay (though not necessarily in this order). Do not use bullets. Write an essay with well-developed paragraphs.

- **General Information** (in an introduction, preferably single paragraph)
  - What is the show? What’s its name?
  - What’s it about overall?
  - What network(s) does it (did it) air on?
  - When? Dates and time slot(s)?
  - How many seasons? How many episodes?
  - What genre is it? (Shows like *Medium, Ghost Whisperer, Drop Dead Diva, Roswell, Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, etc. would be “dramas” and shows like *Paranormal State, Ghost Hunters, Destination Truth, Ancient Aliens*, etc. would be “Reality TV”)
  - What is the paranormal phenomenon used in the show (for instance, in *Medium*, Allison Dubois is a medium or one who speaks to the dead)?
  - Who is the intended audience? (How do you know? If you watch it on television, pay attention to the commercials to answer this question.)
  - Is the show rated (Y=Young Child to M=Mature)? Was the rating accurately applied?

- **Episodes** (in the body of the paper; multiple paragraphs okay)
  - What episodes did you watch?
  - How did you watch them (Hulu, rented DVD, Netflix, etc.)
  - From watching three episodes, you should be able to describe the “form” of the show. Bronwyn Williams describes the form: "The form of the program acts as a template for each week's episode, so that any viewer gets to experience the essential form of the program time and again" (58). So, that means, describe a basic episode. What usually happens? To what degree are the shows that you are examining predictable?
  - What role did music / sound effects play in each episode? Are certain sounds associated with particular characters or themes? Are sounds matched to the mood of a character (or characters)? What do the sound effects add to the program — are they an integral part of the show, or just extra noise?**

- **Review** (in the body of the paper; again multiple paragraphs okay)
Is it a good show? Bad show? Why? (be very specific about the why)
Ask yourself if you would like to watch this television show and if it makes you want to watch more.
Describe in detail at least one scene from the show to illustrate why you liked it / didn’t like it.
Is the show appropriate for its intended audience (which may not be you)?
How does it compare to similar shows in your experience?
Edward R. Murrow said, "Television in the main is being used to distract, delude, amuse, and insulate us." In light of Murrow’s quotation, what role would you say that the television show you are reviewing plays? Does it distract? If so, from what, and how? Or does it delude? Who is it deluding? What methods does it use? If it amuses, who does it amuse, and what techniques does it use to do so? Does it fill several of those roles? Are there roles that the show might fill that Murrow has not mentioned? What?**

- **Analysis (in the body of the paper; multiple paragraphs okay)**
  - Describe the degree of realism of this show: In what ways are the characters real? Do the characters have real emotions — and a full range of emotions? Or do they just have the emotions that seem politically correct for the time and place that the programs consider? Are their emotions predictable? Do they look like real people, or like models and pin-ups? Is their hair every mussed? Do they get dirty? Does anyone ever go to the bathroom? Do they every get sick? Do they grow at a normal rate?**
  - If the show you have chosen is in the category of “Reality TV,” the questions above are especially interesting. How real is Reality? Is it scripted? Are the characters / people acting? How do you know? What do you feel when you watch it? What about a particular scene makes you feel that way?
  - If the show you have chosen is in the category of “Reality TV,” also consider: What specific beliefs, actions, and relationships do the show in particular and the reality genre in general encourage among both the show’s participants and among the viewing audience? **

- **Conclusion (single paragraph at the end of the paper)**
  - Why did you choose this show to watch? What was the appeal to you? What were your expectations before watching the show? How did those expectations shape / frame / or filter what you saw or how you interpreted it? Did you find the show to meet your expectations? How or how not?
  - What did you think overall? Would you recommend the show? To whom? Why or why not?

- **Mechanics**
  - TV Show titles should be in italics
  - TV Show Episode titles should be in Quotation Marks
  - Cite all sources, including your tv episodes, in MLA format.
If show watched on Broadcast television, use this format:

If show watched from DVD, use this format:

If show watched on the internet, use this format:

*If you do not have a DVR and cannot record tv shows or if you wish to watch a show that it is not currently on television, check out Hulu and Network websites (*Charmed*, for instance, is on TNT’s website) for full episodes of the show. In addition, the public library ([www.lfpl.org](http://www.lfpl.org)) might have something; limit your search in the catalog to DVD. Some “Paranormal”-themed shows available to “Watch Instantly” on Netflix (with a subscription)

- *Dead Like Me*
- *Angel*
- *Paranormal State*
- *Monster Quest*
- *Roswell*

**These questions are taken or adapted from [http://www.tengrrl.com/tens/022.shtml](http://www.tengrrl.com/tens/022.shtml).**

Other Sources & Inspiration for this Assignment

- [How to Write a Television Show Review | eHow.com](http://www.ehow.com/how_2123321_write-television-show-review.html#ixzz1LsKMGJ4m)