

Micro Issues

1. Should FPS games be regulated? If so, in what way?
2. Should the killing of innocent bystanders be banned in FPS games?
3. The game was modified in Japan and Germany and banned in Russia.
Critique the actions of these countries in their actions toward this game.

Midrange Issues

1. What does the decision by the developers to make the segment optional say to you?
2. Critique the claim of Breivik above. Is it credible to you? Does it have any bearing on whether FPS games should be regulated?
3. Critique the remarks of Williams above. He allowed the killing of civilians in his game while criticizing the violence of *MW2*. Do you see a difference in the two games?

Macro Issues

1. Violence has long been a part of art and entertainment. What standards, if any, should we place on the artist in terms of how much violence we wish to see in our art?
2. Do you place any credibility in the research that indicates that violence in games, on the television and movie screens, etc., desensitize the audience and make us more tolerate of violence in real life?

CASE 10-C

DAILY DOSE OF CIVIC DISCOURSE

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One aspect that *The Daily Show* is known for is the civil, substantive, and thoughtful discussions and debate between host Trevor Noah—and Jon Stewart before him—and his guest. The interview segment is a model of civil discourse, where guests are provided time to discuss their ideas in a rational and critical back-and-forth discussion, even when the host disagrees (Barbur and Goodnow 2011; Williams and Delli Carpini 2011; Young and Esralew 2011).

Stewart, during his 16-year run as host, often interviewed conservatives such as Grover Norquist, John McCain, and Bill O'Reilly, who appeared on the show 11 times.

Noah, Stewart's hand-picked successor, similarly hosts guests who hold opposing political views, such as conservative talk show host Tomi Lahren, who appeared on the Nov. 30, 2016, episode. During the 26-minute talk, Noah and Lahren discussed Donald Trump's election victory, the Affordable Care Act, and Black Lives Matter, among other topics. Noah "expressed his opinions and challenged her on views he found confusing at best and offensive at worst. But he also just kept asking for clarity, for more information on why, exactly, Lahren thinks the way she does" (Framke 2016).

Lahren, at the time, was a host and commentator at *The Blaze*, a conservative news and entertainment network founded by Glenn Beck. She regularly criticized political and cultural figures such as Barack Obama and Colin Kaepernick on the "Final Thoughts" segment on her show, which routinely garnered millions of YouTube and social media views. Lahren was suspended from, and then left, *The Blaze* in March 2017 for saying that women should have legal access to abortion. She now works for the conservative Great America Alliance PAC and is a commentator on Fox News.

The key moment of the discussion occurred when Lahren said Kaepernick was not protesting "the right way." That comment led to the following exchange:

Noah: When people say that, I'm always fascinated. What is the right way? So here is a black man in America who says I don't know how to get a message across. If I march in the streets, people say I'm a thug. If I go out and I protest, people say that it's a riot. If I bend down on one knee, then it's not [the right way]. What is the right way? That is something that I've always wanted to know. What is the right way for a black person to get attention in America?

Lahren: Why would you take out your perceived oppression of black people on our national anthem and our flag? A country that you live in. A country that you benefit from. A country that people of all races have died for, have died to protect, have died for the vote. How do you then go and disrespect the flag and the anthem of that country? Why is that the outlet?

Noah: Well, maybe you're a person who's lived and read through history and you realize that a lot of those people of every color who died for this country, some of them didn't have the rights that their fellow servicemen had when they came back to the country after

fighting for it. Maybe you're one of those people who realizes that the penal system in America was designed to oppress black people. It was designed to enslave people. It's a relic of slavery. Maybe you're one of those people. So what I don't understand is, a guy is kneeling in the corner. I don't understand why that offends you so much. It's not even like he's trying to sing over you. He's not doing anything that affects you. I don't understand why that gets to you. I genuinely don't.

Deborah Tannen, in her book *The Argument Culture*, describes modern communication more like warfare than discourse. Most issues, Tannen argues, are framed as having two sides, which limits the scope of public discussion and causes polarity instead of thoughtful discussion aimed at resolving issues (Tannen 1999).

Stewart famously argued against "the argument culture" during an appearance on the CNN show *Crossfire* (2004). Hosts Tucker Carlson and Paul Begala, their bosses, and the audience believed they were booking a comedian. But Stewart was far from funny. Instead, he lambasted Carlson, *Crossfire*, and the television news media in general for doing bad political theater rather than their jobs. In a curious way, the media's reduction of the complexities of a presidential campaign to a "horserace" complete with each party and hundreds of journalists for both old and new media alike playing a daily game of "gotcha" with the candidates, had made a show like Stewart's and Noah's, which ridiculed the process, not only popular but quite possibly necessary.

Just before Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert departed from Comedy Central in 2015, a poll from the Public Religion Research Institute, quoted in the *Washington Post*, had 11 percent of millennials saying that Comedy Central was their most trusted source of news, ranking it fourth behind CNN (24 percent), the three major networks (19 percent), and Fox (19 percent). This is a decade after a Pew Research Center poll found 21 percent of viewers under 30 got their election news from Comedy Central.

Micro Issues

1. Compare Trevor Noah's interview of Tomi Lahren with similar interviews on a cable news channel such as CNN, Fox News, or MSNBC.

Midrange Issues

1. Trevor Noah was criticized—even called a "sellout" and "devil"—for giving Tomi Lahren a platform to express her ultra-conservative views, for example, equating Black Lives Matter with the Ku Klux Klan. Is such criticism justified?

2. Compare Trevor Noah's decision to invite Tomi Lahren with Megyn Kelly's decision to interview *Infowars* Alex Jones on her NBC news program?

Macro Issues

1. Jon Stewart often would deflect criticism by saying that he was just a comedian trying to get laughs. What is the role of a political satirist in modern political debate and discussion?
2. Evaluate Deborah Tannen's claim that the argument culture distills every issue or debate into two polarized sides.
3. As polls have consistently shown that Comedy Central is used as a source for news by 10–20 percent of younger viewers, does this impose any kind of responsibility on the channel and its most prominent show to adhere to conventional journalistic standards?

CASE 10-D

THE ONION: FINDING HUMOR IN MASS SHOOTINGS

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A lone gunman opened fire Oct. 1, 2017, during the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival in Las Vegas, killing 58 and injuring 546. News coverage was nearly around the clock, mostly following a similar, well-rehearsed playbook, according to the *Washington Post*:

Deploy reporters to the scene quickly. Interview eyewitnesses and families of the victims and the shooters. Check social media for clues to the attackers' identity. Bring on the law enforcement experts for comment (Farhi 2015).

Coverage was a bit different, however, for one "news" organization.

In *The Onion*, readers were greeted with a familiar headline: "'No Way To Prevent This,' Says Only Nation Where This Regularly Happens." The full text of less than 200 words, reads:

LAS VEGAS—In the hours following a violent rampage in Las Vegas in which a lone attacker killed more than 50 individuals and seriously injured 400 others, citizens living in the only country where this kind of mass killing routinely occurs reportedly concluded Monday that there was no way to prevent the massacre from taking place.