

Butler University
Department of Political Science
Fall 2012
PO 490W - Senior Seminar on Political Humor
The 2012 Presidential Campaign - Obama/Biden v. Romney/Ryan
Wednesdays 3:50 - 6:30p
JH 346

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Office Hours: MW 9:30 - 10:30a and W 2:00 - 3:00p and by appointment for other days.

Textbooks

Chip Bok, The 9.11 Crisis in Political Cartoons (Bok)

Jonathan Gray, Jeffrey P. Jones, and Ethan Thompson (eds.), Satire TV: Politics and Comedy In the Post-Network Era (Satire)

Ann Telnaes, Humor's Edge: Cartoons by Ann Telnaes (Telnaes)

And additional articles and cartoons as course progresses



Class Objective

This course should serve as a capstone in your study of Political Science, challenging you to synthesize both the theoretical and practical knowledge that you have gained as an undergraduate. In this regard we will study the current 2012 Presidential Campaign from a humorous standpoint that should facilitate us navigating our own personal and political biases to analyze the critiques of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates, of whom we may or may not support.

In fact, I'm assuming that we will not necessarily even agree on the critiques while we may possibly agree and indeed, understand the politics of the humor presented from a respective standpoint. Some of the humor you may even find offensive, as you probably should, depending on who you are and your background, and therefore we will discuss our reactions. Finally how does humor influence voting behavior? We shall see....

Class Participation

You are expected to attend each class and to be prepared to fully discuss the assigned reading material and the latest news regarding the Presidential campaign. Use multiple sources and of course, pay particular attention to the funny stuff! As this is a writing intensive course, there are some in-class writing assignments, as well as multiple outside class writing assignments and two research papers. There will be no make-ups allowed unless your absence is excused. Students who are consistently late, absent (unexcused), or unprepared will be penalized with a grade deduction at the end of the course. Because this senior seminar is also connected to our Brahos Lecture this semester, you will be required to attend all events associated with this event, the dinner, lecture and the breakfast the following morning.

Our Brahos Lecturer this semester is the Indianapolis Star Editorial Cartoonist Gary Varvel, who has been in this position since 1994. Following are the dates, times and locations for our Brahos Lecture Series:
 Dinner - Monday, October 15th - 5 - 6:30p - University Club - Invitation Only
 Public Lecture - Monday, October 15th - 7 - 9p - Jordan Hall 141
 Breakfast - Tuesday, October 16th - 8:30 - 10a - Atherton Union 326

Special Accommodations

It is the policy and practice of Butler University to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. Written notification from Student Disability Services is required. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation and would like to request it for this course, please discuss it with me as soon as possible. This conversation will be kept strictly confidential. If you have questions about Student Disability Services, you may wish to contact Michele Atterson, JH 136, ext. 9308.

Butler University Academic Honesty Code

Students are expected to abide by the Butler University Academic Honesty Code. A full description on academic integrity is available in your student handbook. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that both the letter and intent of this code are met in all circumstances. Ignorance of this code, or of proper rules of citation, provides no defense. Violations of this code will be dealt with appropriately. Plagiarism can result in an F for this course.

"I'm only an average man but by George, I work harder at it than the average man." - President Teddy Roosevelt

Grading

Paper - What is so funny about Politics - 15 points - **Due 8/29**

Political Convention Humor Essay - randomly assigned - 15 points - **Due 9/12**

Humorous Political Socialization Paper - 15 points - **Due 9/19**

Digital Storytelling Assignment - 20 points - **Due 10/24**

Political Humor Watch Not- so -Weekly Write-Ups - 5 points each

Campaign Debate Watch Humor Write-Up - 10 points each - 3 total = 30 points - **Due - 10/10; 10/17; 10/24; 10/31**

Campaign Target Group Humor Brief Research Paper - 25 points - **Due 11/7**

Political Cartoon Analysis (in-class writes and sharing) - 3 points each

Political Humor Presidential Team Creative Project & Presentation - 30 points - **Due 12/5**

Grading Scale

100 - 97% = A

96 - 92% = A-

91 - 88% = B+

87 - 83% = B

82 - 78% = B-

77 - 75% = C+

74 - 72% = C

71 - 68% = C-

67 - 65% = D+

64 - 62% = D

61 - 58% = D-

57% and below = F

What is so funny about Politics - 15 points - Due 8/29

Write a paper that presents a general discussion on the nature of humor that is directed at the political world. You should include in your paper thoughts on what type of humor you find insightful, how you feel the public is affected by political humor, and what makes for an easy target. If there is a specific political humorist or satirist you find especially entertaining then feel free to discuss that person in your paper.

Political Convention Humor Essay - 15 points - Due 9/12

You will be randomly assigned either the Democratic or Republican Political Convention to watch and write about in the context of a humorous essay. You may focus on any aspect of the convention and are not expected to watch it in its totality but try and capture the essence of what the respective party is trying to project to the voting public, but from a humorous standpoint.

Republican Convention - August 27 - 30th - Tampa, Florida

Democratic Convention - September 4 - 6th - Charlotte, North Carolina

Humorous Political Socialization Paper - 15 points - Due 9/19

Digital Storytelling Assignment and Presentation - 20 points - Due 10/24

Those of you who have taken any of my introductory courses will recognize this assignment. You are to write a paper about how you were socialized to think the way you do in a fundamental way about various political issues, whether it was your family, friends, education, life experience, spiritual background...etc. For this particular class, however you are to choose one or two political topics and write about your political socialization from a humorous standpoint. Be prepared to share your paper with your peers.

Digital Storytelling Assignment - Your humorous political socialization paper will serve as the basis of your digital story, which you will present to your peers. There will be a short course in class regarding this project and you will have plenty of time to put your "story" together. It must be around three minutes, use good visuals, and have at least music or voice-over background and be reflective of your own political socialization.

**Political Humor Watch Not-so-Weekly Write-Ups - 5 points each
Due as Indicated on Syllabus**

Each indicated week you are expected to turn in a one-two page write-up about some type of humorous political piece you read in a paper or magazine, or watched on television. Describe the item and then discuss why you thought it was so funny. Try and relate some of your not-so-weekly write-ups to our class discussions on readings from the texts.

Campaign Debate Watch Write-Ups - 10 points each

There are currently three presidential debates and one vice-presidential debate scheduled. You are instructed to watch at least two of the three Presidential debates and then write a two-three page humorous paper analyzing some of the candidate's responses to questions. Be prepared to share with your peers.

Debate Schedule - Presidential - 10/3; 10/16; 10/22 - Vice-Presidential - 10/11

Assignments due - 10/10; 10/17; 10/24; 10/31

Campaign Target Group Humor Brief Research Paper - 25 points - Due 11/7

Choose one group (ethnic, social, economic) that has been a target of jokes or satirical discussion around any campaign and compile and analyze these items (three or four will be sufficient). In your analysis discuss the nature and significance of humor about this particular group. Be sure and include a bibliography.

In-class Political Cartoon Analysis- 3 points each

Each week I will choose a political cartoon from Bok, Telnaes or Varvel for you to consider, analyze and write about in-class.. After each write-up you will share it with your peers, discuss and hand-in for me to briefly check before returning it to you.

Political Humor Presidential Team Creative Project and Presentation - 30 points - Due 12/5

You will be randomly assigned to a Presidential Humor "Team" of which you are to research the humor surrounding the assigned president and develop a project to showcase that humor to the class as a group. You are given creative license with regard to the type of project you create but you must make sure that the humor provides crucial information regarding the experiences of the particular President that you are representing. Your presentation should be no longer than 15 minutes.

Tentative Schedule - Readings due on date indicated

Week One - August 22nd - Syllabus Distribution, Introductions and Organizing

View of episode of "All in the Family" and discussion - why was "Archie Bunker" such a profound television character?

Week Two - August 29th - Digital Storytelling Short-course - Eric Esterline

Readings: Satire - Forward & Chapter One

Telnaes - Introduction thru p. 19

* What is So Funny About Politics? Paper due

Republican Convention - August 27 - 30th - Tampa, Florida

Week Three - September 5th

Readings: Satire - Chapters 2 & 3

* Not-so-Weekly Humor Watch Write-up Due

Democratic Convention - September 4 - 6th - Charlotte, North Carolina

Week Four - September 12th

Readings: Satire - Chapters 4 & 5

* Political Convention Humor Essay Due

Heading to D.C. - Class meeting for one hour

Week Five - September 19th

Readings: Satire - Chapter 6

Telnaes - pp. 20 - 63

* Humorous Political Socialization Paper due

Week Six - September 26th

No class - travel to London & Nottingham, England

Week Seven - October 3rd

No class - travel to Zurich, Switzerland

Watch Presidential Debate - 9p - University of Denver - Moderator: Jim Lehrer

Week Eight - October 10th

Readings: Satire - Chapters 7, & 8

* Not-so-weekly Humor Watch Write-up Due

10/11 - Vice-Presidential Debate - 9p - Centre College - Moderator: Martha Raddatz

Week Nine - October 17th

Readings: Satire - Chapter 9

*Not-so-weekly Humor Watch Write-Up Due

10/15 - Brahos Lecture - Gary Varvel - required

Dinner - 5 - 6:30p - University Club; Lecture - 7 - 9p - Jordan Hall 141

10/16 - Breakfast - 8:30 - 10:00a - Atherton Union 326

10/16 - Presidential Debate - 9p - Hofstra University - Moderator - Candy Crowley - Town Hall format

Week Ten - October 24th

Readings: Satire - Chapters 10, 11 & 12

Telnaes - pp. 64 - 95

10/22 - Presidential Debate - 9 p - Lynn University - Moderator - Bob Schieffer

* Digital Storytelling Assignment Due & Presentations

Week Eleven - October 31st

Send in your Presidential Election Prediction - Who will win, voter turn-out, popular vote numbers and electoral college numbers

No class - in Houston, TX

Week Twelve - November 7th

Readings: Telnaes - pp. 96 - 125

* Not-so-weekly Humor Watch Write-up Due

11/6 - Presidential Election!!!

Week Thirteen - November 14th

Readings: Telnaes - p. 126 - End

* Not-so-Weekly Humor Watch Write-Up Due

Week Fourteen - November 21st - Thanksgiving Break - no class

Week Fifteen - November 28th

Film - "Wag the Dog"

Week Sixteen - December 5th - Last Day

Presidential Humor Creative Project Presentations

