

POLSC331: Unit 4 Assessment Analyzing Political Cartoons

Related Media:

4.4.2 Link: C-SPAN's ["Congress and the Media"](#)

4.4.3 YouTube: UCTelevision's ["American News Media—Liberal or Conservative Bias?"](#)

Summary:

Editorial or political cartoons are illustrations containing a commentary that usually relates to current events or personalities. They typically use visual metaphors, humor, and caricatures to address complicated political situations. America's earliest cartoons were political in nature. The first cartoon appeared in Benjamin Franklin's newspaper, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, in 1754. It appeared as part of an editorial by Franklin commenting on the disunited state of the British colonies.

Today, political cartoons are usually found on the editorial page of most newspapers and are disseminated widely on the Internet. The workings of Congress are often a prime target of political cartoonists—commentary which has, for the most part, been highly negative. However, similar to political journalists, cartoonists are important actors in the debate over how the media covers Congress. They have been influential in shaping public perceptions of the institution, from both a historic and contemporary standpoint, and they play a critical role in helping citizens understand representative democracy.

Instructions:

For this assessment, you will find examples of political cartoons about Congress and analyze their techniques, styles, and themes.

1. View the PowerPoint presentation, "[Understanding Editorial Cartoons](#)," and read the article, "[How to Analyze Political Cartoons](#)," to learn more about political cartoons and the various techniques that cartoonists utilize.

2. Go to [The Cagle Post](#) website, which provides the most current and comprehensive index of political cartoons on the Internet. Click on "Cartoon Search" on the left side of the site and write "Congress" in the search box. Click "Search" to be directed to hundreds of political cartoons about Congress.

Browse through the cartoons and pick one cartoon that represents EACH of the following techniques as described in the above materials:

- Exaggeration
- Symbolism
- Irony
- Stereotype



Once you've chosen your four cartoons, write a paragraph for each that answers the following questions:

1. What political event is the focus of the cartoon?
2. What is the specific commentary that the cartoonist is making about Congress?
3. How does the cartoon utilize one of the above techniques?
4. Does the cartoon reflect a particular political ideology (i.e., liberal, conservative, radical, etc.) of the cartoonist?



