



STUDY GUIDE

HOLLYWOOD WANTS YOUR MONEY... AND YOUR MIND

KEY TERMS: activists
influence

propaganda
traditional American values

social justice

NOTE-TAKING COLUMN: Complete this section during the video. Include definitions and key terms.

CUE COLUMN: Complete this section after the video.

Why was the abortion episode of Maude a 'watershed moment' for television?

What is the relationship between Hollywood content and the progressive agenda?

How did the show Will & Grace impact the way Americans think about same-sex marriage?

What is so worrisome about Hollywood content creators being so heavily biased towards one side of the political spectrum?

How many hours a day do teenage boys spend in front of screens?

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

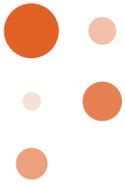
- Towards the beginning of the video, Mr. Shapiro, when describing television, reveals the insidious fact that, “Not only does it reach hundreds of millions of people with its messaging, it embeds that messaging in seemingly innocuous stories... And just as Americans didn’t think much about the carcinogens in the cigarettes they smoked for decades, most Americans don’t think much about the toxic politics in the television they watch.” Why do you think that television content creators embed messaging into their content? Explain. Do you think most Americans care that there is messaging in their favorite shows? Why or why not?
- Mr. Shapiro goes on to note that, “I spoke with nearly a hundred members of the Hollywood community when I wrote my book, *Primetime Propaganda* – and many of them openly admitted that they inserted “social justice” messages into their shows.” Do you think it is morally acceptable for the Hollywood community to insert politics, especially ‘social Justice’ politics, into their content? Why or why not? Do you think that First Amendment arguments of freedom of expression should apply to Hollywood content? Explain.
- When describing the machinations of how Hollywood content creators purposefully attempt to influence viewers, Mr. Shapiro explains that, “Hollywood writers, producers, directors and actors create characters we keep wanting to spend time with, then have those characters act in ways most of us would judge wrong.” Do you agree with Mr. Shapiro’s presumption that most of us would judge what many of the characters do as ‘wrong?’ Why or why not? Does the argument that ‘having characters act in unconventional ways, say having a young gay girl stand up to an unaccepting and emotionally abusive father, is actually empowering’ counter Mr. Shapiro’s point or not? Explain.
- Later in the video, Mr. Shapiro points out that, “...it hasn’t always been this way. For decades Hollywood promoted traditional American values. That changed, as did so much else in the late 1960s and ‘70s, when Hollywood stopped celebrating American values and started transforming them.” What factors do you think contributed to Hollywood swinging so wildly from a conservative, pro-American viewpoint in its content to a hard-core leftist, anti-American agenda? Why do you think that Hollywood progressive wish to transform American values? Explain.
- Towards the end of the video, Mr. Shapiro warns, “My point is that Hollywood has had a tremendous influence on our culture; and that influence has been all to the left side of the political spectrum. ...remember that the people making TV don’t merely want to entertain you; they want to influence you. They want you to think like they think. And unless you’re aware of what they’re trying to do, chances are you will.” Do you think that there is anything necessarily wrong with Hollywood content creators wishing to influence the masses of viewers to think like they, the content creators, do? Why or why not? How successful do you think that the Hollywood propaganda creators are now, and how successful do you think that they will be in the future? Explain.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Hollywood Bias

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “TV Executives Admit in Taped Interviews That Hollywood Pushes a Liberal Agenda,” then answer the questions that follow.

- What does the creator of Golden Girls think of conservative people? Why didn't Dwight Shultz get the part he auditioned for in St. Elsewhere? How does Doug Herzog characterize the relationship of MTV to young people? What does Fred Silverman say about comedy TV today? How did the producer of Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In use the show?
- Do you think that Hollywood content creators have too much power over the American public? Why or why not? Do you think that the Hollywood content creators should politically balance their messaging? Why or why not? Do you think that there should be some check on the power of Hollywood or some way to mitigate the tremendous influence that Hollywood has over so many people? Explain.
- Which specific points made in the article support the points made in the video? Which examples in the article are supporting evidence for Mr. Shapiro's main point in the video?



QUIZ

HOLLYWOOD WANTS YOUR MONEY... AND YOUR MIND

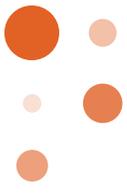
1. As big as the Internet has become, _____ is still king.
 - a. education
 - b. government
 - c. Hollywood
 - d. Disneyland

2. Scientific studies suggest that watching TV _____.
 - a. makes you smarter
 - b. can increase your salary
 - c. acts like a “habit-forming drug”
 - d. reduces the risk of cancer

3. Hollywood has _____.
 - a. been a breeding ground for conservatism.
 - b. kept liberal values from spreading throughout American culture.
 - c. had a tremendous influence on our culture
 - d. None of the above.

4. How did the TV show *Will & Grace* have a major impact on how Americans think about same-sex marriage?
 - a. It caused new legislation to be drafted prohibiting same-sex marriage.
 - b. It didn't make a major impact.
 - c. It shamed same-sex attraction.
 - d. It paved the way for a much wider acceptance of same-sex marriage.

5. For decades Hollywood promoted traditional American values.
 - a. True
 - b. False



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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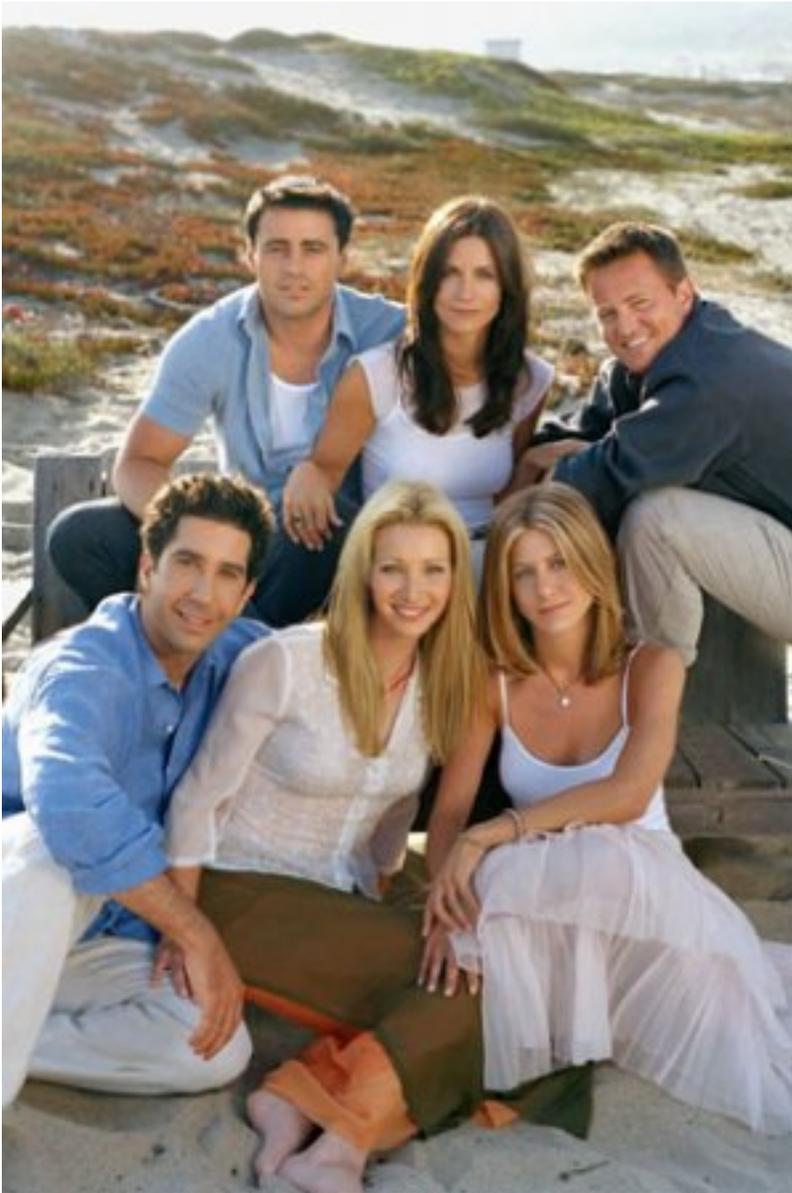
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<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/tv-executives-admit-taped-interviews-193116>

TV Executives Admit in Taped Interviews That Hollywood Pushes a Liberal Agenda

5:00 AM PDT 6/1/2011 by Paul Bond



Warner Bros.
"Friends"

In clips that will hit the Internet to promote a new book, producers including "Friends" co-creator Marta Kauffman and "House" creator David Shore say Hollywood discriminates against and belittles conservatives.

Some of TV's top executives from the past four decades may have gotten more than they bargained for when they agreed to be interviewed for a politically charged book that was released Tuesday, because video of their controversial remarks will soon be hitting the Internet.

The book makes the case that TV industry executives, writers and producers use their clout to advance a liberal political agenda. The author bases his thesis on, among other things, 39 taped interviews that he'll roll out piecemeal during the next three weeks.

The Hollywood Reporter obtained several of the not-yet-released clips, embedded below. Each contains a snippet of an interview, usually some historical footage of the TV shows the interviewee was responsible for and, naturally, a plea to purchase the book, "Primetime Propaganda" by **Ben Shapiro** and published by Broad Side, an imprint of HarperCollins.

In one video, *Friends* co-creator **Marta Kauffman** says that when she cast **Candace Gingrich-Jones**, half-sister of Republican former House Speaker **Newt Gingrich**, as the minister of a lesbian wedding, "There was a bit of 'fuck you' in it to the right wing."

Kauffman also acknowledges she "put together a staff of mostly liberal people," which is another major point of Shapiro's book: that conservatives aren't welcome in Hollywood.

Maybe that's because they're "idiots" and have "medieval minds." At least that's what *Soap* and *Golden Girls* creator **Susan Harris** thinks of TV's conservative critics.

However, the ranks of dumb right-wingers has dwindled, according to Harris, whose video has her saying: "At least, you know, we put **Obama** in office, and so people, I think, are getting – have gotten – a little bit smarter."

Some of the videos have executives making rather obvious revelations, like when **Larry Gelbart** and **Gene Reynolds** talk about pacifist messages in *M*A*S*H* or when *MacGyver* producer **Vin Di Bona** says anti-gun messages were a recurring theme in that show.

But an additional video has Di Bona, who also created *America's Funniest Home Videos*, becoming remarkably blunt about his approval of a lack of political diversity in Hollywood. When Shapiro asks what he thinks of conservative critics who say everyone

in Hollywood is liberal, Di Bona responds: “I think it’s probably accurate, and I’m happy about it.”

Another video has **Leonard Goldberg** — who executive produces *Blue Bloods* for CBS and a few decades ago exec produced such hits as *Fantasy Island*, *Charlie’s Angels* and *Starsky and Hutch* — saying that liberalism in the TV industry is “100 percent dominant, and anyone who denies it is kidding, or not telling the truth.”

Shapiro asks if politics are a barrier to entry. “Absolutely,” Goldberg says.

When Shapiro tells **Fred Pierce**, the president of ABC in the 1980s who was instrumental in Disney’s acquisition of ESPN, that “It’s very difficult for people who are politically conservative to break in” to television, he responds: “I can’t argue that point.” Those who don’t lean left, he says, “don’t promote it. It stays underground.”

Another video rolling out soon has *House* creator **David Shore** acknowledging that "there is an assumption in this town that everybody is on the left side of the spectrum, and that the few people on the right side, I think people look at them somewhat aghast, and I'm sure it doesn't help them."

In the book, subtitled "The true Hollywood story of how the left took over your TV," Shapiro also tells anecdotes of bias against conservatives. One example is **Dwight Schultz**, best known for his roles as Murdock in *The A-Team* and Barclay in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

The late **Bruce Paltrow** knew that Schultz was a fan of President **Ronald Reagan**. When Schultz showed up to audition for *St. Elsewhere*, a show Paltrow produced, to read for the part of Fiscus, Paltrow told him: "There's not going to be a Reagan asshole on this show!" The part went to **Howie Mandel**.

"Most nepotism in Hollywood isn't familial, it's ideological," Shapiro writes in the book. "Friends hire friends. And those friends just happen to share their politics."

Another video Shapiro will release shortly has producer-director **Nicholas Meyer** being asked point-blank whether conservatives are discriminated against in Hollywood. "Well, I hope so," he answers. Meyer also admits his political agenda for *The Day After*, a TV movie he directed for ABC that was seen by 100 million people when it aired in 1983.

"My private, grandiose notion was that this movie would unseat Ronald Reagan when he ran for re-election," Meyer says.

Even seemingly harmless shows like *Happy Days* and *Sesame Street* have been used to advance a progressive agenda, according to Shapiro.

For example, William Bickley, a writer on *The Partridge Family* and a producer on *Happy Days*, says he infused Vietnam War protest messages into the latter. "I was into all that kind of masturbation," he says in a soon-to-be-released video.

"Television has been perhaps the most impressive weapon in the left's political arsenal," Shapiro argues in the book.

Other upcoming videos include: *Family Ties* creator **Gary David Goldberg** explaining how he tried to make Republican character Alex Keaton the bad guy but that actor **Michael J. Fox** was too darn lovable; and president of MTV Networks Entertainment Group **Doug Herzog** talking about his network having "superpowers" when it comes to its influence over young people.

The advancement of a gay and lesbian political agenda is mentioned by multiple executives, including **Marcy Carsey**, a producer of *Soap* and *Roseanne*, and *Desperate Housewives* producer **Marc Cherry**, who is a rarity in Hollywood: a gay Republican.

In her video, Carsey also says she insisted on portraying characters smoking marijuana in *That '70s Show*. "If this is a problem for you, we certainly understand, and we just won't do the show," she told executives at Fox.

Shapiro released two videos Tuesday, one featuring *COPS* creator **John Langley** saying he's partial to segments where white people are the criminals, and the other has **Fred Silverman**, the former head of ABC and later NBC, saying "there's only one perspective, and it's a very progressive perspective" in TV comedy today. (Those videos are also posted below).

Shapiro said the executives felt comfortable talking about politics with him because they assumed, incorrectly, that he is on the left.

"Most of them didn't Google me. If they had, they would have realized where I am politically," he said. "I played on their stereotypes. When I showed up for the interviews, I wore my Harvard Law baseball cap — my name is Ben Shapiro and I attended Harvard, so there's a 98.7 percent chance I'm a liberal. Except I happen not to be."

Shapiro said he'll time the debut of certain videos for maximum effect. One that slams **Sean Hannity**, for example, is reserved for his scheduled appearance on Hannity's show on the Fox News Channel.

And conservative pundit **Ann Coulter** has a new book out June 7. "I have two people ripping her by name, so I'll release those the day Ann's book is released," Shapiro said.

One of those slamming Coulter is **George Schlatter**, who directed and produced *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In* in the 1970s, using the show to knock Republicans and the Vietnam War. "The fact we pissed the Pentagon off, that pleased me enormously," he says before calling Coulter "the c-word."

In his video, Schlatter also goes off on right-wing radio hosts **Rush Limbaugh** and **Laura Ingraham**.

Shapiro says he didn't disclose that he'd be releasing the tapes, but that his subjects have no reason to complain.

"I asked them for permission to tape, and there's no reasonable expectation of privacy when you're being interviewed for a book," he said.

"If they're going to be shocked at something, it should be themselves, not me," Shapiro said. "They should be shocked that opinion is so one-sided in Hollywood that it's OK to say, 'I'm fine with discrimination.'"

"My whole book is a plea for openness in the industry," he added. "Hire people from the other side of the aisle once in a while, or at least stop mocking them."