

2016

Make Your Own Daily Show Report Group Project

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Recommended Citation

Claiborne Way, Caroline. "Make Your Own Daily Show Report Group Project." *Teaching Media Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (2016).
<http://pubs.lib.umn.edu/tmq/vol4/iss2/4>

Teaching Media Quarterly is published by the University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing.

Teaching Media Quarterly
Volume 4, Edition 2 (2016): Teaching the 2016 U.S. Election

Make Your Own *Daily Show* Report Group Project

Creator's Note: This is a 'classic' lesson plan that was originally drafted for the 2012 U.S. election. The basic components could be used for any election cycle, but specific elements, like the links to examples, may be updated to reflect changes in the show, as well as the state of U.S. journalism, or politics. Similarly, the texts provided for guiding students' writing and citation efforts could also be updated or changed to reflect the instructor's preferences.

Overview and Rationale for Assignment:

Suitable for introductory political, media, or composition courses, this assignment is a **four-step** immersive, interdisciplinary group project completed throughout a semester. Activities are designed to bolster critical thinking and research skills, and to enhance students' understandings of proper argumentation, political dynamics, and media representation. Materials: access to campus library, internet, and cable television.

- (1) Class screens example of a *DS* segment to model. Groups of students select an election topic (like campaign finance or voter ID laws). Instructor guides research of topics' relevant aspects. Emphasis: verifying sources, accuracy.
- (2) Groups monitor national news outlets (MSNBC, FOX, *The New York Times* ...), collecting coverage of topics.
- (3) Groups guided to organize research into well-developed argument about the topic *and* its coverage. Emphasis: identifying inconsistencies, logical fallacies in coverage.
- (4) Groups develop rhetorical framework for presenting argument, organizing evidence and writing brief monologues/interviews. Students strategize using video clips, jokes, pop culture references, and evidence comparisons to craft logical arguments. Groups present *DS* segments to class and reflect on experience.

This assignment's functions are multiple and overlapping as students perform rigorous research, learn to identify problematic arguments, and construct rhetorical positions. Comparing multiple sources of media coverage to each other and to factual evidence, students gain an understanding of the complex relationships between political realities and media representations. Rather than merely studying national discourse, this project requires students to invest in current events, analyze news coverage, create proactive discourse, and explore problems at the heart of national dilemmas, often dominated by partisan bickering and sensationalism.

Full citations and/or links to media used with assignment:

These links are provided as examples of typical *DS* arguments, and provide models for argumentation, both satirical and direct, and for blending political and/or media-related critiques with humor and references to popular culture.

Monologues:

<http://www.cc.com/video-clips/n5dnf3/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-an-energy-independent-future>

<http://www.cc.com/video-clips/wt1lyr/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-magical-history-tour>

<http://www.cc.com/video-clips/q6ljet/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-democalypse-2012---v-p--debate--battle-for-the-historical-footnote>

<http://www.cc.com/video-clips/j0rtt7/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-crisis-in-dairyland---for-richer-and-poorer---teachers-and-wall-street>

<http://www.cc.com/video-clips/04rkt0/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-back-in-black---glenn-beck-s-nazi-tourette-s>

<http://www.cc.com/video-clips/tlwgqa/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-cnn-leaves-it-there>

With Correspondents:

<http://www.cc.com/video-clips/lu6a0w/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-condescent-of-a-woman>

<http://www.cc.com/video-clips/nka3cd/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-the-parent-company-trap>

<http://www.cc.com/video-clips/05mfp5/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-healthier-skelter--obama-death-panel-debate>

Full Citations of Readings:

1) Research methods, accuracy, citations:

Hacker, Diana. *Rules for Writers, Sixth Edition*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009.

2) Argumentation:

Gage, John T. *The Shape of Reason: Argumentative Writing in College, Fourth Edition*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006.

Assignment Sheets and/or Discussion Prompts:

Make Your Own *Daily Show* Report Group Project

Phase One: Election Topics and Research

Step 1: Each group will choose ONE topic related to the presidential election. You may choose from the following topics, or suggest your own (pending approval from the instructor). Please circle your group's selection.

- Campaign Financing (Citizens United v. FEC SuperPACs)
- Voter ID Laws
- Identity Politics (religion, race, gender, class, (dis)ability, or sexuality)
- Political Advertisements
- Role of Social Media in Election
- Partisan News Reporting
- Republican and Democratic National Conventions
- Election Statistics, Polls, Predictions
- Candidate Debates
- Ballot Initiatives & Referendums
- Citizen & Community Activism
- Role of Popular Culture (impact of film & television, celebrity endorsements, trends in campaigns)

Step 2: Once your group has selected a topic, answer the following questions as a group. Write your answers in complete sentences.

1. What information about your topic will you need to know? Brainstorm a list of questions about the topic that your group will explore. Here are some questions to consider: What is the history of this issue and have there been dramatic changes regarding its development? Who are the primary individuals or groups involved? Are there any indisputable facts about the issue? What are the conflicts and disagreements surrounding the topic? Has misinformation circulated regarding this issue? How have various media sources covered the topic in the past?

2. What Key Words will be helpful when searching for information on your topic? List all relevant key words or search terms.

3. Which sources and types of sources will be the most important for your research on this topic? List them below, and be as specific as possible.

Step 3: Split up the list of sources generated for Question 3 evenly among group members. Each member will be responsible for assembling, organizing, and presenting his or her research to the rest of the group, as well as keeping track of citations for all sources used. As you do your research, have the group's list of questions close-by so that you keep the project's goals in mind.

Step 4: When you have collected and read all of your research, organize it by clearly listing evidence grouped by source, and share what you have learned with your group.
Turn in a copy of your work to the instructor.

Make Your Own *Daily Show* Report Group Project
Phase One: Reflections on Research

Instructions: After you have shared your research with your group members, return to the list of questions you brainstormed together.

A) Have all of these questions been answered by your research? If not, would further research be helpful or realistic for this project? (Why or why not).

B) Has your research prompted any new questions? If so, list them below. Would researching these questions be helpful or realistic for this project? (Why or why not).

C) Do any of the sources disagree, and if so, about what? Would further research clear up these disagreements, why or why not?

Make Your Own Daily Show Report Group Project
Phase Two: Tracking Election News Coverage

Instructions: Among your group members, divide up the following sources evenly so that each person has approximately 2 sources from which to track coverage of the group's election issue.

FOX News

ABC News

National Public Radio

MSNBC

CNN

The Wall Street Journal

CBS News

The New York Times

The Washington Post

NBC News

Time Magazine

*You may suggest additional or alternative sources pending approval from the instructor.

On a daily basis, each group member will be responsible for going to his or her two sources searching for new and timely coverage of the group's election issue. Online access will suffice when students are not able to access television or hard copies of news publications.

For each instance of coverage, fill out the following form:

Election Coverage Topic Form

Date:

Full Citation (include URL for online sources):

Headline:

Format & Reporters, Pundits, Experts Involved:

Summary of Report:

“Angle” of Coverage: (i.e. What perspectives and questions most concern presenters?
Does coverage provide evidence of disagreement? How deeply is issue covered, and how
much factual information is provided?)

Notes:

5. What kinds of information, discussions, and opinions were present in your research, but not in the issue's news coverage? What kinds of information, discussions, and opinions did not appear in your research, but were present in the news coverage you've monitored?

Next: As a group, discuss your answers to the questions above. What dynamics do you see affecting coverage of your group's election issue? Do misinformation or logical fallacies play a role in the news coverage of your issue? Together, write a basic thesis statement about your issue and how it has been covered. This thesis should assess the state of the group's election issue in public discourse.

Make Your Own Daily Show Report Group Project
Phase Four: Presentation and Rhetorical Strategies

Instructions: Answer the following questions with your group. When you are finished, use the answers to your questions, as well the group's research on the topic and its news coverage to create a *Daily Show*-inspired segment. Your segment should present a logical argument in a comical or satirical way, with references to your sources and research. Your group's presentation of the segment you create may include clips from news sources, but should be **no longer than 12 minutes**. Your group may choose to present its TDS segment with a monologue, interview, or with multiple correspondents.

Questions:

1. Now that you have a basic argument, identify the crucial evidence you need to support your point. What would be the most effective way to make these points (ex. satire, direct argument, use of media clips, fact citation, etc.).
2. What are the primary challenges and difficulties surrounding the issue and how it is represented? What other conflicts do these conflicts resemble?
3. Do you see any logical fallacies or misleading assumptions concerning your topic/argument in the news coverage you've collected that would be easy to disprove comically?
4. What are your key pieces of evidence and sources that will be essential to proving your argument? Do any pieces of evidence provide a clear illustration of your main argument?

*Visit <http://www.thedailyshow.com/> or <http://www.cc.com/shows/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart/video-guide> for more examples of segments to screen.

Brief Biography:

Caroline Claiborn Way earned her doctorate in English and Media Studies from the University of Oregon in 2014. Her dissertation, “Writing the Strike: How Writers Won the 2007-8 Writers Strike and Changed TV,” focuses on the ways that professional writers used YouTube to shift the balance of power in major media industries. Many of the most prominent writers in this movement hailed from *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*, showcasing how their talents for satire and critical discourse can activate political change. Dr. Claiborn Way currently teaches Writing at William Jewell College and Metropolitan Community College.