No News Is Good News?
Satirical News Videos in the Information Literacy Classroom

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abstract: This mixed-methods study explores how the use of satirical news videos contributes to student engagement with information literacy (IL) instruction. The sample was drawn from first-year undergraduate students in for-credit IL courses. Overall, the use of satirical news videos improved student engagement with, and enjoyment of, IL topics. Given the challenge of understanding the videos’ satirical intent, however, instructors must provide context and discussion to help students process and critically understand the videos. This study also uncovered students’ levels of trust in media sources, which have broader implications for undergraduate IL instruction.

Introduction

During a 2011 episode of The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, correspondent Aasif Mandvi interviewed Republican strategist Noelle Nikpour about whether scientists are truly working toward curing disease and saving the planet. Here is an excerpt from the interview:

AASIF MANDIVI (voice-over). To get the cold hard facts on science, I sat down with Republican strategist Noelle Nikpour.

NOELLE NIKPOUR. Scientists are scamming the American people, right and left, for their own financial gain.

AASIF MANDIVI. Now do you have any, uh, I don’t want to say evidence, not data . . .

NOELLE NIKPOUR. I think every American, if they really thought about it, would have a gut feeling that some of these numbers that the scientists are putting out are not right.

AASIF MANDIVI. I knew it. I knew it . . . I mean I didn’t know it . . . but I knew it!
This filmed interview is meant as satire, with the audience understanding that Mandvi does not agree with Nikpour that scientists are scammers. Regular viewers of *The Daily Show* may be accustomed to the program’s fake interview segments, in which one of the show’s correspondents interviews someone who appears not to realize the parodic intent of the conversation. But despite laughter from the audience, some viewers may not understand that this interchange is satirical. They could believe that Mandvi agrees that scientists scam the American people.

The creation of content that satirizes the news is not a new phenomenon. *Saturday Night Live*’s “Weekend Update” sketch, which takes a satirical approach to current events, has appeared on the show since 1975. Satirical news programming—the expansion of the “political-satirical complex”—has proliferated since then. *The Onion*, a satirical take on a daily newspaper, began in the late 1980s. After the success of Jon Stewart’s late 1990s version of *The Daily Show*, several former correspondents from the show created their own satirical news programs, including Stephen Colbert’s *The Colbert Report*, *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*, and *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*.

These satirical approaches to the news are parodies of traditional television news programs, cable news pundit programs, and traditional newspaper coverage of current events. Such satire is most popular with young, predominantly male, and politically left-leaning audiences. The breakdown on the perceived trustworthiness of these sources follows the political polarization of the current times. Most liberals trust them more than not, while those who identify as conservative distrust them more often than they trust them. While these approaches to satirical news were once considered as the reference point for fake news, in the current political climate, accusations of fake news are commonly directed toward traditional media outlets.

Satirical news programs periodically include segments that relate to information literacy concepts, and librarians have shown excerpts from these programs in course-embedded sessions and credit courses to increase student interest in IL topics. In our sections of a required first-year undergraduate IL course, we showed video segments from these programs to encourage students’ engagement with the course material. Previous anecdotal feedback from students on the use of these video clips was positive. We designed and conducted this study during the academic year 2016–2017 to further investigate whether the use of satirical news videos enhances or detracts from students’ learning experiences in our IL courses. Specifically, we wanted to examine student levels of affective engagement with the videos, as well as analyze whether the satirical nature of the videos and students’ life experiences and politics complicated their understanding of the intended meaning of the videos.

**Literature Review**

**Humor in IL Instruction**

Librarians have written about humor in IL instruction for decades. They have advocated using humor in library instruction for myriad reasons, including reducing library anxiety, challenging library stereotypes, and improving students’ receptivity to library instruction.

Recommendations on how to incorporate humor abound. Suggestions include creating a silent comedic film, showing an image of a rat in a maze as an analogy for
the research process, searching for “whimsical” catalog records while teaching, donning Groucho Marx glasses and clown noses, or incorporating funny songs, videos, or cartoons. To use humor successfully for teaching, some authors recommend adapting strategies used by stand-up comedians or immersing oneself in improvisation workshops to improve one’s comedic skills.

**Using the Right Humor**

The recommendation to use only the right types of humor permeates the literature. Librarians have referred to the need to select only appropriate or accessible humor. Orlando Archibeque suggests using humorous examples judiciously and clarifies that there is no formula to follow; instructors should instead rely on instinct and experience to guide them. Randall Garner describes humor as “highly personal, subjective, and contextual” and recommends “prudence” as a guiding principle for selection. Mary Francis advises that instructors recognize the diversity of today’s students and apply humor in the classroom with that diversity in mind. These recommendations do not specify which type of humor is right for a particular classroom setting.

If the goal of bringing humor into the classroom is to make students more relaxed and receptive to library instruction, using the wrong types of humor could negate this goal. Research has shown that differences in age, education, sexual orientation, religion, and culture can increase the risk of students missing the point of their instructor’s humor or taking offense at it. In Robert Perret’s survey, 39 percent of librarian respondents said that the biggest drawback of using humor in library instruction is that it may be off-putting or offensive to students.

**Use of Satire or Sarcasm**

Satire and sarcasm are often classified as problematic or risky types of humor to use in the classroom. The two forms of humor are closely related. Satirical humor is used to ridicule or criticize, and often involves broader social or political commentary. Sarcastic humor is often ironic (where the intended meaning is the opposite of the literal meaning), bitter, and taunting. Satire can be “punishing and non-productive” if used inappropriately, and sarcasm can be alienating when directed at students. Many experts recommend avoiding these forms of humor in the classroom because they have the potential to be both divisive and detrimental.

Some research casts the use of satire or sarcasm in the classroom in a favorable light. Political scientists have analyzed the use of a variety of satirical news content to support student engagement with course material in introductory political science courses. Students enjoyed reading *The Daily Show*’s “America (The Book)” and found it useful for learning. They stated that they learned new things from the satirical content, suggested expanding its use, and nearly universally recommended the continued use of satirical content in future courses.

Three studies surveyed college students about the use of sarcasm in the classroom. In the first study, respondents viewed sarcasm as a generally appropriate form of humor and rated it as one of their top three choices for types of humor they would use if they were teaching. In the second study, participants identified sarcasm as both an ap-
appropriate and inappropriate form of humor. In the third study, students ranked “uses sarcasm in class” as one of the more appropriate uses of humor by teachers. While the support was not unanimous, these studies indicated that the majority of student participants supported the use of satire and sarcasm by instructors in the classroom.

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Understanding Satire

Another consideration around the use of satire and sarcasm is the potential for students to misunderstand these types of humor. Richard Shade describes satire (along with irony and puns) as “higher” forms of humor that “often involve symbolism, and require the prerequisites of advanced language abilities and comprehension of the material in question.” He notes that teachers should try to predict if their students will understand the humor before using it, and they should also consider facilitating discussions around the use of satire and sarcasm to increase student understanding. The inclusion of political themes could also contribute to students seeing what they want to see in the satirical content. Heather LaMarre, Kristen Landreville, and Michael Beam’s survey of college students examined how political orientation might impact the processing of ambiguous satirical texts. They found that, for students with strongly conservative political views, their conservative beliefs were a “significant predictor” of them believing that Stephen Colbert meant the negative things that he said about liberals on The Colbert Report. Shaheed Nick Mohammed’s content analysis of posts to The Colbert Nation online forum found that people who posted conservative statements elsewhere on the forum would more likely miss the irony or satirical content of the show. Both the complicated nature and the political leaning of the content may increase the possibility of students misunderstanding satirical news videos.

Research Questions

This study seeks to explore how the use of satirical news videos contributes to student engagement with IL instruction. It is designed to address the following research questions:

RQ1: How does the use of satirical news videos affect student engagement with, and enjoyment of, learning information literacy concepts?

RQ2: Do students understand the contextual information and the satirical content presented in the videos?

RQ3: How does the satirical content of the videos impact how students critically consume the information presented, regardless of whether their own politics and experiences are reflected in the videos?

Methodology

The study used a mixed-methods concurrent nested design, which involves the simultaneous collection of qualitative and quantitative data. The investigation centered on qualitative data collection, while nesting supporting quantitative data within the
predominantly qualitative methodology. This design provides a broader perspective than just qualitative data collection and allows for a richer picture of the phenomenon being researched.\textsuperscript{42} The quantitative data was analyzed in SPSS. Both authors independently coded the relevant qualitative data in Dedoose, meeting throughout the process to ensure consistency and interpretive convergence.\textsuperscript{43} Four research instruments were used in the study; each is described in the following sections.

**News Interaction Survey**

During the first week of each term, students filled out a news interaction survey. The survey was based on the “Modern News Consumer Survey” portion of the 2016 Pew Research Center’s American Trends Panel.\textsuperscript{44} See Appendix A.

**Individual Video Surveys**

Individual video surveys were administered after each video was shown in class. The surveys were designed to measure students’ comprehension and record their opinions on the videos. Students were asked to identify the main topic of the video; determine the host’s perspective or position on the topic; rate each video’s humor, interest, likability, and relevance to the course; and include any additional comments. See Appendix B.

**End of Quarter Survey**

In the last week of each term, students were asked to provide feedback on the use of the videos in the course via an end of quarter survey. Students rated the usefulness and likability of satirical news programs, expressed their intentions to watch satirical news programs in the future, and included any additional comments about the use of the videos in the course. See Appendix C.

**Focus Groups**

The focus groups were conducted during the academic year in which the study took place. The semi-structured focus groups used open-ended questions and brief viewings of selected videos shown in class to better understand the themes identified in the news interaction survey, individual video surveys, and end of quarter survey. See Appendix D.

**Satirical News Videos**

To select videos for this study, the authors searched for clips related to information literacy from the following satirical news television programs: \textit{Last Week Tonight with John Oliver}, \textit{The Colbert Report}, \textit{The Daily Show}, \textit{Full Frontal with Samantha Bee}, and \textit{The Nightly Show with Larry Wilmore}. Five video clips were used:


3. “Dr. Oz and Nutritional Supplements,” Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, airdate: June 22, 2014. Host John Oliver discusses the trust placed in doctors and why it is problematic that Dr. Oz promotes supplements on his television program that have not been scientifically proven to provide the benefits he claims. Concepts: authority; commercial bias.


5. “Journalism,” Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, airdate: August 7, 2016. John Oliver discusses the financial troubles of the newspaper industry and how they might affect the quality of journalism on other platforms (television and social media, in particular). Concepts: authority; media ownership; bias in journalism.

Sample

California State University, East Bay (CSUEB) is one of the 23 public universities in the California State University System. CSUEB enrolls approximately 14,000 students a year, and its student body is the most diverse in the continental United States. For the academic year of the study, 2016–2017, CSUEB’s first-year undergraduate cohort included 46.7 percent Latinx, 18.9 percent Asian Americans, 11 percent African Americans, 8 percent white, 6.6 percent international students, 5.4 percent two or more races, 2.6 percent unknown, and less than 1 percent Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and Native American. Most of the cohort identify as female (63.2 percent). More than half (56.6 percent) are eligible for Pell Grants, which are awarded based on financial need. The overwhelming majority of the cohort are in-state admissions (95.5 percent), and 61 percent are first-generation college students.

At the time of the study, all first-year undergraduate students took LIBY 1210, a required two-unit IL course taught by faculty librarians, as part of CSUEB’s First-Year Learning Communities program. Students are automatically enrolled in this course, according to their thematic learning community, an arrangement that brings students together around a similar discipline or theme. All students enrolled in the four sections of LIBY 1210 taught during academic year 2016–2017 were eligible to participate in the study. Because we graded students, it was important not to coerce them; students were assured that participation was voluntary, and they could opt in by signing a consent form. The work used in this study was required coursework that would be performed by all students regardless of whether they consented to take part in the study; however, only results from those who agreed to the study are included in our analysis. Participation rates varied by course section (see Table 1). In total, we had a 56.1 percent participation rate across the four LIBY 1210 sections.
Students who consented to participate in the study were sent an e-mail solicitation and offered lunch and a gift card to take part in the focus groups. After multiple solicitations, we recruited five students total for two focus groups.

**Table 1.**
Study participation rate by quarter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2016 (1 section)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter 2017 (2 sections)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2017 (1 section)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
<td><strong>114</strong></td>
<td><strong>56.1%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Findings and Discussion**

Six themes emerged from the data collected. Each theme relates to a research question, referenced in parentheses: student engagement and enjoyment (RQ1); exposure to new ideas (RQ1); popular culture references (RQ2); satire and “getting it” (RQ2); truth, credibility, and trustworthiness (RQ3); and politics and bias (RQ3). The following sections explore each theme in detail.

**Student Engagement and Enjoyment**

Before showing the satirical news videos in class, we wanted a better understanding of the students’ prior familiarity with satirical news shows. When asked in the news interaction survey whether they watched satirical news television programs, students were evenly split. Almost 52 percent of students said they “often” or “sometimes” viewed satirical news programs, while 48 percent indicated that they “hardly ever,” “never,” or “weren’t sure” if they watched this kind of show.

The end of quarter survey captured student feedback on the comprehensive use of the satirical news clips in the course. Overall, students responded positively to the use of satirical news videos in the classroom (see Table 2). Students indicated that they “strongly agree” or “agree” with the following statements: the use of satirical news video clips made the class more enjoyable (94.8 percent), they would recommend using satirical news video clips in future classes (94.8 percent), the satirical news videos helped them understand course content (93.1 percent), the use of satirical news video clips helped them be more critical consumers of media (88 percent), and they planned to watch satirical news programs in the future (62.1 percent).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>End of quarter survey results</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The satirical news video clips helped me understand course content.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of satirical news video clips made the class more enjoyable.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend using satirical news video clips in future classes.</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of satirical news video clips helped me to be a more critical consumer of the media.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I plan to watch satirical news programs in the future.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Standard deviation measures the spread of a set of observations.
The focus groups gave similar positive feedback. Participants from both focus groups expressed that they found the videos engaging, even if the topic was not intrinsically interesting to them. One participant said, “I think it makes it more interesting to learn because it is comedy . . . it engages us but like entertains us at the same time.” Participants appreciated the humor and the visual appeal of the videos. They also commented on how the content of the videos sticks more than other forms of instruction and is more engaging than lectures. They particularly enjoyed the sarcasm in the satirical news videos.

**Exposure to New Ideas**

On the individual video surveys, students indicated their agreement with four statements (see Table 3). Looking at the scores cumulatively, the responses to S1 and S4 had means above 4 (agree), and those to S2 and S3 had means slightly below 4 (agree), supporting overall positive responses to the videos.

ANOVA (analysis of variance) tests on the responses to each of the four statements on the individual video surveys were performed to see if there were statistically significant differences (defined as p < 0.05) between the five satirical news videos shown in class. S3 and S4 had statistically significant ANOVA results. A post hoc analysis of S3 found statistically significant differences (p < 0.05) between the means of 5 of the 10 pairings (see Table 4). Looking at the mean differences of the statistically significant pairings, we see that “The Art of the Steal” and “Weathering Fights—Science, What’s It Up To?” offered the least exposure to new ideas. “Journalism,” “Government Surveillance,” and “Dr. Oz and Nutritional Supplements” provided about the same exposure. None of the other responses to the statements were statistically significant, suggesting that interest, humor, and relevancy were not affected by students’ familiarity with the material in the video clip. This statistical finding contradicts the theme found in the focus groups, where participants favored materials previously familiar to them. While the ANOVA test for S4 was statistically significant (p < 0.05), a post hoc analysis comparing the S4 responses for all potential video pairings revealed no statistically significant differences between the means of the videos.

**Popular Culture References**

Each of the satirical news videos included numerous references to American popular culture. Students in class responded particularly positively to references to recent popular culture events with which they were already familiar. In the individual video survey for “The Art of the Steal,” several students commented on the inclusion of the controversy between Kim Kardashian, Kanye West, and Taylor Swift. The three performers have feuded intermittently since West interrupted Swift’s acceptance speech at the 2009 MTV Music Video Awards. The “Art of the Steal” clip parodies their conflict. In it, Kardashian releases a video recording of a conversation between West and Melania Trump (originally with Taylor Swift). Students wrote such comments as “I like how they referred to Kanye West and Kim K” and “The end about Kim and Kanye was funny.” Most of the focus group participants liked and recognized the references in the “Art of the Steal” clip, including the Kardashian allusion. The first focus group unanimously voted “The Art of the Steal” as their favorite clip, explaining that they could relate to...
Table 3.
Descriptive statistics for cumulative responses by statement to the individual video response sheets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation*</th>
<th>Standard error†</th>
<th>Lower bound‡</th>
<th>Upper bound§</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1: The clip was interesting.</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.764</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2: The clip was funny.</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>0.974</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3: This clip exposed me to ideas/information that I was not previously familiar with.</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.857</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4: The clip made learning about [the main topic of video] more enjoyable.</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>0.835</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Standard deviation measures the spread of a set of observations.
†Standard error reports the standard deviation of the sampling distribution of a statistic.
‡Lower bound is the number less than or equal to any number in the results.
§Upper bound is the number greater than or equal to any number in the results.
Table 4. Post hoc analysis with Tukey’s test* of statement 3: “This clip exposed me to ideas/information that I was not previously familiar with.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video I</th>
<th>Video J</th>
<th>Mean difference (I versus J)</th>
<th>Standard error†</th>
<th>Lower bound‡</th>
<th>Upper bound§</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The Art of the Steal”</td>
<td>“Weathering Fights—Science”</td>
<td>–0.155</td>
<td>0.163</td>
<td>–0.61</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“What’s It Up To?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Dr. Oz and Nutritional Supplements”</td>
<td>–0.689#</td>
<td>0.164</td>
<td>–1.15</td>
<td>–0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Government Surveillance”</td>
<td>–0.665#</td>
<td>0.163</td>
<td>–1.12</td>
<td>–0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Journalism”</td>
<td>–0.592#</td>
<td>0.165</td>
<td>–1.06</td>
<td>–0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Weathering Fights—Science, What’s It Up To?”</td>
<td>“Dr. Oz and Nutritional Supplements”</td>
<td>–0.534#</td>
<td>0.162</td>
<td>–0.99</td>
<td>–0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Government Surveillance”</td>
<td>–0.510#</td>
<td>0.161</td>
<td>–0.97</td>
<td>–0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Journalism”</td>
<td>–0.437</td>
<td>0.163</td>
<td>–0.90</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Dr. Oz and Nutritional Supplements”</td>
<td>“Government Surveillance”</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.162</td>
<td>–0.43</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Journalism”</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>0.164</td>
<td>–0.37</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Government Surveillance”</td>
<td>“Journalism”</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>0.163</td>
<td>–0.39</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Tukey’s test is done after a study has been concluded to determine which groups in the sample differ.
†Standard error reports the standard deviation of the sampling distribution of a statistic.
‡Lower bound is the number less than or equal to any number in the results.
§Upper bound is the number greater than or equal to any number in the results.

# p < 0.05. The p value is statistically significant at the 0.05 level, and one can reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship.
it best. However, by contrast, it was the least favorite clip in the second focus group, because the participants mentioned that they had already heard about the controversy; one participant mentioned she could find something like “The Art of the Steal” in her YouTube feed.

The “Dr. Oz and Nutritional Supplements” video was less relevant to students. A few focus group participants mentioned that they did not see themselves as the target audience for the video. They thought *The Dr. Oz Show* is for middle-aged people, saying, “A lot of housewives watch him mostly.” Both focus groups agreed that Dr. Oz is a ubiquitous figure in popular culture but that *The Dr. Oz Show* aims at an older audience, and thus the subject matter of “Dr. Oz and Nutritional Supplements” is less relevant to them. Participants in both groups ranked the “Dr. Oz and Nutritional Supplements” clip relatively low. Some participants disliked it, with one stating, “I could’ve lived my life not watching that.” Another recommended that we exclude this video from future classes; she instead suggested that we find satirical news videos that would be easier for students to relate to and like.

**Satire and “Getting It”**

One risk of using satirical news videos is the potential for students to not understand the satirical content. Most video clips shown in class included elements of satire, but the satire was most pronounced in “Weathering Fights—Science, What’s It Up To?” In this video, *Daily Show* correspondent Aasif Mandvi plays devil’s advocate when interviewing a Republican strategist about the value of science and peer review. Unique to “Weathering Fights” were responses to the individual video survey questions showing that some students found the video challenging. Their free-text survey responses included such comments as “It kind of confuses me,” “It was hard to follow,” “I didn’t really understand it that well,” and “Being that it was so sarcastic, the main point seemed misconstrued.” We began to wonder how many students did not pick up on the satirical nature of the video and thus believed Mandvi was skeptical of science and the peer-review process as a means of vetting information.

To further investigate student understanding of the satirical content in “Weathering Fights,” we each independently coded student responses on the individual video survey and made determinations of whether each student “got it,” “didn’t get it,” or was “unclear.” We compared our coding to reach consensus on each student. If consensus was not possible, we marked the response as leaning toward one direction when one researcher coded it as “unclear” and the other as either “got it” or “didn’t get it.” We classified the response as “disagreement” when one researcher coded it as “got it” and the other as “didn’t get it.” Based on these combined codings, we found that only 25.5 percent of students conclusively “got it” and 5.9 percent leaned toward “got it.” Based on their responses on the individual video survey for “Weathering Fights,” less than one-third of the students recognized the satirical nature of the content and thus understood the point of the video.

**Truth, Credibility, and Trustworthiness**

The truth, credibility, and trustworthiness of news sources came up frequently in our study. In the news interaction survey, students were nearly split on how much thought
they gave to their sources of news, with 48.4 percent indicating they devote little or no thought to their news sources, and 51.6 percent answering that they give a good deal of consideration to where their news came from. Students were asked how much they trust news from different sources. The largest percentage (88.7 percent) trusted local news organizations “a lot” or “somewhat.” National news organizations and news from family, friends, and acquaintances were trusted equally (83.9 percent), and 64.5 percent indicated “a lot” or “some” trust in news from social media.

Social media was the most common way students get news. Nearly 94 percent of students “often” or “sometimes” received news from social media, compared to 56.8 percent from cable television news, 51.6 percent from a news website, 46.8 percent from local TV news, and 45.2 percent from national TV news. Even fewer students indicated that they “often” or “sometimes” got their news from the radio (33.9 percent) or a print newspaper (8.1 percent).

We learned more about the importance of social media as a news source in the focus groups. Two participants mentioned hearing on social media about the Melania Trump controversy covered in “The Art of the Steal” video. One participant shared that, “Twitter went wild . . . the memes that were going around about it were hilarious.” In the second focus group, a student indicated that she had learned about the controversy by seeing memes crop up on Instagram. The controversy about Melania’s speech occurred approximately nine months prior to the focus groups, and the humorous memes they had seen at the time still resonated with them.

Several focus group participants also referred to having a “gut feeling” when they thought someone was telling the truth. One participant declared she “just knew” Last Week Tonight host John Oliver was telling the truth. In the second focus group, participants agreed that satirical news shows are more trustworthy than traditional news, and that Oliver seems believable and truthful. However, both focus groups also talked about how this “gut feeling” can be exploited by someone’s likability, particularly referring to Dr. Oz’s likability, which makes him appear credible and truthful, even though “Dr. Oz and Nutritional Supplements” claims that he is not trustworthy. In the responses to the individual video survey questions for “Dr. Oz and Nutritional Supplements,” a student defended Dr. Oz, writing that John Oliver was “attacking Dr. Oz . . . no one’s perfect.” The student then wrote, “It’s hard to take [Oliver] seriously since everything is a joke to him,” highlighting how the use of satirical or sarcastic humor may affect trust in a news source.

**Politics and Bias**

Students were aware of what they see as bias in the media. In the news interaction survey, over 87 percent of the respondents indicated that they felt the news tends to favor one side on political or social issues. Students also picked up on the political biases of the hosts on satirical news programs. Responses to the questions on the individual video survey for
“The Art of the Steal” demonstrated that some students felt that the host, Trevor Noah, leans liberal. They wrote that Noah’s position was that “the Trump administration is a bunch of lying idiots” and that “he doesn’t support Trump.” Students also used this opportunity to connect their own political leanings to the videos, including such phrases as “not my first lady” and “people of power in the White House will go at such lengths to lie about things,” both in relation to Melania Trump. During both focus groups, participants also identified the hosts of the show as liberal or democratic leaning, with one participant noting, “Most of the people who do these shows definitely are on the more liberal side.”

Some of the focus group participants indicated that they identified as liberal. While some participants had a hard time imagining how a conservative student might feel watching these clips, most thought that conservative students might feel “attacked,” “offended,” or “isolated” by the content and approach of the videos. Interestingly, both focus groups acknowledged that some students may not get the satire if the satirical portrayal matches their political views. This insight mirrored the findings of LaMarre, Landreville, and Beam and Mohammed discussed in the literature review.

After rewatching a segment of the “Weathering Fights” video, two students talked about why some students might not understand the satire, saying, “If you have a different point of view on the topic, like, if you don’t believe in science, you’re going to totally believe in this video.” Another said, “I feel, like, because of the part where they’re like ‘I don’t believe in evolution,’ then people who don’t really believe in evolution they’re going to, like, take this seriously.”

Future Directions

Our study was primarily focused on the affective use of satirical news videos in the information literacy classroom. Despite self-reported findings by students that the videos helped with concept engagement and retention, we did not measure the impact the videos had on student learning. Such a measurement would make an interesting continuation of our study. Since this study was conducted at a single university, it may not have universal implications for undergraduate IL instruction. Furthermore, when we designed the study, we intentionally did not ask students to provide demographic information, including political orientation, because we worried about asking students to share this information when we were their instructors of record. Soliciting this demographic information, however, may provide a richer analysis in future research on this topic.

Conclusion

Overall, we found that satirical news clips improved student engagement and enjoyment with information literacy topics. Students enjoyed the humor and visuals of the clips
and remarked on how the related IL topics “stuck” when connected to a satirical news video. Students preferred videos that related to their lives and demographic interests. However, we also found that students’ previous familiarity with the material did not affect the interest, humor, and relevancy of the videos, which suggests that new topics can still be engaging and interesting to students.

Students generally trusted traditional media sources and had only moderate confidence in news received through social media, despite social media being their largest source of news. They overwhelmingly believed that the news is biased on political and social topics, and some pointed out the liberal bias in the satirical news videos shown in class. Students also mentioned that students’ political beliefs could affect their interpretation of satirical news videos. While our conclusions are nested within a study on satirical news videos, these findings about media trust and skepticism have broader implications for teaching information literacy to undergraduate students.

One risk of using satirical news videos in the classroom is the potential for the satire to obscure the message, or for some viewers to take the satire literally. We found these issues when analyzing student responses to the video with the most satirical content (“Weathering Fights—Science, What’s It Up To?”), where fewer than one-third of the students understood its satirical nature. Given the inherent challenge of using satire and sarcasm in the classroom, providing context and guided discussion are crucial. Despite these risks, using satirical news videos in the classroom may lead to increased student enjoyment and engagement with information literacy concepts.

Overall, we found that satirical news clips improved student engagement and enjoyment with information literacy topics.

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One risk of using satirical news videos in the classroom is the potential for the satire to obscure the message, or for some viewers to take the satire literally.
Appendix A

News Interaction Survey

This survey seeks to get a better understanding of how you interact with the news. Throughout the survey, when you see the word “news,” it is defined as information about events and issues that involve more than just your friends and family.


How closely do you follow . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of News</th>
<th>Very closely</th>
<th>Somewhat closely</th>
<th>Not very closely</th>
<th>Not at all closely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International news</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National news</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local news</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News about your neighborhood</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How closely do you follow each type of news, either in the newspaper, or on television, radio, or the Internet?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of News</th>
<th>Very closely</th>
<th>Somewhat closely</th>
<th>Not very closely</th>
<th>Not at all closely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government and politics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People and events in your own community</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and finance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and technology</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How often do you . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read any newspapers in print?</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to news on the radio?</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read news online through a dedicated news website (e.g., nytimes.com,</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>huffingtonpost.com, cnn.com)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch local television news?</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch national evening network television news (e.g., ABC World News,</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBS Evening News, or NBC Nightly News)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch cable television news (e.g., CNN, the Fox News cable channel, or</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSNBC)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get news from a social networking site (e.g., Facebook or Twitter)?</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get news from a website or app?</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch satirical news (e.g., The Late Show, The Daily Show, Saturday</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night Live, Last Week Tonight)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How often do you discuss the news with others?

- Nearly everyday
- A few times a week
- A few times a month
- Less often

When you share a news story with others, what is the most common way you share it?

- By talking with them either in person or by phone
- Through e-mail or text message
- Through social networking sites
- In hard copy

When family or friends share a news story with you, what is the most common way they share it?

- Talking with them either in person or by phone
- Through e-mail or text message
- Through social networking sites
- In hard copy
Thinking about the sources you get your news from beyond your friends and family, which of the following statements comes closer to your view?

- I don’t give much thought to the sources I get my news from.
- I give a good deal of thought to the sources I get my news from.
- Other (please explain): ____________________________

Thinking about the news you get from your friends, family, and acquaintances, which of the following statements best describes you?

- Friends, family, and acquaintances are the most important way I get news.
- Friends, family, and acquaintances are an important way I get news, but not the most important way.
- Friends, family, and acquaintances are not a very important way I get news.

How much, if at all, do you trust the information you get from . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Not too much</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National news organizations</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local news organizations</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends, family, and acquaintances</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networking sites</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some people think that by criticizing leaders, news organizations keep political leaders from doing their job. Others think that such criticism is worth it because it keeps political leaders from doing things that should not be done. Which position is closer to your opinion?

- Keep political leaders from doing their job
- Keep political leaders from doing things that shouldn’t be done
- Comments: ____________________________

In presenting the news dealing with political and social issues, do you think that news organizations deal fairly with all sides, or do they tend to favor one side?

- Deal fairly with all sides
- Tend to favor one side

When you are online and come across information in a news story that you think is inaccurate, how often do you take it upon yourself to figure out whether it is accurate?

- Often
- Sometimes
- Hardly ever
- Never
- Not sure
Thinking about the news that your friends, family, and acquaintances post or send you online about political and social issues, overall, do you think the mix of news you get from them . . .

- Represents just one side.
- Represents more than one side.
- They don’t send me news about political and social issues.

Would you prefer that the news your friends, family, and acquaintances post or send you online about political and social issues has a greater mix of views from all sides, or do you think it’s okay that overall it represents just one side?

- Would prefer a greater mix of views
- It’s okay that overall it represents just one side

Which statement best describes how you get news online, whether on a computer, phone, or tablet, even if neither is exactly right?

- I mostly come across news online because I’m looking for it.
- I mostly come across news online when I’m doing other things online.

Thinking about all the time you spend online, how much of that time is spent getting news?

- A lot
- Some
- Not too much
- Not at all

When you follow a link to a news story on a social networking site, how much attention, if any, do you pay to the news source the link takes you to?

- A lot of attention
- Some attention
- Very little attention
- No attention at all

Thinking about when you are on a social networking site, how often, if at all, do you . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Click on links to news stories</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post links to news stories yourself</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share or repost links to news stories that were originally posted by someone else</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Like” news stories</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post my own photos or videos of a news event</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss issues in the news with others on that site (e.g., via comments section)</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thinking about the last three hours, if you followed any links from a social networking site, e-mail, or text message to get that news, what specific news outlet(s) did the link(s) take you to?

Directions:
Type the name of up to three specific news outlets in the boxes below. (Please do not type the name of a social networking site. We are interested in the original outlet of that news.) If you do not remember, please click “Do not remember.” If you did not follow any links, please click “Did not follow any links.”

- News source 1: ____________________________________________________
- News source 2: ____________________________________________________
- News source 3: ____________________________________________________
- Do not remember
- Did not follow any links

Appendix B

Individual Video Surveys
What was the main topic the video was discussing?
What do you think [the host/correspondent’s] perspective or position is on this topic?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The clip was interesting.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The clip was funny.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This clip revealed to ideas/information that I was not previously familiar with.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The clip made learning about authoritative sources more enjoyable.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you have any other comments you’d like to share about the video?

Appendix C

End of Quarter Survey
In this class this quarter, we watched several video clips from satirical news sources that covered topics related to information literacy (Week 2: Last Week Tonight—“Journalism”; Week 3: The Daily Show—“Weathering Fights—Science, What’s It Up To?” Week 6: Last Week Tonight—“Dr. Oz and Nutritional Supplements”; Week 7: The Daily Show—“The Art of the Steal”; Week 8: Last Week Tonight—“Government Surveillance”). Please answer the questions below to provide feedback on the use of these video clips in this class.
Appendix D

Focus Group Questions

Welcome

Good afternoon and thank you for taking the time to join us in talking about the use of satirical news stories in the information literacy classroom. My name is Stephanie Alexander, and joining me is Lana Wood. We’re both library faculty members who teach the LIBY 1210 course, which you took with one of us earlier this school year or are currently taking with [Redacted]. You may remember that we watched a number of satirical news stories in class. You have been invited to participate in the focus group today to discuss these videos in greater detail with your peers.

Guidelines

There are no wrong answers but rather differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Keep in mind that we’re just as interested in negative comments as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The satirical news video clips helped me understand course content.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of satirical news video clips made the class more enjoyable.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend using satirical news video clips in future classes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of satirical news video clips helped me to be a more critical consumer of the media.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I plan to watch satirical news programs in the future.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you have any other comments you’d like to share about the use of the satirical news video clips in class?
You’ve probably noticed the microphone. We’re tape recording the session because we don’t want to miss any of your comments. People often say very helpful things in these discussions, and we can’t write fast enough to get them all down. We will be on a first name basis today, and we won’t use any names or identifying information in our study. Everything you say will be kept confidential.

Well, let’s begin. We’ve placed name cards on the table in front of you to help us remember each other’s names. Let’s find out some more about each other by going around the table. Tell us your name, what year you are at East Bay, and what quarter you took LIBY 1210.

Questions

1. Given that each of you may have taken the LIBY 1210 course at different times, let’s now go around the room and share what you remember about satirical news videos used in the class.
2. Thinking back on your experience in LIBY 1210, how would you say the use of the satirical news videos influenced your experience in the class?
3. Show the following clips:
   1. *The Daily Show*: “The Art of the Steal”—0:00–2:20
      1. What do you like most about . . .
      2. What do you like least about . . .
      3. What do you think about the host?
      4. If you had to describe this clip to a friend, what would you say?
   2. *Last Week Tonight*: “Dr. Oz and Nutritional Supplements”—1:24–4:51
      1. What do you like most about . . .
      2. What do you like least about . . .
      3. What do you think about the host?
      4. If you had to describe this clip to a friend, what would you say?
      1. What do you like most about . . .
      2. What do you like least about . . .
      3. What do you think about the host?
      4. If you had to describe this clip to a friend, what would you say?
4. Ask about sarcasm: Do you think that there’s a risk of anyone taking the clips literally and not recognizing the sarcasm?
5. Ask about the use of references: What do you think about the references he made? Do you recognize any of them? (List references and ask if participants know what they are.)
   Thinking about all of the clips we watched today, we’d like you to rank them based on your preferences. (Have a list of the clips.)
      1. For those of you who ranked this clip as their top choice, what led you to decide that?
      2. For those of you who ranked this clip as their bottom choice, what led you to decide that?
7. Have any of you watched satirical news videos since taking LIBY 1210?
   1. Which ones?
   2. Did you watch them on your own? In another class?
   3. What did you like about them?
   4. How did you come across the clips? Did you search for them? Did someone post them somewhere?

Closing Question

Today’s focus group was about your experiences and enjoyment of satirical news videos in the information literacy classroom and after. Reflecting on the last hour, is there anything else you’d like to add that we haven’t discussed already?

Closing Statement

Thank you everyone for your time and expertise. As a reminder, everything discussed in this focus group is confidential. Please feel free to reach out to us with any further comments or questions you may have.

Do you have any other comments you’d like to share about the use of the satirical news video clips in class?

Notes


12. Liebman, “Make ’Em Laugh.”


18. Trefts and Blakeslee, “Did You Hear the One about the Boolean Operators?”


20. Tewell, “Tying Television Comedies to Information Literacy.”


29. Fulton, “Plain (Well, Not Just Plain) Fun.”


51. Fanny Yeung, interim director of institutional research and analysis, Cal State East Bay, e-mail message to authors, June 25, 2018.

52. LaMarre, Landreville, and Beam, “The Irony of Satire”; Mohammed, “‘It-Getting’ in the Colbert Nation Online Forum”; Shade, *License to Laugh*.

53. LaMarre, Landreville, and Beam, “The Irony of Satire.”

54. Mohammed, “‘It-Getting’ in the Colbert Nation Online Forum.”