



# Thinking Outside the Box: A Contemporary Television Genre Reader

*Gary R. Edgerton*



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From the Western and the sitcom to the game show and the reality series, genre has been at the center of television's identity since programming began in the 1940s. Thinking Outside the Box: A Contemporary Television Genre Reader brings together some of the best and most challenging scholarship about television genres, exploring their beginnings, their development, and their shaping by creators, networks, and viewers. While television genre was seen as static in the scholarship of the 1980s, Thinking Outside the Box explores the malleable and reflective nature of various TV programs. The book begins with a historical and theoretical overview of television genres and examines their influences on a national popular culture. The authors analyze less-studied genres such as cartoons, soap operas, and talk shows, locating their place and critical importance in American society. Thinking Outside the Box also examines the ways in which television genres have begun to blend together in recent years. Shows such as American Idol, The Osbournes, Fear Factor, and Trading Spaces are all examples of hybrid programming that illustrate the intuitive nature of genre and how its formulas succeed within mainstream television. The book closes with an investigation of American television's reach into foreign countries and its impact on the patterns of various genres worldwide. Thinking Outside the Box is an essential resource for understanding television's past and future. It is the first book to focus on genre as a significant process in the development of the TV industry and includes an epilogue that serves as a convenient bibliographic guide to further study. Instead of treating genre as a trivial categorization of various programs, Thinking Outside the Box makes a strong case for genre as essential to media-studies scholarship. Identifying historical continuities and envisioning trends, this is the richest and most up-to-date study of how television genres form, operate, and change.



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