

# **Read Very Carefully**

**An Examination of the Role of Satirical News In Promoting Media Literacy and  
Encouraging Engagement with Current Events**

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## Fooled By Fake News

### Stanford Cuts Mechanical Engineering

In recent breaking news, Stanford has just cut their mechanical engineering department, because according to reliable sources, “It just wasn’t working.” This was an article in my weekly satirical newspaper called the *Stanford Flipside*. The *Flipside*

takes events that are going on around the campus and around the world and presents them in a slightly ridiculous and satirical manner. The campus was experiencing drastic budget cuts, and we wanted to suggest that the cuts were so extensive that they were removing a program that is seen as a staple of Stanford academics.

“Are they really cutting mechanical engineering?” I heard a girl ask in a dining hall as I walked by distributing. This question was asked several times in complete seriousness. I have heard many stories of people who believe articles from the *Flipside*—all which are “fake news.” My friend told me that a girl had been reading the *Flipside* all year and had not realized the articles were fake and asked desperately, “What is happening to the campus?”

My question in response is this: What is happening to the state of critical thinking and active engagement with media in our society? This is not an isolated incident. As the popularity of mainstream news sources has declined, soft news has become a ready alternative. However, instances where people—both readers and writers—have been fooled by fake news abound.

The Stanford Flipside  
Helping out awkward people since circa  
August 14, 1531 or 7:12:32pm GMT  
FREE EVERYWHERE, \$2.30 CANADA YEAR 1, ISSUE 24, NO. 24  
www.stanfordflipside.com

STANFORD CUTS MECHANICAL ENGINEERING: "It's JUST NOT WORKING!"

STANFORD, CA—Due to the recent budget cuts, Stanford has been attempting to eliminate superfluous departments around campus. In a long expected move, the university announced Monday that the Mechanical Engineering department will be cut because ME no longer has any practical applications. "It makes sense," said ME professor Dr. John Doe. "I just been feeling around all this time with Legos. Everyone knows ME doesn't work....Things break all the time."

Many astounded Drama and

Mechanical Engineering was cut, considering it is an extremely popular department among non-majors. You want to talk about an easy A, then talk about ME 101." "It's like Classics," said Joey Kemp. "I use ME all the time to pad my schedule. It's too bad I won't have that option anymore."

Many other students are worried that the job market may be cut in the near future. "I tried to sell my retractable whisk that I designed in the shop class ME203 to Williams Sonoma, but they

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Student Makes Informed Decision In Large Crowd  
Stanford Review Ousted For Racism In Their Own Paper  
TGIFunk Beefs with Goodbye

What I will argue in the following paper is that as the form of journalism has changed, satirical news has played an increasing role in checking mainstream media as well as providing an alternative mechanism to promote critical thinking. Many are worried that the public is become more uninformed, but what I argue that the problem is different—the definition of what it means to be informed is changing, and what is important is that both media consumers and producers develop media literacy skills.

## **Maintaining a Critical Lens Towards All Media Forms**

### Fake Quote Dupes Real Media

Wikipedia is a user-based open-source online encyclopedia. Anyone has the power to edit—and this is both a boon and a weakness of the site. Its use requires that the reader be aware of the nature of the website and the mechanism by which facts are checked. Wikipedia is not generally considered a legitimate news source for academia or newspapers because of its derivative nature and potential lack of credibility of the contributors.

Recently, after the death of French composer Maurice Jarre, Dublin University student Shane Fitzgerald posted a fabricated quote on Jarre's Wikipedia page. Many blogs and respected newspapers such as *The Guardian* cited this phony quote. But before then, it was taken down several times by Wikipedia moderators because it did not have a source (Carbery; Pogatchnik). According to the Associated Press, "Wikipedia passed. Journalism flunked." (Pogatchnik). The faux-quote contributor Fitzgerald said, "I am 100 percent convinced that if I hadn't come forward, that quote would have gone down in history as something Maurice Jarre said, instead of

something I made up. It would have become another example where, once anything is printed enough times in the media without challenge, it becomes fact” (Pogatchnik).

What am I suggesting with this example? I am going to argue that journalism is failing its role as a watchdog of truth. However, I am placing responsibility for critical consumption on both sides. Wikipedia embodies this idea of criticality—editors are always looking to verify sources. But users also must keep their guard and realize the nature and drawbacks of Wikipedia. Because of instances like this, it is crucial that we maintain an active relationship with media.

## An Active Relationship With Media

We are moving towards a time when fact and fiction are merging together, and it is becoming harder to sift through all of the types of information we are bombarded with. As news and entertainment mesh, there is a less clear distinction between types of content:

When electronic media – not just the internet, but radio and television as well – were in their infancies, the boundary lines were clearer. Journalism was journalism. Popular culture was popular culture. And we could easily tell which was which.... Now, though, the meanings of journalism have fallen into the hands of the media audience as it struggles to define what counts as journalism. (Berkowitz 290)

The media landscape is complex and difficult to traverse, and the main point I want to argue is that both readers and writers are failing to adequately apply critical thinking skills to the information we receive. This is the failure I want to analyze. We are fooled by fake news because we are not actively parsing the information we encounter. With the abundance of information, media consumption can no longer be passive.

In his book *True Enough*, Farhad Manjoo raises the stakes: “No longer are we merely holding opinions different from one another; we’re also holding different facts” (2). If society is

how Manjoo suggests, then the only way to reconcile these “different facts” is through an active and critical interaction with media.

# Satirical News Requires a Critical Audience

With satirical news, the line between the fake and the real is extremely blurred, and therefore becomes a notable form in this new journalistic paradigm shift. It is now more important than ever that a cautious and critical eye be taken towards all sources of information, whether real or fake. Satirical, soft, and fake news sources now have a substantial contribution to make to the media sphere, and also the possibility to inform.

Fake news—news as entertainment—is just another way to spark interest and converse about meaningful topics. Satirical news fosters critical thinking, and a desire to remain informed. To be read well, satire needs a critical lens, and this lens is what can allow us to be more thorough recipients of all types of media and information.

# Don't Believe Everything You Read—Why Critical Thinking is More Important than Truth in News

## Iraq War Ends

The Yes Men are a group of liberal pranksters who through impersonation attempt to ridicule large corporations and present an



alternative policy message. In one instance, the Yes Men helped create a completely fake version of the *New York Times* and distributed it in the subways of New York City as well as in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Washington. The paper promoted an ideal future and a revealing progressive agenda. Many believed that the paper was for real, and the according to a report by the *New York Times*<sup>1</sup>, “The spurious 14-page papers — with a headline “IRAQ WAR ENDS” — surprised commuters, many of whom took the free copies thinking they were legitimate” (Chan).

The seeming professionalism of the layout was enough to fool many people into seriously considering this fake edition of the *New York Times*. The articles were only a little far-fetched, and could easily fool the casual reader. Why would readers question the source anyways? This was the *New York Times*—a beacon of credibility amongst this mess of biased news sources.

This raises several intriguing and compelling questions: First, how do we know what to trust when we are consuming news? Can we trust any sources blindly? Is something correct just because a legitimate newspaper reported it? These are questions we will explore.

## Critical Reading and Media Literacy

Now that I have framed my analysis, it is time to examine some of the important relevant terms. Two keys to this discussion will be the understanding of critical thinking and media literacy. These are two related keywords that both operate on assumptions and strategies for interacting with the information we are presented with.

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<sup>1</sup> Yes, it is extremely ironic that the *New York Times* reported on a fake issue of the *New York Times*.

Critical thinking is the idea that you are actively engaging with and questioning the ideas you come into contact with. It means placing the current object of thought in context with your other knowledge, and realizing that some of the message is in what is not said. It means that you don't take information at face value, and you analyze its worth against a set of logical principles.

Media literacy is the application of these critical thinking skills towards the reception of media. Here is a list of teaching principles used in media literacy education classes:

1. Media literacy is education for life in a global media world.
2. The heart of media literacy is informed inquiry.
3. Media literacy is an alternative to censoring, boycotting, or blaming “the media.” (Galician 10)

Media literacy begins under the assumption that there are errors in all forms of media consumed, and puts the burden on the consumer to actively find these. It presumes that the media will blunder, and so the reader or viewer should always be wary and take as his or her responsibility the task of separating truth from false and real from fake.

This is no light task, as the media-literate mindset must be maintained at all times. Journalism and communication scholar Galician writes, “The attitude of the media literate citizen-consumer should be skeptical but not cynical. The approach of the journalist and the researcher should be employed: questioning and interrogating media messages without prejudice or preconception about the answers.” (10). Media literacy requires full-time detective work on the sources you are consuming.

Media literacy is a higher-level form of literacy that combines many analytical thinking skills and information-processing skills.

Media literacy, then, incorporates many elements from multiple literacies that are already central to today's education including information literacy, computer literacy, scientific literacy, and cultural literacy. In addition, media literacy builds critical-thinking, communication and technology skills. (Scheibe 61)

Media literacy is a perpetual and vigilant attitude, and there are several specific subcomponents that help define exactly what it is. Media literacy is a set of questions to always consider about the source you are consuming. It involves evaluating the information value and parsing out the bias or hidden agenda. Scheibe gives us a set of questions to consider:

1. Who made—and who sponsored the message, and what is their purpose?
2. Who is the target audience and how is the message specifically tailored to that audience?
3. What are the different techniques used to inform, persuade, entertain, and attract attention?
4. What messages are communicated (an/or implied) about certain people, places, events, behaviors, lifestyles, and so forth?
5. How current, accurate, and credible is the information in the message?
6. What is left out of the message that might be important to know? (63)

These questions are all centered on retrieving the non-obvious information about a source. It involves thinking about the production of the media for, its style, and its intention, and using these factors to alter the meaning of what is actually being said. This is a high-level contextualization activity, and one that can provide a fuller understanding of all media forms.

### Satirical News Promotes Media Literacy

Satirical news is a form that necessitates and emphasizes many of the media literacy goals I have explained previously. In satirical news, critical reading and media literacy are two of the most important aspects. Because of the deceptive and professional style, and as demonstrated by the many instances where people are fooled by fake news, it is clear that if you are not being watchful, you can get tricked.

According to the media reference book *Battleground: The Media*, satirical news can help create critical news consumers. “News satire’s potentially positive effects on its audience

include: (1) offering news-processing time, (2) making news accessible, and (3) teaching critical media literacy” (Anderson 298). It is this last aspect that deserves analysis now. Because of the nature of satirical news, most of what is said is false. But it takes media literacy—questioning the source and analytical thinking—to realize this. It is in this mindset that satirical news can contribute to an attentive public.

To sort through and make meaning of fake news, you must be actively thinking. However, this is not the case for standard “hard news.” By standard or hard news I will be referring to sources that try to present an objective viewpoint. Standard news is supposedly telling you exactly what happened, and when we believe this we let down our guard and are susceptible to being fooled. Consumption of standard news does not promote media literacy. “*The Daily Show* and other news satires may play a small role … in teaching media literacy” (Anderson 299). Anderson writes of importance of the “active audience” in news consumption, and it is exactly this “active audience” the satirical news promotes. We must be wary of the media, and Anderson writes, “Some of these warnings are offered by the media themselves, as good parody and satire. Some in particular operate as media literacy primers on media genres, as does *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* with the news” (35). Because of the necessarily alert and engaged nature of news satire, it is a prime location to teach criticism of sources—including most importantly itself. Satirical news must know its limits, and when we examine writers of satirical news we can see that more clearly.

## Seeking Truth in News

As it stands now, many people in the United States are not media literate. “We have more print and electronic media vehicles … than ever before, but we are actually *less* informed in many significant ways” (Galician 7). But satire can encourage media literacy.

What is the end goal of the news media? Is it to bring us the truth about what is going on? The news is failing to adequately do this, and I argue that what is more important is that news consumers can be critical of the news, so that they can develop a substantive picture of reality regardless of the type of information that is being broadcast. Although we like to think otherwise, news does not come with a quality guarantee, despite our brand loyalty.

Hard news is not necessarily a beacon of truth: “Fox News is the most popular cable news network in the United States, but that does not mean that it should be held up as an ideal model for news broadcasting the world over because of what it does to empower the American citizen” (Harrington 276). Real news has a definite bias and is also error prone.

With this knowledge, you are armed to take on any news source with all its faults and shortcomings. When you can think about the source and its goals, you will get a fuller picture than just by passively consuming what it says.

### **The Right Way to Be Informed: News vs. Entertainment**

As the media and journalism changes, the definition of what it means to be informed changes. Being informed used to consist of knowing a set of objective facts, but this is no longer the case. Press critic and professor David Mindich laments the generational shift away from consuming news and fears the coming of an uninformed public. He was disappointed to find that in his Media Law and Ethics class, 18 out of 23 students could not even name one Supreme

Court justice (Mindich ix). He worries because in the 1950s and 60s, “young people were *nearly* as informed about news and politics as their elders were” (ix). Mindich sees that young people are using the internet for “everything *but* news” (4), but what he doesn’t understand is that what counts as being informed and what counts as news is changing.

News is no longer just politics and knowing the names of justices. Facts are commodities now, because I, as the youth Mindich is attacking, argue that if I need to know who the justices are, I can find that information on the internet in two seconds. Because facts are easily accessible now, being informed does not consist of rote memorization of easily retrievable information.

Being informed now is about having a grasp and understanding of facts and culture. A majority of Americans don’t value in depth understanding of the news—most are “grazers” (“Audience Segments” 5). The public will decide what counts as being informed, not old men writing in old books. If it is culturally valuable to follow both *American Idol* and the election, then that counts as informed.

There is a breakdown of the old hierarchy of hard news. News and entertainment are merging in programs like *The Daily Show* and other satirical news publications. Carpin and Williams note the difficulty and arbitrariness in distinguishing between news and entertainment: “They opposite of *news* is not *entertainment*” (162). The tension between old and new journalism is the tension between news as information and news as a story. “The information model of journalism came to be associated with decency and truth, whereas the story model was relegated to a lesser, even immoral status” (Feldman 415). But this separation no longer exists, and the objective standard is being rethought. Feldman argues, “Journalists are instead recognizing that comedy and entertainment need not be incompatible with substantive journalism” (421).

Young people want to know about information that pertains to their lives, and this is why we can see the popularity of programs like *The Daily Show*. This sort of show—a mesh of politics, humor, and entertainment, is a central cultural convergence point. Feldman says, “Today’s youngest generations have grown up in a media world where the line between news and entertainment has never been clear; it only makes sense that these young people are drawn to a program that resists distinguishing between the two” (422). Old notions of being informed by facts alone are out. The changing definition of what counts means changing interests in news programming. Manjoo summarizes the debate nicely: “You can go so far as to say we’re now fighting over competing versions of reality” (2).

### **The Role of Satire**

I have made the argument that being informed is no longer about knowing facts, but about knowing what society values. This does not mean that there is no value to “hard news;” it means that the value needs to be reconciled with current cultural forces.

So what is the role of a satirical news source in this new journalistic landscape? How does it play a role in informing—or not informing the public?

### A Philosophical View: A Regulating Voice

A satirical newspaper should serve mainly to make people laugh and think about the important topics of the day. Is this enough to keep people informed? No. But it does serve another important function. This ability to poke fun at major institutions and politicians and

celebrities serves a moderating role in a democracy. The press should serve to check and balance the powers of the government, and in this way, satire should serve to check and balance the powers of the press. Who will press the press?

Satirical news can serve as a moderating voice in a society. It has the power to ridicule the government, as well as the people who are reporting on it. Because it is not striving towards truth, it has an uncanny ability to still report reality. The role of media in a democracy is to keep the public informed—a satirical source can serve a supplementary role.

### A Practical View: Comedy as a Gateway to Traditional Forms

More practically, however, satirical news is a popular phenomenon. Prior argues this is not the case (150), while Baum refutes his assessment by faulting his web-based survey that provides a large part of his evidence (“Political Knowledge” 173). I agree with Baum considering the increasing popularity of shows like *The Daily Show* (Trends 47), and also the relatively well-informed audience it entertains (“Audience Segments” 44). Because of its popularity, *The Daily Show* has the power to deliver a broad message, and at a time when news readership is declining, it is still important to have someone talking about news—even in a sideways manner.

Harrington argues that popular news serves an important function in popularizing journalism and dealing with complex issues. He writes, “Popularizing news is a noble cause in many respects, and we should celebrate the marvelous opportunities provided by it, but we still need to be critical of what becomes popular” (Harrington 280). Comedy is seen as entertainment, so according to Baum it is a “low cost” viewing option and draws people in. He

sees the possibility of having political information “piggyback” onto comedy shows to “allow individuals to learn about politics passively” (“Sex Lies” 96).

Many have argued that satirical news can serve as a gateway back to traditional news (Feldman; Young; Tisinger; Baum), and this can serve real importance if one is worried about the decline of hard news. Baum argues in *Soft News Goes To War* with his “Gateway Hypothesis,” the idea that “People who attend to information about a political issue in a soft news context are more likely to subsequently pay attention to the issue in a traditional news context” (48). Baum’s “Gateway Hypothesis” is a highly popular idea in this area of academia—and I find it has many compelling points. The main important element of this theory is contextualizing—it can provide some background interest in the theme. It is also argued this works in both directions; satire causes curiosity about real news, and vice versa (Baum “Public Opinion”; Feldman, and Young). Feldman and Young write, “Here soft news programming appears to have provided viewers with a cursory understanding of foreign crises, motivating them to attend to coverage of this topic in traditional news television broadcasts (403).

This makes sense, especially in terms of youth, because the reason people were not attending to political information was because they were not interested. Middle school and high school students found television news to be “boring, repetitive, and lacking in entertainment value” and also irrelevant to their own lives (Feldman 408). If comedy programs can spark interest, then they can also serve as an entry-point to discover current events issues.

What we find then is that satirical news provides a gateway to the news much like the internet does—by incidental contact and involvement with the themes (“Trends” 45). Baum writes, “Many Americans who previously ignored politics now attend to *some* information about major political events, such as wars, via the soft news media” (“Soft News and Foreign Policy”

117). As Baum writes, “Soft news coverage of politics is becoming mainstream (“Soft News and Foreign Policy” 143), and in this way it is making the political topics relevant and accessible to a large audience.

### An Overview: Satire as a Supplement Rather than a Replacement

Throughout the paragraphs I have been praising the many advantages of satirical news; its popularity, accessibility, ability to raise tough issues and ridicule the system—but it is certainly not the solution to every issue raised by the new media transformation.

Satirical news provides an alternative and moderating perspective—but if that alone were the only perspective, we would encounter the same problems as before. It is important to have many opinions in the marketplace of ideas, and satirical news is just another one of those sources with a slightly different take.

There is disagreement about the substantive content of satirical shows like *The Daily Show*. Fox, Koloen, and Sahin find that “the average amounts of video and audio substance in the broadcast network news stories were not significantly different than the average amounts of visual and audio substance in *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart stories about the presidential election.” Their overall evaluation of the program is that it is just as substantive as traditional news:

The findings should allay at least some of the concerns about the growing reliance on this nontraditional source of political information, as it is just as substantive as the source that Americans have relied upon for decades for political news and information.

However, Niven et al. find that late night comedy programs have no substantive content, focus on the same individual traits, and rarely talk about the issues. The substantive content of

comedy programs is up for debate, but I argue that the most meaningful part of them is as a means to provoke interest in controversial and timely topics.

Satirical news definitely approaches many relevant policy subjects, and Baum writes, “Indeed, *soft news programs have covered every major U.S. foreign military crisis since 1990*” (“Sex, Lies” 93). Moreover, many viewers believe that they get a lot of political information from satirical news sources like *The Daily Show*, although they are at times to admit that a comedy program is their primary source (Wells 1283). What becomes evident is that regardless of the substantive content, satirical news tackles the issues. At times fake news can incidentally inform, but more importantly, it is popularizing important current events, and serves as a necessary supplement to other media forms.

## Criticism and Limits of Satirical News

### You’re Cynical and Uninformed

Critics claim that satirical news makes people cynical and that many rely primarily on satirical news as a source of information. In 2004, “Bill O’Reilly suggested that *The Daily Show’s* viewers were learning all of their news from the show” (Andersen 297). Even more biting and amusing is that Hart and Hartelius find Jon Stewart guilty of “political heresy” because he has engaged in “unbridled political cynicism” and “plants in the [Children of Democracy] false knowledge” (263). The main argument of my paper is that satirical news promotes critical thinking, and even the worst critical thinker realizes that *The Daily Show* is a joke. Additionally, Young and Tisigner find that:

Contrary to popular wisdom, young people are not watching late-night comedy as their exclusive source of news or instead of traditional news. Rather, they are watching both.

In fact, watching late-night comedy is positively and significantly correlated with watching almost all forms of traditional news examined here, even when controlling for other variables. (128)

This suggests that the supplementary idea I postulated earlier is correct. Satire serves the most useful purpose when paired with and contextualized by legitimate news. Baumgartner and Morris criticize the cynicism caused by satirical news. They write, “We contend that the result for young viewers is a more cynical perspective of the news media’s ability to fairly and accurately cover politics” (346).

Jon Stewart, the target of these critiques, has another take on this cynical viewer:

“It’s so interesting to me that people talk about late-night comedy being cynical. What’s more cynical than forming an ideological news network like Fox and calling it ‘fair and balanced’? What we do, I almost think, is adorable in its idealism. It’s quaint.” (Rich)

After examining the situation, I have come to the conclusion that when critics use cynical to describe the audience of *The Daily Show* and other comedic programs, they are just getting overhyped on a negative euphemism for alertness. A program that calls out the contradictions of government officials is not cynical, but more aware.

### The Limits of Satire

If you examine the perspectives of the writers of *The Daily Show* and other satirical publications, it becomes clear that they are highly aware, possibly even more so, of its limits than those who praise it. Baym writes that, “The show’s host, comedian Jon Stewart, and his co-producers label their work as “fake news,” and insist that their agenda is simply “to make people laugh”” (260).

I spoke over video-chat with Steve Bodow, the head writer for *The Daily Show*, and he said that their job wasn't to break news, but to be funny and add perspective. When asked if people could become informed from his show, he replied that they could "become narrowly informed of certain things," but he was overall very suspicious of people getting news from the show.

He had no delusions that *The Daily Show* was the news. He knew what it was, and knew its place. He said, "*The Daily Show* exposes what's fake about the news." He highlighted the idea that the show could be a watchdog of the media, but also realized the importance of a critical eye towards all media sources.

At the show, they don't feel a responsibility to the public to provide people with news, because that isn't their goal. This doesn't mean that the side effects we examined and incidental positive externalities don't exist. *The Daily Show* does interest people in politics.

These writers need to be informed to some level about what is going on in order to joke about it. They don't actually need to know what is going on, just what is funny about what is going on. This still can provide some utility because it is important to have this engagement with politics.

The show encourages the active viewer, mostly in the sense that people want to get the jokes, so they will learn about the topic. Stewart said, "If [kids] came to our show without knowledge, it wouldn't make any sense to them" (Feldman and Young 403). The show presupposes an intelligent audience, and this way can stay part of the entertainment-news cycle.

Andersen and Gray write, "Critics of *The Daily Show* have often overlooked the degree to which many of its jokes require a fair knowledge of the news to understand and appreciate what is being said in the first place. Behind Stewart's tomfoolery is often a sophisticated analysis

or discussion of the news that assumes foreknowledge of the players and issues involved" (298).

The show is not devoid of content, and also not made for a dumb audience.

## **Conclusion**

After reviewing the many sources, it is clear what is at stake. Newspaper readership is declining drastically, and people are seeking to get their news from other sources. As this happens, alternative soft news sources like *The Daily Show* are becoming more popular. After investigation, it is clear that *The Daily Show* has much to contribute to the public's intake of information—mainly its role along with other satirical news sources in promoting critical thinking.

The state of the informed nation is also at stake, but I argue that what counts as informed is changing, and that we are leaving an old notion where being informed was to know a set of political facts and dates. Being informed now means knowing a set of cultural as well as current events, because entertainment has merged with news. With the accessibility of the internet and the myriad sources of information—the most crucial part of consuming the media is the promotion of the active and attentive reader or viewer.

Satirical news sources are initially attractive for their entertainment value, and this lures people into thinking about and discussing relevant themes. In this way satire is able to promote being traditionally informed and lead people back to standard news sources.

Satire is not about facts or objectivity, but is about the feeling we get when we actively observe the news. Satirical news can have a critical view and expose the ridiculous nature of public policy, but it cannot inform you in the traditional sense. There is no one source that can

inform you, and this is the most important part of the critical thinking and media literacy that I believe satirical news promotes. We need to be wary of the bias of all types of news—whether satirical, op-ed, or traditional reporting.

If there is a problem in the media now, it is not with a public turned cynical by satire. Satire encourages critical thinking and careful examination of current events. Satire is not responsible for cynicism or the transformation of the informed youth. The key is our ability to read critically, and apply this to all domains of media.

### The Role of a Campus Newspaper

What is the function of a satirical publication in affecting readers? Does it do anything more than provide jokes? I have tried to convince you that what a satirical newspaper can do is offer a poignant perspective about compelling issues and encourage people to find out more for themselves. *The Stanford Flipside* can hopefully provide a humorous view of the campus, but at the same time offer a subtle critique in a manner different from standard publications. The fact that satirical news has been mistaken for truth only lends more credibility to the idea of humor as a mirror and a critic. Satire serves as a voice, a declaration of values, and an alternative introduction into the larger world of ideas.

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