

Call for Papers:

**Special issue (Spring/Summer 2015):
Contemporary TV Drama Series**

Guest editors:

**Elisabeth Klaus, University of Salzburg/Austria
Florian Huber, University of Salzburg/Austria**

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The Global Media Journal invites papers for the spring/summer 2015 edition on the topic of “Contemporary TV Drama Series”. Examples of such series, sometimes vaguely referred to as “Quality-TV”, are *The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, or *Breaking Bad*. Other labels used for these internationally successful TV-programs are “Post-TV Drama”, “Transnational Drama”, “Post-Modern Drama”, “TV-Novels” or “Auteur-TV”. Despite their vague name a surprisingly strict canon exists as regards to the particular series mentioned. Their origins from different countries, the producers’ marketing strategies and their modes of appropriation/adoption reveal their transnational and cross-medial character.

Of interest for the special issue of the Global Media Journal are articles that discuss the nomenclature, the boundaries and specific characteristics of the different series. The terms “Quality-TV” and “Auteur-TV” show that contemporary drama series are a means of distinction for the producing broadcasters, the critics and the audience alike. At the same time they can be seen as a “reinvention” of the medium television at a time, when digital media questions its unidirectional flow. Contemporary TV Drama Series thrive on the convergence of the “old” medium with multimedia communication and digital media. Contrary to this, one could argue that their success is routed in their capability to truly fulfill the story-telling potential of television, which has often been discussed in media studies. In addition, some doubts are warranted that such diverse series as *Mad Men* and *The Walking Dead* can be qualified as part of the same genre or genre family. Could the success of the different series simply be accounted for by their narrative properties? If this is the case, is it legitimate for media and television studies to analyze them as a group with distinct properties?

A close look at the different series opens up another subject area. Hermeneutic, discursive or content analysis can be performed on a textual level that entail a closer look at particular series or allow for a comparison of different series. For instance, many series explicitly show violence, which has been interpreted as a higher degree of realism.

Although often referred to as “American Quality Series”, other series such as *Downton Abbey* (UK), *Borgen* (Denmark) or *Real Humans* (Sweden) reveal their cross- and transnational character. Series that do not originate from English-speaking countries often enter the American and the international market only through remakes as in the case of *Homeland*. How does the copy differ from the original, and what do the differences tell us about the social and cultural embedding of the series?

Such questions address the mode of production and financing of Contemporary TV Drama Series. The cultural industry is looking for new models and opportunities for marketing and sales. Despite their differences, “Quality-TV” has proven to be an equally successful strategy as “Trash-TV”. Although the two program concepts seem to be antithetic, they are similar in many respects. Both formats offer ways of finding an audience in a competitive market – for commercial and public-service companies, as well as for online streaming services. It is also interesting to pay attention to the cultural contexts of the series and their particular reception, their success or failure in different countries. In the United States the series succeeded by granting Pay-TV channels new subscribers, a strategy the German channel Sky is trying to replicate. Whether Sky will be successful is questionable, as the Contemporary Drama Series were only moderately successful, if at all, when aired on commercial and public-broadcasting channels in Germany. What are the reasons for such differences?

Very important is the question of consumption and reception of Contemporary TV Drama Series. Why do members of the audience turn to them and why? Are they consumed following the television scheduling or are they watched time-delayed via (portable) devices and by relating to the so-called binge-watching? What role does the socio-economic and cultural context of the audience play? Television critics often imagine the audience as a highly sought-after group of sophisticated and well-to-do intellectuals. This is clearly a construction, but to what extent do audience members share this view and portray their preferences as a means to distinguish themselves from other viewers and to differentiate between “Quality-TV” and “everyday-TV”? First research shows that the language used in talking about the series by recipients, television critics and scholars is remarkably similar. Moreover, it parallels the marketing speech of many series. No doubt, the Contemporary Drama Series encourage the production of tertiary texts: Members of the audience become participant producers themselves. They exchange opinions in (international) forums, produce fan-videos, fan-edits, and fan-fiction. What are the motivations, the contents and the meanings of fandom in the context of the series?

We are looking forward to articles based on theoretical considerations or on empirical work that deal with one of the topics discussed and try to find answers to the questions raised. We invite original submissions from communications and media research and value an inter- or transdisciplinary perspective.

Articles with 30,000-50,000 characters, that will undergo a peer-review, are as welcome as reports from the field (20,000-40,000 characters) or essays and commentaries (10,000-30,000 characters). The submissions must follow the guidelines of the Global Media Journals (see <http://www.globalmediajournal.de/de/submission-guidelines/>).

Please send your submissions until **December 1st, 2014** to the editors Elisabeth Klaus (elisabeth.klaus@sbg.ac.at) and Florian Huber (florian.huber@stud.sbg.ac.at), University of Salzburg, Department of Communications, Rudolfskai 42, 5020 Salzburg/Austria.