

Blog Post 2: The Funnies (2020-09-06 14:36)

Much of what we talked about in class revolved around segmentation, the process of dividing a total market into groups of people with similar traits. Segmentation plays a very large role in politics and likely now more than ever. Politicians pretend to be religious to appeal to that demographic. Politicians advertise on different platforms to reach different audiences, they say things and sometimes make compromises to check boxes that appeal to those who they would not normally reach. For example Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders have worked together on policy initiatives in order to appeal to the younger and more left-leaning crowds.

We have seen more and more, especially in the realm of politics, that partisanship is becoming an increasingly defined segment of the population. Partisanship can fall into multiple segmentation variables but particularly psychographic, a group of people with similar activities, interests, and opinions. Within the groups of partisanship there are different segments of people whose main issue is different than others (e.g. gun rights conservatives or social justice liberals). However, as Jones points out, there is much less nuance when it comes to arguments based on partisanship anymore. Now many see partisanship as black and white, rather than shades of grey. Because of this it is easier to appeal to larger groups of people as it is more of a tribal mentality and people are less willing to go against the tribe.



[1]
Mark Liester / cartoonistgroup.com



[2]

Dave Granlund / Examiner-Enterprise



Ben Garrison / grrgraphics.com



[3] Mike Keefe / Colorado Independent

Above are four examples of political cartoons surrounding the President’s use of Twitter. This has always been a hot-button issue during his presidency and continues to be as he has been taken to court regarding his blocking of users and that has been ruled as violating the First Amendment. Political cartoons also represent a rhetorical message that has been around for centuries but has become less popular with less newspaper readers. Because of this political cartoons are likely to appeal to a specific demographic, likely older news readers or people who are already highly politically knowledgeable who want to seek them out. They also appeal to specific ideology, the first two to a more conservative audience and the latter two to a more liberal audience.

The cartoons use different forms of appeals in their message, chief of which is humor. Humor is excellent in getting and keeping the attention of the audience. The use of humor is crucial to a good political cartoon as satire is not as effective when it is not funny, however

"funny" means different things to different people. That is seen in the cartoons above as the liberal cartoons accentuates certain aspects of the President while the conservative ones are more likely to poke fun at the stereotypical appearance of liberals.

They also use pathetic appeals which appeal to the emotions of the audience . In the conservative cartoons that arises in the feelings that conservative are more likely to be censored on social media and in the liberal comics as the President having a "fragile ego" and a very anxious (Twitter finger). These pathetic appeals can really only work if the audience believes that same as the cartoonist which puts a large constraint on who they can effectively reach. However, political cartoons can be effective rhetorical devices with the right combinations of humor and rhetorical appeals.

1. <https://www.cartoonistgroup.com/subject/The-First+Amendment-Comics-and-Cartoons-by-Mike+Lester%27s+Editorial+Cartoons.php>
2. <http://https://www.examiner-enterprise.com/news/20200528/granlund-cartoon-trump-vs-twitter-fact-check>
3. <https://www.mercurynews.com/2017/06/22/cartoons-best-of-donald-trump-and-twitter/>

Blog Post 3: Social Media and Free Speech (2020-09-13 18:37)

What makes our democracy work? That was the question posed by Dr. Clark in class on Tuesday to try to ascertain what those in the class thought made the American version of democracy so effective for almost a quarter millennium. There were two popular answers that I believe go hand in hand with one another, participation and accountability. I see these two ideas as inseparably intertwined if they both want to be seen as effective as they can be and are best illustrated in our Constitutional Amendments.

The 15th, 19th, 24th, and 26th Amendments all deal with cementing the right to vote and removing barriers to voting which allows citizens to participate in the election process and hold officials accountable by voting them out of office. However, the Amendment more frequently in question is the First Amendment and what constitutionally constitutes Free Speech and Expression and what would not be covered under those umbrellas. The topic of what goes beyond the First Amendment has been a hot one in light of some not-so-peaceful protests (although most have been), but they also show how dynamic representation can work. Many states have begun to undergo police department reforms and Sen Rand Paul has proposed legislation to ban no-knock warrants in response to outrage following the death of Breonna Taylor.

The arguments of what falls under First Amendment protection on social media sites has raged since the Russian misinformation campaign in 2016 (and still continuing today) that many have argued influenced the presidential election and help to continue to drive wedges between people in the country.

[1]President Trump has already lost a court case that ruled that him blocking critics was a violation of the First Amendment. Social media sites have been a revolution in ways for public opinion to be heard. The citizenry has never had a louder voice or easier opportunities to participate in political discussion as they do now. However, many in the country, including the President, believe that many social media sites silence conservative voices and opinions.

Republicans feel that Social Media Platforms totally silence conservatives voices. We will strongly regulate, or close them down, before we can ever allow this to happen. We saw what they attempted to do, and failed, in 2016. We can't let a more sophisticated version of that...

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [2]May 27, 2020

If this is the case it could be dangerous for the political discourse in our country. Twitter has also started flagging posts that present misleading or false information, and President Trump has been at the receiving end of this fact-checking and has voiced frustration about it. The President passed an executive order set to add more federal scrutiny to how social media companies [3] police content. Some have argued, including Mark Zuckerberg, that social media companies should not be "the arbiters of truth." Fox News analyst, Andrew Napolitano, agrees that Twitter is within its First Amendment rights as a private company to fact check tweets and quiet more conservative voices but that [4] by fact checking one side more than

the other, it can lead to a loss of credibility.

Social media has been a great vehicle for citizens across the world to make their voices heard and have an unprecedented access to the political process and affecting changes policy. However, the discussion on how the First Amendment applies to social media companies is in legislatively uncharted waters which causes the debate to rage on. Social media will have undeniable impact on the presidential race and on politics to come for the foreseeable future.

1. <https://knightcolumbia.org/cases/knight-institute-v-trump-2>
2. https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1265601611310739456?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw
3. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/05/29/no-twitter-did-not-violate-trumps-freedom-speech/#comments-wrapper>
4. <https://thehill.com/homenews/media/499745-foxs-napolitano-to-trump-first-amendment-does-not-regulate-twitter>

Blog Post 4: Braver Angels (2020-09-20 16:54)

Throughout my blog posts I have touched on how President Trump uses social media (particularly Twitter) and how it is viewed by Democrats, Republicans, the Judiciary, and Twitter itself. The President on multiple occasions has claimed that Twitter shows bias towards liberal viewpoints and is more likely to censor conservative voices. The President believed this went far enough to [1]issue an executive order targeting censorship by social media companies. While Twitter, traditionally as a private company, has a right to decide what kind of speech is allowed on their platform, the scale of their platform begs the question of how they should determine what needs censoring and what does not.

During our "fishbowl" discussion in the Braver Angels workshop, the Reds brought up that they believed more in original intent and textualism and that the Constitution is more of a static document, whereas the Blues saw the successes of the Constitution owed to its flexibility and status as a living document. These are two conflicting ideas as the Reds used the First Amendment and free speech as illustrative examples of the differences. Conservatives look at it as "free speech is free speech" no matter if one's views are in opposition with the speaker. Liberals on the other hand see free speech as more constrained and emphasize that hate speech (which is sometimes taken too far with cancel culture) and misinformation can be dangerous and need to be policed. This difference in interpretation leads to differences in opinions when it comes to the President's (sometimes hypocritical as he has blocked users which censors their free speech) use of social media. Conservatives believe that Twitter should have no business censoring the President, while many Democrats believe that some of his tweets are like yelling "Fire!" in a crowded movie theater. The difference of opinions on this issue is informed and explained by the dichotomous interpretations of the First Amendment that were illustrated in our discussions.

I felt this workshop is for sure beneficial and I see bridging some of the current political tribalism as one of, if not the most important, task that faces the country going forward. I was extremely on board with these discussions as someone who's views really do not match up with most of the demographics in my home town and area. I strongly believe that there is an extreme worth as to understanding what people across the aisle believe. I often times feel that people can see those on the other side as "other" and not people with full life experiences that inform their political viewpoints, they just see D or R. I feel like understanding that people hold viewpoints for certain reasons and not just to spite the other side (though I do feel like some on both sides are starting to do this). I feel as though this idea is going to be even more paramount with the upcoming election as it has just gotten a magnitude more contentious with the passing of Justice Ginsburg. I do think that having an understanding of the other side can help you convince others of your own point of view though I think that likelihood is still quite low. I like it is just the most important to talk to someone else across the aisle as someone who has had a full lifetime of experiences and is not deserving of hate or vitriol simply because of their political standings. I am of the strongest belief that by simply listening to inform instead of listening to argue is extremely important when talking politics (or anything for that matter) and I believe that Braver Angels facilitates that extremely well and I wish that all political discussion was as civil as this.

1. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-preventing-online-censorship/>

Blogpost 5 (2020-09-28 00:38)

The unhindered right to vote is often seen as a foundational aspect of any functioning democracy, however as we have seen throughout American history, that has not always been the case. Initially the right to vote was granted to property owning white men and transitioning through phases of exclusion, whether it be Jim Crow laws after the passage of the 15th Amendment, women not being able to vote until 1920, poll taxes not being outlawed until 1964, and now navigating a global pandemic, the foundational right of any democracy has faced its fair share of challenges here in the United States. Now with an approximate half of all votes being cast by mail, more people than ever could potentially have access to voting than we have ever seen before. However, there is still a large portion of the population that has lost their most fundamentally democratic right, felons.

In 2016 [1]6.1 million Americans were not able to vote due to state laws preventing convicted felons from having the right to vote. In an election where the popular vote was decided by 3 million, that is a lot of lost voters that potentially could have swung the election. Giving the right to vote to as many people as possible should not necessarily be a partisan issue, even in our exceptionally polarized society . However, as demonstrated recently in Florida, that is not the case.

Florida has passed a constitutional amendment that restores felons' rights to vote only after they have paid all of their debts. This has disenfranchised about [2]775,000 otherwise eligible voters in the state which is set to be a battleground in the Presidential Election. Michael Bloomberg, former Mayor of New York, Democratic Presidential Candidate, and current billionaire, has donated [3] \$16 million to the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, a non-profit dedicated to paying the fines preventing felons from voting. Donations have also been made by LeBron James, Ben and Jerry's, Michael Jordan, Levi Strauss, and three Floridian professional sports teams.



This move has been fiercely attacked by some Republicans, including the President who called it "criminal" and Florida Congressman Matt Gaetz who called for the state AG to investigate the donations claiming they violated election laws. Bloomberg, owner of Bloomberg LP, contends this is a non-partisan donation and that the newly re-franchised felons would be able to vote for either candidate in the upcoming election. The prominent Republicans who have spoken out against this has alleged he is paying people for their vote against the incumbent President, however ballots are secret and the new voters would be able to choose whomever

they want and it would not be known who they chose. The fact that Bloomberg ran for the Democratic nomination however does carry with it a certain connotation of whom he would prefer the votes would be cast.

There could also be an ideological reason for why Republicans have been more outspoken against this and could come from the idea of "fixed versus fluid" mentalities. Conservatives generally have a much stronger view on law and order than those across the aisle, seeing punishment as necessary for those who commit serious crime. Democrats on the other hand are more likely to see the prison system as reformatory and that people can change (are fluid). This is not to say all Dems are in favor of re-franchising felons, but in this instance the partisan divide has been very evident. Whether the reason the angst comes from fear of unfair election influence or more ideological difference, what can be seen is that Bloomberg and others believe returning the right to vote is beneficial.

1. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/6-million-lost-voters-state-level-estimates-felony-disenfranchisement-2016/>
2. <https://www.politico.com/states/florida/story/2020/09/23/florida-ag-calls-for-criminal-inquiry-into-bloombergs-16m-felon-voter-donation-1317995>
3. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-09-24/trump-calls-bloomberg-criminal-for-helping-florida-felons-vote>

Blogpost 7: Tharasybulus' Speeches (2020-11-19 23:25)

Gain citizenship for metics and slaves who saved the democracy:

My fellow Athenians, it is time that we give to those what was given back to us. We have taken back our great city, pried it from the oppressive grasp of the Thirty Tyrants who turned their back on our democracy in favor of the tyrannical rule of Sparta. We fought hard against this occupation and we would not have been able to claim victory without the assistance from all of Athens, even those who cannot call themselves Athenians. It is time we rectify this wrong.

The battle was won on the backs of the slaves and metics, those who our great city-state does not even recognize as her citizens. They fought and died, took up arms for a city that does not even offer them the name Athenian. It is an insult to these brave soldiers who so loved this city and all it stands for, freedom and democracy, that they should not be repaid for their sacrifice, their willingness to defend and reclaim our great empire.

The metics, chiefly led by Lysias, gave funds and materials to our great army. Without his and all those other metics who were willing to fund and supply and fight alongside me in this tremendous battle, the battle for the soul of democracy, the soul of Athens, we would have fallen victim to the reign of the Thirty and the tyranny of Sparta. Lysias, who paid the cost of two hundred mercenaries, who lives among us, who provided our avenue for victory, is more worthy of citizenship than any who voluntarily supported those oppressed us and threatened the existence of our great Athens. Why should Lysias and those like him, who risked their lives and fortunes, who fought for and funded, who battled bravely, why should they be shown less gratitude, be seen as lesser members of our community, than the oligarchs who supported the downfall of our democracy.

I ask you my fellow Athenians, why should the slaves, who are treated as less than human beings, why should they who fought for the city that looks at them as not being less than citizens, but less than human, why should they would fought arm in arm with their owners, why should they not be granted the right of citizenship that they sought to protect for us. Is it not hypocritical? Is it not malevolent? Is it not undemocratic? Is it not un-Athenian to shun these brave souls from all that they fought to protect? These people, who are looked down upon by the citizens of Athens, who despite that took arms for their protection, who if the situation were to arise again, would once again go to battle on her behalf, what more to they need to prove to be deserving of citizenship. Our city is only as strong as weakest links and these slaves and metics have proven to be stronger than many of their compatriots.

It is time to right this wrong, it is time to repay this debt, it is time to welcome these people who have already proven to be Athenian in every way but name.

Pass legislation that would restore the Athenian empire

My fellow Athenians, under the rule of the Thirty Tyrants and the oppressive occupation of the Spartans, the Athenian Empire has shrunk and our economy has slowed and it is time we bring back the great and powerful Athenian Empire. While others advocate for defensive tactics and hiding behind our walls, we have seen how that strategy has worked before and had led us to defeat and tyranny at the hands of Sparta. It was at the tip of my sword that the Thirty have fallen and through my capable leadership and the bravery of my fellow Athenians that we were able to take back our city and democracy.

The cities that have once paid us tribute do so no more. Some have even begun to cower and kowtow to the rising Thebes, who as our neighbors present a growing threat at our doorstep. It should be the chief purpose of our military to expand offensively, reinstate the tribute system, and remind all those around us that Athens is the greatest power in all of the world. Not only are we the beacons of democracy, the bastions of art and thought, we are the mightiest state that the world has seen and we must emphatically reclaim that throne.

Samos, Chios, Miletus, Byzantium, Naxos, and many other city-states once had paid tribute to Athens totaling a great sum of one thousand talents. It is with this money that we may be able to rebuild our great city and continue to enshrine our democracy and rule of the people. Our economy has taken huge blows at the hands of tyranny and oppression, our influence has shrunk, the name Athens does no longer carry the reverence it once had and that should not stand. We should not turn isolationist and cower in fear behind a wall, we should instill fear and awe when every man hears the name of Athens spoken.

Once again expanding our empire gives work and jobs to those without other options, it provides options for those who do not own land, and it gives the opportunity to stimulate our economy and increase our wealth in ways never before seen in our city. Just because we just finished battling our oppressors does not mean we are not now up for another fight. We are more prepared than ever, our soldiers are trained and have demonstrated bravery and competence and love for our great city. Why should we rest when our city is hungry for expansion? We must reclaim the empire of Athens. Reinstate our dominance over our tributaries. And reinstall the reverence and awe felt by all at the mere utterance of the name Athens!