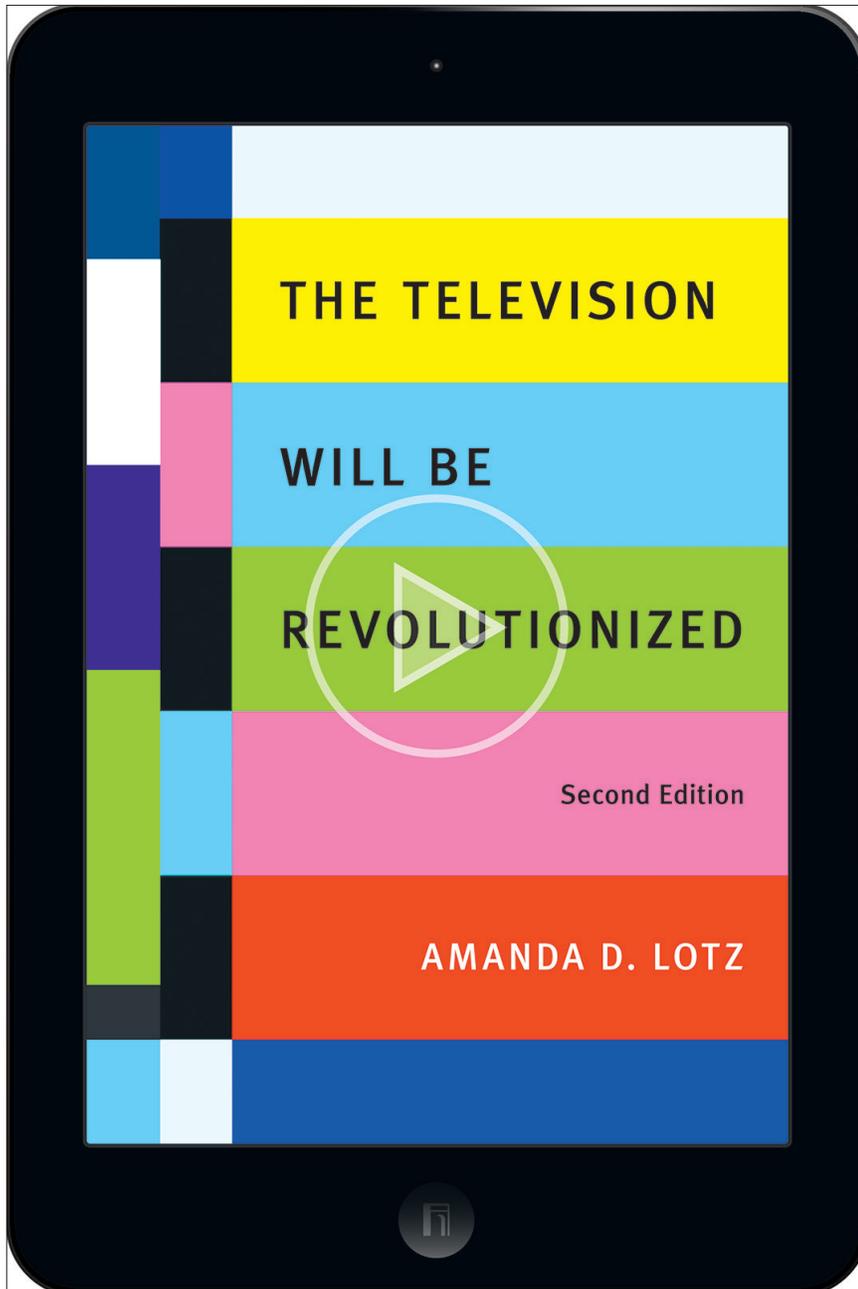


THE TELEVISION WILL BE REVOLUTIONIZED

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE



After occupying a central space in American living rooms for the past fifty years, is television, as we've known it, dead? The capabilities and features of that simple box have been so radically redefined that it's now nearly unrecognizable. Today, viewers with digital video recorders such as TiVo may elect to circumvent scheduling constraints and commercials. Owners of iPods and other portable viewing devices are able to download the latest episodes of their favorite shows and watch them whenever and wherever they want. Still others rent television shows on DVD, or download them through legal and illegal sources online. But these changes have not been hastening the demise of the medium. They are revolutionizing it.

The Television Will Be Revolutionized examines television at the turn of the twenty-first century —what Amanda D. Lotz terms the “post-network” era. Television, both as a technology and a tool for cultural storytelling, remains as important today as ever, but it has changed in fundamental ways as the result of technological innovations, proliferating cable channels targeting ever more specific niche audiences, and evolving forms of advertising such as product placement and branded entertainment. Many of the conventional practices and even the industry's basic business model are proving unworkable in this new context, resulting in a crisis in norms and practices.

321 PAGES

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(pages 1-19)

SUMMARY

The introduction establishes the foundation for the book, which charts out the industrial practices that undergird the television industry in light of changing business, technological, and viewer practices.

The chapter provides an overview of U.S. television today—what it means to talk about television and what “television” is—and introduces two key themes that appear throughout the book. First, the chapter situates television within three institutional eras: the network era (from the 1950s to mid 1980s); the multi-channel transition (from the mid 1980s to mid-2000s); and the post-network era, which reflects the disrupted, though transitional, state of contemporary television. In addition, the chapter advocates for more specifically categorizing television content in order to acknowledge the different industrial and viewing norms now common. These broad categories include “prized content,” “live sports and contests,” and “linear viewing.” Finally, the chapter introduces the topics covered in the book, which include the following:

- understanding television in the post-network era
- identifying the technological changes affecting the television industry
- examining production and distribution practices of television
- charting the economics of television financing
- understanding the tools of audience measurement
- case studies of television shows that reflect the changed conditions of the post-network era

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What were some of the common anxieties that emerged around television during the early 2000s?
- What are the main distinctions between the network era, the multi-channel transition, and the post-network era?
- What distinct types of content have emerged in the post-network era?

Understanding Television at the Beginning of the Post-Network Era (pages 21- 52)

SUMMARY

This chapter more explicitly outlines the distinction between the network era, the multi-channel transition, and the post-network era. The network era, alternatively known as the broadcast era, was dominated by three networks: ABC, CBS and NBC, often described as the “Big Three.” Networks were able to establish norms of practice and modes of operation (i.e., consistent scheduling blocks, the norm of a “television season,” reruns in the summer, and advertiser-supported financing models). The multi-channel transition (beginning in the mid-1980s) introduced cable channels and additional broadcast channels such as Fox and UPN, allowing viewers some expanded choice and control in their viewing practices.

This shift in television’s norms—its move from a mass medium to an aggregator of niche media—has challenged assumptions about the nature of television both from the industry’s perspective and its experience by the culture. The latter half of the chapter focuses on identifying ways in which television might still enjoy some of its relevance as a cultural institution in an era of niche media and introduces the concept of phenomenal television.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What were some of the established network-era norms that came to be seen as natural? What did the multi-channel transition reveal about these norms?
- What is phenomenal television and in what ways does it approximate television’s ability to serve as a cultural forum?
- How did audience behavior change with the arrival of the post-network era?
- How did the emergence of additional broadcast networks and cable channels in the multi-channel transition change the competitive dynamics of the industry and the type of programming likely to be produced?
- What are the four modes of television that allow it to continue to function as a cultural institution?

SUPPLEMENTAL ASSIGNMENTS

Think through the television shows you currently consume and try to identify how these shows function according to one of the modes of television identified in this chapter.

Television Outside the Box: The Technological Revolution of Television (pages 53 - 94)

SUMMARY

This chapter focuses on the technological changes that have affected how viewers use television and how those changes have affected industry practices over the three eras. By tracing the penetration of different technologies, the chapter helps illustrate the vast differences in the experience of television in 2003 compared to 2013, reflecting the significant influence of technology on television.

The second half of the chapter focuses on in-depth analyses of the post-network attributes of convenience, mobility and theatricality by delving further into the affordances of various technologies.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What are the three main attributes of post-network era technology?
- How has the possibility of mobility changed the experience of watching television? The business of television?
- What is the difference between mobile television and portable television? Why does it matter?
- How did the introduction of the Electronic Program Guide (EPG) and subsequently the Interactive Program Guide (IPG) help in facilitating the convenience of post-network television?

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

How critical is the distinction among various types of content—prized, live sports and contests, and linear—in thinking through the convenience aspects of post-network television? Do these distinctions matter or create different affordances for consumers?

SUPPLEMENTAL ASSIGNMENT

Make a diary of your personal media consumption habits and identify how the way you view television is characteristic of the post-network television era. What aspects of your television consumption (technologies used, places where you watch, shows you watch) would not have been possible in the network era?

Making Television: Changing the Practices of Creating Television (pg. 95 - 130)

SUMMARY

Noting the financial risks inherent in developing content for television, this chapter examines both long-existing and emerging production norms that structure the making of television in the United States. As with technology, the post-network era has ushered in new modes of financing television production, although some of the changes that have emerged came about due to changing regulations that eradicated strict division between studios and networks. Post-network era production practices also include video produced for online distribution by both amateur and professional talent. However, as the chapter notes many of these experimental practices have not become, nor may not become standard. The second part of the chapter moves away from financing to discuss other issues such as labor practices, changes in programming and scheduling norms, and the challenge of promoting content in the post-network era.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- How do practices such as deficit financing influence the programming of television content?
- In what ways have labor agreements been affected by new technologies and the emergence of new distribution windows?
- What is one reason given in the chapter for the influx of unscripted programming since the 2000s?
- What financing model did DeBmar-Mercury introduce and how does it change the production process?

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

- Why are the distinctions that emerge in financing television programs an important factor to consider in thinking through the types of content produced? What impact does financing have on production norms and content?

SUPPLEMENTAL ASSIGNMENTS

Try to locate a show that was produced without deficit financing. Are there any features of the program—such as its content or style of shooting—that seem remarkably different from shows utilizing deficit financing?

*Revolutionizing Distribution: Breaking Open the Network
Bottleneck (pages 131 - 165)*

SUMMARY

This chapter outlines the various ways in which television distribution has been transformed in the post-network era and the attendant consequences this has had on business models and the types of content that can be produced. Two main changes have taken place in distribution: the emergence of new distribution windows and the rise of new forms of distribution to the home. New distribution windows such as DVD, electronic sell-through, and VOD have created new ways for studios to monetize content and for viewers to access it. Some new competitors have adjusted the terrain of distribution to the home, and broadband developed as an important delivery mechanism for viewing a wide range of video.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What is the main difference between new distribution windows and new forms of distribution to the home?
- How did repurposing alter the long-established distribution norms of the network era?
- The chapter notes the industry has adopted two strategies in regards to VOD. What are the aims of these strategies and how do they differ?
- What were some of the limitations on VOD that led to slow adoption rates for the service?
- What affect did telco companies like AT&T and Verizon have in spurring on new forms of distribution to the home?

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

How important is distribution in thinking about the production and financing of television? What changes have emerged in other parts of the industry due to new distribution windows and new forms of distribution to the home?

SUMMARY

This chapter on the economics of television outlines the various financial models used to support the production and distribution of television content. Advertiser-support dominated the network era and multi-channel transition, but a hybrid of advertiser and subscription support became common in the post-network era, even among broadcast networks that earned substantial sums in retransmission consent fees. These practices remain the most dominant forms of funding, with experiments such as direct-pay serving mainly as additional revenue streams that supplement the main forms of financing. As the chapter notes, even digital distribution platforms such as Hulu and YouTube rely primarily on advertiser-support.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What were the main factors that led to a shift from single-sponsorship to the magazine-format advertising model? How did this benefit the networks?
- What is the upfront process and how does it shape network practices in relation to programming content?
- How do subscriber-financed and advertising-financed television differ and what implications do these differences have on programming?
- What is the difference between basic and advanced placement?

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

Describe two ways (other than the 30-second commercial) that advertising exists on television in the post-network era. Explain how each of these methods has affected the type of content we see on television?

Recounting the Audience: Measurement in the Age of Broadband (pages 207 - 232)

SUMMARY

Audience measurement remains a significant practice for advertiser-supported television. Chapter 6 details the changes that have emerged in these practices throughout television history and into the post-network era. The chapter explores the various challenges that the technologies and distribution methods that have emerged in the post-network pose for audience measurement as audiences are now fractured across a range of viewing contexts, as well as the potential of the data about what and how audiences watch that can now be captured.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What controversies emerged with audience measurement during the implementation of Local People Meters?
- What challenges do data from set-top boxes present in creating accurate measurements?
- How did/didn't competition fuel Nielsen's efforts to innovate its audience measurement services?
- What are some of the limitations that have emerged with Nielsen's Extended Screen Panel, which is intended to measure online viewing?
- What parameters does Nielsen use in defining a television home? Why does this matter?

Television Storytelling Possibilities at the Beginning of the Post-Network Era (pages 233 - 262)

SUMMARY

This chapter uses a series of case studies to highlight shows that reflect the changes characteristic of post-network norms and their attendant effect on content. Each of the shows explored here (*Sex and the City*, *Survivor*, *The Shield*, *Arrested Development* and *Off to War*) disrupted existing norms and provided opportunities for imagining new practices and revenue options for the television industry.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- How do the shows examined in this chapter function as post-network shows?
- What were the particular conditions that helped in *The Shield's* success?
- How does the mandate for subscriber-financed television differ from advertiser-supported television, and how did *Sex and the City* take advantage of this distinction?

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

The chapter argues *Off to War* provides the most hope for imagining the future of post-network television as a cultural institution. What elements of the *Off to War* case help support this view?

SUPPLEMENTAL ASSIGNMENTS

Think of a show other than the five examined in Chapter 7 and construct an argument illustrating how the show serves as an example of post-network television.