

**IDH 2952: (Un)Common Arts: How Political Satire
Becomes Political Reality
Section 26537
University of Florida
Honors College
Fall 2020**

Professor: Amy Martinelli, PhD

Office: Rolfs Hall 413—but working remotely
during Fall 2020

Email: acmart@ufl.edu (preferred communication)

Class Meeting Times: Wednesdays, 1:55-2:45 PM

Class Zoom

Link: <https://ufl.zoom.us/j/93727274969?pwd=VmdCVkk1K0FhWmZiVmhKZ0dkMzBhdz09>

Zoom Meeting ID: 937 2727 4969

Zoom Meeting Passcode: 474658

Office Hours in Zoom Personal Meeting Room:

Wednesdays at 3-4pm or by appointment

Link: <https://ufl.zoom.us/j/3097483865>

Zoom Meeting ID: 309 748 3865

Course Description

Political comedy and satire have been viable forms of communication for centuries, providing an outlet for transmitting political commentary and opinion in both flattering and unflattering ways. In the contemporary era, there has been a rise in the use of political comedy on television, but there are numerous other outlets where satire and comedy shed light on political realities. Political cartoons, stand-up comedians, blogs and websites, social media and memes, and music or other live-art performances have the power to convey information, form or shape opinions, and even influence or motivate political participation.

The purpose of this course will be to explore the connections between comedy and satire, and politics. As American politics have become more hyper-partisan and bitter, it would seem that political comedy has increased in attention, becoming more popular. In 2009, a TIME Online poll cited Jon Stewart as the most trusted news anchor since the death of Walter Cronkite. A “fake” news program on a cable comedy channel became a legitimate source of news, including spawning multiple offspring. At a time when politicians, including the president, members of Congress, and pundits accuse actual news of being fake, can fake news inform and influence public discourse, policy debates, and politics?

This course will examine the rise of political comedy in the modern era, beginning in the 1960s by examining how stand-up comedians began to use their platform to address social and political issues, leading to television comedy like the Smothers Brothers. Moving through time to the establishment of Saturday Night Live, to the late night comedy legends, to the Daily Show and its offshoots. The course will also examine other outlets beyond television and stand-up, including print and political cartoons, online comedy websites like the Onion, and

other outlets. A live performance by the Capitol Steps will be included, and the class will attend together the night before the November election. (Unless we can't because of COVID-19)

Course Objectives

The goal of the course is to promote a new appreciation for and understanding of the influence political comedy has on our politics. In particular:

- How political comedy can influence behavior and shape opinion
- How satire and fake news can be just as, or more, impactful than traditional news sources
- How political actors (candidates and elected officials) can use political comedy to their advantage
- Critically think about, analyze, and evaluate how information – like comedy and satire – influence our public discourse, policymaking, and politics
- How the use of political comedy, in all its forms, has changed over time

Recommended Text

RECOMMENDED TEXT: S. Robert Lichter, Jody C. Baumgartner, and Jonathan S. Morris. *Politics is a Joke: How TV Comedians are Remaking Public Life*. Westview Press, 2015. ISBN 978-0-8133-4717-2.

Weekly readings, videos, and websites will be provided to you by the instructor or linked in the syllabus.

Course Requirements

1. This course will be run seminar style, which means it will focus mainly on discussion. It is important that read and watch the required material prior to coming to class so that you will be able to discuss the material. The required material covers a host of controversial topics and issues, and includes the use of colorful and/or foul language, so be prepared. Language matters in public discourse, and specific words or phrases can be impactful at critical moments, also known as comedic timing. Bottom line – we only meet for one hour per week, so come to class prepared.

The following assignment is required for the course:

- **Presentation:** The last few weeks of the semester, you will be required to give a 5-7 minute presentation to the class. The presentation will be on material related to the content of the course. The presentation is up to you, meaning I will give you leeway in what you want to present. It can be a comedy sketch (with others in the course), a talk, a paper, interpretive dance. Think about issues we covered in class, or issues, topics, outlets, comedians that were not covered. Presentations can done individually or in groups.

Grading Distribution

Class participation and attendance:

50% Presentation: 50%

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

100 – 93% = A	82 – 80% = B-	69 – 68% = D+
92 – 90% = A-	79 -78% = C+	67 – 63% = D
89 – 88% = B+	77 – 73% = C	62 – 60% = D-
87 – 83% = B	72 – 70% = C-	59% and Below = F

Attendance/Participation/Conduct

Assignments are expected to be turned in on the due date, either by hard copy, submitted through Canvas (UF e-learning), or email. One letter grade per day (not class days) will be taken off for late papers unless you have obtained prior approval for a different date due to special circumstances or have a documented illness or family emergency. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have some type of special circumstance, but you must do so before the due date unless it is an emergency. Communication is key. Attendance, assignments, and make-up work will adhere to UF policies and standards, available here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.asp>

Your grade for class participation depends not only on physical presence (attendance is mandatory), but also your active participation in class and your "class manners." This means being on time, refraining from side discussions and other distracting behavior and respecting each other's viewpoints. We will be discussing controversial issues about which many people have strong opinions and beliefs so mutual respect is critical for the success of the class. It is fine to challenge someone's ideas/positions, but personal attacks will not be tolerated.

Students with Disabilities: If you have special needs, you must register with the Disability Resource Center, <https://drc.dso.ufl.edu/>, so that you can be provided the necessary accommodations to ensure your success. You must inform me at the beginning of the semester and provide me with a copy of your letter. I will work with you to be successful in this course.

Please do not ask me specific questions about your assignments or grades outside of office hours. Federal privacy rules (FERPA) prohibit any discussion that can be heard by others. FERPA also prohibits me from sending grades through e-mail.

Honor Code of Conduct: UF students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty. Requirements, expectations, and violations can be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/1617/advising/info/student-honor-code.aspx>. It is your responsibility to know UF policies and procedures, and you should hold yourself to the highest standards.

Online Course Evaluations: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. [Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. [Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here](#).

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints On-Campus: [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage](#)

[for more information.](#)

On-Line Students Complaints: [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.](#)

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website.](#)

University Police Department: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#)

Date	Readings/Videos	Due
September 2	Introduction to course and Syllabus Discussion Discuss course goals	
September 9	<p>1. The Early Landscape of the 1960s and the Death of Free Speech on Television with the Smothers Brothers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Uncensored Story” Of the Smothers Brothers, NPR Fresh Air interview with David Bianculli http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130569467 • Smothers Brothers on the cancellation of “The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqriMwc53es <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Smothers Brothers Explain Politics https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2V2zFaogBcg • Pat Paulson Editorials https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4kWLUnorTU Early Comedians on Television Change Political Comedy, Challenge the Social Norms • The Comedy of Lenny Bruce https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/the-comedy-of-lenny-bruce/ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Lenny Bruce, On Obscenity https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDkoCtMOFOg&feature=youtu.be o On the Steve Allen Show https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G3QgxmiBfNY o ***On Southerners, Religion, Racism, Obscenity, Law, Police, Politics https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uml4XCOGrm o (optional)*** • Dick Gregory https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3jtu5Hgamc AND https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkQ4OCNecXs&list=RDP3jtu5Hgamc&index=6 • George Carlin – 7 Dirty Words https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbZhp3sQxQ 	
September 16	<p>The Launch of Saturday Night Live</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Ford’s Speech”: http://www.nbc.com/saturday-night-live/video/fords-speech/n8607 • “Christmas Eve at the White House” http://www.nbc.com/saturday-night-live/video/christmas-eve-at-the-white-house/n8620 • “Ask President Carter” ” http://www.nbc.com/saturday-night-live/video/ask- 	

	<p>president- carter/n8649</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o “President Reagan Uses Stick Figures to Explain the Economy” http://www.nbc.com/saturday-night-live/video/cold-opening/n8786 • Newsweek: “The most Popular Political Sketches on SNL” from 2017 https://www.newsweek.com/10-most-popular-political-saturday-night-live-sketches- latest-season-613267 • The Late Show with David Letterman <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Watch “David Letterman Grilling Politicians and Pundits Through the Years” http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/20/david-letterman-grilling- politicians_n_7345464.html o David Letterman (2012) Is Donald Trump Racist or just a Dope? https://www.facebook.com/HuffPostPolitics/videos/10154035724007911/ • MadTV The Apple iRack https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rw2nkoGLhrE Julia Ioffe, “Seth Meyers Has “Very Fond” Memories of Roasting Trump from <i>The Atlantic</i>” https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/06/seth-meyers-trump-oprah/559118/ • How Jordan Klepper does satire in the age of Trump https://wapo.st/2NCwr4I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Who Says Conservatives Can’t Do Comedy? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HsMIGNaAJLM • Behind the Scenes with Seth Meyers https://wapo.st/2LGOGFK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A Closer Look https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXCuAi9tSno o Late Night Press Briefing https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65vOUdre1nI • The Late Show with Stephen Colbert https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kk6uNlSkLj4 	
September 23	Political Effects on Thought and Mobilization: Does Comedy Influence? And, why do academics have to remove the humor from political comedy? How do we make sense of information?	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lindsay Hoffman and Dannagal Young, “Satire, Punch Lines, and the Nightly News: Untangling Media Effects on Political Participation,” from <i>Communication Research Reports</i>, 28/2 (2011). https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/08824096.2011.565278?needAccess=true • Allaina Kilby, “Provoking the Citizen: Re-Examining the Role of TV Satire in the Trump Era.” From <i>Journalism Studies</i>, 19/3, (2018). https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1495573 • Young et al., “Psychology, Political Ideology, and Humor Appreciation: Why is Satire So Liberal?” http://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2017-51853-001.pdf 	
September 30	<p>Contemporary Internet Tom Foolery and Shenanigans: Rise of Satire Websites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Onion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o http://www.theonion.com/article/tim-tebow-just-sitting-by-himself-in-darkened-flor-32289 (can’t resist this one) o The Onion Politics - https://www.theonion.com/tag/politics o How to Discuss Politics With Your Loved Ones - http://www.theonion.com/graphic/how-discuss-politics-your-loved-ones-52646 o 16 Times The Onion Masterfully Trolled American Politics - http://www.salon.com/2015/10/16/16_times_the_onion_masterfully_trolled_american_politics_partner/ o “How Trump changed everything for the Onion” - https://www.politico.com/story/2018/05/20/donald-trump-onion-stories-597809 o “Onion writer’s routinely recycled mass-shooting headline hits close to home” - https://www.marketwatch.com/story/onion-writers-routinely-recycled-mass-shooting-headline-hits-close-to-home-2018-02-15 • The Borowitz Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Trump Demands that NFL Players Stand During the Russian National Anthem - https://www.newyorker.com/humor/borowitz 	

	<p>-report/trump-demands-that-nfl-players-stand-during-russian-national-anthem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Go to The Borowitz Report homepage and have a look - http://www.newyorker.com/humor/borowitz-report • Compost—The Washington Post’s Alexander Petri puts the ‘pun’ in punditry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Main page - https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/compost/?utm_term=.1195b9372eb0 o Too bad we can do nothing about the excesses of this president - https://wapo.st/2mDQPqA 	
October 7	<p>Birth of a New Era: The Rise and Dominance of the Daily Show</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jon Stewart’s Post 9/11 Monologue http://www.cc.com/video-clips/1q93jy/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-september-11--2001 • 5 Times the Daily Show Actually Influenced Policy http://www.pbs.org/newshour/art/5-times-the-daily-show-influenced-policy/ • How Jon Stewart Changed Politics http://www.cnn.com/2015/02/10/politics/how-jon-stewart-changed-politics/ <p>Post Jon Stewart Daily Show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jon Stewart Shares how Trevor Noah Elevated the Daily Show: ‘We Did Diversity for Diversity’s Sake.’ https://ew.com/tv/jon-stewart-shares-how-trevor-noah-elevated-the-daily-show/ 	
October 14	Social Media and Its’ Influence on Politics	Everyone should

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How Social Media Has Changed Politics - https://www.thoughtco.com/how-social-media-has-changed-politics-3367534 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Joel Penny, “It’s so Hard Not to be Funny in this Situation’: Memes and Humor in U.S. Youth Online Political Expression.” From <i>Television and New Media</i>, 2019. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1527476419886068 o David M. Beskow, Sumeet Kumar, Kathleen M. Carley, “The Evolution of Political Memes: Detecting and Characterizing Internet Memes with Multi-Modal Deep Learning.” From <i>Information Processing & Management</i>, 57/2, 2020. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0306457319307988 	<p>be ready to share memes for the class so that we can analyze them. Please be prepared to discuss 3-5 memes. It is good to have multiple, in case someone brings in the same one as you have planned.</p>
<p>October 21</p>	<p>It’s not just White Dudes—Gender and Political Humor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samantha Bee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC18vz5hUUqxbGvym9ghtX_w o Здравствуйте to Our New Mother Russia - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8u8MVF19SOk • Michelle Wolf <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Viv Groskip, “Why is Political Satire so Perilous for Women?” https://www.ft.com/content/702b82ae-539b-11e8-b24e-cad6aa67e23e o White House Correspondents Association Dinner Speech https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxlSB26a_vpw • Sarah Cooper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o https://www.vogue.com/article/is-sarah-cooper-the-reason-donald-trump-wants-to-ban-tik-tok o Commentary: There’s an Art to Impersonating Trump. Just ask J-L Cauvin and Sarah Cooper 	

	<p>https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/story/2020-07-30/trump-impersonators-sarah-cooper-j-l-cauvin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Youtube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCySwUJlFN_tEctGX3xbjAGQ o Jessyka Finley, “Black Women’s Satire as (Black) Postmodern Performance.” From <i>Studies in American Humor</i>, 2/2, (2016). https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.5325/studamerhumor.2.2.0236.pdf (this is long, I know. I encourage you to read as much of it as you can because it’s excellent). 	
October 28	<p>Queering the Political Landscape: Drag Queens and Political Satire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dylan Rae, “Sissy that Protest: The Political Power of Drag,” https://vocal.media/theSwamp/sissy-that-protest-the-political-power-of-drag • Maura Judkis, “How Drag Queens have Snatched the Political Spotlight in the Trump Era,” https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/how-drag-queens-have-snatched-the-political-spotlight-in-the-trump-era/2019/11/24/0e197464-0712-11ea-ac12-3325d49eacaa_story.html • Daniel Villarreal, “Drag Queens are More Political than Ever. Can they Lead a Movement?” https://www.vox.com/identities/2018/11/5/18056558/drag-queens-politics-activism-lgbtq-rupaul • Lizzie Widdicombe, “Can ‘RuPaul’s Drag Race’ Save us from Donald Trump?” https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/can-rupauls-drag-race-save-us-from-donald-trump 	
November 4	Reflection on Election	
November 11	VETERANS DAY—NO CLASS	
November 18	Presentations	
November	THANKSGIVING—NO CLASS	

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December 2	Presentations	
December 9	Presentations Reflecting on what we've learned this semester.	