

Extended Common Core Social Studies Lesson Plan Template

Lesson Title: The Daily Show Effect on American Politics and Political Culture

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Appropriate for Grade Level(s): 10-12

Nevada Social Studies Standard(s)/Applicable CCSS(s):

C15[9-12].4: Analyze the role of the media in political persuasion

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

Engagement Strategies: Journal entries, guided readings, group presentations, class discussion, video clips, writing assignment

Student Readings (list):

1. "The Daily Show: Attracting Young Voters to Politics One Vote at a Time" by Larry Rosen, PhD; from *Psychology Today*, Oct. 8, 2010
2. "Is America a Joke? Researcher Examines The Daily Show's Impact on Political Culture" by Mathew C. Nesbit; from BigThink blog, Sept. 15, 2010
3. "The Daily Show Video Effect: Jon Stewart and His Enormous Influence Over the Millennial Vote" by Jasper Zweibel in *Culture*, Oct, 2012 issue and "The Daily Show'...Influencing Voter participation?" by yohcm8, *Dead Politics Society* blogger, posted May 12, 2012
4. "Politics Counts: The Impact of Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert" by Dante Chinni; from *Washington Wire*, Feb. 17, 2012
5. "'And Now Your Moment of Zen': The Cultural Significance of 'The Daily Show'" by Jeremy Griffin; from *PopMatters*, Aug. 7, 2009. (This article was edited for length)

Total Time Needed: One block period plus homework

Lesson Outline:

1. Students will compose a paragraph in response to the following question: What roles, both positive and negative, does political satire and humor play in American politics and political culture? Share responses with class (10-15 min.)
2. Students will view a few clips of *The Daily Show*. You may use the links provided below or source your own. The clips should be those that belittles and lampoons a governmental official, preferably the president or other high-ranking individuals. Students will then reflect on what they wrote in their opening paragraph in response to the following: did viewing the clips reinforce your opinion or cause you to reevaluate? (20 min.)
 - a. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDfmUK833hc> (Obama & scandals)
 - b. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjJAluQz9D8> (Bush v. Bush debate)
 - c. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCpOagMBD08> (Scalia & SCOTUS same-sex cases)
3. The class will be divided into 5 groups and each group will be assigned an article* on the impact of *The Daily Show* on American politics. Students will be asked to read silently their articles then as a group they will compose a statement stating the main point(s) of their article. Next, each group will also add 3-5 bullet points of evidence from the articles that supports the main idea. Lastly, each group will present their articles to the rest of the class who will take notes on the other articles (Option: if in possession of the necessary technology, notes can be substituted by a class email or posting each groups summary to a Facebook page, class website, etc.). (25-30 min.)

*Note: the third article is actually two shorter articles, which makes it similar to the others in regards to length.
4. Students will be assigned an essay (homework) based on the following prompt: What has been the impact of *The Daily Show* on American politics? (Emphasize that both pros and cons must be addressed and students must conclude with their own opinions, based on the readings.)

Description of Lesson Assessment: Students can be assessed three ways. First with the opening journal entry, secondly by the groups summary of the articles and lastly, by the essay. The teacher may choose to only assign points for the essay though.

How will students reflect on the process and their learning? Students will actively participate in group discussions and class discussion in order to guide the basis for their essays.

Rewired: The Psychology of Technology

How technology influences family life, education, the workplace, and every waking moment of our lives.

by Larry Rosen, Ph.D.

The Daily Show Effect: Attracting Young Voters to Politics One Joke at a Time

The Daily Show Effect and the Politicization of Young Voters

Published on October 8, 2010 by Larry Rosen, Ph.D. in Rewired: The Psychology of Technology

Here are some headlines and comments from recent research on the media's impact on politics:

- *Election 2008: Second-largest youth voter turnout in American history. 23 million young Americans ages 18-29 voted, resulting in a youth voter turnout of 52%.*
- *More Young People Look to the Times, Colbert and Stewart for News: Colbert Report (80%), Daily Show (74%) and New York Times (67%) have the biggest percentage of viewers and readers in the coveted 18-49-year-old demographic.*
- *comScore Releases First Comparative Report on Mobile Usage in Japan, United States and Europe: In the U.S., 25-34 year olds were 44 percent more likely to access mobile media than an average mobile user, with 18-24 year olds 39 percent more likely.*

With 500 million Facebook users, and 1 in 14 people worldwide having a Facebook account, as well as youth sending and receiving massive numbers of monthly text messages, it is not difficult to see why people feel this way. However, that being said, this is not the most narcissistic generation in our history (as some have called it). In fact, as the most connected generation in history our young adults are becoming more interested in politics and have more sources from which to gain their political perspectives. The numbers bear this out. The Net Generation, those born in the 1980s, is ready to lead and govern.

There is a wealth of information about our 18- to 29-year-olds and their voting records and political preferences but what I find intriguing is the next generation which has been dubbed the iGeneration (for their love of anything "i" - iPod, iPhone, Wii - as well as anything "i"ndividualized and personalized). Little is known about this generation and their values and aspirations. Recently my colleagues and I have begun to study not only these teen iGeners but also preteens and children who will make up the next "mini-generation" of Americans. Research is still in progress but here are some things that we do know:

- Even the youngest children multitask with the amount of multitasking peaking in the late teen years.
- Media usage increases steadily as children spend five and a half hours per day mostly watching television and playing video games, preteens add on other forms of media to bring their total to nearly 10 hours a day, followed by young teens who spend nearly 16 daily hours consuming nearly all forms of media and then older teens who up the ante to more than 20 daily hours. Of course, much of this media consumption is

done while multitasking as seen in studies by the Kaiser Family Foundation, the Pew Internet & American Life Project and my own research lab.

Our current work is examining values among these age groups. Preliminarily, we are finding that even the youngest children are showing a strong value and belief in social and political issues. Coupled with their older brothers and sisters in the Net Generation, this points to the 2008 and 2012 elections as critical in the progressive impact of youth on politics. In 2008 youth voters comprised 18% of total voters (up from 17% in the 2004 election). When we add in all of those young adults who have turned 18 since the 2008 election we should now start seeing a very powerful voting block that are ripe for information and political guidance.

Where do we go to reach those youth? Well, according to the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, our youth are consuming news from a variety of sources **BUT** primarily through electronic sources. According to a Pew report, "*those in their 30s are the only age group in which a majority (57%) reports getting news on one or more digital platforms yesterday.*" So, there are clearly two avenues to our Net Generation young adults and our iGeneration teens - media and technology! And, from the popularity of The Daily Show and The Colbert Report among these youth, humor goes a long way.

The Daily Show Effect -- first mentioned in a 2006 journal article in American Politics Research, and now also referred to as *WWJSD* (What Would Jon Stewart Do?) -- speaks yards about our newly politicized youth. They live in a connected, media-driven world replete with hours spent switching from Facebook to YouTube to text messages to video games to the Internet, on their omnipresent iPhones, Droids, laptops, iPads, and literally any Internet-enabled device. They enjoy and appreciate social and political issues and are ready to gobble them up as long as they are presented with the following in mind:

- The messages must be delivered via some form of media.
- The messages must be short and to the point.
- The messages must be delivered using multi-sensory inputs (auditory, visual, tactile, kinesthetic, etc.).
- The messages must entail humor.

Long messages will not fit on one smartphone screen or will roll off the bottom of a Facebook wall. YouTube videos longer than a few minutes exceed their task switching limits [NOTE: for those of you who would argue that this is evidence of a generation with short attention spans see interesting work done at the University of California, Irvine campus by Gloria Mark and her colleagues who found that information workers spend about 3 minutes on a task before switching to another]. Messages must be delivered in formats that will grab young viewers' attention as does everything in their world. A teen or young adult's world is full of bright colors, moving objects, vibrations, beeps, whistles, and every imaginable sensory input vying for the user's limited processing abilities in a rich multi-sensory world. Messages must compete with the 10-plus screens open on the laptop, the constant bombardment of text messages arriving and departing, and the constant status updates and wall postings on Facebook.

This is why the Daily Show works and why there is a true *Daily Show Effect*. It uses brief (often just a few seconds) video or audio clips, in engaging formats, with snippets of information leading the viewer to an obvious conclusion. Whether Jon Stewart is dishing out "fake news" or not, the impact is the important feature. That young viewers clamor to watch his show (many of whom do so online as they task-switch voraciously) and they pay attention to the information he dispenses. They do not look at him as some sort of icon. Rather, they see him as a leader in bringing them news in a manageable, hip, understandable, and humorous format which they can digest, return to at a later date, forward to their friends, and post on Facebook. As one 19-year-old told me recently, "*Yeah, I know Stewart*

says he is giving us fake news but he's really just getting me interested in following up a story myself to see what else we are not being told. I love it when I can post a DS clip and watch my FB friends react to it. It's not the news. It is a portal to more news. That's The Daily Show Effect. It has turned my friends and I into wanting to know more and we know how to find more but it helps that he gives us a starting point."

I am excited that in the next month or so we should have data from hundreds of children, preteens, teens, young adults and older adults examining and comparing their personal and work/school values. It should be fascinating and as a researcher I can hardly stop myself from jumping online and watching the anonymous data roll in. Such is the life of a Baby Boom researcher!

Source: <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/rewired-the-psychology-technology/201010/the-daily-show-effect-attracting-young-voters-politics>

ARTICLE 2

Is America a Joke? Researcher Examines The Daily Show's Impact on Political Culture

by MATTHEW C. NISBET

SEPTEMBER 15, 2010, 11:29 AM

Daily Show host Jon Stewart is the most trusted man in America. Or at least as Chris Smith writes in a cover story at this week's New York magazine, in today's fragmented media culture, he is the most trusted man among his devoted following of 2 million nightly viewers.

But as Smith also recounts, Jon Stewart's influence extends far beyond the size of his direct audience. "Jon has chronicled the death of shame in politics and journalism," NBC anchor Brian Williams tells Smith. "Many of us on this side of the journalism tracks often wish we were on Jon's side. I envy his platform to shout from the mountaintop. He's a necessary branch of government."

Stewart's *Daily Show*, along with *The Colbert Report*, and traditional network programs such as NBC's *Saturday Night Live*, the *Tonight Show*, CBS's *Late Night*, and even *The View*, hold an ever increasing influence over political culture and public perceptions. Parodies, satirical segments, and appearances by political figures are the subject of next day conversations, covered as news stories by journalists, among the most viewed, forwarded and recommended content online, and a central part of campaign strategy.

Yet what exactly are the impacts related to this new genre of political entertainment? Why do political figures risk ridicule or miscues by appearing on the *Daily Show*, SNL, or *The View*? How does parody and satire at *The Daily Show* or *The Colbert Report* influence the agenda and framing of news coverage and political discourse? Are these programs a distraction to audiences or a rich resource for critical analysis and learning about politics?

For insight on these questions, I interviewed last week Lauren Feldman, a colleague in the School of Communication at American University and a leading scholar examining the nature and impacts of The Daily Show and other forms of political entertainment. In the interview, Feldman discusses the relationship between these programs and political strategy, along with the impact on news coverage and the framing of political debates.--**Matthew Nisbet**

Why do politicians and public figures go on The Daily Show, The Colbert Report, or Saturday Night Live? How might an appearance influence their public evaluations?

Appearances on late-night comedy programs have become an essential part of campaign strategy and, increasingly, political strategy more generally. This is, in large part, due to the fragmentation, or breaking up, of the mass media audience. It is extremely easy for people to tune out news and politics, if they so desire, and opt for purely entertainment programming. Many politicians have accepted this reality of our current media

environment, reaching out to apolitical audiences by appearing as interview guests on entertainment talk shows – including late-night comedy programs.

While once the domain of candidates running for office, when President Obama appeared on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* in March 2009 to promote his economic recovery plan, he became the first sitting president ever to be interviewed on a comedy show.

In addition to providing politicians with access to audiences that they might not be able to reach otherwise, late-night comedy programs allow politicians to project their non-political persona, make themselves seem more human, and convey that they care about and are in touch with the average citizen. In particular, appearances on *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report*, and *Saturday Night Live* help politicians to assert their pop culture credibility and demonstrate that they have a sense of humor.

Research has found that political candidates who appear on comedy and other entertainment talk shows enjoy an increase in favorability, particularly among audience members who have less strongly formed opinions. There are risks to these appearances, however. Politicians can come off as pandering.

President Obama has opened himself to criticism for appearing on late-night comedy programs – and most recently, daytime's *The View*. These appearances were criticized as un-presidential, inappropriate, and evidence of misplaced priorities. However, what we see more and more is that politician interviews on comedy and other entertainment programs are, in fact, politically substantive and provide an important opportunity to reach out to niche audiences in our fragmented media environment.

Do *The Daily Show* and other late night comedy programs influence mainstream news coverage? If so, in what ways?

Yes, and there are several ways in which this is happening, all of which highlight the increasingly fluid line between news and entertainment. Perhaps most obviously, mainstream news outlets report on politicians' appearances on late-night comedy programs, airing clips of and offering commentary about the interviews. This began in earnest during the 1992 presidential race, when late-night comedy programs and entertainment talk shows first played a central role in campaigning, and has only increased in recent election cycles. In some high profile instances, politicians have broken major news on late-night programs, virtually requiring mainstream outlets to cover them.

For example, Arnold Schwarzenegger, John Edwards, and Fred Thompson all announced their intentions to run for office on late-night comedy programs. Recognizing the growing importance of late-night comedy to the political landscape, many traditional news programs now even include bits from comedy shows as regular features of their broadcasts – for example, on ABC's *This Week*, the Sunday "Funnies" provides a round-up of the week's best late-night political comedy.

Ultimately, *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report*, *SNL*, and other late-night comedy programs have become part of mainstream political discourse. Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert satirize what mainstream news outlets are saying, and then the mainstream outlets, in turn, report on the comedians' critiques. In some cases, mainstream news personalities have directly engaged with Stewart and Colbert, responding to their critiques by appearing on the program (think Bill O'Reilly on *The Colbert Report* and CNBC's Jim Kramer on *The Daily Show*).

I published a study in 2007, which examined what mainstream journalists were saying about *The Daily Show*. One of my key conclusions was that *The Daily Show* – with its incisive, straight-shooting critique of media and politics – was forcing some journalists to reconsider traditional journalistic norms like balance and detachment, which too often serve to obfuscate rather than reveal the truth.

So, perhaps one of the most important ways that *The Daily Show*, in particular, is influencing mainstream news coverage is by exposing its limitations and encouraging journalists to break from conventional norms – or at least to think more expansively about what journalism should look like today.

Does the Daily Show have the power to challenge the preferred frame promoted by political leaders on an issue? For example, during the Bush years, I found interesting how the Daily Show was often in front of mainstream news coverage in challenging the Administrations claims about the Iraq War and about stem cell research.

The Daily Show does an exceptional job of holding politicians and the news media accountable. Because *The Daily Show* is not bound by the conventions of journalism – namely, the need to appear objective – it can say things that traditional journalists cannot or will not. As a result, *The Daily Show* is able to challenge elite frames and offer alternative framing of issues. As you pointed out, *The Daily Show* did this particularly effectively during the lead up to and early years of the Iraq War.

Through its segments on “Mess O’Potamia,” for example, *The Daily Show* brought attention to the insurgency and civil war in Iraq before the mainstream news media did. *The Daily Show* was also one of the first outlets to report on the connection between Dick Cheney and Halliburton.

Some of the best moments on *The Daily Show* are when it uses news pastiche to expose hypocrisy and cut through spin – in other words, juxtaposing news footage of political and media elites saying one thing at one point in time and then contradicting themselves at a later date.

One of the most popular examples of this (the clip has received over 4 million views on Comedy Central's website) aired just after Sarah Palin was announced as the 2008 Republican Vice Presidential nominee and highlights the double standard of sexism as applied to Palin versus Hillary Clinton.

--Interview with Lauren Feldman, American University

What do readers think? Do you agree that The Daily Show and other forms of political entertainment have an increasing influence? Do parodies and satire serve an important accountability function, a function increasingly missing from traditional news coverage and commentary?

Source: <http://bigthink.com/age-of-engagement/is-america-a-joke-researcher-examines-the-daily-shows-impact-on-political-culture>

ARTICLE 3

The Daily Show Video Effect: Jon Stewart and His Enormous Influence Over the Millennial Vote

• [Jasper Zweibel in Culture](#)

• October, 2012

Jon Stewart, host of Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*, made a name for himself covering the 2000 presidential election. "Indecision 2000," fueled largely by George W. Bush's endless lampoonability, was a huge success that launched Stewart to the top of political journalism. Though he is still first and foremost a comedian, his role as a pundit and swayer of public opinion has no doubt expanded over the past 12 years. In 2010, he was voted the most influential man in America by an AskMen.com poll, even beating out President Obama.

But just how much influence does Jon Stewart have? If you look at the polling numbers, voter turnout in the 18-29 demographic has risen steadily since 2000, reaching its highest levels since 1972. Stewart probably deserves at least a little credit here, because his ability to get young people more interested in politics is undeniable. Everyone is always harping on the short attention span of millennials, and whether or not that's fair, it's clear that we love sharing videos online. *The Daily Show's* quick and punchy topical segments easily make the transition to viral media, giving the show a much broader reach than its approximately 2 million weekly viewers.

With great power comes great responsibility, and many are quick to accuse Jon Stewart and *The Daily Show* of abusing their influential position. While Stewart clearly jabs at *both* major political parties, as well as everyone in between, critics would argue that there is a left-leaning bias to it all. The truth of the matter is that Stewart does indeed split his time pretty evenly between Democrats and Republicans. However, this time-share is really a ruse, because there is a subtle but clear difference between the ways liberals and conservatives are mocked on *The Daily Show*.

In general, prominent Democrats being made fun of are depicted as bumbling, stiff, or pandering, but always well intentioned. On the other hand, Republicans come off ostensibly more evil and less pitiable. While Stewart seems to make light of liberals, the commentary on conservative politicians is much more pointed. Barack Obama and Joe Biden are playfully roasted for their foibles, Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan have their policies and personal track records viciously satirized. Personally, I don't see partisanship as a negative as long as humor remains the focus. It's not Jon Stewart's fault that the wildly conservative Fox News is the most ripe for ridicule. That being said, I defy anyone to find a clip this harsh about a prominent liberal.

Despite this apparent bias, studies have shown that a major effect of *The Daily Show* is more negative opinions of candidates from either party. Members of one study who described themselves as regular *Daily Show* viewers displayed increased cynicism about the political process. Distrust might sound like a detriment to voter participation, but those same *Daily Show* viewers also had much higher “confidence in their ability to understand the complicated world of politics.” Surely such people would be more likely to vote, right? Whether or not Jon Stewart is doing more to create informed, politically active individuals, or simply reinforce disillusionment and non-participation is really on us, the young viewers and would-be voters.

Source: <http://www.policymic.com/articles/14674/the-daily-show-video-effect-jon-stewart-and-his-enormous-influence-over-the-millennial-vote>

“The Daily Show”... influencing viewers’ political participation?

Posted on May 9, 2012

Jon Stewart was named the most influential man of 2010 (AskMen.com). Even though I am a fan of Jon Stewart, I’m not going to lie, I was kinda shocked. How do people view a host of a comedy news program, as more influential than President Obama, Bill Gates, and even Mark Zuckerberg? Even though this poll of half a million people is just one of the many unrepresentative internet polls, these results are hard to ignore.

How does Jon Stewart influence others... and more importantly, what does he influence people to do? For starters it can be argued that Jon Stewart’s main source of how he influences others is through his TV show, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. On average, 2.3 million people, I being one of them turn on Comedy Central and watch his show (TVbythenumbers). I, as well as the majority of the show’s viewers, watch simply because it is entertaining to do so (Brewer and Marquardt 2007, 251). But by watching am I being influenced by Jon Stewart...and if so, to do what?

Currently, there have been numerous research studies that explore this question. However, the many of these studies take a more narrow approach and explore the connection between watching the show and political participation. Therefore, in efforts to get an answer, the question to explore is... by watching *The Daily Show* are viewers being influenced to become more or less politically active?

As mentioned, even though the majority of people watch the comedy news shows in order to be entertained, many viewers end up walking away with increased knowledge about politics through the process of watching (Cao and

Brewer 2008, 90). As entertainment, shows like *The Daily Show* have been found to expose otherwise uninvolved citizens to the world of politics (Brewer and Marquardt 2007, 252). As research conducted by The Annenberg Public Policy Center has shown, as compared to non-viewers, viewers of *The Daily Show* are more knowledgeable about politics (Young 2004). This increased knowledge has been found to make viewers feel more confident in their ability to partake in politics (Hoffman and Thomson 2009). Most importantly, those who are more informed and comfortable with politics are more likely to participate and gain political interest (Baumgartner and Morris 2006). Political interest has been found to play a crucial role in voter turnout (Schlozman et al 1995). It is important to note that not all studies have reached similar conclusions regarding viewers' increased knowledge and interest after watching *The Daily Show*.

Despite some research discovering these positive findings, studies have shown that *The Daily Show* influences its viewers to be more distrustful politicians and the electoral process (Baumgartner and Morris 2006, Morris 2009). In particular, humor within the show that mocks a politician's/candidate's character and policy initiatives has been found to make viewers evaluate such figures more negatively (Morris 2009). Baumgartner and Morris argue in their work that by constantly emphasizing the ridiculousness that exists within politics, Jon Stewart overall contributes to his viewers becoming more cynical of the electoral system. These researchers believe that due to increased distrust, viewers will be less likely to participate politically because they are more likely to feel alienated by the overall political system. Once again, however, some general research regarding comedy news shows has not found evidence of increased cynicism among viewers.

That being said, an aspect of another study performed by Baumgartner and Morris reveals that being a casual viewer (someone who watches the show at least once a week but follows another news source more closely) or moderate viewer (someone who watches the show and follows another news source equally) of *The Daily Show* leads to greater involvement in political activity than those who do not watch or heavily watch *The Daily Show* (2011). For example, if you are a casual or moderate viewer of the program, you are more likely to write to a politician, attend a local public town meeting, and work for a political party or campaign.

Overall, with the available research, I do not think that it is possible to jump to any conclusions if *The Daily Show* influences its viewers' political participation in a positive or negative way. Therefore, this aspect of how Jon Stewart influences others is not yet fully evident. As a viewer, I am happy to know that at least the show has not been proven to influence its viewers' political participation in a negative manner. After all, the last thing that the United States needs is another factor that may keep voters from going to the polls (Wattenberg 2003).

Source: <http://cloud.lib.wfu.edu/blog/polisoc364s12/2012/05/09/the-daily-show-influencing-viewers-political-participation/>

ARTICLE 4

Washington Wire

February 17, 2012, 3:09 PM

Politics Counts: The Impact of Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert

By Dante Chinni

Among the many forces that go into shaping a campaign – from speeches to advertisements – late-night comedy has earned a special place. It's where narratives about candidates can be created and grow free of the constraints of regular journalism, for better or worse.

On late-night TV a candidate can be branded and rebranded as a flip-flopper or stiff (see Sen. John Kerry in 2004) or reckless and foolish (frequently part of the jabs at former President George W. Bush).

But not all late-night shows are the same. For some, politics is more than just the stuff of monologue one-liners; it's a critical element to the program. Take, for instance, the late-night shows on Comedy Central, *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart and *The Colbert Report*. They thrive on politics. And when you look at who watches those shows through Patchwork Nation's demographic/geographic county breakdown, an interesting pattern emerges.

Both shows do well in places where the vote is solidly Democratic, collegiate Campus and Careers and big city Industrial Metropolis counties. And both shows underperform in reliably Republican counties like the small-town Service Worker Centers and the socially conservative Evangelical Epicenters.

But the *Daily Show* and the *Colbert Report* also have strong followings in the politically crucial, swing-voting Monied Burbs. In fact, viewership numbers in those 286 counties mirror the numbers from those more liberal counties, according to data from Experian Simmons.

That tells us a bit about the voters in those counties and about the impact of Mr. Stewart and Stephen Colbert on the 2012 campaign.

The *Daily Show* and *Colbert Report* aren't like other late-night TV shows. The main goal for both shows is comedy, of course. No laughs equals no audience. But there is a definite bent to their humor. Consider this week's offerings.

On Monday, just back from a week's vacation, Mr. Stewart devoted 11 minutes of his show to poke fun at former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum's rise in the polls and the battle over contraception – with the GOP as his primary target. On Tuesday, Mr. Colbert used the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show to mock Republican class-war arguments (yes, you read that right) with his own unique style, of course. Mr. Colbert's on-air persona is a sardonic take on conservative commentators in general.

And this year, Messrs. Colbert and Stewart have been openly critical of the Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling that led to the creation of Super PACs. Mr. Colbert went so far as to create his own Super PAC (Making a Better Tomorrow, Tomorrow) to illustrate the conundrums those entities create.

It's humor with a strong political point of view.

To be clear, late-night TV is not going to make or break this campaign. Even in the county types with highest viewership, less than 10% of adults tuned into The Daily Show or Colbert Report in a four-week period. (The numbers for the Late Show and Tonight Show are measured differently.)

But the viewership pattern is what's interesting here, not the numbers.

It's no surprise Comedy Central's puckish tone scores with college students or urban hipsters, but what's behind its resonance in the Monied Burbs? It's about common traits that extend beyond politics, but that also have political ramifications.

There are two big commonalities the Campus and Careers, Industrial Metropolis and Monied Burb counties share – higher levels of income and education. And these numbers indicate that in the modern, hyper-niched media world, those traits are carving out a different entertainment and news space for viewers in these counties. Do people in all those places like the same foods or even newspapers? No. But when it comes to late-night TV, people in them share some preferences.

It's not that people in more conservative communities don't watch the Daily Show or Colbert. Some do. But more people than average watch those shows in the Campus and Careers, Industrial Metropolis and Monied Burbs counties and ultimately that shapes the way those places understand the news – and the 2012 election. It binds them closer together, at least where the late-night TV narratives are concerned.

It's only one measure, of course. The TV data show that in other types of programming the Burbs are not quite as in line with those collegiate and big city counties. We'll look at numbers in coming weeks and months.

But the Stewart/Colbert axis in Patchwork Nation is worth noting for a few reasons.

It suggests that income and education levels may be tying the swing-voting Burbs more closely to Democratic-leaning counties. And, perhaps just as important, the narratives created by Mr. Stewart and Mr. Colbert are reaching not just the young and hip, but also into some of the most politically important places in the country.

Source: <http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2012/02/17/politics-counts-the-impact-of-jon-stewart-and-stephen-colbert/>

ARTICLE 5

"And Now Your Moment of Zen": The Cultural Significance of 'The Daily Show'

By **Jeremy Griffin** 7 August 2009

When Jon Stewart took over as host of *The Daily Show* in 1999, displacing then-host Craig Kilborn, the show was little more than a modestly amusing satire program modeled loosely after *SNL*'s "Weekend Update" sketch: good-natured celebrity-bashing, a healthy dose of political lampooning. Today, the show is a potent cultural institution, boasting one of the largest viewerships in modern history for a cable program.

The Daily Show's influence over voter perceptions has been well documented—a 2006 study by East Carolina State found that *Daily Show* viewers, while considerably cynical of the electoral system, demonstrated a higher degree of interest in politics as a whole. Of course, Stewart, who now serves as managing editor of the program, dismisses such stats as irrelevant, arguing that the sole purpose of the program is entertainment, and as such, it has no obligation to be "fair" in the same way that real news programs do. By its own logic, *The Daily Show* has insulated itself from attacks of journalistic bias by virtue of the fact that it is a comedy show, and therefore free of the rhetorical constraints that underpin "serious" journalism—an entity it regards with a healthy degree of skepticism.

Stewart had already made a career as a comic and had enjoyed a few stints on several short-lived MTV programs before taking Kilborn's place, and so it was little surprise that he excelled in the capacity as host. He was quick-witted, self-deprecating, and undeniably likable. But it wasn't until the 2000 presidential elections that the full scope of his political wit became apparent. Stewart and his team of farcical news commentators, including soon-to-be comedy icons Steve Carrell and Stephen Colbert, worked diligently to highlight the inherent absurdity of the election process—exemplified in that case by the Florida ballot debacle, which provided nearly a season's worth of material for the show's writers. The cast's sarcastic portrayal of themselves as "real" journalists underscored the twisted relationship between politics and media in America—the result of which, ironically, was that viewers began to regard the show as an *actual* news program.

By 2004, more young people (18-29) were turning to the show as their primary source for news. With a growing guest roster of authors, political analysts, and upper-echelon Washington elites, it was clear that the show was becoming something more than just a comedy program. People were no longer watching it simply because it was funny; they were watching it because it was *important*.

This was also the year of Stewart's now-infamous guest appearance on CNN's *Crossfire*. Presumably, hosts Tucker Carlson and Paul Begala had hoped that having a comedian on might take some of the edge off the customarily turgid program. Instead, Stewart blistered the two men, whom he referred to as "partisan hacks," for furthering the growing ideological divide between political parties and thus serving the interests of the Washington elite and not those of American voters. Carlson, clearly incensed by Stewart's remarks, claimed that he thought Stewart had come on the show to be funny. "Oh, no no," Stewart replied dryly. "I'm not your monkey."

The show's coverage of the 2004 presidential election between George W. Bush and John Kerry solidified Stewart's reputation as a savvy cultural critic, but more importantly, it offered a clear demonstration of comedy's efficacy as an instrument of rhetorical analysis. Says Robert J. Thompson, Director of the Center for the Study of Popular Television at Syracuse University: "Actually, when it's done well, comedy in this country can become a counterbalance to journalism, like journalism is a counterbalance to government."

Of course, by definition, a counterbalance acts in *opposition* to its subject, and so in order to be an effective instrument of rhetoric, comedy must often maintain a certain degree of distance between itself and ideology. This is not to say that a comic must regard all ideologies with the same degree of cynicism, but it is important to keep in mind that mistrust of one ideology or set of ideologies does not necessarily entail an endorsement of its opposite. When comedy begins endorsing particular views, it often degenerates into propaganda, as evidenced by FOX's short-lived fake news program *The ½ Hour News Hour*. Arguably a response to *The Daily Show*, the program made no effort to hide its Republican leanings, crafting the majority of its jokes as passive-aggressive jabs at Democrats, featuring such guest commentators as Ann Coulter and Rush Limbaugh.

Of course, anyone with a moderate understanding of irony can tell you that the reason a show like *The ½ Hour News Hour* doesn't work is because, in a way, we already know the punchlines before they arrive. It makes no attempt to disguise the fact that it functions on behalf of one side of the political spectrum, and so it operates as little more than poorly-crafted political propaganda. There's never any larger truth underpinning the gags, and thus no incentive for viewers to invest on an intellectual level.

That FOX even believed a response to *The Daily Show* was necessary indicates its having mistaken the show's mistrust of conservatism as an open endorsement of liberalism. And while it is true that *The Daily Show* did support Barack Obama in the 2008 election, and that it tends to be more critical of Republicans than Democrats, this certainly does not mean that it fully endorses the Left. In fact, as Michiko Kakutani pointed out in her 2008 *New York Times* interview with Stewart, *The Daily Show* is largely characterized by its cynicism toward *all* ideologies, not just those of a Republican bent.

By this measure, it seems that *The Daily Show* has become its own sort of counterbalance to the major news networks, which it perceives as having forsaken the quest for truth, functioning instead as vehicles for political and corporate gain—an attitude best exemplified by the much-YouTubed skirmish between Stewart and Jim Cramer.

However, it's hard not to watch the interview and wonder if *The Daily Show* isn't overstepping its own self-imposed boundaries. Is it naïve to think that Jon Stewart is above such skirmishes? Arguably, most people are largely drawn to *The Daily Show* because they feel alienated by the networks that the program satirizes. It is an intellectual respite from the self-aggrandizing sensationalism of traditional news sources, and as such, one can't help but cringe a little at the idea that it, too, may have begun to take itself a bit too seriously.

It's not that the show's criticisms of men like Cramer are unwarranted or inaccurate. Truth is, the interview was something that Americans *needed* to see, if only to reassure themselves that someone in the media had not forgotten

about them entirely. It's just that, given the breadth of the show's influence, it would be nice to believe that *The Daily Show* does have some sense of responsibility to its audience not to tangle itself in media squabbles.

It's worth pointing out that the show's viewers are already statistically less inclined to vote than viewers of other news programs. For a nation of viewers already jaded by the childish sensationalism of a self-serving media culture, the stakes are surprisingly high for *The Daily Show* not to let its ego run amok. And with that in mind, it's troubling to wonder what might happen if the show were to devolve into another political forum where well-coifed pundits hurl petty invectives at one another. Stewart does such a wonderful job of poking fun at the Bill O'Reillys and the Keith Olbermans and the Sean Hannitys of the world, I'd hate to see him become one.

Source: <http://www.popmatters.com/pm/tools/full/107479/>

Sample Essay

We all like to laugh and most of us like to be informed as well. *The Daily Show* has combined these two into one of the most successful TV show of the recent decade and in doing so has become an important element in American political culture. The reasons given for the success of *The Daily Show* are the changes in technology and the younger generations that utilize it as well as the diversity of TV programming, including news shows. The effect of *The Daily Show* is increasing political awareness, (and perhaps political participation), and offering an alternative counterbalance to the both mainstream media and partisan political shows.

The first article breaks down young peoples' use of technology and viewing habits regarding political news. Dubbing those in their later teens and early 20s as the iGeneration, the author states that this generation interacts with media in short, to the point bursts that are also funny. *The Daily Show* fits this to a tee and hence is the primary avenue through which young people receive political news. Because of this, the iGeneration has been found to have a high degree of political awareness.

A second reason for the success of *The Daily Show* in attracting a large youth audience is the fracturing of the media landscape. We now an incredible amount of TV channels to choose from in order to entertain ourselves and straight forward news programs often get lost in this crowded landscape. Therefore, in order to reach voters, candidates must reach out to entertainment shows. *The Daily Show* is a perfect fit in this situation because it packages its news in an entertaining format, which is why it has grown as a potent force in the American political scene.

Continuing on this theme, the other media outlets that claim to be "news" channels have begun to become more partisan yet claiming non-bias. *The Daily Show* is not burdened by the necessity adhere to traditional journalism ethics of appearing neutral and unbiased because it is first and foremost a comedy show. This gives the show great freedom in how they report political news and cover elected officials. The article goes on to say that because of putting comedy first and catering to the tastes of younger voters, clips from the show are much more likely to go viral on the internet, thus giving the show an expanded audience that traditional news programs just don't have. Which leads to the point of the second part of the third article, does reaching so many younger voters lead to increased political participation? It has already been shown that *The Daily Show* viewers possess a higher degree of political awareness but because the show often focusses on the absurd, scandals, and hypocrisy of government, viewers of the show tend to be more cynical of

government, even though more aware. This then may explain the fact that a link between viewing the show regularly and increased political participation has yet to be established.

In the previous articles, the audience of *The Daily Show* has been identified as the young and hip crowd of college campuses and urban hipsters, which already tended to be more Democratic leaning. But the author of article four also identifies monied suburbs as a demographic with high viewership numbers. This is a critical swing voting bloc that can determine the outcome of elections due to their high voting rates, which gives real weight to *The Daily Show*'s influence on voters. This demographic is key to both Republicans and Democrats because *The Daily Show* tends to be left-leaning, its influence in this voting bloc can be significant.

Lastly, article five brings up a new dynamic in how the media functions in American politics. Traditionally, the media is seen as a counterweight to government by playing the watchdog roll and reporting to the voters just what their leaders are saying and doing, which is often two different things. But with the partisanization of political news, like FOX and MSNBC, the need for a "counter-counterweight" is need to keep tabs on the partisan press. *The Daily Show* fills this role perfectly. One of the show's common bits is showing old clips from a particular pundit on a particular issue and then shows a current contradictory statement, ridiculing the person in the process. In this way, *The Daily Show* keeps tabs on the hypocrisy coming from both the right and left, though it must be said that the right and FOX are much more the targets of this sort of coverage than the left. The author also sounds a warning that *The Daily Show*, by attacking the right more than the left, runs the risk of losing its reputation as a show that goes after both sides equally. Then the show just becomes another partisan hack job.

In my opinion, *The Daily Show* does have a real impact on American politics. My government teacher uses clips from the show much more often than clips from traditional media outlets and in doing so, I can attest to the fact that I am one of those who have an increased political awareness due to the show's existence. It makes politics funny and enjoyable which then can lead to more sophisticated interaction with politics as one grows older and matures. I would have to think that politicians would want to avoid being ridiculed on the show and this may actually influence what they say and do. If that's the case, then the influence of *The Daily Show* is indeed something to take notice of.

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

	Beginning 1	Developing 2	Accomplished 3	Exemplary 4	Score
Thesis/claim	Not clearly stated; unclear what the claim is	Has an idea for a claim but vague and not supported in essay	Clearly states claim and is supported in essay	Clearly states more than one claim which are supported in essay	15%
Structure of essay	Little to no paragraphs; minimal organization of thoughts	Has paragraphs but not ordered logically	Logical paragraphing arranged to support claim.	Logical paragraphing arranged to support claim, topic sentences clearly state next step in argument.	15%
Use of evidence to support claim	Little to no reference to articles; can't tell if article were read/understood	Some use of articles but no more than two; shows lack of understanding of articles.	Uses at least four articles to support claim and shows understanding.	Uses all five articles in nuanced sophisticated ways to support claim.	55%
Concluding Opinion	Has no opinion or not relevant to prompt/essay.	Opinion stated but not synced to essay.	Has relevant opinion that is congruent with essay.	Has a relevant and clearly stated opinion that also addresses counter opinions.	15%