

Heidelberg University

Fall 2009

FYE 100-10

Truth and Truthiness: Political Satire from Doonesbury to The Colbert Report

T, TH 12:30-1:45 PM

Bareis, Room 310

Instructor: Dr. Marc O'Reilly

Office Hours: M-W-F 1-2 PM, T-Th 4-5 PM, and on Appointment

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Course Content:

This first-year experience (FYE) course examines the role and place of political satire in America and abroad. Whether via political cartoons, stand-up comedians, sketch comedy, fake news shows, or animated series, humorous commentary on politics abounds. Although such editorializing often mocks its subjects, it can be insightful as well as ironic. Programs such as *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report*, and segments such as "Weekend Update" on *Saturday Night Live*, spotlight the ridiculous in politics. But they also speak truth to power in a way that conventional political media often cannot. Although it may provoke, political satire remains mostly an amusing, albeit unconventional, way to express frustration about a political process that too often bewilders citizens instead of enlightening them.

This FYE course is meant to introduce you, the student, to the Heidelberg University curriculum, academic expectations of university professors, academic advising, academic planning, and to academic resources available. This FYE course is also meant to initiate you to Heidelberg campus life, events, and opportunities.

Required Readings:

- Jonathan Gray, Jeffrey P. Jones, and Ethan Thompson, eds., *Satire TV: Politics and Comedy in the Post-Network Era* (New York: NYU Press, 2009). Available in the Heidelberg University Bookstore.
- Daryl Cagle and Brian Fairrington, eds., *The Best Political Cartoons of the Year 2009 Edition* (Que Publishing, 2008). Available in the Heidelberg University Bookstore.
- *The New York Times*. Copies of this daily newspaper are available on campus (in Campus Center, for example). You can also read the on-line version at <http://www.nytimes.com>.

- Additional readings will be accessed via the Internet or distributed in class.

Course Requirements:

Introductory Essays: You will write two (2) brief introductory essays. **Each essay should be 2 typed pages.** In the first essay, you will think and write about your university goals, both academic and otherwise. In the second essay, you will think and write about political satire. What do you know about it? What is it? Is it important? Does it contribute to society? You should answer these and any other questions that come to mind. **OBJECTIVES:** The introductory essays enable you to do some initial thinking about your most important current endeavor, attending college, and the most important issue content-wise in FYE 100-10, political satire. These exercises also enable you to work on improving your writing. **FIRST ESSAY DUE: THURSDAY, AUGUST 27; SECOND ESSAY DUE: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3.** Essays will be submitted at the start of class.

Short Research Papers: You will write two (2) short research papers. **Each paper should be 3-5 typed pages.** In each, you will analyze issues that you will have read about, viewed, and discussed in class, on Moodle, and at the weekly class activity. For the first paper, you will submit a draft. I will read and comment upon your draft. Once I have returned your draft to you, you will schedule an appointment with me so that we can discuss your draft. You will then make revisions to your paper and resubmit it to me. **OBJECTIVES:** The short papers enable you to improve your analytical and writing skills; allow you to familiarize yourself with the expectations of a research paper; and enable you to think about and analyze political satire concepts and genres, compare and contrast them, and provide your informed opinion about them. By turning in a draft, you will have an opportunity to revise your work using instructor comments to guide you. By rewriting your paper, you should be able to improve it and thus earn a better grade than you would have otherwise. **DRAFT OF FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29; REVISED FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15; SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27.** Papers will be submitted at the start of class unless otherwise instructed.

Four-Year Plan: Week 10 will be devoted to your initial 4-Year Plan. You will work on your plan in class. I will assist you. If need be, you will make an appointment with me to discuss your Plan further. You will submit a final version, written in pencil. **You cannot pass FYE 100-10 unless you submit your 4-Year Plan.** **OBJECTIVES:** Working on your 4-Year Plan allows you to familiarize yourself with the Heidelberg University catalog, know what courses you need to take to fulfill major/minor requirements as well as general education requirements, and plan out a schedule that will lead to graduation in a reasonable amount of semesters. Even if you are an undecided major, this exercise will be useful. **4-YEAR PLAN DUE: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3.** Plan will be submitted at the start of class.

Engagement: You will attend several academic, cultural, personal, and campus events throughout the semester. I will provide you with a brochure detailing these semester events. **OBJECTIVES:** Attendance at varying campus events will familiarize you with the diverse opportunities available to you as a college student, make you aware of important subjects, educate and entertain you, and further connect you to your institution.

Class Activity: You will join me in watching, typically on Thursday evenings, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report*. We will start our viewing on September 17. The shows air at 11 and 11:30 PM. We will watch them in Campus Center. After the shows, we will briefly discuss the content. Food and drinks will be provided. **OBJECTIVES:** Viewing these shows as a class will add to your knowledge of political satire, facilitate and/or add to in-class group discussion, and allow for a fun and relaxed shared experience outside the classroom.

Oral Presentation: You will deliver individually, or as part of a group, a presentation on a political satire subject. The use of multimedia and creative formats is encouraged. **I must approve your topic and presentation method.** **OBJECTIVES:** Your presentation will allow you to improve your oratorical skills, synthesize material you will have studied throughout the semester, potentially summarize and analyze material unfamiliar to your classmates and instructor, and display your creativity. **ORALS WILL OCCUR ON: NOVEMBER 12, 17, 24, DECEMBER 1.**

Final Project: You will prepare a final project that highlights your comprehension of political satire and potentially showcases your creativity. You can submit your own script, create your own show, submit a video of it, draw your own political cartoons, etc. Use of multimedia and creative formats is encouraged. **I must approve your topic and format.** **OBJECTIVES:** The final project encourages you to be creative as you discern or hit upon an effective way to underscore your comprehension of political satire and its role(s) in contemporary America and abroad.

Participation: You must attend class regularly (I will keep track of your attendance), provide input (in the form of questions and answers) during lectures and class/group discussion, respect classmates and the instructor, and conduct yourself in a mature and responsible way. You must also attend campus events and the class activity. **Finally, you must also contribute to the class Forum.** To enter the Forum, access <http://numu.heidelberg.edu/moodle/>, click on FYE 100-10, and type in the following enrollment key: 22285. **OBJECTIVES:** Good, effective participation enables you to improve your oratorical, persuasion, and listening skills and recognize the importance of proper comportment and etiquette in the classroom. The Forum allows you to ask questions, seek clarification, tackle material not otherwise discussed in class, and engage each other in intellectual conversation. The Forum also allows you to post articles and videos (from YouTube, for example) relevant to course material and respond to such articles and videos, whether posted by me or your classmates.

Distribution of Grades

Introductory Essays	10% (5% each)
Short Papers	30% (15% each)
Oral Presentation	20%
Final Project	20%
Participation*	20%

*includes attendance at campus events and class activity

Make-up exams will be authorized only if a student can offer a compelling reason as to why he or she could not take the test. Late essays, papers, plans, and projects will be docked one grade (A to A-, for example) for every day past the deadline. Also note that any student guilty of cheating or plagiarism will receive an F for the assignment and can be dismissed from Heidelberg University.

Class Outline and Reading Assignments

WEEK 1: Introduction.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY #1 DUE ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 27

WEEK 2: **Political Satire.** Reading: *Satire TV*, Foreword and ch. 1.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY #2 DUE ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

WEEK 3: **Satirizing U.S. Presidents.** Reading: *Satire TV*, ch. 2.

WEEK 4: **Fake News, Part 1: The Daily Show.** Reading: *Satire TV*, ch. 4.

WEEK 5: **Fake News, Part 2: The Colbert Report.** Reading: *Satire TV*, ch. 6.

WEEK 6: **Satire TV in Canada and Britain.** Reading: *Satire TV*, ch. 8.

Tuesday: No class (Faculty Development Day).

DRAFT OF SHORT PAPER #1 DUE TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

WEEK 7: **Extreme Satire, Part 1: South Park.** Reading: *Satire TV*, ch. 10.

Guest: Dr. Traci Stark, Heidelberg University Southparkologist.

WEEK 8: **Extreme Satire, Part 2: Chappelle's Show.** Reading: *Satire TV*, ch. 11.

REVISED SHORT PAPER DUE THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15

October 16 is the last day to drop the course.

FALL BREAK: OCTOBER 17-20

WEEK 9: **Extreme Satire, Part 3: Boondocks.** Reading: *Satire TV*, ch. 12.

SHORT PAPER #2 DUE TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27

WEEK 10: **4-Year Plan.**

REGISTRATION STARTS ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2

4-YEAR PLAN DUE TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3

WEEK 11: **Political Cartoons.** Readings: *The Best Political Cartoons of the Year 2009*; and selected cartoons (Xerox).

WEEK 12: **Oral Presentations.**

Tuesday: No class (Dr. O'Reilly out of town).

WEEK 13: **Oral Presentations.**

Thursday: No class (Dr. O'Reilly out of town).

WEEK 14: **Oral Presentations.**

THANKSGIVING BREAK: NOVEMBER 25-29

WEEK 15: **Oral Presentations & Summary.**

FINAL PROJECT DUE IN CLASS ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9 @ 10 AM