

(re)Reading the TV Sitcom.

This workshop will begin with a brief background to Freudian, Lacanian and Kohutian theories of identity as a framework through which to observe the behaviour and relational dynamics of the main characters in a sitcom. I argue that the perpetual entrapment of the characters in the sitcom derives from an unconscious struggle for identity which they never achieve; unaware of what prevents them from achieving their goal in their failure they suffer comic degradation. I posit that for some characters their entrapment is borne of a disempowerment that exists in their relationships and is reinforced by the particularity of the 'situation'. It is this tension that enables the comicality.

The workshop will explore the characteristics that make the sitcom funny examining popular and classic programs such as *M*A*S*H*, *Seinfeld*, *Frasier*, *How I Met Your Mother* and *Modern Family* to ascertain the genesis of their comic tension and how it is manifested; be it through relationships, the situation or in response to a hegemony and its discourse, or indeed a combination of those characteristics.

Analysing favourite programs participants will determine the characteristics of a program including the central characters, the situation that enables the tension between characters and their 'frame' and the logline that defines what the program is about. The workshop will conclude with a step by step guide for building a program centred on a main character, their struggle, relationships that enable that struggle and its tension that reinforce their entrapment and how the situation must reflect the nature and theme of that entrapment. In doing so this workshop embraces approaches to reading the sitcom as posited by David Marc (*Comic Visions*, 1989, 1997) and that taken by craft books such as Evan Smith (*Writing Television Sitcoms*, 1999) when developing and writing a sitcom.

Deborah Klika MA (research) UNSW Australia
Lecturer TV Production, Media Department
Room G145 Middlesex University,
The Burroughs, Hendon
London NW4 4BT

d.klika@mdx.ac.uk deborahklika@bigpond.com
+ 44 (0)7748271876