

WITTICISM OF TRANSITION:
HUMOR AND RHETORIC OF EDITORIAL CARTOONS ON JOURNALISM

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ABSTRACT

The first decade of the twenty-first century was a time of transition for the journalism profession, and a time of economic struggle for news media organizations. A selection of editorial cartoons that constructed arguments about journalism during this period presented criticism of journalism in reference to four broad categories: the decline of traditional news media, the rise of new media technologies, the role of comedians as journalists, and the corporatization of news media. The means by which the cartoons constructed these arguments was analyzed using a combination of previously understood rhetorical elements, as well as the humor theories of incongruity and superiority. This method of analysis demonstrated a connection between the cartoons' use of humor and their use of other rhetorical techniques: incongruity humor manifested when the cartoon depicted contrast, and superiority humor manifested when the cartoon depicted contradiction. The implications of these rhetorical connections that informed the argument of the cartoon, as well as the arguments themselves, provide a guide for future study of the rhetoric and humor of editorial cartoons.