

CMS 603/CMS 995  
American Soap Opera  
Spring 2008  

Lecture Time/Location:  
Monday and Wednesday, 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. (1-132)  

Lab Time/Location:  
Monday, 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. (1-132)  

Instructor:  
Sam Ford  
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Office Number: NE25-379  

Meeting Times: By Appointment  
Stellar Site: http://stellar.mit.edu/S/course/CMS/sp08/CMS.603/  
Class Blog Site: http://mitsoaps.wordpress.com/  
Discussion Board: http://www.mediadomain.com/cgi-bin/netforum/atwt/a.cgi/  

Class Description  

The television landscape has changed drastically in the past few years; nowhere is this more prevalent than in the American daytime serial drama, one of the oldest forms of television content. This class examines the history of these "soap operas" and their audiences by focusing on the production, consumption, and media texts of soaps. The class will include discussions of what makes soap operas a unique form, the history of the genre, current experimentation with transmedia storytelling, the online fan community, and comparisons between daytime dramas and primetime serials from 24 to Friday Night Lights, through a study of Procter & Gamble's As the World Turns.  

Viewing Materials  

In each week’s viewing lab, we will be watching the Procter & Gamble Productions/TeleVest soap opera produced for CBS Daytime Television, As the World Turns (1956-present). There may be occasional viewings of texts for comparison in regular class sessions.  

Reading Materials  

There is only one book required for this course:  


All other readings for the course will be provided on Stellar, as the other books we will be reading are currently out of print.
Attendance Policy

There will be none. Students must attend regularly to complete the assignments.

Class Assignments

30 percent  Class Blog  
30 percent  Term Paper  
20 percent  In-Class Participation  
20 percent  Discussion Board Participation  

Class Blog

Many soap fans feel that there are not enough sites that facilitate serious discussions about soaps. I hope that, through our tackling of scholarship on soaps and linking those readings to a current soap opera text, our class blog can become a site of interest not just to those of us involved in the course but to other scholars, soap fans, and even those involved in the soap opera industry.

Students are expected to make 1 post each week and write at least 2 comments on others’ posts each week. Graduate students are required to write 2 posts each week and at least 3 comments on others’ posts each week.

These updates cannot all be done in one setting. This is not meant to be a burden but rather the most significant part of the class and is where I see the majority of the class’ potential in lying. Think of this as a conversation, and please use the blog as such. While our discussions may be somewhat insular in that it will be focused around the readings and viewings we are currently immersed in as a class, please keep in mind that a larger audience may be reading and that these posts will remain public after the duration of this course.

Term Paper

Reading and viewing materials are all meant to provide potential sources and further avenues of research for the class. Students are expected to have picked a topic by Friday, March 14, and to schedule a meeting time with me during the next two weeks. A proposal for the paper is due by Friday, April 04. An outline or equivalent writing sample is due by Friday, April 25.

Students are expected to meet with me a second time before deadline. Students are more than welcome to turn in a version of the paper early for feedback and may do so throughout the term if so motivated. However, the final version of the term paper is due by Monday, May 19. The term paper shall be approximately 11-15 pages for undergraduates and 15-20 pages for graduate students. Meeting the deadlines of the term paper is reflected in the overall grade.

The term paper may be on any topic as long as it is approved through discussion with the instructor. The intent is for students to be able to bring their own expertise and interests into the course and apply them to this study of soaps. A wide variety of topics, analytical angles, and writing styles are acceptable if used effectively.
In-Class Participation

While there is no required attendance, a fifth of your grade for the course will come from your active participation in class discussion of the viewings and readings. While the evening lab each week will always be taken up by viewing, there will almost always be class discussion in both the Monday and Wednesday class sessions. This will not be a lecture course, so it requires your active participation to be a success.

Discussion Board Participation

My thesis work discusses, in part, the interaction among the community that posts on the *As the World Turns* discussion board at Michael Gill’s Media Domain. Since part of this class deals with the ways in which people build community around soap opera texts, I feel it is crucial not only for the class to have face-to-face discussion about soaps but also to participate in an online discussion forum. Students are required to post a minimum of **4 substantial comments** in the discussion forum each week. Graduate students are required to post a minimum of **6 substantial comments** weekly. As with the blog, these posts can’t be made in succession. This requirement ends on Monday, April 21, as the weekly *ATWT* viewing requirements end at that point.

Writing and Communication Center

The **Writing and Communication Center (32-081)** offers you free professional advice from published writers about oral presentations and about all types of academic, creative, and professional writing. Go to [http://web.mit.edu/writing](http://web.mit.edu/writing) and click on the yellow sunburst. If you cannot find an open appointment slot, do not despair. There are **always** cancellations on the day of the appointment (sometimes as many as 15 cancellations in one day). Click on the Wait List (the blue strip that says “Is the time that you want already reserved?”). Whenever a cancellation occurs on that day, you will be automatically notified by email. Because several people might receive that same message, go online ASAP to schedule that open spot; 96% of clients who want an appointment end up with one if they use the Wait List. If you still can’t find an appointment, try the Online Tutor at [http://web.mit.edu/writing/Center/onlinetutor.html](http://web.mit.edu/writing/Center/onlinetutor.html). The Center’s hours are Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to noon, 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.; Monday-Thursday evening 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.; and Sunday 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Statement on Plagiarism

Plagiarism—use of another's intellectual work without acknowledgement—is a serious offense. It is the policy of the Literature Faculty that students who plagiarize will receive an F in the subject, and that the instructor will forward the case to the Committee on Discipline. Full acknowledgement for all information obtained from sources outside the classroom must be clearly stated in all written work submitted. All ideas, arguments, and direct phrasings taken from someone else's work must be identified and properly footnoted. Quotations from other sources must be clearly marked as distinct from the student's own work. For further guidance on the proper forms of attribution, consult the style guides available in the Writing and Communication Center (12-132) and the MIT Website on Plagiarism located at: [http://web.mit.edu/writing/Special/plagiarism.html](http://web.mit.edu/writing/Special/plagiarism.html).
Class Schedule

W Feb. 06  Introduction
Viewing: *Guiding Light* 70th Anniversary Episode

M Feb. 11
Audio: *Guiding Light* Radio Episodes
Ford, Sam. “Growing Old Together: Following *As the World Turns*’ Tom Hughes Through the Years.”

M Feb. 11  Viewing Lab
*ATWT* Episodes  Feb. 4-8

W Feb. 13

M. Feb 18  President’s Day—No Class

T. Feb. 19
Research Presentation: *ATWT* in the 1960s.

T Feb. 19  Viewing Lab
Viewing *ATWT* Episodes  Feb. 11-15

W Feb. 20
Research Presentation: *ATWT* in the 1970s.

M Feb. 25
Viewing: Clips from International Soaps in Europe and Asia
M. Feb 25     Viewing Lab
ATWT Episodes     Feb. 18-22

W Feb. 27
Research Presentation: ATWT in the 1980s.

M March 03

M March 03     Viewing Lab
ATWT Episodes     Feb. 25-29

W March 05     (Last Class Before Add Date)
Viewing: Clips on ATWT’s History
M March 10
Viewing: Clips on ATWT’s History

M March 10 Viewing Lab
ATWT Episodes March 03-07

W March 12
Research Presentation: *ATWT in the 1990s*. Also, Topic by Friday.

M March 17
Research Presentation: *ATWT in the 2000s*.

M March 17 Viewing Lab
ATWT Episodes March 10-14

W March 19
Viewing: ATWT Episodes Aired on March 17-18

M March 24 and W March 26
No Class—Spring Break

M March 31
Viewing: ATWT Episode Aired on March 19

M March 31 Viewing Lab
ATWT Episodes March 24-28
**W April 02**

**Viewing:** ATWT Episodes Aired on March 31, April 01


**Proposal Due by Friday**

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**M April 07**

**Viewing:** ATWT Episodes Aired on April 02-03


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**M April 07**  **Viewing Lab**

No Class

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**W April 09**

**Viewing:** ATWT Episode Aired on April 04


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**M April 14**


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**M April 14**  **Viewing Lab**

ATWT Episodes  April 07-April 11

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**W April 16**


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**M April 21**

NO CLASS OR VIEWING—Patriot's Day

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**W April 23** (Last Class Before Drop Date)


Ford, Sam. “*As the World Turns* in a Convergence Culture.” Ch. 1.

**Outline/Writing Sample Due by Friday**

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**M April 28**

**Viewing:** Clips from Primetime Shows from the Class

Ford, Sam. “*As the World Turns* in a Convergence Culture,” Ch. 2-3.
M April 28     Viewing Lab
Viewing: Episodes of Other Soaps

W April 30
Viewing: Clips from Ugly Betty, Telenovela
Ford, Sam. “As the World Turns in a Convergence Culture,” Ch. 4-6.

M May 05
Viewing: Clips from Primetime Shows from the Class
Ford, Sam. “As the World Turns in a Convergence Culture,” Ch. 7.

M April 28     Viewing Lab
Viewing: Episodes of Other Soaps

W May 07
Presentation of Research

M May 12
Finish Presentations of Research if Needed.
Derecho, Abigail. “‘Perhaps,’ ‘Forgotten,’ and ‘Never-Were’ Stories: The Troubled Times of Internet Soap Opera Fan Fiction.”
Webb, Emma. TBD.
Wilson, Mary Jeanne. TBD.

M May 12 Viewing Lab
Viewing: Primetime Television Shows

W May 14
Last Class Discussion. Wrapping Up.

Paper Due by Monday, May 19.