ABSTRACT

RAE MEADE. The Rhetoric of “Bingeing” and the Age of Story: The Evolution of Audience in the Era of Netflix Original Programming

(Under the direction of Professor Casie Fedukovich.)

With 75 million subscribers, Netflix is the leader in internet television in the modern age. Despite the platform’s immense popularity, very few audience scholars in rhetorical and media studies have focused their attention on this rapidly growing platform and how its original content alters the way audiences watch television. In this paper, I will examine how audiences of Netflix Original Programming view and interact with the narrative via “binge-watching.” Specifically, I will conduct a dual analysis of the rhetorical and metaphorical implications of “binge-watching” and how this behavior shapes audience values and beliefs. Using the rhetorical scholarship of Edwin Black and Kenneth Burke, as well as composition scholars’ Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford’s “Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked,” I will argue for a positive analysis of “binge-watching” in which the viewer serves as an active, co-creator of meaning. As support for this analysis, I will provide examples from popular digital culture, including brief discussions on memes and IMDB message boards. I conclude that Netflix re-appropriates the “binge” metaphor and encourages its fans to identify and connect with the original story, ultimately creating a collaborative relationship between the viewer and the Netflix original show.