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Teaching with Reality Television: Editor's Introduction

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Reality television occupies a significant portion of the contemporary media diet and its symbiosis with social media make it a highly saturated site of interest for instructors, students, and researchers. For this special issue, we sought to explore the ways in which reality television occupies space in our media studies classrooms - in our conversations about neoliberalism, late capitalism, gender, race, and class - as well as the ways in which instructors situate reality television amongst broader televisual and media histories. The lesson plans included here provide answers to questions regarding governmentality and surveillance, genre theory, authenticity, and emotional spectacle, all key components in a critical analysis of reality television. Though often trivialized, reality television has become and remains a critical area of study for those working and teaching in media and communication environments, as demonstrated by the scholarly contributions to the field, including the lesson plans included in this special issue.

In "Reality TV, Genre Theory, and Shaping the Real" **Rebecca Burditt** provides a series of lesson plans that encourage students to recognize the connection between film genre and reality TV. Three Reality TV programs are used as in-class case studies: *The Bachelorette*, *What Would You Do?*, and *The Real World*. Burditt also provides a hands-on activity that asks student to edit clips of Reality TV to create dramatic effects. Overall, whether an instructor decides to use one or all of the lesson plans, students will have an opportunity to think through how reality TV, despite seeming to be reflect reality, is constructed through the use of familiar narrative structures, characterization, editing techniques and, of course, dominant ideologies.

Justin Joseph Grandinetti historicizes and contextualizes the technology of television through a focus on televisual control and reality television in "Teaching the Lineage of Televisual Control and Reality TV." Through the provided readings, lectures, discussions, and activities, this lesson plan makes difficult, yet fundamental, communication concepts – including neoliberalism, control society, and contemporary technology – understandable for the undergraduate and graduate classroom. Furthermore, the small-group activity related to students' engagement with reality TV offers the class a chance to relate to the implications of contemporary televisual culture.

Terrell Jake Dionne takes up a fictional reality program in the context of the film *Sleep Dealer* to develop a lesson plan for teaching students about the connection between reality television and elite interests. The lesson plan specifically introduces students to the complex topics of metaphor, colonialism, and colonality by providing them with an in-depth investigation of a media object which reveals both the connections between these ideas and the ways in which reality programming can serve the elite interests that perpetuate colonial thought and activity. This lesson plan is a tool to help students understand that reality television can play a pivotal role in establishing the understood legitimacy of colonial conquests and the extent to which the colonized are dehumanized and rendered disposable.

In "Emotional Spectacle and Reality Television: Constructing the Authentic," **Emily Saidel** historicizes theoretical positions on "spectacle" and applies these definitions to different visual case studies, namely emotional spectacle seen in *The Bachelor* franchise. Through a screening



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of episode 12 of season 22 of *The Bachelor* paired with a cadre of reality television scholarship on authenticity, performativity, and emotion, students are asked to find and present their own examples of emotional display on reality television, as well as pair these moments with different musical scores to demonstrate the relationship between sight, sound, and spectacle in reality television.

