**WRIT 4260/5260**

Y**our Name:**

**The Premise of a Series**

**(Motion Graphic Title Sequence)**

Choose an actual television series to analyze its premise.

In the boxes below, answer the questions. Print out a of this file copy for class. Also save the Word file on your USB drive.

**1. Title of Series:**

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**2. What network does the series appear on?**

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**3. The Essence of a Premise = Conflict + Containing Situation:**

*The premise of a series is typically based on the following formula:*

*a primary tension or conflict + a containing situation = the premise*

*The* ***conflict*** *produces either comic situations or dramatic plots. These tensions arise out of contradictions in the condition of the hero or the world of the story. Examples:*

* *a fish-out-of-water situation*
* *a secret*
* *an injustice*
* *competition for a prize or goal*
* *a mystery*
* *contradictory characters thrown or stuck together*

*Since the series' conflict must remain unresolved for many seasons, there must be a "****containing situation****," which perpetuates the conflict, tension, or contradiction.*

*For example,*

* *Roommates forced to live together by economic necessity.*
* *High school*
* *A talking horse will only speak to his owner, who worries that he will be thought crazy if he tells his wife or neighbors.*
* *The FBI assigns a skeptical, by-the-book agent to investigate supernatural and extraterrestrial phenomenon with a very unconventional agent who "wants to believe."*
* *Family bonds and obligations*

In a sentence or two, describe the basic tension in this series

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In a sentence or two, describe the containing situation that prevents the conflict from being resolved in an episode or two:

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**4. Genre**

Describe the genre of the show and give a couple of examples of other shows in that genre (current or past):

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**5. Character Types or Positions**

*TV series--and stories in general--tend to feature the same set of character types, defined in relation to a "hero" (and thus the audience).*

*In a series, as opposed to a one-time movie concept, relationships among these types are never resolved.*

List characters from the series according to the roles they play (parenthetical examples from *Seinfeld*):

the Hero (example, Jerry Seinfeld):

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the Buddy (example, or George, Kramer):

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the Love Interest (example, Elaine, or current episode's girlfriend):

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the Antagonistic, Blocking, or Complicating Character(s)

(Newman, Jerry's parents, George's parents, Jerry's various short-time girlfriends, George's various short-time girlfriends, Soup Nazi, sometimes Kramer, sometimes George, sometimes Elaine):

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List one or more other "Antagonistic" characters below:

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| **Variation: Ensemble Cast***Some series feature groups of friends, co-workers, and/or family members, weaving together their various experiences more or less equally, rather than focusing on a single, lead character or hero. Examples:*Parks and Recreation, Girls, or Game of Thrones. Emotionally, an ensemble grouping almost always functions as a family-equivalent--if they are not literally a family.Each character in the ensemble has a **distinct, defining role or value**that arises from his/her character or situation in a shared world.  |

**6. Shared World**

*Characters in a series live their relationships in a shared world: a physical place and/or location, a social situation, a (sub)cultural context, a particlar universe of problems, hopes, values, challenges, etc.*

*This shared world is sometimes defined by a profession/workpace, social issue, generational identity, gender, etc.*

In a paragraph, describe what characterizes the shared world of the series:

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**7. Backstory**

In a short paragraph, describe "how the characters came together, the circumstances that hold them together, a description of that world":

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**8. Realism and Texture: Real Places or Sub-Cultural Universes**

*Most series feature particular locales or settings which provide background texture or realism, generate plot complications, or even represent the ultimate subject and meaning of the show (Seinfeld/New York City; Dexter/Miami; Sopranos/New Jersey).*

In a sentence of two, try speculating on the meaning and function of the setting and other aspects of realism or real-world texture on the series premise--or on the possible reasons for having a *generic* setting like the middle-class suburbia of The Simpson's Springfield.

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**9. Log Line:**

*Producers compose log lines so they can, in one memorable sentence, explain to network executives what a proposed series is essentially about. (The log line is the core of the “elevator speech” that producers are supposed to be able to give.) For example, a logline for* Everybody Loves Raymond *reads, "A likable husband's tolerance and marriage is tested by the constant intrusion of his overbearing parents and dim-witted brother.”*

*For* Game of Thrones*, a log line might be, “Noble families across the realm of Westeros compete for control of the Iron Throne,” or simply, “The Sopranos in Middle Earth.” Producer Gene Roddenberry’s famous log line for pitching the idea for the original* Star Trek *television series was, “*Wagon Train *to the Stars” (*Wagon Train *was a popular ‘60s-era television western when Roddenberry was developing* Star Trek*).*

Try to write a one-sentence summary of the series’ premise:

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**10. Title-Sequence “Plot Phrase”**

In one to five words, describe the structural logic of the title sequence (not to be confused with the "log line" describing the situations of the entire series).

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*A plot phrase for the Mad Men title sequence might be “falling,” or The Simpsons might be “going home.”*

**11. Any Notes, Questions, Further Comments:**

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**Sources**

Chris McGuire: “Ensemble Comedy”

*The Inside Pitch*

[*The TV Writer's Vault*](http://www.tvwritersvault.com/creating/creatingLoglines.asp)