

PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA
DE VALPARAÍSO
FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA Y EDUCACIÓN
INSTITUTO DE LITERATURA Y CIENCIAS
DEL LENGUAJE



PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD
CATOLICA
DE VALPARAISO

**WE ARE WHAT WE LAUGH AT: AMERICAN CULTURE
THROUGH TV COMEDY SHOWS.
AN ELECTIVE WORKSHOP FOR JUNIOR AND SENIOR
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS.**

**Trabajo de Titulación para optar al Grado de Licenciado en
Educación y al Título de Profesor de Inglés**

Profesor Guía:
Ricardo Benítez

Alumno:
Dominique Stephania Loyola Bobadilla

Viña del Mar, Diciembre - 2015

INTRODUCTION

As English is the most popular second language (Elsherif, 2013), there is an ever-growing need for learning it in today's globalized world. Learning a language consists not only in studying functions, grammar, and words but also in studying the culture in which language is embedded.

For the purpose of this project, culture will be defined as “the evolving way of life of a group of persons, consisting of a shared set of practices associated with a shared set of products, based upon a shared set of perspectives of the world, and set within a specific social context” (Moran, 2001:24).

Learners need to understand the culture if they want to understand the language. As stated by Moran (2001), “members of the culture have created the language to carry out all their cultural products, and to name the underlying cultural perspectives in all the various communities that comprise their culture.” For this reason, culture should be an essential element of all language teaching programs. However, many times, they only focus on linguistic elements and the development and mastery of the four language skills, leaving culture aside. This is the case of the MINEDUC's English programs, in which culture is only mentioned in the Fundamental Cross-Curricular Objectives (OFT) in terms of ethical training: “Respeto y valoración de modos de ser, pensar y valorar de otras culturas, y el cuestionamiento de estereotipos, discriminaciones y mitos que se construyen respecto de las mismas” (Programas MINEDUC Tercer y Cuarto Medio, 2004).

The present project aims to fill this language-and-culture gap as well as the void of humor as both a topic and a tool for culture learning.

COMEDY AND CULTURE LEARNING

Comedy has been around since at least the ancient Greeks, when it was used by comic poets at theaters to criticize political and social issues, often in a satirical way. Comedy has always been part of our lives. But, what is comedy? According to <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com>, comedy has at least two meanings;

“professional entertainment consisting of jokes and satirical sketches, intended to make an audience laugh”, and “a movie, play, or broadcast program intended to make an audience laugh.”

So, how does comedy relate to culture? Comedy is a creation of human beings; therefore, it is a product of culture. As any other cultural product, it is a carrier of meaning, which means it reflects cultural perspectives. As a consequence, comedy mirrors “perceptions, beliefs, values, and attitudes that underline the products and that guide persons and communities in the practices of the culture” (Moran, 2001:25).

This helps to explain why different cultures have different expectations of comedy: in different cultures, people laugh at different things. This is related to a fundamental element of comedy: humor. According to the site <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com>, humor is defined as “the quality of being amusing or comic, especially as expressed in literature or speech” and as “the ability to express humor or make other people laugh.” So humor, on one hand, is the quality or ability to make someone laugh. On the other hand, and according to *Cambridge Dictionaries Online*, humor is also “the ability to find things funny” or “the way in which people see that some things are funny.” What we laugh at will depend on several variables, such as geographical location, maturity, level of education, context, personality, and, of course, culture.

In order to understand why persons of a determined culture laugh at what they laugh, we need to examine the perspectives and cultural references that lie behind the comedy they do and like.

Why teach culture through comedy? Comedy is entertaining, interesting and controversial but, most important, it “assumes knowledge of certain basic aspects of society and human nature and makes us laugh by exaggerating and distorting them” (Comedy, Satire and Society, 2000). Therefore, if we take a look at the things comedy is making fun of, we can get an idea of the cultural aspects they are representing.

The general objective of the course herein proposed is that through the examination of different types of American TV comedy shows, students will be able

to both discern and justify the correlations between the elements of the U.S. culture portrayed and the types of humor involved in each type of comedy. In addition, the students will be able to compare and contrast elements of American and Chilean humor.

This workshop is designed for junior and senior high school students for three main reasons: first, students should present a high level of language proficiency in order to understand the language used in the materials and to be able to express their thoughts on the topics; second, the average age of the students will allow the use of more complex material, which requires a considerable world knowledge; and third, students of their age are more capable of processing information about culture as they have been more exposed to culture than students of lower levels.

The reason for choosing American TV shows is that they are more accessible and popular among teenagers. Unlike British or Australian shows, the language and accents tend to be more familiar and easier to follow for the same reasons.

This course is thought of as an elective workshop because it is intended to enrich the EFL curriculum and not to replace other contents. Besides, making it part of the regular curriculum might take the fun out of the topic.

In order to achieve the objectives, the workshop will be structured around four types of comedy shows –stand-up comedy, sitcoms, news satire and sketches, and humor. Consequently, the syllabus designed for the workshop will be topic-based, and will be organized into five units; each one about one of the four types of comedy aforementioned, as well as a unit about American humor.

Unit 1 will deal with sitcoms or “situation comedies”. Sitcoms refer to regular TV programs “in which recurring characters take part in humorous story lines centered on a common environment, such as a family home or workplace” (“Encyclopedia Britannica”, n.d.).

Unit 2 will cover sketch comedy, which is defined by <http://www.about.com/entertainment/> as “a show made up of short self-contained comedic segments, called sketches, that last about 3-10 minutes each. Unlike sitcoms, sketch comedies generally don’t feature ongoing characters and situations, and they have actors playing multiple characters in each episode”.

Unit 3 will deal with news satire. Satire is defined by the Encyclopedia Britannica (n.d.) as an “artistic form, chiefly literary and dramatic, in which human or individual vices, follies, abuses, or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony, parody, caricature, or other methods, sometimes with an intent to inspire social reform”. In the case of News Satire, news programs and journalism are parodied; but more important, the news themselves are parodied. This allows the comedians to address, to expose and criticize controversial national and international issues or individuals, especially in the context of politics.

Unit 4 will cover stand-up comedy. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica (n.d.), stand-up comedy is “comedy that generally is delivered by a solo performer speaking directly to the audience in some semblance of a spontaneous manner.” This type of comedy allows comedians to tackle everyday topics such as routines, work, relationships, etc.

Finally, Unit 5 will cover all the elements involved in American humor, as well as the review of five theories of humor presented by Rastogi (2011): The Superiority Theory, which suggests that we laugh when a joke makes us feel superior to others; the Incongruity and Incongruity-Resolution Theory, which claims “humor happens when there is an incongruity between what we expect and what actually happens”; the Benign Violation Theory, which states that “we laugh when something is violated — like morals, social codes, linguistic norms, or personal dignity — but the violation isn't threatening”; the Mechanical Theory, which mentions that “it is inadaptability or rigidity — the repetitive nature of our personalities — that is the source of humor”; and finally, the Release Theory, which points out that we laugh “in order to release sexual or aggressive tension.”

Each unit will be divided into two lessons associated with the categories of critical thinking proposed by Numrich (as cited by Beaumont, 2003): Tasks focused on the students’ world, tasks focused on the text, and tasks focused beyond the text. This way, the students’ language and critical skills will be gradually challenged and developed as they explore the topics (Beaumont, 2003).

In each unit, students will have to perform different tasks that will allow them to arrive at a full understanding of the topics explored. These tasks will include

observing the different scenarios and topics portrayed in American TV comedy shows, identifying assumptions, expressing opinions, distinguishing relevant details, comparing and contrasting, making inferences and hypothesizing, reflecting, and reevaluating assumptions, among others.

These tasks are expected to help students develop their critical thinking skills, i.e. “the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action” (Scriven & Paul, 2013).

This type of syllabus enables the students to use their four skills in an integrated manner in order to examine the topics and develop their cultural competence in the matter by stating their opinions and applying critical thinking to the issues discussed. The reasons for adopting an integrated-skills approach are various. In the first place, and according to Oxford (2001), this approach promotes the use of a variety of language skills in normal communication, considering language not as the object of study but as a tool for learning content. In the second place, it “exposes English language learners to authentic language and challenges them to interact naturally in the language.” This way, English becomes a real means of interaction and not a mere subject of study. Lastly, it can be “highly motivating to students of all ages and backgrounds.”

The topics and the materials will focus on areas or themes that students can relate to their prior knowledge and to their own cultural background and that are relevant to their needs and their interests.

To sum up, although teaching culture through comedy may be seen as teaching it in a superficial way, this project is a good opportunity for students to elucidate how the societal elements shape American comedy and set it off from comedy in other cultures. This way, comedy will serve as a window to American society. As stated by Snellinx (2009), “humour is highly culture-bound. Each country has its own particular brand of humour and what is funny in one place, is not necessarily funny somewhere else.” For this reason, it is important to make the students aware of the cultural aspects that make Americans laugh at what they laugh.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

The basis of this project is that students can learn about American culture through comedy. In order to collect the students' view on the topic, their needs in terms of culture learning, and their abilities, a needs analysis questionnaire was designed (See Appendix).

The questionnaire was applied to a total of thirty-two high school students from Umbral de Curauma School: seventeen senior students and fifteen junior students. The answers from the questionnaire provided an insight about the students' views on culture learning, their learning preferences, their language abilities and their personal attitudes.

When asked about learning about other cultures, 94% of the students agreed on the statement that it is necessary to know about other cultures. In a similar way, 75% of the students consider that studying culture is essential when learning a language. This suggests that the students are aware of the importance of culture when it comes to language learning. As stated by Kramsch (as cited in Rose, 2003, Intercultural awareness section), "If...language is seen as social practice, culture becomes the very core of language teaching."

As to whether culture is taught as part of the English classes, the answers were varied: 37,5% of the students claimed that culture is part of the English learning curriculum of their school, while 50% partially agreed with the statement, and 12,5% of them indicates that it is not taught as part of the English classes.

Regarding the students' views on humor as tool for studying culture, 62,5% stated that learning culture through humor is easier and more engaging, 31,25% of the students partially agreed, and only 6, 25% of them do not agree with the statement. This suggests that the students have a positive attitude towards humor as a learning tool. According to Peachey (2004), "the humour of a nation or individual is an integral part of that person or nation's culture and we need to help students to appreciate the humour in order to help them understand the culture and language", and one way to do this is through TV comedy shows.

In relation to this last point, 68,8% of the students declared to watch TV comedy shows in English. However, only 50% of them indicated that they understand and enjoy American humor, while 31,3% said that they understood it or enjoy it sometimes, and 18,7% do not understand or enjoy American humor.

When it comes to the students' respect and tolerance, a high percentage (75%) stated that they respect cultural differences while 9,4% of the students declared that they do not respect cultural or personal differences. Besides broadening the students' cultural knowledge, this project also seeks to help the students develop their intellectual empathy, described by www.criticalthinking.org as "consciousness of the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others in order to genuinely understand them"; and their fair-mindedness, defined as "consciousness of the need to treat all viewpoints alike, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community or nation" (Valuable Intellectual Virtues, 2004).

Finally, the last question asked them to give their opinion on whether it is possible to learn about a specific culture through humor or not. Although there were a couple of answers that object to the possibility of learning culture through humor, stating that culture is a serious topic, so it should be taught in a serious way, most answers were positive, indicating that through TV shows like *The Big Bang Theory*, *Friends* or *Two and a Half Men*, they have learned so much about American culture to the extent that they can understand their sense of humor. They also mentioned that humor is culture-specific and that it transcends generations. Furthermore, they stated that it is possible to learn about a culture through humor because it represents each culture's ways of thinking, their behavior, and their attitudes in a way that can get a laugh if understood. These opinions show that the students are aware of the relevance of learning about a culture.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

General Objective:

Through the examination of different types of American TV comedy shows, students will be able to both discern and justify the correlations between the elements of the U.S. culture portrayed and the types of humor involved in each type of comedy.

	Lesson	Specific Objectives	Activities
Unit 1: Sitcoms	1	To identify core values of the American culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Sharing background knowledge about sitcoms· Exploring and clarifying assumptions or beliefs about sitcoms· Predicting topics from snapshots· Listening and watching clips from sitcoms· Distinguishing relevant details· Writing a short text
	2	To distinguish elements of American culture from Chilean culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Listening and watching clips from American and Chilean sitcoms· Identifying essential elements of each one· Comparing the similarities· Contrasting the differences· Making inferences from the cultural differences· Synthesizing information
Unit 2: Sketch-comedy	1	To examine the types of humor used on American sitcoms as opposed to sketch-comedy shows.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Sharing background knowledge· Reading about types of humor· Listening and watching clips from sketch-comedy shows· Distinguishing relevant details· Identifying types of humor on each type of comedy· Comparing the similarities· Contrasting the differences· Making inferences from the reasons behind the differences· Discussing ideas

	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · To evaluate the influence of sketch-comedy shows on controversial issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Listening and watching clips from sketch-comedy shows · Determining the purpose of sketch-comedy · Reading pieces of news about the topics · Discussing implications and consequences · Giving and justifying their opinion
Unit 3: News satire	1	To break down news satire shows into its essential parts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Sharing background knowledge about news satire shows · Exploring and clarifying assumptions or beliefs · Listening and watching clips from news satire shows · Distinguishing relevant details · Comparing different news satire shows · Identifying core elements · Categorizing elements · Expressing and sharing opinions
	2	To evaluate the effects of mocking controversial issues in American culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Listening and watching clips from news satire shows · Identifying and analyze uses of irony · Interpreting meaning · Reading pieces of news about the topics · Making inferences of the purpose and effects · Raising questions · Comparing perspectives, interpretations, or theories
Unit 4: Stand-up comedy	1	To analyze the topics, persons and values depicted by stand-up comedians.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Exploring and clarifying assumptions or beliefs · Listening and watching clips from stand-up comedy routines · Distinguishing relevant details · Contrasting different routines · Raising questions · Discussing ideas

			· Synthesizing information
	2	To determine the role of comedy in American culture.	· Listening and watching clips from stand-up comedy routines · Distinguishing relevant details · Comparing and contrasting different types of comedy. · Making inferences of the purpose and effects · Writing a short text
Unit 5 - American Humor	1	To formulate a theory about why Americans laugh at what they laugh.	· Collecting information and relevant details from the previous units. · Reading about the hypothesis of what make people laugh · Raising questions · Hypothesizing · Comparing perspectives, interpretations, or theories
	2	To explain why Americans laugh at what they laugh.	· Justifying arguments · Analyzing and evaluating arguments, interpretations, hypothesizes and facts · Synthesizing information · Writing a short essay

EVALUATION

The workshop will be assessed in the following way:

In-class participation in discussions, and asking questions	70%	Throughout the course
Writing assignments	30%	Lessons 1.1, 4.2 and 5.2

CLASS PARTICIPATION RUBRIC

Name: _____

	Criteria				Points
	4	3	2	1	
Attendance/ Promptness	Student is always prompt and regularly attends classes.	Student is late to class once every two weeks and regularly attends classes.	Student is late to class more than once every two weeks and regularly attends classes.	Student is late to class more than once a week and/or has poor attendance of classes.	
Level Of Engagement In Class	Student proactively contributes to class by offering ideas and asking questions more than once per class.	Student proactively contributes to class by offering ideas and asking questions once per class.	Student rarely contributes to class by offering ideas and asking questions.	Student never contributes to class by offering ideas and asking questions.	
Relevance	Contributions enhance lesson or discussion, asking key questions, or taking the discussion to another level.	Contributions are related to the topic and some support is provided, at least in general ways.	Comments may only repeat what has been already said, or may sidetrack discussion from time to time.	Comments are not related to topic at hand, or go back to previous part of discussion or question.	
Listening Skills	Student listens when others talk, both in groups and in class. Student incorporates or builds off of the ideas of others.	Student listens when others talk, both in groups and in class.	Student does not listen when others talk, both in groups and in class.	Student does not listen when others talk, both in groups and in class. Student often interrupts when others speak.	
Total					

Comments: _____

(Adapted from www.teach-nology.com)

WRITING RUBRIC

Name: _____

	Criteria				Points
	4	3	2	1	
Content/ Ideas	The text introduces a precise claim that is clearly arguable and takes an identifiable position on an issue.	The text introduces a claim that is arguable and takes a position.	The text contains an unclear or emerging claim that suggests a vague position.	The text contains an unidentifiable claim or vague position.	
Argumentation	The text provides convincing and relevant arguments to back up the claim.	The text provides sufficient arguments to back up the claim.	The text provides arguments that attempt to back up the claim.	The text contains limited arguments related to the claim.	
Organization	Information in logical, interesting sequence which reader can follow.	Student presents information in logical sequence which reader can follow.	Reader has difficulty following work because student jumps around.	Sequence of information is difficult to follow.	
Grammar and Spelling	Presentation has no misspellings or grammatical errors.	Presentation has no more than two misspellings and/or grammatical errors.	Presentation has three misspellings and/or grammatical errors.	Work has four or more spelling errors and/or grammatical errors.	
Total					

Comments: _____

(Adapted from www.teach-nology.com)

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

Unit 1: SITCOMS

HOW I MET YOUR FRIENDS

BEFORE WATCHING

- Brainstorm ideas with your classmates about the following questions:
 - ✚ What comes to your mind when you hear the word “sitcoms”?
 - ✚ What sitcoms do you know/have you watched?
 - ✚ What do they have in common?
- You are going to watch a clip from one of the most popular U.S. sitcoms: *Friends*. Look at the snapshots from the clip and predict what you think it will be about.



WHILE WATCHING

- Were your predictions correct? What is the clip about? Make a brief summary.
- Discuss:
 - What are situations portrayed? Are they daily situations or uncommon events?
 - What activities or elements suggest that it is an U.S. TV show? Explain.

- Now you are going to watch a clip from another popular American sitcom: *How I Met Your Mother*. Look at the snapshots from the clip and predict what you think it will be about.



- Were your predictions correct? What is the clip about? Make a brief summary.
- What do you think will happen next? Why?
- Did you guess correctly? Did you expect that ending? Why/why not?
- What do you think about the way Canada is portrayed? Do you think there is a real chivalry between Canada and the USA?

AFTER WATCHING

Answer the following questions:

- Are the two sitcoms similar? Why/why not?
- How would you describe a U.S. sitcom to someone who has never watched or heard of one?
- What values or attitudes do the characters represent? Name at least one for each character.
- From those values or attitudes, which ones do you think best represent the U.S. culture?
- According to Barney from HIMYM, what does it mean to be "American"?
- Now, watch the two clips again and note down situations containing irony or mocking.
- Why do you think they use this device in sitcoms?

BEING "AMERICAN"

WRITING

- From your point of view, what does it mean to be "American"?

Write a short paragraph (no more than 150 words), and then share your ideas with your classmates.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slightly textured appearance and is set against a dark background.

REFLECTION

- What do you know now that you didn't know before?
- Did any of the situations on the clips seem shocking or unusual to you? Why/why not?
- Are these situations similar to or different from common situations in your country?
- Have your perceptions or attitudes towards the American culture changed after watching these clips from sitcoms? Why/why not?

Unit 2: SKETCH-COMEDY

OBAMACARE AND GUN CONTROL

BEFORE STARTING

- Get together with a classmate and discuss the following questions:
 - What do you think are the most controversial issues in the U.S.? Classify them into areas such as politics, economy, healthcare, social issues, etc.
 - Are those controversial issues similar or different from the ones in your country? What do you think is the reason for that?
- Now read the following extract about ObamaCare:

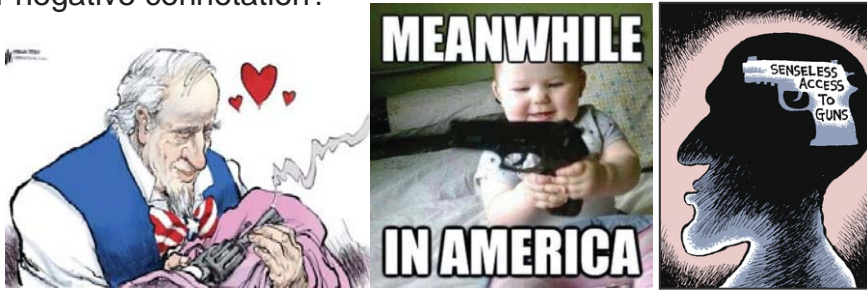
ObamaCare, officially called *the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act*, is a health care reform law signed in 2010 by President Barack Obama. Many of the law's provisions are already in effect and the rest continue to roll out until 2022.

Beyond the new benefits, rights, and protections to curb healthcare spending and improve healthcare and health insurance, important Affordable Care Act provisions include: a mandate for most Americans to have insurance by 2014, a mandate for large employers to provide insurance, the expansion of Medicaid, and the opening of Health Insurance Marketplaces to help subsidize private insurance. (Taken from *Obamacarefacts.com*)

- From what you just read, do you think ObamaCare is a controversial issue for Americans? Why/why not?
- Look at the images depicting ObamaCare, do they have a positive or negative connotation?



- Now look at the images depicting gun control in the U.S., do they have a positive or negative connotation?



- Compare your assumptions with the results of a poll conducted in the U.S. in 2014 about Americans' satisfactions with gun laws:

This year, the gap between those wanting stricter gun laws and those wanting less strict laws narrowed as a result of a sharp increase in the percentage of Americans who want less strict laws, now at 16% up from 5% a year ago. Support for making gun laws stricter fell to 31% from 38% last January. (Adapted from "Americans' Dissatisfaction With Gun Laws Highest Since 2001," 2014)

- Are Americans pro or against stricter gun control laws?
- Now you're going to watch two clips from the show *Saturday Night Live* depicting critical issues in the U.S. Pay close attention to the uses of irony and mocking in the clips.

WHILE WATCHING

- How do these sketches approach the controversial issues? Do you think it is appropriate to depict those topics that way? Why/why not?
- What do you think is the purpose of these sketches? Why?
- Is there similar TV shows in Chile? Do they address controversial topics? Name at least 3.

AFTER WATCHING

Answer the following questions:

- In your opinion, what could be the consequences of depicting serious issues in such a light and humorous way? Explain.

- Read the following extracts from two pieces of news about the topics:

Extract 1

Just as President Barack Obama's embattled U.S. healthcare law hits a milestone on Monday, NBC's "Saturday Night Live" mocked the administration's efforts to reach young "invincibles" with its varied social media efforts. The opening skit had the president, played by Jay Pharoah, pose with an e-cigarette on Instagram, shoot a selfie photo with reality TV star Kim Kardashian, dance with Pope Francis for a Vine video -- and make out with actress Kate McKinnon playing Justin Bieber.

Monday is the end of Obamacare's first enrollment wave, and the administration likely will not come that close to its goal of signing up 7 million people in private health insurance. Despite a last minute push, the law likely will have just over 6 million enrolled, and there remains much confusion over how many among that number have paid their first premiums. (Taken from "'Saturday Night Live' Mocks Obama's ObamaCare Youth Outreach," 2014)

Extract 2

Comedian Amy Schumer stirred controversy as she took on gun control in her first Saturday Night Live appearance this weekend.

In a fake public service announcement, Schumer lampooned the prevalence of guns in America. In the skit, she said: "Guns. Guns are there. In little moments and in big ones. From first loves, to new beginnings, wherever life takes you, guns, we're here to stay."

Some saw the parody as edgy and hilarious. Others thought it came too soon after the massacre at the Oregon community college earlier this month.

In one unscientific online poll, 83 percent said it was in good humor 17 percent said it went too far, according to NBC News. (Taken from "Amy Schumer takes on gun control during controversial 'SNL' skit," 2015)

- Form groups of three and discuss the following questions. Support your opinion with at least 3 arguments, and then share your positions with your classmates.
 - According to what you just read, do you think comedy is an appropriate and effective tool to shed light on national or international critical issues? Why/why not?
 - Do you think comedy can have an impact on Americans' points of view towards national or international issues? How?
 - Are public health care and gun control controversial issues in Chile?

REFLECTION

Tick the statement that best represent your opinion:

By the end of this lesson, ...	I agree	I partially agree	I disagree
I understood most of what I read.			
I understood most of what I heard.			
I was able to express my opinions effectively.			
My assumptions about American controversial topics have changed.			
I was able to notice the influence of culture in American comedy.			
I was able to notice the influence of comedy in American culture.			

Unit 3: NEWS SATIRE

BREAKING NEWS



BEFORE STARTING

- **Get together with a classmate and discuss the following statements:**

- ✚ News programs should be serious.
- ✚ News programs and their anchors should be objective.
- ✚ News programs should be educational.

- Now you are going to watch 4 short clips from news satire shows: two from *The Colbert Report*, and two from *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*.

WHILE WATCHING

Answer the following questions:

- What are the topics discussed? Are they complex, sensitive, common, or ordinary? Explain your answer
- Notice and write down the uses of irony and mocking. Do they affect the delivery of the news? Why/why not?
- Why do you think they used irony and mocking to depict national and international matters?
- Do you think it is appropriate to mock at serious or controversial topics? Justify.

AFTER WATCHING

Discuss the following questions with the class:

- Do the anchor's personal points of view interfere with the objectivity with which the news should be presented?
- Could fake news shows be considered educational? Do you think this type of shows helps educate voters about political issues and candidates?
- Do you think news satire shows depict American society objectively or do they over-criticize it? Justify.
- If there was a Chilean news satire, what topics or persons would it depict? How would they be portrayed? Do you think people will laugh?
- Read the following extracts from news articles about the topics in the videos:

Extract 1

After 90-year-old is arrested, Florida judge halts law that restricts feeding the homeless.

On Tuesday, a Florida circuit court judge temporarily halted a controversial ordinance that restricts charities from feeding the homeless in public. The ruling arrived several days after the most recent arrest of Arnold Abbott, a 90-year-old World War II veteran who has for years run a nonprofit devoted to feeding the city's homeless population.

Abbott seemed to have public opinion on his side. For starters, his fight was featured on the Colbert Report last month.

"I say if the homeless want to eat, they should do it in the privacy of wherever those people live," Colbert sarcastically chimed.

This weekend, around 100 demonstrators pooled outside Fort Lauderdale's federal courthouse to protest the ordinance. The group marched several blocks and served pizza to members of the city's homeless community, according to NBC 6. (Adapted from the article "After 90-Year-Old Is Arrested, Florida Judge Halts Law That Restricts Feeding the Homeless.")

Extract 2

Jon Stewart Explains When It's OK To Shoot People Who've Offended You.

The shooting in Texas over cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad had "Daily Show" host Jon Stewart going over some common sense rules about when it's acceptable to shoot people who've offended you.

The answer of course is never. But clearly, not everyone has received the message.

(Adapted from the article “Jon Stewart Explains When It's OK To Shoot People Who've Offended You.”)

[illegible]

REFLECTION

Tick the statement that best represents your opinion:

By the end of this lesson, ...	I agree	I partially agree	I disagree
I understood most of what I read.			
I understood most of what I heard.			
I was able to express my opinions effectively.			
My assumptions about American controversial topics have changed.			
I was able to notice the influence of comedy on American culture.			
I was able to notice how people's motivations and behavior are shaped by their cultural background.			

REFERENCES

Ancient Greece - Classical Literature. (n.d.). Retrieved September 26, 2015, from <http://www.ancient-literature.com/greece.html>

Beaumont, J. (2003). A Sequence of Critical Thinking Tasks. *TESOL Journal*, 427-448. Retrieved October 10, 2015, from <http://cms.education.gov.il/nr/rdonlyres/fb78f489-ebea-4771-b660-f49cfb0e9029/121131/beaumont.pdf>

Comedy. (n.d.). In *Oxford Dictionaries - Dictionary, Thesaurus, & Grammar*. Retrieved September 25, 2015, from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/comedy>

Elsherif, I. (2013). Globalization as Inspiration. In *Adventuring in the Englishes: Language and literature in a postcolonial globalized world*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Foundation for Critical Thinking. (2004). Valuable Intellectual Virtues. Retrieved November 19, 2015, from <http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/valuable-intellectual-traits/528>

Higher Still Development Unit (2000) *Classical Studies: Comedy, Satire and Society (Advance Higher)* Retrieved September 26, 2015, from http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/ComedySatireandSocietyAH_tcm4-477318.doc

Holley, P. (2014, December 3). After 90-Year-Old Is Arrested, Florida Judge Halts Law That Restricts Feeding the Homeless. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved December 3, 2015, from <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-37459885.html?>

Humor. (n.d.). In *Cambridge Free English Dictionary and Thesaurus*. Retrieved September 25, 2015, from <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/humor>

Humor. (n.d.). In *Oxford Dictionaries - Dictionary, Thesaurus, & Grammar*. Retrieved September 25, 2015, from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/humour?q=humor>

Inside Edition. (2015). Amy Schumer takes on gun control during controversial 'SNL' skit. Retrieved November 19, 2015, from <http://www.insideedition.com/headlines/12326-amy-schumer-takes-on-gun-control-during-controversial-snl-skit>

Malins, G., & Bright, K. (1998). The one with all the Thanksgivings. In *Friends*. New York City, New York: NBC. Retrieved November 18, 2015, from <http://www.seriesflv.net/ver/friends-5x8.html>

Mazza, E. (2015, May 5). Jon Stewart Explains When It's OK To Shoot People Who've Offended You. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved December 3, 2015, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/05/jon-stewart-cartoon-shooting_n_7210516.html

MINEDUC. (2004). *Programas de Estudio para III y IV medio: Inglés como Idioma Extranjero*. Santiago: MINEDUC. Retrieved October 5, 2015, from <http://www.curriculumlineamineduc.cl/605/w3-channel.html>

Moraga, R. (2010). Laughing it up: Understanding the American culture through American humor. A workshop for junior high school students. (Unpublished bachelor dissertation). Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Valparaíso.

Moran, P. (2001). *Teaching culture: Perspectives in practice*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

ObamaCare Facts - ObamaCare Explained. (n.d.). Retrieved December 3, 2015, from <http://obamacarefacts.com/obamacare-explained/>

Oxford, R. (2001). *Integrated skills in the ESL/EFL classroom*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics. Retrieved October 5, 2015, from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED456670.pdf>

Peachey, N. (2004). Sense of humour. Retrieved November 20, 2015, from <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/sense-humour>

Rastogi, N. (2011). 5 Leading Theories for Why We Laugh—and the Jokes That Prove Them Wrong. Retrieved November 21, 2015, from http://www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2011/05/13/5_leading_theories_for_why_we_laugh_and_the_jokes_that_prove_them_wrong.html

Riffkin, R. (2014). Americans' Dissatisfaction With Gun Laws Highest Since 2001. Retrieved December 6, 2015, from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/167135/americans-dissatisfaction-gun-laws-highest-2001.aspx>

Rose, C. (2003). Intercultural learning 1. Retrieved November 20, 2015, from <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/intercultural-learning-1>

Satire. (n.d.). In *Encyclopædia Britannica online*. Retrieved October 16, 2015, from <http://global.britannica.com/art/satire>

Saturday Night Live. (2015). Gun Control. Retrieved November 18, 2015, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i72X76VILyc>

Saturday Night Live. (2014). Healthcare.gov Meeting Cold Open. Retrieved November 18, 2015, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SluBPO4SCBw>

Saturday Night Live. (2014). Obamacare. Retrieved November 18, 2015, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXGDJKr140g>

Scriven, M., & Paul, R. (2013) Defining Critical Thinking. Retrieved October 4, 2015, from <http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/defining-critical-thinking/410>

Situation comedy | Broadcasting genre. (n.d.). In *Encyclopædia Britannica online*. Retrieved October 13, 2015, from <http://global.britannica.com/art/situation-comedy>

Sketch Comedy. (n.d.). In *About Entertainment*. Retrieved October 16, 2015, from <http://tvcomedies.about.com/od/showsaz/g/sketchcomedy.htm>

Snellinx, R. (2009). *Humour that divides; humour that unites. : American Sitcoms, A Case in Point*. Centre for Research and Innovation in Linguistic Education. Retrieved from http://www.uab.ro/jolie/2009_2/26_snellinx_ria.pdf

Stand-up comedy | Entertainment. (n.d.). In *Encyclopædia Britannica online*. Retrieved October 16, 2015, from <http://global.britannica.com/art/stand-up-comedy>

Tatham, C., & Fryman, P. (2009). Duel citizenship. In *How I met your mother*. New York City, New York: CBS. Retrieved November 18, 2015, from <http://www.seriesflv.net/ver/cmo-conoc-a-vuestra-madre-5x5.html>

The Colbert Report. (2014). The climate change. Retrieved November 18, 2015, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbMoGnVI9hM>

The Colbert Report. (2014). Florida's "Do not feed the homeless" law. Retrieved November 18, 2015, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPkFD7sm4-k>

The Daily Show. (2015). The snacks of life. Retrieved November 18, 2015, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCG_i9InBFc

The Daily Show. (2015). To shoot or not to shoot & fear and absent danger. Retrieved November 18, 2015, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xhn7FHHQbVw>

Welcome to TeAch-nology.com. (n.d.). Retrieved December 10, 2015, from <http://www.teach-nology.com>

Wires, N. (2014). 'Saturday Night Live' Mocks Obama's ObamaCare Youth Outreach. *Newsmax*. Retrieved November 18, 2015, from <http://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/snl-obama-bieber-obamacare/2014/03/30/id/562565/>

APPENDIX

GRADUATION PROJECT SURVEY

We are what we laugh at: American culture through TV comedy shows

Mark with an **X** the statement that best represents your opinion.

1: I agree **2:** I partially agree **3:** I disagree

	1	2	3
1 I think it is necessary to know about other cultures.			
2 I consider studying culture essential when learning another language.			
3 Culture is taught as part of the English learning classes.			
4 I think that humor is a representative picture of a culture.			
5 Through humor I can get to know a culture more easily.			
6 I consider learning culture through humor engaging.			
7 I watch TV shows in English.			
8 I watch comedy TV shows in English.			
9 I understand American humor.			
10 I enjoy American humor.			
11 I engage more in learning if the topic is appealing to me.			
12 I would like to take a workshop on American Comedy.			
13 I can understand what I hear in English.			
14 I can express my opinions using English.			
15 I can justify my opinions effectively.			
16 I can make inferences from what I see/read/hear.			
17 I consider myself a tolerant person.			
18 I respect other people's opinion.			
19 I respect cultural and personal differences.			
20 I am able to put myself in the place of others.			

Do you think that it is possible to learn about a specific culture through humor?

Grade: 3rd H.S. _____

4th H.S. _____

(Adapted from *Laughing it up: Understanding the American culture through American humor. A workshop for junior high school students* (p. 37) by R. Moraga, 2010)