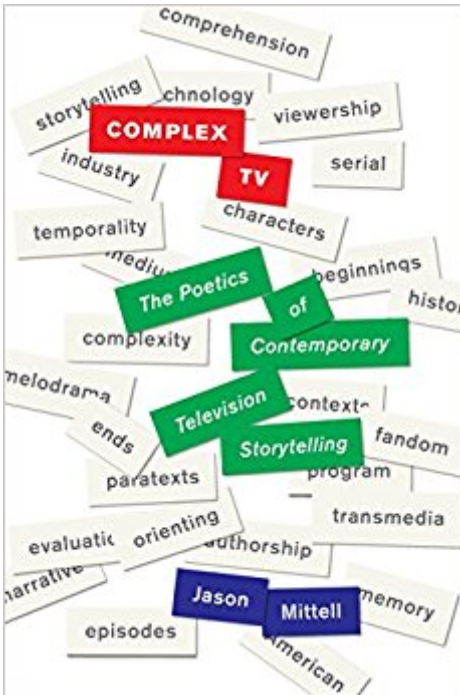


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# Complex TV: The Poetics Of Contemporary Television Storytelling



## Synopsis

Over the past two decades, new technologies, changing viewer practices, and the proliferation of genres and channels has transformed American television. One of the most notable impacts of these shifts is the emergence of highly complex and elaborate forms of serial narrative, resulting in a robust period of formal experimentation and risky programming rarely seen in a medium that is typically viewed as formulaic and convention bound. *Complex TV* offers a sustained analysis of the poetics of television narrative, focusing on how storytelling has changed in recent years and how viewers make sense of these innovations. Through close analyses of key programs, including *The Wire*, *Lost*, *Breaking Bad*, *The Sopranos*, *Veronica Mars*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, and *Mad Men* the book traces the emergence of this narrative mode, focusing on issues such as viewer comprehension, transmedia storytelling, serial authorship, character change, and cultural evaluation. Developing a television-specific set of narrative theories, *Complex TV* argues that television is the most vital and important storytelling medium of our time. Browse a gallery of supplemental video clips on the *Complex TV* website.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Complex TV is one of the most exciting books I have ever read. Each chapter contains useful and well-defined terms to put to work in formal analysis, and every argument is backed up with lively, detailed, and entertaining readings of familiar TV texts. The result is a rich and

thorough piece of scholarship that will do for television studies what David Bordwell's historical poetics has famously done for film.

—Robyn Warhol, co-editor of *Narrative Theory Unbound: Queer and Feminist Interventions*

"A lucid and provocative exploration of modern television, from the inside out.

—Emily Nussbaum, television critic at the *New Yorker*

"Mittell cleverly explores *Complex TV* on its own terms, favouring a formal analysis investigating the poetics of television series over discussing their cultural impact or interpretation of content. Looking at how television tells stories Mittell shows the contribution of technology, reception, and industry in changing television into a lived cultural experience where different forms of cultural engagement, are key to understanding the textuality of *Complex TV*."

—European Journal of Media Studies

"[Complex TV] Mittell's compelling arguments about topics such as anti-heroes and melodrama help us see the bigger picture when it comes to the small screen."

—Seven Days

Jason Mittell is a Professor of Film & Media Culture and American Studies at Middlebury College. He is the author of *Genre & Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*, *Television & American Culture*, and co-editor of *How to Watch Television* (NYU Press, 2013).

A fascinating and important work for tv professionals and audiences that love "complex" television shows. As a long-standing television dramatist and show creator, I have read a great number of books on TV and TV writing -- you never know, even the worst written books may have a nugget of insight that improves my craft. And that's about all most of them have, even the most famous and best-selling -- one nugget. *COMPLEX TV* has more than I can count. The author brings up many novel ideas about television, today; I now fully understand my own craft, thanks to him! Also, while almost all other books on TV shows and the craft of creating them refer to TV forms that are now outdated -- the old way of story-telling that dominated television from the 1950's to the early 2000's -- this book is cut from an entirely different cloth. The author knows what television is about today, what makes great series' tick. A remarkable achievement.

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