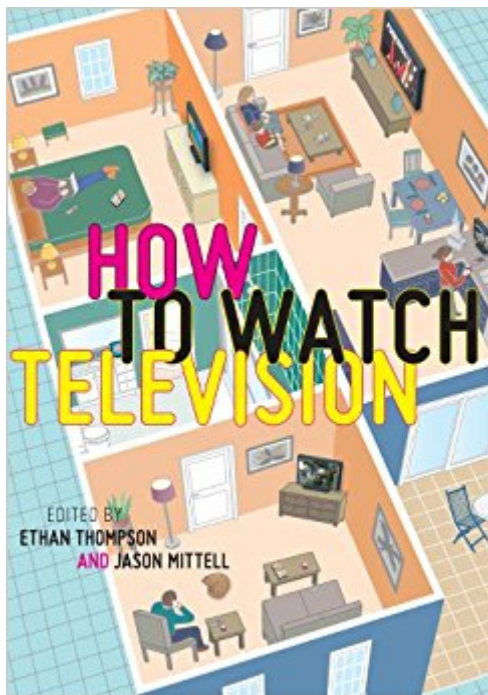


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# How To Watch Television



## Synopsis

We all have opinions about the television shows we watch, but television criticism is about much more than simply evaluating the merits of a particular show and deeming it 'good' or 'bad.' Rather, criticism uses the close examination of a television program to explore that program's cultural significance, creative strategies, and its place in a broader social context.

How to Watch Television brings together forty original essays from today's leading scholars on television culture, writing about the programs they care (and think) the most about. Each essay focuses on a particular television show, demonstrating one way to read the program and, through it, our media culture. The essays model how to practice media criticism in accessible language, providing critical insights through analysis--suggesting a way of looking at TV that students and interested viewers might emulate. The contributors discuss a wide range of television programs past and present, covering many formats and genres, spanning fiction and non-fiction, broadcast and cable, providing a broad representation of the programs that are likely to be covered in a media studies course. While the book primarily focuses on American television, important programs with international origins and transnational circulation are also covered. Addressing television series from the medium's earliest days to contemporary online transformations of television, *How to Watch Television* is designed to engender classroom discussion among television critics of all backgrounds. Ethan Thompson is Associate Professor at Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi. He is the author of *Parody and Taste in Postwar American Television Culture*, and co-editor of *Satire TV: Politics and Comedy in the Post-Network Era*. Jason Mittell is Professor of Film & Media Culture and American Studies at Middlebury College. He is the author of *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*, *Television and American Culture*, and *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York University Press, 2015).

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This book, unlike the manual that comes with your TV set, is utterly readable, highly engaging, and worth referring back to, long after you've switched on your favorite channel. . . . Regardless of which essay one chooses to tune in to, *How to Watch Television* is an accessible and impressive group of essays by a powerhouse cast of television scholars."—*Journal of American Culture*

"Ask anyone in Hollywood and they'll tell you the movies are dead. TV is where it's at, and this book will show you why. Thompson and Mittell offer an essential guide to television today, featuring the most insightful critics writing about the most creative and engaging shows. Whether student, fan, or TV professional, it belongs on your bookshelf."—Michael Curtin, co-author of *The American Television Industry*

"There's not a single dull page in this book."—Jose Solis, *Popmatters*

"There's quite simply no book out there that can match this in scope and quality. The contributors are a 'Who's Who' of contemporary television studies, and the prose is engaging and highly readable. If you're looking for models of how to think about television from a range of perspectives, you need look no further."—Greg M. Smith, author of *Beautiful TV: The Art and Argument of Ally McBeal*

"What happens when you give 40 smart television scholars ten pages each to write about a television show that interests them? You get a delightful book that is sure to become a favorite of television scholars and students alike. Thompson and Mittell have brought together authors who provide thoughtful criticism in an engaging style and cover just about every genre, historical period, and lens of analysis. Each essay's combination of brevity and detailed analysis makes the book likely to work well as both a course reader for undergraduates in television studies and a reference resource for those wanting to dive into research on individual shows. Though every essay adds something valuable to the collection, essays on *Mad Men*, *Glee*, *M\*A\*S\*H*, *I Love Lucy*, *Modern Family*, *NYPD Blue*, *The Twilight Zone*, and *The Walking Dead* are worth the price of this fun, informative, and useful book, even for seasoned television scholars."—*Summing Up*: Highly recommended."—S. Pepper, *Choice*

"[I]t is a damn good collection, featuring 40 different contributions from American scholars, plus Matt Hills from Aberystwyth and Roberta Pearson from Nottingham. Their contributions are organised under five main themes: Aesthetics and Style; TV Representations:

Social Identity and Cultural Politics; TV Politics: Democracy, Nation, and the Public Interest; TV Industry: Industrial Practices and Structures; and TV Practices: Medium, Technology, and Everyday Life. As with television schedules, it is easy to flick and pick and read—indeed, the editors in their Introduction actively encourage readers to go straight to a particular program or approach that interests them."-Geoff Lealand, CST Online "With their urging in the introduction about how the essays serve as models for writing your own criticism, the editors seem to be addressing media studies students. But because of its well-commissioned and well-balanced tone and diversity/specificity of texts, it is just as instructive for a wide range of burgeoning or established TV scholars as well as inquisitive fans of the various programs. The collection manages to be potentially enjoyable and useful to scholars and TV fans alike."-Kathleen Collins, Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly

Ethan Thompson is Associate Professor at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. He is the author of *Parody and Taste in Postwar American Television Culture*, and co-editor of *Satire TV: Politics and Comedy in the Post-Network Era*. Jason Mittell is Professor of Film & Media Culture and American Studies at Middlebury College. He is the author of *Genre & Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture* (Routledge, 2004), *Television & American Culture* (Oxford UP, 2009), and *Complex Television: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (NYU Press, 2015),

In-depth essays from a wide variety of perspectives on individual TV programs. Excellent for promoting classroom discussion. Would be interesting and accessible to general interest reader, too. Great assemblage of leading scholars in field and excellent range of TV programs. Nicely produced/bound book.

I'm using this collection in a course on Media Criticism. It's engaging, informative, and nicely keyed to specific examples of important television programming. The editors have done a fine job of lining up very good essays. The book works well at the undergraduate level.

An excellent collection of essays, and a fine resource for anyone concerned with television, and that is all of us!

This is a book i needed for class but it was so good i ended up keeping it because i enjoyed the

theory behind it.

Not only did this book ship fast, but the content is AMAZING! It's the most interesting educational book I've ever read!

With no irony intended, How To Watch Television is structured just like a television series. Every essay starts with a third person abstract. The author then follows a framework of describing what will s/he will describe, and there are notes and further reading lists after the conclusion. They use conventions like citing the network year-span of any tv show they mention. The essays are all compact - maximum ten pages - so you know you won't get too deeply involved. This makes them easy to get into, easy to get out of and easy to follow - just like tv. With essays on forty shows, the book does not build (it is "non-episodic"), so you can skip around, safe in the formal structure. You can even ignore shows you never heard of, because the references might mean very little, and dig into the shows you hate, or glory in the shows you love, because the authors look at details, trends and references that most likely never occurred to you while you were watching. They impute race and sex and culture themes where story is paramount, find significance where none was intended, and higher purpose when all the network wanted was entertainment. Not all the essays critique episodes. Some look at the impact, some the production process, some the context. They all exhibit a passion, not to say neurosis, for the specific show under the microscope. From I Love Lucy to Star Trek to Modern Family, and touching on "news" (Fox & Friends) it's clearly a labor of love as each author gets to extol the virtues of whatever show s/he is passionate about. I particularly enjoyed the analysis of MTV's Jersey Shore. And many thanks for the examination of Prisoner, which shows clearly once and for all why American remakes of British and French cult classics are totally and irrevocably doomed to fail if not completely alienate. The original Prisoner remains way ahead of its time (now) despite, not because of the updated, unfaithful remake. For anyone writing a paper on a favorite show, How To Watch TV is a most excellent starting point. David Wineberg

Written by a wanna be clearly. Worst book ever! Don't waste ur money nor time.

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