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**Response to AESTHETICS AND POLITICS IN TELEVISION STUDIES
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Can we glean insights into aesthetic practices and results without falling into a hierarchizing judgmentalism? Can aesthetic questions productively complicate our politically-minded research, or at least supplement it? Here are a few guideposts, among others:

First: Bourdieu! The concept of habitus entwines aesthetic taste and political position. The point of this sort of inquiry into aesthetics is not to discover, prove the existence of, or proselytize for “good” television, but to understand the linkages between the cultural preferences, social contours, and political beliefs of audiences. Deep analysis usually requires on-site research among viewers, which has limited the number of such studies.

Fan studies offers a variation of this path, with its creation of connections between aesthetic taste and the contours of everyday life, but more work is needed to bring political understandings and positions more consistently into its purview. Research into and from subcultural communities and historical cultural legacies that influence both the aesthetics and politics of media can offer another way to trace the relations between them, at the levels of both production and viewership. As more producers from subcultural communities gain access to production resources, we can study how cultural tastes and political beliefs interact with each other in works operating from specific traditions.

Television studies has looked to the politics of culture for a long time, though too often politicized analysis of entertainment productions has been limited to studying narrative developments, evaluating the functions of characters, and parsing representations of social identities. There is so much more that can be done regarding performance styles, mise en scene, humor, and other aesthetic elements. The rise of the political humor shows on Comedy Central has inspired sustained analysis in the last regard, at least, as we see the rise of hybrid forms of entertainment and informational programming. Recent studies starting from aesthetics, conversely, rarely have tried to make political resonances explicit, seeming to also be more comfortable with delving into narrative structures, as well as questions of multiple platforms, sources of aestheticized pleasure, and viewer knowledge. By remembering the convergence of ideology, pleasure, comprehension, and practices of daily life that constitute the concept of habitus, cultural studies practitioners can address aesthetics and politics within the context of viewing practices that embed them into the lives of audiences.

A second critical/cultural theorist: John Fiske, in “Moments of Television” (available in Ellen Seiter, et al, *Remote Control*. This piece is valuable because its point of analysis is the intersection between viewer and text. This micro level of analysis, which leads to an emphasis on shifting, flexible subject positions, stands a better

chance of avoiding essentialism while acknowledging and using the importance of textual aesthetics in elucidating media meanings and meaningfulness. Scholars of cultural studies have tried to resist judging viewers for their taste. This has led to an avoidance of making aesthetic judgements at all. Fiske's piece reminds us that viewers are multivalent, as are viewing situations and strategies, and the meanings and pleasures that are produced within them. This understanding, so central to contemporary media studies, has not been fully appreciated in discussions of the position of the cultural studies researcher and analyst. It allows cultural studies practitioners some space to consider aesthetic appeals without essentializing and hierarchizing viewers per se. We should always keep in mind that we are studying viewing positions and strategies, rather than people, when looking at the intersection between viewing and textual elements of a production.

Finally, the aesthetic turn can be productive when applied to explicitly political communication itself. Cultural studies is still grappling with the study of news, television journalism, political rhetoric and advertising, and other non-entertainment forms. The field's necessary embrace of the idea that "the personal is political," inspired by feminism and the recognition of the importance of the culture of everyday life, for a long time left political communication underdeveloped as a subject of study, especially in the United States (as opposed to, for example, Great Britain). In recent years, spurred by the rise of political humor shows, the urgencies of the Great Recession, and the unbelievably rich semiotics of American politics in the Age of Obama, more media scholars have been turning to the study of politics and news using cultural studies paradigms. In doing so, we should learn from the field's embrace of entertainment forms as a subject of study. We cannot treat political rhetoric and framing devices in isolation from aesthetic elements, and from the embeddedness of political discussion and reportage in specific media formats and stylized presentations. American politics took an "Aesthetics Turn" decades ago; the study of political communication needs to catch up, and we are the ones to do it.