

THE TELEVISION

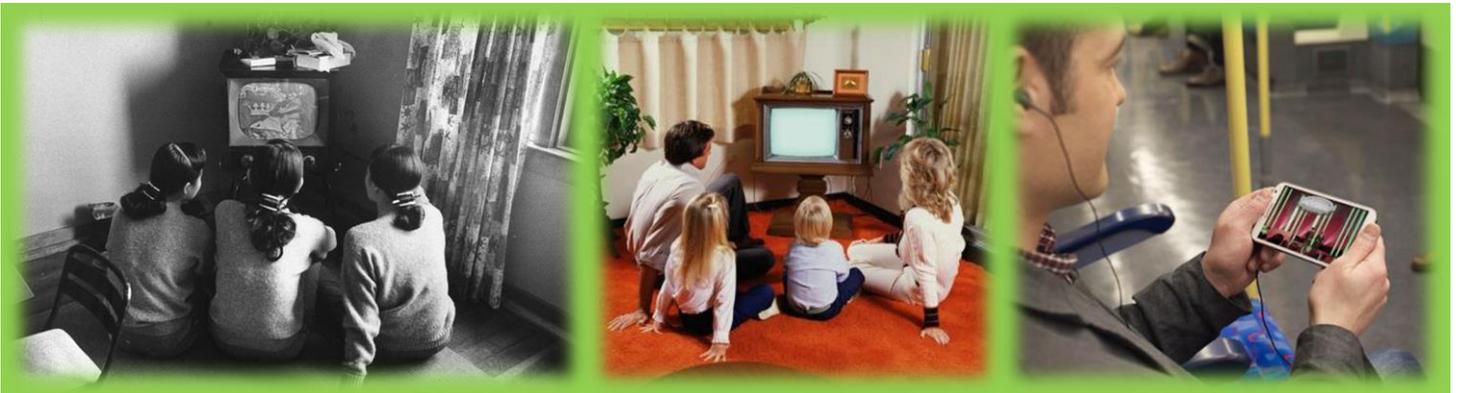
WILL BE

REVOLUTIONIZED

AMANDA D. LOTZ

In the first chapter of her book *The Television Will Be Revolutionized*, Amanda Lotz examines some of the many industrial, social, and cultural changes that led to the emergence of what she and other media scholars call the “Post-Network Era.” Your first reading response should briefly summarize this assigned reading (in 500-700 words, roughly two double-spaced pages), explaining how the contemporary context in which Netflix has risen to prominence differs from earlier periods in U.S. television history, when the “Big Three” networks (CBS, NBC, and ABC) and eventually cable channels (such as HBO, CNN, and MTV) dominated the industry.

In contrasting the experience of TV-viewing “then” vs. “now,” try to imagine how your grandparents and parents watched programs decades ago. Do you think that your own experience with television differs markedly from theirs? How did the introduction of new technologies during the 1980s, such as the remote control, the videocassette recorder, and analog cable systems, alter people’s understanding of the medium? How is “broadcasting” different from “narrowcasting,” and does the latter term denote a problematic fracturing of the public sphere into smaller and smaller “interest groups”? What are the larger implications of this social fragmentation and polarization? Do you miss (or feel any nostalgia for) the earlier history of television, when the “least objectionable programming” could be consumed by a broad viewership due to a relative lack of options/alternatives?



Lotz proposes the term “phenomenal television” in reference to programs that somehow break through the “cluttered media space” of post-network television to attain cultural significance. Although she does not list examples by title, can you think of any recent TV shows that have managed to “capture the zeitgeist” or speak to contemporary social and political concerns? Will those shows endure in the years to come? Finally, what are the four “functions” of television that Lotz describes near the end of her chapter? Which of those four resonates with you, and why?

Post your response on CANVAS (in the Discussions area) before the 10:00 p.m. deadline Tuesday night.

(NOTE: Because my only engagement with each of you is through your writing (no face-to-face conversations, sadly), I expect a level of competency, proficiency, and even professionalism in your online submissions; typos, errors, run-on sentences, and other mistakes will reduce your overall grade)