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## PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND THE STEWART MODEL OF CRITICAL THINKING

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*Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; but directly involve me, and I'll make it my own.*

Confucius

With their unique brand of humor, Stewart and his *Daily Show* team inspire twenty-somethings and grandmothers alike by involving them in thinking critically to uncover underlying assumptions, logical fallacies, and dishonest arguments. One of the secrets of the show's success is that it taps a human longing for learning, questioning, and open conversation that is generally neglected in public discourse.

### The Red (Herring) Menace

In a segment entitled "Are You Prepared?!?" (May, 2006) correspondent Samantha Bee begins: "Recent events have shown that Americans face certain death. Death that will kill you." Like many of the show's fake news items, the report caricatures the way the nation's leaders and television media tend to sensationalize stories, appealing to emotion rather than disciplined reason.

Bee interviews one suburban couple about their emergency preparedness:

*Bee:* Homeland Security says you need duct tape and plastic sheeting to protect your home. I assume you have that?

*Couple:* No.

*Bee:* Communications gear?

*Couple:* No.

*Bee:* (*lowering her voice as if embarrassed*) Do you at least have a large tarp with which to collect the corpses of your friends and family?

While exaggerated for comic effect, Bee's parody of loaded media questions conveys a serious message: civic discourse is often driven more by emotion and dogma than by reasoned dialogue. By reducing the entire issue of emergency preparedness to "either protect yourself or die," Bee lampoons how such false dichotomies (false either/or choices) do anything but promote safety (much less a *feeling* of safety), which requires even-tempered, reasoned planning, preparation, and prevention.

Hysteria makes a great red herring distraction. As Stephen Colbert says, "There's fear out there; someone's gotta monger it." A man evading pursuit once dragged a red herring across his trail to throw the hounds off his scent. The term now signifies attempts to distract audiences from the issue at hand. Today's media, for example, leniently allow politicians to use polarizing "wedge" issues to distract attention from corruption, wasteful government spending, and other serious problems.

After the 2005 London terrorist attacks, Stewart mused, "The attacks happened overseas, yet 62 percent of Americans are worried about similar attacks here. I wonder why Americans are so nervous about it." Glaring news headlines then flashed with ominous voiceovers: "London Terror," "Attacks in London," "Who's at risk? How prepared are we?" Wide-eyed, Stewart said, "Oh, I see. But I'm sure the on-air cable hosts will bring some perspective, context, and understanding to the coverage." Clips then showed hosts saying: "Are we next in America?" "How safe are we in America?" "Can we prevent a subway or a bus attack in the US?" "This is why I thought the Brits should have let the French have the Olympics." "Why are they doing this?" and "You have to wonder, will we ever *truly* feel safe again?" Such clips of alarming headlines and vacuous sound bites highlight the media's tendency to focus egocentrically on Americans' safety when people suffer elsewhere. They also show the failure of news organizations to

act in the traditional, time-honored role of watchdog, arbiter, and protector.

*Daily Show* humor presupposes that news organizations have a responsibility to the public, much as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) conceived a government and its citizens to be bound by a social contract. Government should provide people "a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate."<sup>1</sup> News organizations, similarly, should function in ways that benefit people, not use scaremongering to gain audience share. Likewise, Stewart and company show how politicians appeal to voters' basest instincts to rally support for their own ideological positions.

### "Diss" Ingenuous: Scapegoating and Leaping to Judgment (Day)

When the Republican-dominated House passed a resolution to continue the Iraq war ("Hearing Impaired," June 2006), Stewart underscored the event:

*Stewart:* Representative Tom Cole encapsulated how the Republicans had once again succeeded.

*Cole:* (*video clip*) Whether we are right or wrong on our side of the aisle, we do have a common position and it's expressed in this resolution.

*Stewart:* That's right: He's right. Or wrong. But either way, people agree with him.

Cole's assumption here seems to be that we shouldn't focus on whether such decisions would be better or worse, whether they would help or harm people. Rather, we simply need to agree – regardless of the consequences. Worse yet, we only need agreement among, and by extension *with*, the party in power, because the majority is presumed to represent the will of the people. Such an epistemology (or framework for knowing what's true) devalues thinking through decisions, compromises democratic deliberation, serves only the interests of those in power, and reduces everything to either-or absolutes.

As Stephen Colbert says (in one installment of "The Word"), "You're either for the war, or against America. There's no gray area." ("Or gray matter, apparently," as the explanatory side-text reads onscreen.)

Stewart has said most politicians probably do truly believe they'd do a better job than their opponents. But they tend to neglect making honest arguments to justify that belief. They don't consider enough information honestly to arrive at the best course of action. Instead, they often follow Niccolo Machiavelli's (1469-1527) advice "to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge and not use it, according to the necessities of the case."<sup>2</sup> Such reasoning leads to thinking that one's ends "justify" any means, no matter how destructive.

Stewart disagrees less with what politicians actually believe, and more with the way they suppress respectful and possibly fruitful exchange. Many leaders go from duplicitously manipulating rhetoric to outright dissembling and lying. Worse still, the media often appear to collude in the deception, failing to provide appropriate context or perspective. For example, when former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld gave a speech ("Secretary on the Defensive," October 2006), he was interrupted by hecklers. Then he took a question.

*Questioner:* I'm Ray McGovern, a 27-year veteran of the Central Intelligence Agency. Why did you lie to get us into a war that was not necessary, that has caused these kinds of casualties?

*Rumsfeld:* First of all, I haven't lied.

*Stewart:* Oh, he didn't lie. Well, that settles it. There's pound cake in the back, we can have a good time, and uh -

*Rumsfeld:* It appears that there were not weapons of mass destruction.

*McGovern:* You said you knew where they were.

*Rumsfeld:* I did not.

*Stewart:* See? He never said he knew where they were.

*Rumsfeld:* (earlier video from March 2003) We know where they are. They're in the area around . . . Baghdad.

*Stewart:* Well to be fair, Rumsfeld probably never saw that episode of *Meet the Press*.

Stewart begins his comments, as he often does, in the guise of a hopeful, if somewhat gullible, citizen. He then pretends to believe

that the media will dutifully investigate such doubletalk: "So, the Secretary of Defense, caught, in a contradiction, about weapons of mass destruction. Surely that will be a big story." Clips instead show CNN's Paula Zahn accusing McGovern of having "an axe to grind," Tucker Carlson calling him "not just any heckler," and Anderson Cooper asking McGovern irrelevantly, "Were you nervous?" Carlson continued:

*Carlson:* Isn't it enough that he was wrong and had bad judgment? Why does he have to be a liar too?

*McGovern:* Well, that's the question you'll have to direct to him.

*Stewart:* But won't.

Stewart then showed clips from what he called "a Fox News uninvestigative report" about Rumsfeld entitled "Why He Fights." The reporter interviews General Paul van Riper - who called for Rumsfeld's resignation - and asks accusingly:

*Reporter:* What are you trying to accomplish by doing this? And you don't think this debate threatens the civilian leadership of the military? Does that hurt the war effort?

*Stewart:* (sniffing deeply) Mmm, I can't tell if I'm smelling the fairness (sniffs) or the balance.

Alluding to the Fox News tagline "Fair and Balanced," Stewart draws attention to how loaded questions support a one-sided agenda, rather than providing an even-handed and honest investigation or forum for discussion. By allowing such contradictions, whether from politicians or the media, to speak for themselves, *The Daily Show* implicitly invites us to notice when we too resort to deception - keeping us honest when we believe, say, that we ourselves deserve to succeed by any means necessary.

## In the Line of Ire: Reframing the Debate

One way to fight Machiavellian manipulation, the show implies, is to reframe the terms of debate. In interviewing William Bennett,

author and former Secretary of Education under Ronald Reagan, Stewart questions the apparent inconsistency between Bennett's claim to affirm America's belief in freedom and his attempts to limit freedom by a ban on gay marriage:

*Stewart:* Why not encourage gay people to join in in [sic] that family arrangement if *that's* what provides stability to a society?

*Bennett:* Well I think if gay . . . gay people are members of families, they're *already* members of families.

*Stewart:* And that's where the buck stops, that's the gay ceiling.

*Bennett:* Look, it's a debate about whether you believe marriage is between a man and a woman.

*Stewart:* I disagree. I think it's a debate about whether gay people are part of the human condition or just a random fetish.

Stewart rejects Bennett's framing of the debate. He doesn't just contradict him by saying, "Marriage isn't *necessarily* between man and woman." Rather, he suggests that the debate isn't about how to define marriage, but instead about who counts as human, and how to understand the human condition.

*Bennett:* The question is how do you define marriage? Where do you draw the line? What do you say to the polygamist? What do you *say* to the polygamist?

*Stewart:* You don't say anything to the polygamist. That is a choice, to get three or four wives. That is not a biological condition that "I gots to get laid by different women that I'm married to." That's a choice. Being gay is part of the human condition. There's a huge difference.

Stewart first shows that calling homosexuality a *mere* choice ignores that it's a much more basic condition of who someone is; he thus undercuts superficial versions of the determined/chosen dichotomy. Stewart then speaks to the larger question of what it means to be human. While Stewart seeks to foster respect for the freedom to be our fully human and different selves, Bennett treats differences of human condition as subject to choice and hence, regulation.

*Bennett:* Well, some people regard their human condition as having three women. Look the polygamists are all over this.

*Stewart:* Then let's go slippery slope the other way. If government says I can define marriage as between a man and a woman, what says they can't define it between people of different income levels, or they can decide whether or not you are a suitable husband for a particular woman?

*Bennett:* Because, gender *matters* in marriage, it has mattered to every human society, it matters in every religion, uh, it has mattered in -

*Stewart:* Race matters in every society as well. Isn't progress understanding?

Bennett's appeal resembles the warning of conservative orator Edmund Burke (1729-97) against interfering extensively with stability and habit. Stewart's suggestion, on the other hand, is that for real progress to occur, society must become more inclusive and accommodate greater variety and difference over time.

Stewart implies a belief in the fundamental value of learning and transformation over stagnation and tradition for tradition's sake. To learn first requires admitting that one's perceptions may be limited. As the *Tao Te Ching* puts it, "The mark of a moderate man is freedom from his own ideas."<sup>3</sup> To free our minds, we must either shift frames of reference ourselves or at least understand genuinely how others frame things differently.

## Look Who's Not Talking Now: Going Beyond Experience

Our experience both opens and closes our perception of the world, like a lens that brings some things into focus while blurring others. As the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) wrote, "If a person is trying to understand something, he will not be able to rely from the start on his own chance previous ideas."<sup>4</sup> If Bennett fails to question the source of his moral indignation - how, for instance, family influence or a distaste for gay sex may influence his viewpoint - he can't truly understand either the issue or his role in debating it.

In his interview, Bennett went on to target "activist" judges, saying that gay marriage is coming because "the courts have decided

it.” He continued by associating being gay with a devaluing of marriage in Western culture:

*Bennett:* In Holland and Norway, marriage is taken less seriously. When you define it out, when you start to say it can involve anybody, then I think, any grouping, anybody who loves anybody, it has serious problems.

*Stewart:* It has serious problems. And you know divorce is not caused because 50 percent of marriages end in gayness.

Deliberately associating being gay with “taking marriage less seriously” is a form of scapegoating. (Historically, the Jewish people symbolically burdened a goat with their sins.) Bennett’s argument seems similarly aimed at blaming an innocent target (here, homosexuals) and gives no reason for his prejudice.

Stewart puts the obsession with the issue of gay marriage, and its abuse by politicians and pundits, in perspective by identifying divorce as not the result but the greater concern. As with all humor, the joke first gives a context (marriage), then sets up an incongruity or problem (what ends a marriage), and finally leaps to an unexpected resolution (marriage ends in gayness). The structure of such jokes resembles that of serious problem-solving. To make sense of a certain thing, we need to put it in appropriate context and build a new understanding. Stewart’s juxtaposition highlights the absurdity of the view that homosexuality somehow mars the institution of marriage.

## Show Me the Meta

*America (The Book)* contains an image of colonists meeting Native Americans.<sup>5</sup> The caption reads: “America’s path to democracy was cleared by the colonists’ generous giveaways, like the much sought-after ‘Smallpox Blankets.’” The line makes us laugh at an agonizingly tragic fact about colonial history. Such sharply tinged satire in *The Daily Show* derives from the very nature of tragedy and comedy. According to Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), tragedy combines both Apollonian and Dionysian tendencies, reason and recklessness, restraint and excess, going back and forth between the two, never resting at either.

Such a dynamic relationship is the theme of correspondent Ed Helms’ visit to one of the great battlegrounds of what *The Daily Show* terms the “evolutionary” war. He stands in front of Ray County Courthouse, in Dayton, Tennessee, the site of the infamous 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial, where John Scopes was convicted for teaching evolution to high school students. That trial “gave Dayton a reputation for closed-minded ignorance,” as Helms says. But, he then implies, it’s really just a reenactment town.

*Helms:* (voiceover) Just like Colonial Williamsburg, the town is populated with costumed performers who reenact the quaint attitudes of the good old days.

*Helms:* (to resident June Griffin) What is your take on the Scopes trial?  
*Griffin:* Evolution is a total fabrication and a lie. Evolution distorts faith, destroys faith, and builds an economic market that is contrary to our American way of life.

*Helms:* That’s good stuff.

*Helms:* (voiceover) In addition to the skilled actors, Dayton’s attention to detail is staggering. The town has gone so far as to erect this elaborate set of a fully functioning college. Named after William Jennings Bryan, the prosecutor in the Scopes trial, the college keeps things authentic. Store owner Tim Cruver, whose daughter plays one of the college students, explains.

*Helms:* (to Cruver) What does their science department teach regarding evolution vs. creationism?

*Cruver:* Well it’s a fact that they’re going to be teaching creationism up there because they don’t believe in evolution.

*Helms:* When the tourists aren’t, ya know, milling around, watching the classes and stuff, then what do they teach?

*Cruver:* Well, the same thing.

According to a 2005 Pew Forum survey, nearly two-thirds of Americans support teaching creationism alongside evolution. Yet doing so treats faith and prejudicial belief on a par with scientific truth. Science requires observation, testing, data, analysis, and verification. And these can’t simply be forced to fit one’s values, important as values are in deciding what questions to pursue.

Dayton’s opposition to evolutionary theory, as Helms puts it, “would be terrifying if it were real” – which it is! It rightly scares us that so many people ignore or defame the scientific community’s

consensus that humans evolved from non-human primates. An extra irony comes when Griffin says that she despises actors, apparently not realizing that Helms himself is an actor:

*Helms:* June, you're very good, you're very good. Do you have a background in acting?

*Griffin:* No, I despise actors.

*Helms:* Really?

*Griffin:* Yes.

Griffin's "character" is unaware of the difference between a faith-based view (such as creationism) and a verifiable, scientific account of human origins (such as evolution), and is equally unaware that an actor has conned her into being the butt of a joke.

While the entire "Evolution, Schmevolution" series implicitly supports evolution, Stewart himself is usually concerned less with *what* people should think and more with how to engage in productive dialogue. In addition to reframing the terms of debate, he shows how to "go meta," or get above it all, and improve the process itself, be it political argument or media reportage.

For example, when interviewing Ramesh Ponnuru, author of *The Party of Death*, Stewart begins with meta-commentary:

*Stewart:* It seems like rhetoric like *The Party of Death* puts people on – I guess what I would call – the *defensive*, in some respects.

*Ponnuru:* Yeah. I can't really present the argument against things like abortion by pretending it doesn't have something to do with death. I guess that's part of the argument.

*Stewart:* Could you agree there is maybe sanctimony on both sides?

*Ponnuru:* Yeah, absolutely.

*Stewart:* Now, what's the sanctimony on your side?

By referring to sanctimony here, Stewart is targeting the false righteousness that's often involved in these debates. When pro-life advocates call abortion "genocide" and its defenders "murderers," they ignore important issues, such as women's right to protect their bodies. Likewise, when pro-choice advocates use language such as "products of conception" or "termination of pregnancy," they dehumanize the issue as one of cold, impersonal science. Ponnuru goes on to claim, "I try very hard to argue for a rational case," but rather

than granting that his opponents have a reasoned defense, he reduces them to mere proponents "of death."

Stewart's approach to discourse, on the other hand, avoids the common attack-and-defend interview model, and instead endorses problem-solving values of conflict resolution.<sup>6</sup> As Stewart illustrates, this model prefers rationality to reactivity, sincerity to disingenuousness, authentic representation to dissembling, meaning to absurdity, and recognition to cynical suspicion. Of course, while the show implicitly values meaning over absurdity, it often amplifies the absurdity of public behavior, as with the Dayton story. *Daily Show* writers play up absurdity, however, not to get an empty laugh, but rather to affirm our right to more meaningful public discourse. In fact, critics often miss how the show targets precisely the sort of inaccuracy conveyed by empty jokes. When the show's writers use sarcastic or cynical humor, they arguably do so in response to the far graver cynicism of callous pundits and politicians who ignore their responsibility to society.

## Self-Effacement and Good Faith

*Stewart:* I disagree with a lot of people. I think the whole problem with this debate is it's being waged on both extremes. If you extend it out it becomes: Do you condone what some would call rape to prevent what some would call murder? Because women are, I think rightly so, protective of what we call . . . their pussies. I don't know the scientific terms. But that's the part that's missing from the book. Can I tell you something?

*Ponnuru:* Yeah.

*Stewart:* I am very unprofessional.

No sooner does Stewart seriously summarize the abortion debate than he irreverently uses a word he knows will be censored and then derides his own behavior. Rather than take himself too seriously, Stewart often tries to make interviewees feel at ease, giving them a relatively free and uninhibited venue for speech and discussion. Adding unexpected taboo here, as elsewhere, provides lighthearted relief from the tension of serious discussion (which might go off track), for Stewart himself, his guests, and the audience alike.

Stewart is frequently self-effacing in this way, as when he reports that the show is now written by monkeys who complain, "Are we not sentient beings who deserve more than the relentless grind of ephemeral, topical, humor pabulum?" In this one line the *Daily Show* writers brand their *own* humor unfit for monkey, much less human, consumption, forgettably short-lived in its shelf-life, and so sophomoric as to be little better than baby food. Ironically, perhaps, to get the line's critical language, one needs more than basic sentience.

Further self-effacement comes when Stewart brings on guests like Bennett and Ponnuru, with whom he disagrees, and this often provides his guests with a face-saving out. For example, Stewart backed off Bennett at one point and said, "I'm just grasping at straws," acknowledging and taking responsibility for his own limited perspective, even putting himself down.

As he often does, Stewart also puts down audience ridicule. When Ponnuru hesitated and stumbled at one point, and the audience began to cheer, Stewart cut them off, saying, "No, no, no," then to Ponnuru, "And I want this, honestly, for us to have a conversation, because you're a smart guy, and you've made a lot of smart arguments." Stewart's shtick, even if it's an act, implies that one need not agree with someone in order to empathize with them or understand their viewpoint. In effect, Stewart extends a rarely seen presumption of good faith to those he interviews.

When actor Kevin Spacey told Stewart he wished "Congress and the Senate would go at [the President] every day" and added, "or maybe it should just be you . . . You should go, and every day ask him questions," Stewart replied, "I could barely get myself to work in the morning." As usual, Stewart portrays himself as a mere clown. When he himself is interviewed, he denies that *The Daily Show* is anything but comedy or at best, political and cultural satire. Such denials only reaffirm that Stewart's self-inclusive way of poking fun embodies a powerful way of being in the world – one of thoughtful, self-reflective, and modest engagement.

In the Ponnuru interview, for instance, Stewart's ultimate point is that we need lucid discussion, not heated provocation: "Isn't there a rational conversation to be had in the country . . . ?" Stewart's repeated call to overcome mutually exclusive oppositions often helps viewers to clarify their own thoughts and feelings, whether they agree

or disagree with him or his guests. He seeks to find shared interest and common ground across political and ideological lines of debate.

Good faith, such as Stewart extends to most of his guests, relies on an implied promise that parties will participate sincerely in open dialogue and assume that progress can be made. By contrast, politicians and celebrities alike often act from bad faith, characterized by hidden agendas, closed discussion, and pessimism about, or indifference to, the genuine progress that open discussion might foster. Hence Matt Lauer delivers straight-laced reports like "Countdown to Doomsday," which Stewart called a "two hour investigation into your pants and why you should crap them."

When President Bush spent part of his vacation reading – and reportedly *liking* – Albert Camus' (1913–60) philosophical novel *The Stranger*, Stewart hinted at the irony of timing this choice during the Iraq war: Bush chose "a classic novel about a Westerner who kills an Arab for no good reason and dies with no remorse. Why that would strike a nerve, I don't know." *Daily Show* correspondent Jason Jones then "quoted" Bush's response to the work: "If the unexamined life is not worth living, then the soul not delved into is not worth being." Jones wishes that Bush were a kind of "philosopher king," Plato's ideal ruler, always acting rationally in the state's best interest.

Stewart similarly fantasizes about an ideal media and actually demonstrates how journalists would behave if they acted in good faith. For instance, he invariably adopts the persona of a serious reporter providing (and hoping for) much-needed perspective in place of mere sensationalism:

*Stewart:* Obviously what is going on in the Middle East is awfully complicated. The fuel that fans the flames: The rival factions within Islam, both of them seem to have antipathy towards the US, Israel. It seems like there are some authoritarian regimes that are using proxy countries to fight their wars. It's a very difficult situation to grasp. Luckily, news organizations are on hand to give us context and ask the important questions.

*Paula Zahn:* (CNN *graphic*: "Armageddon?") Are we really at the end of the world? We asked Faith and Values Correspondent Delia Gallagher to do some checking.

By juxtaposing the complexity of current international crises with the crassly commercial way cable networks cover them, *The Daily Show* lets misleading statements and images be their own undoing. The effect of Stewart's presentation is more immediate, and can be more powerful, than a pedantic, detailed, critique by an academic.

Not letting us rest content with taking in readymade perspectives uncritically, *The Daily Show* frees us from inert passivity and forces active viewing, as counseled by China's most famous philosopher (in the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter). The writers assume we can infer how reasoning has gone awry in public discourse, inviting us to wrestle with the rhetoric in order to get the joke. We try to keep pace with Stewart by leaping as he does through the roles of shocked viewer, confused inquirer, reasoned skeptic, and frustrated (because powerless) citizen. Yet while forcing us to reckon with what's most disturbing about the machinations of politicians and the media, *The Daily Show* also provides a cathartic laugh in the face of seemingly inevitable pain and disappointment.

Who knew thinking could be such fun?<sup>7</sup>

### Notes

- 1 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. G. D. H. Cole (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1988), p. 23.
- 2 Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Luigi Ricci, revd. E. R. P. Vincent (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950), p. 56.
- 3 Lao-tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992), p. 59.
- 4 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. and ed. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 238.
- 5 Jon Stewart, Ben Karlin, and David Javerbaum, *America (The Book): A Citizen's Guide to Democracy Inaction* (New York: Warner Books, 2004), p. 18.
- 6 Jay Rothman, *Resolving Identity-Based Conflict in Nations, Organizations and Communities* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), pp. 17, 40, and 47.
- 7 My deepest gratitude goes to Melanie Torosyan and Chris Worsley, without whose invaluable feedback I could not imagine writing. Thanks also to Ron Gross, Jack Kytte, Steve Sills, Rick Dewitt, and Jen Goldberg.

# 10

## THE DAILY SHOW'S EXPOSÉ OF POLITICAL RHETORIC

LIAM P. DEMPSEY

In no area of human life is the purposeful misuse of reason more pervasive than in politics. Rhetoric, you might say, is the bread and butter of political discourse. It's also the mainstay of *The Daily Show's* humor. Through purely informal means, the program brings to light various uses of political rhetoric for recognition and due ridicule. *The Daily Show's* incisive satire makes these attempts at rhetorical manipulation (literally) laughable.

In this chapter we'll consider *The Daily Show's* unique capacity to demonstrate, through satire, misuses of reason in political life. Most of the examples we'll consider are taken from the "Indecision 2004" segments originally broadcast on the show.<sup>1</sup> Some are taken from *The Colbert Report*. We'll begin by considering *The Daily Show's* treatment of the more common logical fallacies employed by politicians and their exponents. Next we'll discuss various political appeals to emotion exposed by *The Daily Show*. Then we'll consider some of *The Daily Show's* many forays into the alternative universe of political spin, the systematic, politically motivated use of persuasive language, including "talking-points." We'll conclude by briefly considering some of the different comedic devices used by Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert to expose and satirize these kinds of political rhetoric.

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