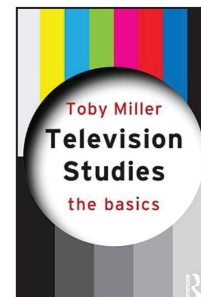


MILLER, T. *Television Studies. The Basics*. London: Routledge, 2010, 254 p.
ISBN: 978-0-415-77424-6.

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Television studies: the consolidation of an academic discipline

In 1974 Raymond Williams published *Television, Technology and Cultural Form*, whose influence is still being felt on communication studies at an international level and which established the fundamentals for the academic treatment of television. Almost four decades later, the discipline called *Television Studies* is in full expansion in the Anglo-Saxon sphere via a profusion of courses, degrees and postgraduate qualifications, all needing works to introduce a theoretical framework that is as fertile as it is sometimes diffuse. This is the category of the book by Toby Miller, *Television Studies. The Basics*. It is the latest addition to a list of introductory manuals that is not very long but already contains some outstanding works, such as *Critical Ideas in Television Studies* (Corner 1999), *Television Studies: The Key Concepts* (Casey et al. 2002 and 2007), *An Introduction to Television Studies* (Bignell 2004 and 2008) and *Tele-Visions: An Introduction to Studying Television* (Creeber 2006). Without counting more specialised works or anthologies of academic texts on this area, we can say that, in just ten years, theoretical work regarding the medium of television has grown substantially. But, precisely because of this, we no longer need to celebrate each new publication that contributes to expanding the discipline until we have appraised its true merits in advancing the state of the question.

Toby Miller is an academic with a singular career, with interdisciplinary training in history, political science, philosophy and communication. British by birth, he developed the first stage of his educational career in Australia, before moving in the 1990s to the United States, where he is currently professor and director of the Media and Cultural Studies department of University of California at Riverside. In 2002, Miller had edited one of the most outstanding reference works on the speciality, the British Film Institute publication entitled *Television Studies*, and his last publication was produced as a manual for the subject that, with the name of *Introduction to Television Studies*, he

has taught at the University of California for the last few years. *Television Studies: The Basics* dedicates its first few chapters to the four key aspects of the discipline: the history of television studies as a critical discourse, technology and TV institutions, genre as a basis for TV content and the methods to measure and interpret TV audiences. The work's didactic focus is clear to see: Miller is precise in his explanations, there are many examples and tables and each chapter ends with a specific bibliography and several questions in order to reflect on the issues dealt with.

Nevertheless, if this were the entire contribution of *Television Studies: The Basics*, its principal merits would be no more than to be written in a readily understandable style and to have the affordable and intellectually accessible format of a paperback. There is an underlying concern in the book which those studying the so-called *traditional media* cannot ignore: while some are still immersed in a process of establishing the traditional media as an object of study with academic legitimacy, the idea is already circulating that their days may be numbered due to the rise in new technologies. Miller proves, with data, that this is still a premature lucubration, at least for the moment and regarding television. But it's not so difficult to argue that television studies are in a complicated situation. In the first chapter of *Television Studies: The Basics*, the author proposes the existence of television studies 1.0 and television studies 2.0. The first (pp. 26-28) focus their attention on the effects of television on the lives of citizens and on the television policies developed by public powers and private capital. But for the second (pp. 28-30), television's omnipotence is replaced by that of the audience, with consumption as the main focus of attention and, often, of celebration. In the fifth and last chapter of the book, Miller transcends the instructive panorama employed up to this point and investigates, with a reflexive rather than didactic aim, the road ahead that can be glimpsed in a constantly changing context: television studies 3.0. Because of this, researchers should commit to a broader interdisciplinary approach than the mere idea of using theoretical frameworks

that are well established in different spheres. Working groups need to be set up that combine different nationalities and languages and that also dare to apply the already known methods to new objects. But, above all, television studies 3.0 require research to carry out a radical contextualisation that takes into account the circumstances in which television text is produced, circulates and is consumed. Only then can we understand that the life of a television text is a conduit through space and time that is continually being reconfigured by institutions, discourses and distribution and reception practices (p. 148). Institutions, text and reception can no longer be understood or studied from separate spheres with the excuse of methodological thoroughness: news discourse depends both on the ups and downs of geopolitics as well as the operational routines of the large channels.

Finally, Toby Miller's book deserves to stand out because it develops a panorama of television theory that is global in scope, not only in terms of content but also practice. The reluctance of Anglo-Saxon academics to resort to bibliographies in languages other than English is already notorious, which in practice means that a notable part of international academic bibliography is unknown to them. And in the context of the social media, this is quite a substantial part, leaving out the recent contributions made in Latin America. Miller enriches his text with contributions from a new generation of theorists, including the Brazilian César Bolaño (2000) and the Argentinians Luis Albornoz (2000) and Mirta Varela (2005) but also the Italian Milly Buonanno (1994). The dominance of the local in the work of researchers dedicated to analysing the media and television in particular might explain why practically no key work on television studies has been translated into Spanish. Although *Television Studies: The Basics* is presented as a manual, it makes its own theoretical contributions which are of considerable interest. It would therefore be desirable for this book to enjoy better fortune and thereby alleviate the situation of educators who identify with a discipline such as television studies, which is lacking many of the fundamental texts in Spanish.

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