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Political comedy and cultural citizenship

Doona, Joanna

2015

Document Version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Doona, J. (2015). *Political comedy and cultural citizenship*. Abstract from Politics and Humour : Theory and Practice.

Total number of authors:
1

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LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

ABSTRACT: *Politics and Humour: Theory and Practice*

The rising popularity of political comedy and other types of political entertainment spurs scholarly concerns regarding civic values and growing cynicism among young citizens (cf. Jones 2010). Simultaneously, news habits and preferences among younger audiences are changing (Marchi 2012), which add to the concerns. With the exception of the effects studies that focus on issues like knowledge diffusion and voting behavior, political comedy audiences are under-researched within relevant fields; humour studies have fallen short in its audience perspective; and audience studies has lacked in its focus on comical content.

This paper concerns young political comedy audiences and their citizen identity, in relation to community construction. Drawing on the analytical framework of cultural citizenship, as defined by Hermes (2005), the study focuses on production of distinctions as community construction. Through analyzing data from in-depth interviews and focus groups with Swedish young adults (18-35 years; self-described audiences of either the Swedish public service radio programme *Tankesmedjan* or the internationally popular *The Daily Show*, the paper attempts to answer the question of how we can conceive of political comedy through the perspective of citizenship as cultural, whilst focusing on the audience.

The analysis shows that audiences are very much engaged in the political, but tend to downplay their abilities to analyze or even debate political issues. This is connected to an unwillingness to associate oneself with *any* community, and if one has enough knowledge to participate; making political comedy a space where this interest or passion potentially accommodated.

BIO

Joanna Doona is a doctoral candidate in media and communication studies at the Department of Communication and Media at Lund University, in Lund, Sweden. Her thesis project is about young audiences of political comedy, with a focus on cultural citizenship.

EQUIPMENT

Projector for showing power point presentation.