



## Seven Series to Watch

Here at the University of Worcester we know that this is a difficult time. However, we have put together a few suggestions for you to watch while you are waiting to start studying TV with Film Production.

Check out these series and let us know what you think when you come to University September!

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## Dekalog (Poland, 1989)

In 1989 Polish film director Kryzstof Kieslowski completed a long-awaited project: the filming of ten short films that were loosely based around the ten commandments. Each hour-long film is a beautifully filmed philosophical meander through ethics and morality, as everyday lives are revealed to be burdened with meaning and importance. Admired by none other than Stanley Kubrick, *Dekalog* is about as far as you can get from light entertainment. Dark, brooding, and saturated with the director's own colour palate (a mixture of greens and greys) this TV series is certainly one to sit through and contemplate. Be careful though - be sure to watch *RuPaul's Drag Race* in between episodes to lighten your mood.



### Things People Have Said About It:

"The 10 films are not philosophical abstractions but personal stories that involve us immediately; I hardly stirred during some of them." - Roger Ebert

"Kieslowski has the very rare ability to dramatize ideas rather than just talking about them." - Stanley Kubrick

### Things to Do:

Try to work out which episode is dealing with which commandment.



## The Kingdom (Denmark, 1994)

Imagine *Holby City* being directed by David Lynch. This is very much the feeling of Lars Von Trier's *The Kingdom*, or *Riget* in its original Danish. Set in a general hospital, *The Kingdom* is part fantasy, part horror, part psychological thriller. Von Trier is better known for being the enfant terrible of contemporary cinema. His films, like *Antichrist*, *The Idiots* and *Melancholia* have shocked cinema goers and critics alike, so it was perhaps remarkable that he chose to work in TV. *The Kingdom* stretches the boundaries of television in its themes and its look, it also paved the way for numerous Scandinavian noirs such as *The Bridge* and *The Killing*. It is weird, it is strange but it is also brilliant. It is a ghost story but also a thriller and it crackles with Von Trier's masterful way with tension.



### Things People Have Said About It:

"*The Kingdom* plays at times like an otherworldly, darkly entertaining soap opera." - Peter Stack

"*Twin Peaks* meets *ER* in this grotesque hospital drama" – Grady Hendrix

### Things to Do:

Watch a film by Lars Von Trier – how does it compare? Why might a director like Von Trier turn to TV instead of the cinema?

## Porridge (England, 1974 – 1977)



A fun fact about the comedy series *Porridge* is that not only is it the only sitcom to feature in the IMDB top ten prison shows of all time, it is the only British series too. Written by sitcom heavy weights Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais and starring Ronnie Barker and Richard Beckinsale, *Porridge* was a mainstay of TV schedules in the 1970s. It continues to delight and amuse audiences today.

In some ways *Porridge* anticipated the writing of Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith in *Inside Number 9*, as the physical constraints of the cell were often woven into the comedy. Check out for example the episode 'The Desperate Hours', where Fletcher (Barker) and Godber (Beckinsale) spend an entire 30 minutes chatting about the difficulties of spending a night behind bars.

*Porridge* is a great example of what can be achieved with inventiveness, performance and great writing. Most of the series was filmed in one single cell.

### Things to Try:

Make a similar series in your own bedroom, using two characters.



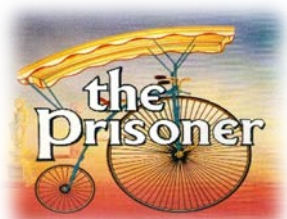
## The Prisoner (England, 1967 – 1968)

*The Prisoner*, starring Patrick McGoochan was a staple of 1960s cool. The story of a man who wakes up in a strange eerie world where everyone is called by a number, it is often imitated but seldom matched. The series was first broadcast in 1967 and was instantly famed for its surreal plot lines and social critique. In the years since its production, it has grown into one of the most famous cult TV shows ever seen.

The weirdness was increased every week by changes in the cast. The enigmatic Number 2, the chief agitator in the life of Number 6 (McGoochan ), was played by a different actor in every episode, a decision that created tension for both the character and the audience.

*The Prisoner* spawned a series of cult images and sayings. Who has not shouted out “I am not a number, I am a free man” on occasion?

Filmed in the Welsh village of Portemeirion, the location was every bit as important as the script.



## Attack on Titan (Japan, 2013)

The plot is simple: in order to protect themselves from a gang of humungous giants who have a taste for flesh, humans have taken to building huge walls to keep them safe. One day even bigger giants explode onto the scene, the Titans, and threaten the human race forever. In order to tackle this new threat the humans organise themselves into fighting armies made up of the best fighters among them. The job is dangerous but they are determined to make it.

Based on the manga of the same name *Attack on Titan* has become one of the best-known anime TV series in the world and it is brilliant and terrifying on equal measure. The humans battle against almost unimaginable odds and suffer heartbreaking loses to keep the race alive. In parts this series is surreal and scary, but it is always surprising. Be warned though: it is addictive and you may end up spending weeks and weeks on the many series it spawned.

### Things to do:

Read the manga comic upon which the series was based.



## Connections (England, 1978)



What is the connection between squash balls and a gin and tonic? How do you get from flying a kite to the nuclear bomb? All these questions and more are answered in James Burke's classic documentary series *Connections*. *Connections* was made at a time when public institutions like television saw themselves as both entertainment and a service. Whilst this show is endlessly fascinating it is also educational – tracing the links between inventions and occurrences in the modern world. It billed itself as a history of change. Think of it a little like a mixture between a David Attenborough documentary and *QI*.

So how do you get from squash balls to gin and tonic? Rubber was mainly produced in India in the 18th century, it was needed for the production of all kinds of things, from wellington boots to rubberised cloth. Quinine was used in the rubber plantations as a cure for malaria, however it tasted bitter so the owners of the plantations poured gin into it and the G and T (Indian Tonic water) was born.

### Things People Have Said About it:

"James Burke surely has one of the most intriguing minds in the western world" – The Washington Post

### Things to Try:

Try tracing an invention that you know back in time – what led to that invention? How did it change society?

## The Staircase (France, 2004)

In December 2001, Michael Peterson dialed 911 and declared that his wife had fallen down the stairs in this plush Forrest Hills mansion. Peterson, a novelist was distraught and the police and ambulance were called. What followed was one of the most intriguing and exciting murder cases ever to be filmed for TV. Peterson was accused by the police of pushing his wife – it was not an accident they stated but murder. A TV crew followed Peterson throughout the trial and we see the twists and turns of a case unfolding before our very eyes.



The series became an instant hit in France but was unavailable in America and the UK until it was released on Netflix. You will be riveted by each episode as the dark and confusing tale unravels before the camera's lens.



### Things People have Said About It:

“Peterson’s adult children try to keep faith in their father, even as the media bombard them with gossip. Lestrade’s cameras pull us farther into the legal system than *Law & Order* or *Court TV* ever could, and the result is chilling.” – The Village Voice

### Things to Try:

Discuss with friends whether Peterson is guilty or innocent.