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### American Political Satire: The 20th Century Onward

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## Reflective Essay

The prevailing reason behind my foray into this project was to examine the people responsible for the way I view the world. Biologically, I am a product of my family. Environmentally I have entered into a world of satire. My time at Syracuse University has only strengthened the hold this genre of humor has on me. It is only fitting I culminate my honors experience with a foray into political satire; in particular, political satire in the United States. Of course, that really isn't very particular at all. I had to dig deeper than that. And I did. Content aside, the thing I'll remember most about this project is sifting through what felt like endless piles of information, trying to put together a presentation the viewer could understand.

Media is plural: The media *are*, not the media *is*. We had barely chosen our chairs when my fellow freshmen and I were taught our first lesson about communications. The lesson bears relevance in this project as I have made use of more than one medium (the singular of media, or the second lesson about communications). The majority of the pieces you see in this project are in the form of standard TV packages: moderately long-form stories between two and three minutes in length. Conversely, the initial chapter of the project takes on the form of a multimedia slideshow. The logic behind this is twofold. In addition to examining satire, I wanted to First, I wanted to take a look at how the great satirists viewed their craft. It would be more effective to portray this with still images and quotes superimposed on top of them. Second, multimedia journalism is profoundly affecting the press and those who study it; for example, the

communications major I had as a freshman (broadcast journalism) is different from the one I have now (broadcast and digital journalism).

This Capstone project is under the heading of satire. It's very much about people. People who a, had a hard time shutting up and b, were lucky enough to have large numbers of people eating up their every word. Like many other fields, satire exists in a web. The practitioners of political humor frequently found themselves performing together, learning from each other, and inspiring each other. In particular, Lenny Bruce stands tall among his fellow standup comics in this regard. A constant in all of the archive footage I did on standup comedians was how much they all raved about him.

The page limit on this reflection essay largely puts a ceiling on how much I can write about George Carlin. The satirist who has most influenced me and my sense of humor. I find Carlin to be unique among satirists in that he had different versions of comedy throughout his distinguished career: he started out as a conservative, family friendly comic. Then he grew his hair out and became more of a hippie. Later he moved into a more observational style of standup. Finally, he became an angry old man. I loved every second of it. I didn't always agree with him. He did always make me think. The same can be said about making me laugh. There are few who are able to elicit those reactions from people simultaneously.

I have been listening to George Carlin's words for nearly a decade. Moreover I have consumed the work of other prominent satirists who feature in my packages. The biography *Ben Franklin, An American Life* by *Walter Isaacson* was the key determinant in me selecting the words of Franklin to start off the first

story of my capstone. Now it feels like there is nobody else who could have led off the project. I read *America: The Book* cover to cover before I really got into *The Daily Show*. The book itself came out the year before Stephen Colbert left *The Daily Show* to launch *The Colbert Report*. I am yet to read Colbert's book, though it's certainly high on my reading list. As for music, one of the more enjoyable editing jobs of this project was splicing up guitar riffs from "Alice's Restaurant." The song is exactly 18:30 long, and I combed through every second of it in order to find the proper passages to use for the story. You really get to know a song, even one of such great length, when you listen to it in that way.

Harkening back to history, I often find myself at odds with the character that is Ben Franklin. I say character because I believe there are two Ben Franklins: the guy we read about in the textbooks and the actual person who lived, breathed, thought, laughed and invented more than 200 years ago. The former is an American icon, one of brilliance, good humor and benevolence. The latter is also an American icon, one of wit, emotional distance and pragmatism. Both of these men are great figures. It's the latter, however, or the more flawed individual, who represents the true satirist. As happy as he appeared to be, it must be remembered that the guy showed little to no lasting affection to almost anyone in his life, including family, and he had a big family. There is a sadness around him that seems to feed his satire. This sadness is a recurring theme among satirists, including many of the ones I profiled for my project.

In addition to the satirists who have influenced me, I find myself fascinated by the historical figures of American politics and government. This is

contradictory in the sense that government and politics, or to put it better, government and politicians are the same people satirists challenge. The mismatch is especially clear on the individual level. One of my favorite political figures is John Adams, a founding father of the United States. During his term as the second U.S. President, he oversaw the passing of the Alien and Sedition Acts, which made it a crime for the press to speak out against the government. Moreover, he and his party, the Federalists, were sure to include a sunset clause for the acts; they would expire once Adams and the Federalists left office. So not only was Adams against criticism of the government, he took greater issue with criticism of himself. Is there any doubt that had this happened today, the countless amateur satirists on the Internet would have torn the president of the United States apart?

Working on a satire project, these are the things I think about. Is there any chance Thomas Jefferson would have been able to get around his philandering while President of the United States? The implications for Jefferson, as well as his country, would be considerable: a founding father of the United States, the third President in a young country's history, and a political issue that had already threatened to divide the country as it was being created. I'm not sure what satire would have done to ameliorate the situation. All of this is chimerical. Youtube didn't exist back then. It is also worth noting that by all accounts, Thomas Jefferson was widely liked; at least while he was living. The same could not be said for William Jefferson Clinton, but that is another matter, for another time.

Another sort of muse for this project is my interest in theatre. I have acted in 30 different productions; a number I'm sure to regularly update and inform

people of, or exactly what I'm doing now. Theatre, particularly musical theatre has made a considerable impression on my life. Musical theatre had the same powerful influence on satirists such as Tom Lehrer, who clearly sampled from Gilbert and Sullivan, or the Capitol Steps, who multiple times have used the material of Rogers and Hammerstein for their songs. It's because of my own connection to music and theatre that I decided to dedicate some of my Capstone to the music of satire.

The juxtaposition of the internet and 18<sup>th</sup> Century politicians does well to segue into the initial dilemma of this study; that is, *what* to study. As my capstone reader Professor Charlotte Grimes noted, satire has been around for a long time. At the outset I decided I really didn't want to go too far back in time, the 15<sup>th</sup> century at the most. I find a post-printing press world to be far more conducive to satire than the one existing prior. In terms of language, I also decided fairly quickly that I would only examine satire done in English. With these parameters in place, the final step would be establishing the geographical boundaries of my work.

Soon after choosing a basic theme for my Capstone project, I spent a semester studying abroad in London. The experience is one I will never forget. The ways in which it affected me are becoming more apparent as I spend another passing day without walking through Russell Square. With regards to my capstone, the most beneficial aspect of going abroad was the decision to more narrowly define my project. I went to London wanting to simply study political satire. I left London wanting to focus on satire in the United States. In many ways,

some obvious and others more nuanced, satire differs in the U.S. and in the U.K. More specifically, a shared language does not mean shared humor. Trying to encompass both vintages of political satire would, in my opinion, blur the focus of my study. This in mind, I decided on American Political satire only. It should be noted this decision also cut the timeline of satire down from about 550 to 350 years. Throughout this experience I welcomed any opportunity I had to narrow things down a little bit.

A final restriction on my project was tying my project to the motion picture. For all intensive purposes, I begin my study at the point where television enters the picture; no pun intended. I'm intrigued by the notion that the advent of new technology doesn't necessarily make things easier. In many ways it makes things harder. This assertion has been made to many other fields in addition to satire, most notably politics, which seems appropriate: how many times has it been said Abraham Lincoln never would have won an election if he and his ugly face had been on posters. What about Franklin Delano Roosevelt? Does a man in a wheel chair in a time of financial insecurity get elected, let alone win his party's nomination?

With regards to satire, at numerous points in my research I came across the motif that more technology tends to complicate things. This happens even though advances in technology give off the image of making things easier. The Allen brothers note as broadcast-era comedians they were constantly pressured to come up with material faster. Flash-forward to today, comedians talk about their dilemma over whether or not to peddle the same act from city to city. With the

Internet, people have almost instant access to your routine, and now comedians have to ask themselves whether it's better to come up with new jokes each time, or to reward audiences who know what is coming and came to hear particular jokes. I'm certainly in favor of today's norms: more jokes, more satire, and for the sake of this capstone project, more content to choose from.

Using a visual medium, this project featured a direct relationship between age and difficulty. The older the pioneer of satire, the harder it was to obtain footage of said figure to use for a TV story. This factor in particular weighed my decision to focus on more modern satirical figures. Of course, there still is limited video out there of people before 1950. To put it better, I cannot simply go to a show featuring Will Rogers and record it for my honors capstone purposes. From the outset the boundaries of available archive footage placed a limitation on my project. I accepted this notion and went into the capstone project ready for the challenge.

Classification helped to organize and streamline my project. There are six different TV packages on different genres of satire: famous quotes and figures, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, standup comedy, television, music, and the Internet. I found these distinctions akin to sub-headlines within a story; providing greater clarity and focus. It should be noted much of my aforementioned classifying was arbitrary. I feature the Smothers Brothers in my television satire package, yet they could have easily fit into the musical satire piece. The television package also features Jon Stewart, who came up as a standup comic. Moreover, I include



George Carlin in the standup section, but regular show deals with HBO were a constant in his career.

As a fan of satire I have a clear rooting interest in terms of who I think the greatest standup comic/satirist is. Therefore it brought me great joy to dedicate most of the standup comedy package to Lenny Bruce, with George Carlin being featured. Carlin also ends up with less time in the piece than Mort Sahl. I began this project far less familiar in the humor of Bruce or Sahl, especially Sahl. I had seen a couple of bits by Lenny Bruce and didn't find him to be that funny. Meanwhile, Sahl had been just a guy in a red sweater who had just as many wrinkles at 30 as he does in his old age. This was a hidden benefit of the project though, to better get to know the giants of satire. I thought I knew a lot before this project. I was wrong.

I had never really known much about Will Rogers, other than his name. The only reason I knew that is because of his fellow Rogers celebrities, Roy and, well, *Mister*. I probably won't be dedicating too much of my future time to his work, but I must say I truly enjoyed seeing little bits of all the other satirists in him; rather, parts of the Will Rogers genetic code in all of the satirists that came later. You could also make the point Rogers himself had traces of Mark Twain and Ben Franklin in him as well. Regardless of where the satire bloodline starts, my arbitrary beginning to this capstone project was Will Rogers. Therefore, for the purposes of this project I trace everything back to him.

The extent to which I underestimated Lenny Bruce surprises me. As I said before, I never found him that funny. It is unfortunate the first video I saw of him

was grainy footage of his second-to-last performance. By that time he had been effectively blacklisted from almost all potential venues, and his material almost entirely focused on his legal troubles. He also looked terrible. That wasn't Lenny Bruce, it was the shell of Lenny Bruce. Thankfully, the Internet provides a bevy of Bruce footage that I had never seen before, or sought out for that matter. The difference between this Lenny Bruce, and the Lenny Bruce I first saw, is remarkable. He looks healthier, he smiles more, his material is sharp and his overall persona is very engaging.

The power of personality hovered over this project as a sort of hidden motif. Satire is satire: there are many versions of it, there are many ways you can convey your message, but largely, you're doing the same thing as everybody else. This means two things determine who people like, or what people like in terms of satire: tastes for certain material and the deliverer of the message. In other words, whether or not people like you has a big influence on your success. It has an even greater effect on how people will remember you after you are gone. The most poignant example of this is Will Rogers, who everybody seemed to love. Another is Mort Sahl, who gets more scathing reviews from his peers. This holds true even for satirists such as Bruce, who everyone loved despite his often-careless lifestyle. I made a point of referencing this in the standup satire package.

The packages I chose to organize my project presented me with unique sets of challenges; a pleasant surprise, that each story wouldn't be the same. It ended up going even farther than that. In my opinion the packages were like editing etudes: a certain skill was required for each of them, and that skill had to

be used repeatedly. The musical satire piece required a lot of deft sound editing: bringing two songs together without an awkward transition as well as keeping sound levels low enough so that they wouldn't drown out my own audio track. The package on standup comics was finding the right time to use a bit by Lenny Bruce, Mort Sahl or George Carlin to act as a natural sound break. I'm banking on people who watch it to recognize these are funny people, and that when they here a couple of seconds worth of material, they also know that it is funny.

Looking back on the project it is necessary for me to comment on another limitation, this time one I placed on myself: Voluntarily choosing to completely omit portions of satire from my presentations. For instance, I have no mention of the weekly update segment of Saturday Night Live in my capstone project. I could have easily fit it into my TV or my satire packages, but I chose not to. The reason is simple. There's just too much stuff to make sense of. It would have watered down my project to the point where it was a Wikipedia page for political satire. No depth, no perspective, no project at all.

There are a couple of things in particular I regret sacrificing from my project, or items of satire that were especially painful to leave out. The "Weekly Update" segment from Saturday Night Live was recommended to me by my advisors; it's also a classic bit of satire, arguably one of the longest-standing, uninterrupted ones too. I feel like this haunted me after I chose not to include it in my project: recently I listened to an interview with SNL alum Norm Macdonald. He talked about how hard he went against O.J. Simpson during the former NFL star's murder trial. I couldn't help but think of how visually interesting it would

have been to use images from Weekly Update in chronological order, from the segment's origins in the 1970s to the present day. It would have made for a nice progression, and a good sequence.

Another large-scale omission is everything that happened before I chose to start my project; the satire before the time of Will Rogers. This next sentence will seem childish. I really wish there would have been some way to record Ben Franklin, Mark Twain, H.L. Mencken and all of the other great satirists of American history. Franklin would be a visual gold mine all by himself with his litany of experiments and accomplishments. The same could be said for Twain with his iconic appearance. Of course, there is one way I could have done a better job of including everyone.

I'm not sure whether it would have been easier to do this project by simply writing a really long paper. First, the research would have been different. Literature instead of video. Attaching notes to pages of books instead of logging hours upon hours of tape. I could have started at the beginning, and moved all the way through to the present day. Furthermore I would have been able to spend a lot of time reading about satire, more play than work. It would also allow me to prove wrong my maxim that you can't get any reading done in college. In short, a broad-based satire project and a completed reading list, those are two nice things to have, if I had done them.

A thesis-style project also would have had its negatives. I would have had a hard time making everything fit together. If anything, the project would take on the mile wide, inch deep style of paper. I'm already bordering on that with this

project by attempting to tackle so many different forms of satire. I can't imagine I would enjoy having to write 40-plus pages about political humor. I think doing that would have killed satire for me, which this project hasn't done; in fact it's gotten me more attached to the genre than before I began. I'm much happier having used video and digital media to do my project.

The web package in particular required me to use discretion in picking and choosing bits of satire. It was harder than expected to select bits and pieces of the web's vast array of satirical content. Putting myself in the shoes of a satire novice made it even more complex. I created the following dilemma for myself. Suppose you know little to nothing about satire on the Internet, so you look up my story on the subject in order to make sense of it all. Every sound bite, every image, every word I say could, in a way, be considered an authoritative judgment on internet satire. This is not the same for eras such as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, where the smaller number of noted humorists could get by with infrequent material, thanks to the lack of today's technology. With this mindset, I understood the importance of editing carefully; carefully, and comprehensively. With this story especially, there's a lot to understand.

Countervailing the notion of "too much" is the Internet. Without the web I wouldn't be able to sort through this cacophony of content. Sorting it all out is another matter. In actuality I reference the importance of the Internet in my final satire package; saying the older satire material is just as big a part of Internet humor as the latest stuff. The riffs of Will Rogers beget and exist alongside the material on Jibjab.com. You can watch a snippet of a documentary on Lenny

Bruce, and within a couple of keystrokes you're viewing footage of Bruce performing in his prime. In doing this project I was reminded of how remarkable the Internet is, something most of us forgot a while ago.

Something that needs to be touched upon; the near-total reliance on the Internet for my material for this project. At the outset, my advisors and I came to the conclusion this was an academic product first, journalistic project second. This means I would have no issues using video, sound and pictures from public forums such as youtube.com and the AP photo database, the latter available to SU students at the Bird Library Website. Because this is an academic venture, not to be aired on TV, I face no potential copyright restrictions. Knowing this from the start I had an easier and less apprehension filled time doing my work.

At the start of this reflection I noted how satire and political humor were milieus I had chosen for myself. I would have neither arrived nor stayed in these circles were it not for the assistance of several individuals: relatives, friends and instructors. I've known a few of them my whole life, though most of them I met at a later date. Some of them are family by blood. All of them are family by influence. The proceeding people make up my personal thank-you list for this project. I do my best to laud them with proper language. I doubt any words can accurately denote their importance to me: as a writer, as a thinker, as a person.

A long time ago I realized my personality was somewhat more eccentric than that of my friends. Completely normal to me, my mind and behavior can sometimes leave my friends scratching their heads. The best friends were the ones who simply let me do my thing. I learned this from my mother, Linda Contino. I

can't even try to count the number of times I've been with her, and done something, or said something that caused a conversation to pause. I'd look at her, she'd look at me funny, then smile, then nod to herself, then keep on going. The obvious thing to take from this is she, like many, doesn't understand me but has the good sense to embrace it. In reality, she understands me better than the rest.

The most important public figure in my life is George Carlin, but George never went out of his way to make me a follower. That is the work of my father, Dana Contino. I can still clearly remember the night in eighth grade when he first exposed me to Carlin's standup. The more vague, blended-together memories stem from the image I have of my Dad. Proud. Bold. Charming. Fearless. Encouraging. Every day, I feel more and more like I'm beginning to take on some of these qualities. I'm especially hoping for the charming one. When I was younger he told me he would always spend money on a book if I wanted it. Excellent advice, as it turned me into a voracious reader. I can never thank him enough for that. If I have kids though, I'll be sure to give them the same advice.

Being 21, there are only so many times in my life in which I've made a decision directly affecting my life. Choosing a college is the most obvious example. In the summer following my sophomore year, I decided to audition for a show at a theatre I had never heard of. It ended up being a wonderful experience. I've done two shows there since then, including one this past winter. The man in charge of this theatre is Michael Disher, a veteran of the stage who has had a profound influence on me in the limited time I've gotten to spend with him. I say limited, because as a college student, I'm almost never home. While I've known

him for almost two years, I've spent maybe seven months under his tutelage. It's been more than enough. He is one of the people I credit with reinforcing my comfort in the person I've become. That it's fine, or as he would say, more than fine, for me to be dry and satirical. I'm especially thankful for the pre-show makeup sessions in which we talked about George Carlin, as well as the lunches in Southampton spent discussing social issues.

A student at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications understands the meaning of difficult: classes lasting way longer than their credit total indicates, dress shoes ruined walking through the snow, endless would-be sources who never call you back. These are common facets of journalism classes. It takes something different to make one harder than all the rest. That's why Professor Charlotte Grimes' class, long purported to be incredibly hard, intrigued me. The course's subject matter, political reporting, made it a perfect match. At the end of my college career I can confidently say Professor Grimes' class was easily the most challenging I've ever taken. Never have I worked harder. Never have my natural writing tendencies been so questioned by one professor. Never have I cared more about a professor. If you want to enroll in writing boot camp and come out a sharper journalist, I strongly advise taking a course with Professor Grimes.

It is certainly enjoyable to have chosen a topic of study that is alive and well as I turn this project in. It puts considerably less pressure on me to conclude it with a sense of finality. In addition, I had full freedom to end the project wherever I wanted; in this case with one eye in the present, the other looking to



the past. Looking back I think this was the best way to go, the full-circle strategy. I'm really not certain the direction that satire will go in the years to come, only that it will still exist. A weak conclusion? Possibly. An accurate conclusion? That's also true when it comes to satire. The genre of humor has outlasted many a politician, many a satirist, and now, this reflection essay. I'm glad to have undergone a study on American political satire in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was well worth my time. I learned from it, I'm smarter for it. That's everything I wanted.

## Capstone Summary

The accomplishment of this capstone project has been a tale of two processes: research and production. More than any other piece I've done as a journalist, this presentation on political satire demanded countless hours of study, planning and synthesis. Choosing whom to write about, what about them to write and finally, how to fit them into the grand scheme of things was as challenging as any bit of editing or visual storytelling; usually what makes up the brunt of any journalism project here at Syracuse. This normally more challenging production end became easier due to my strong content-based knowledge of my story, or stories, I'm telling. They're the stories of the people who have so profoundly affected the way in which I view the world.

The project I have chosen for my capstone is an examination of political satire in the United States. The time frame of the project heavily focuses on the 20<sup>th</sup> century, moving through the present day. In addition, I dedicate some time to the pioneers of American satire. As a broadcast journalism major, I'm approaching the project as a reporter would: with a series of packages on the various facets of the subject. In this case, those subjects are the words of famous satirists, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, standup comedy, the music of political satire, television and the web. Each of the packages, with the exception of the first, is traditional news pieces. The first story is in the form of a multimedia slideshow.

The way I've divided my project is specific in terms of subject. The same cannot be said with regards to time, as there is an uneven loyalty to certain eras from package to package. For instance, the early-20<sup>th</sup> century piece, largely

dedicated to Will Rogers, takes place in the narrow time frame between the advent of the motion picture and Rogers's 1935 death. On the other end of things is my piece on TV satire, which is constructed so the reader sees the parallels between the days of *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* and *The Daily Show*. A byproduct of this structure is the viewer constantly moving to two periods in time: the late-1960s and the present-day. The standup comedy story focuses on the 1960s, while the musical satire section starts in the 1960s and progresses through the present. The web of course only goes so far back. The project on the great quotes of satire briefly covers around 300 years of political humor.

In addition to being about satire, the way I'm doing the project offers a subtle reflection on the growing prominence of multimedia journalism. I strongly doubt I would have even considered making one of these pieces a multimedia presentation had I been doing this project ten, or even five years ago. In the present I find it not only doable, but also natural to diversify my means of telling a story. Using AP photographs, the chords of "Alice's Restaurant" and some choice quotes from the satirists themselves I feel I'm approaching the simple matter of quoting someone in a more creative, engaging way. This more artistic style of storytelling, while strange at first, has become my favorite type of journalism at the Newhouse School.

The software I used to create this introduction to political satire are iMovie and Garage Band. The most difficult part of the iMovie work was making sure the text boxes showing the satirists' quotes were visible. Many of the photos are black and white, so using white text, while effective for the color photos, wasn't

satisfactory there. As for Garage Band, I imported my copy of “Alice’s Restaurant” and went over all 18 minutes and 30 seconds of the song to find the appropriate passages to cut up, copy, paste together and apply underneath the images and quotes. You really get to know an 18-minute song when you go through it second by second, note by note.

At some point I should say something about why I’m doing this project on political satire; in other words, the meaning of my honors capstone. This is a project about bold, intelligent individuals. It is also a story of flawed characters, sometimes fatally so. Something about my project I’m particularly fond of is its organization of satire into more specific eras. This is followed by the subsequent juxtaposition of the figures in these areas. There are several instances in which you can almost feel the ceremonial torch being passed from one great satirist to another: examples include Lenny Bruce and George Carlin, and then the Smothers Brothers and Jon Stewart years later. Of course, another connection could be made between Bruce and Stewart in that Stewart is verging on a transition from satire to full-blown advocacy.

In terms of the methods I’m using for the project, I have a greater degree of freedom than the average reporter would when doing a series of stories like this. Early on I received permission from the honors program to make use of any footage I could get my hands on, with no fear of copyright violation. This is an academic study, not a story that will appear on the evening news. In this sense, this project has been a fairly refreshing experience, at least in terms of gathering

resources. Nearly all of my material comes from the web; however, my knowledge of what sources to look for comes from prior research.

The year was 2009 the first time I watched *1968 with Tom Brokaw*. Now in 2011, I can deconstruct the video and use it for three of my stories: standup comedy, TV and the music of political satire. Brokaw's work not only includes interviews with Arlo Guthrie and the Smothers Brothers, but it contains perfect 1960s b-roll that I can use to fill in some of the visual blanks in my stories. An example of this is quintessential footage of people protesting; of course I had to find the requisite present-day video of protest elsewhere. The discussion between the Smothers Brothers and Jon Stewart also serves as one of my juxtaposition points that I'm highlighting in these stories.

Having discussed the issue with my capstone reader, I've decided to not have any bridge stand-ups in any of my stories. Stand-ups are essentially that ten seconds in a reporter's package in which the reporter him/herself stands in front of the camera and says one random fact about the story. Technically it's meant to be a reporter's signature on a package. Ostensibly it's a reporter's means of cheap self-promotion. Instead of doing this, I'm introducing them and closing my stories, book-ending them at the top and at the bottom. I'm doing so because much of the footage and people I'm working with come from a time long before my own. By inserting myself into the story with a standup, I would be visually splicing the present day into the 1960s, even the 1920s. The effect would jar a potential audience and perhaps even make it look like I'm trying too hard to

appear part of the story. This is not my intent, and I do not want to convey this feeling either.

Another thing I've tried to do in this project is to find instances in which my self-appointed titans of satire talk about one another. Sometimes they speak of another satirist as an influence. Other times they talk about a fellow humorist as a peer. Regardless of the tone, the commentary one satirists has on another is essentially a critique on political satire itself. It also serves to indicate just how small the political satire community is. That these characters exist in a sort of web is hardly a surprise, given how this occurs in almost any industry. It is still fascinating.

If my project has a flaw it's, myself, or my prejudices. Throughout the process I tried my hardest not to let my own biases about satire come into the picture. For one, I'm a huge George Carlin fan, and I've been trying very hard not to let my near obsession with him and his work dominate the package on standup comedy. I may try to tell you otherwise, but for the purposes of this project, George Carlin was not the only standup comic. I feel I've achieved my Carlin-limitation goal based on the way he factors in, but does not dominate, my standup script. Another thing I'm trying to avoid is any hint of partiality with regards to politics. With liberal positions taking up most of the content, I'm trying to let the satire speak for itself, and act as more of a guide for those interested in the subject. I certainly do not want my own political beliefs influencing this project.

On the technical side, the challenges with this capstone mirror those of any other broadcast package: my SOTS, or quotes from sources, were at times

long, or needed some transitions in order to make them flow better. Also there were times in which I ran out of what I saw as my best b-roll. I think I did well to limit the amount of wallpaper footage, or simply throwing stuff up there so the tape doesn't go to black while I do the story. I'm actually proud of the effort I made to cogently match sound to video. The same can be said about my sound editing. In the music project in particular I feel I've accomplished a higher level of editing than most students put into their everyday work. That is the idea, of course.

In the end, this project on political humor is an educational experience for people looking to learn more about satire. Since it is a fascinating subject to me, I'm thrilled to do a report on it. I hope this shows when the final product is complete. I love satire. I love the way satirists think, and I get fulfillment from deconstructing satire to get a better understanding of how it all works. As political satire continues to bear significance in the United States, this project will serve as a checkpoint that recaps the journey so far. One final reflection, I've learned a lot about this form of humor throughout the course of my research. I'm now closer to it than ever before. In terms of self-indulgence, that's as good as it gets.