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A Novel Approach to Politics

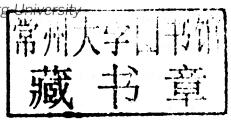
Introducing Political Science through Books, Movies, and Popular Culture

Second Edition

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Dedication

This book is not dedicated to Jon Stewart.

We dedicated the first edition to Jon Stewart. Obviously that was a mistake. We were trying to do the guy a favor and get his name in front of a few college students, just trying to help him expand his audience into some new demographics. We know it was a little outside the box to think that college students might like news that isn't really the news, but we liked Jon's quirky little public access show, and we thought if we could get him a few hundred more viewers he could guit pretending his mother's basement was a studio and maybe do an actual show. That was a mistake. We aren't sorry for trying, but we are disappointed. Clearly, Jon just doesn't understand capitalism, and he really has no clue what it really means to be a real American. So for the second edition, we decided to dedicate the book to someone who truly understands capitalism. Someone who so totally understands the value of sucking up to the guy with a TV show. A man whose very heart beats with the lifeblood of unprovoked flattery.

This book is so totally dedicated to **Stephen Colbert.**America's realest American



A dozen things most people don't know about

DOUGLAS A. VAN BELLE

 Doug once backed over a Peugeot with a loaded dump truck—all the way over. But it was OK—Officer Van Lierop gave the screaming realtor lady a ticket for parking in a marked construction zone.

- 2. Ten days later Doug backed into the front bumper of that same woman's brandnew insurance-money Peugeot. It was just a little bump, but it was enough to break off the little pin in the transmission that held the car in park and send it rolling down the hill. The car was going at least fifty when it suddenly realized it was going backward and did a full Starsky and Hutch around and into a very large tree. A passing botanist saved the tree. Officer Van Lierop gave the screaming realtor lady another ticket for parking in a marked construction zone.
- 3. Less than a week later, Doug was moving a flatbed trailer with two sections of 4-foot concrete pipe when he discovered that the physics of mass and momentum will kick the \$#*& out of a 1972 Datsun pickup. He slammed on the brakes and managed to stop the roll backward down the hill before it turned into a train wreck, but the concrete pipes shifted and snapped the chain holding them in place. The first pipe hit the Peugeot (less than two hours off the lot) just behind the front door and spun it around so the second pipe hit the other side in almost exactly the same spot. The two back doors ended up touching each other in the middle of the back seat. Officer Van Lierop gave the screaming realtor lady yet another ticket for parking in a marked construction zone. The realtor lady walked home crying, and no one ever saw her again.
- 4. Doug used to call his Datsun pickup Hoser Truck. Hoser Truck was killed by a fat lady in a Ford Fairlane. She was going "at least fifty" when she hit it broadside. After rolling and tumbling nearly half a block down University Ave, Hoser Truck came to rest, on its wheels (OK, three of its wheels) in the middle of a used car lot. The car lot's fence was undamaged, and Hoser Truck had somehow ended up inside a ring of cars parked very close to one another. The cars were undamaged, and the police had to call the owner of the lot to unlock the gate so Doug could get out. The car lot was called "Buy a Wreck Cheap, Nothing over \$500." Doug left the car there and rode the bus home.
- 5. If you're going to park a 1972 Datsun pickup near the edge of a small cliff, try to remember that the parking brake never really worked right. Otherwise it will cost you fifty bucks to have an old guy with a bulldozer pull it up off the beach for you.
- 6. At the end of his second-worst date ever, Doug ended up in a hospital emergency room with his possibly-broken wrist handcuffed to a gender indeterminate biker (who

smelled like Pine-Sol) while he tried to explain to a similarly gender-indeterminate police officer (who spit when she/he screamed) how the cute blonde girl had ended up with a broken nose.

- 7. Until his second-worst date ever, Doug thought that his Austen Healey Sprite was the best date car in the world. It was kind of ugly and most motorcycles could put its motor to shame, and girls didn't really like it, but it was so small that just getting a girl in the passenger seat counted as foreplay. The problem was that when two of the pistons in that screaming little engine decided to leave the other two, they took the entire drivetrain out of the bottom of the car with them. That snapped the gearshift handle hard to the right, and there was nowhere for the hand sitting on the gearshift knob to go except up and into the face of the cute blonde girl in the passenger seat.
- 8. If you happened to be driving down I-5, just outside of Woodburn, Oregon, in September of 1987 and you saw a bunch of fraternity boys roasting marshmallows and hot dogs over the smoldering remains of a Winnebago, Doug was the one wearing a green sweatshirt.
- 9. Just in case you were wondering, a 1972 Datsun pickup won't fit inside one of those big ten-foot, concrete sewer pipes. Not even if you get a running start.
- 10. Also, just in case you were wondering, a tow truck isn't powerful enough to extract a 1972 Datsun pickup that is jammed halfway into a ten-foot sewer pipe. A 1968 GMC pickup is. It has to get a running start, and you want to be smart enough to realize straightaway that the back bumpers of the trucks just ain't gonna handle it, but if you hook the chain to the frames, it'll work.
- 11. Doug once set the unofficial Kansas record by flying a motor home more than 50 yards through the air. On the third day of a grand, summer-long tour of the U.S., Doug was driving down the freeway just outside of WaKeeney, Kansas, when the aforementioned motor home was hit by what the people in the insurance business call a "lateral microburst." Humans call it a big gust of wind. It lifted the brand-new motor home from the right-hand lane, flipped it over, and deposited it on its side on the far side of the center median, blocking both oncoming lanes. No one was hurt, but Doug did suffer a deep muscle bruise when he was hit in the head by a 13-inch TV that he had just set up to play the *Lion King* for the kids. He had also just told his wife to, "Stop being neurotic, the stupid TV isn't going anywhere."
- 12. Doug's wife repeatedly and frequently reminds him that she is going to carve "Stop being neurotic, the stupid TV isn't going anywhere," into his tombstone.

KENNETH M. MASH

Ken can think of a hundred reasons why lists are stupid and has decided that the best way to introduce himself to the readers of this book is to ask them to consider a few, thought-provoking philosophical queries. Unfortunately, the editor was a bit annoyed with Ken when this hit his desk and just to be mean, he decided that Ken's questions should be presented in the form of a list.

- 1. Is free-verse poetry the literary equivalent of free-range chicken?
- 2. Why does a professor make more from his certificate in mixology than from his Ph.D.?
- 3. What is blue?
- 4. If the government thinks that privatization and marketplace competition are such good things, then why can't we choose which country we want to send our taxes to?
- 5. How many university degrees is too many?
- 6. In the contest between a deer and a car, the car wins, but it is a Pyrrhic victory?
- 7. Why doesn't a question mark at the end of the sentence turn #6 into a question?



This is not your grandparents' textbook, and we mean that in a way that goes well beyond the simple fact that it's not written on papyrus. We also mean it in a way that goes beyond the fact that we use novels, films, television, and pop culture to introduce stu-

dents to the study of politics. The marketing people may be all giggly and twittery over the films and such, and people may like the idea so much that suggestions for novels and films are always flying at us like they were American Dodgeball Association of America regulation dodgeballs,* but the use of fiction to teach about the fundamentals of politics may well be the smallest of the differences between A Novel Approach to Politics and the other introduction to politics textbooks out there. The real difference that sets A Novel Approach apart from the shuffling hordes of intro to politics textbooks out there can be found in the way it expresses our pathological fear of zombies.

We are, of course, talking about zombies in terms of the metaphorical roles they play in the narratives of the genre. Even when given a comedic twist in films like *Shaun of the Dead*¹ zombies are always used to represent slow but relentless threats to living that we all must face. The fear of aging is a significant subtext in *Night of the Living Dead*. In *Shaun of the Dead*, it's the weight of social entanglements with friends, lovers, and family. In *Zombies from Mars*, it's bureaucracy. And for an introduction to politics course, zombies represent the threat posed by a textbook that is so chock full of soul-crushing boredom that it will smother the mind and rot the flesh right off of students' faces.

Putting aside the unpleasantness of having to endure the overwhelming stench of decaying corpses when you lecture to a hall full of undead freshmen, introduction to politics instructors hate this because it makes it really, really difficult to teach. In theory, a textbook should provide a foundation of material and information that all students share and that the instructor can teach from. The problem with that theory is that it presumes that the students read and engage the material in the text, and even when you get the former, the latter is, unfortunately, rare. That was the problem we wanted to tackle.

So, the first thing we did when we sat down to write the first edition of this book was throw out the rules, literally. All the outlines, guidelines, and other suggestions we were given went straight into the recycling bin. The last thing we wanted to do was to offer students yet another dreary slog through what should be a dynamic, engaging, and challenging subject. What we wanted to do was to write a textbook that students could and would actually read without fear of brain damage or coma. We wanted to create something that professors could teach from, rather than teach at. These two goals are inseparable. In order for a textbook to serve as a foundation that can be taught from, students need to be able to read the book with little or no guidance from lectures. When

^{*}While it is true that if you can dodge a wrench, you can dodge a ball, books are a bit tougher. They open up and flop around in the air and don't fly straight.

instructors step up to the lectern, they need to know that there are certain sparks of thought and knowledge hidden behind that sea of undead faces that the lecture can build from.

Our use of fiction is one of two critical aspects of *A Novel Approach* that accomplishes this. In fact, fictional examples allow us to both increase the complexity and nuance of the political dynamics addressed and create a book that all students can and will read. Because of the way that fiction exaggerates the forces driving characters, the way it often explicitly explores the political and social dynamics of choice, action, and consequence, *A Novel Approach* can actually engage the often-complex dynamics that underlie political phenomena more completely and more thoroughly than most introduction to politics textbooks.

Fiction, however, is only one of the two keys. The second is the style, or lack thereof, that we bring to the text. Our narrative tone is casual, sarcastic, and occasionally just a bit crass. The argumentative structure varies from topic to topic. We play with the chapter structure. We even mess with the structure of the book. We have fun with it whenever and however the opportunity arises. This may not appeal to everyone. In fact, if you're a British academic who uses the word "proper" with serious intent, it may very well endanger your health. However, for the humans reading the book, our snarky style should be mostly harmless and, more important, it serves a purpose well beyond providing an admittedly modest bit of entertainment. We also want to inject some uncertainty into the text. We want the turn of every page, the start of every paragraph, the jump to every footnote to include just a little anticipation of the unexpected. We want readers looking for the next non sequitur, the next nearly appropriate example, or the next bit of narrative commentary. That uncertainty, that anticipation of the unexpected, does more to keep the reader engaged than all the car chases and sex scenes in the history of cinema.

The result is a text that can be used just like a regular textbook. It has all of the necessary stuff. In fact, because our approach makes it easier to get across some relatively complex theoretical ideas, in many ways there is more of the important stuff in here than you would usually find in an intro textbook. An instructor can add a couple of lectures to reinforce the topics and add a few examples each week, and the semester will just fly merrily by. We have tested that approach with this material, and it works quite well. However, A Novel Approach can also be used as a starting point for exploring any of the huge number of films and novels that delve into the complexities of society and politics.

A Novel Approach can also be thought of as a textbook that reduces or eliminates most of the substantial barriers to using fiction in the classroom. Not only will students quickly get used to using fiction, they can and will read it quickly. Two, or even three, chapters can be assigned per week, leaving half the semester or more for instructors

to show or discuss any of the myriad of novels, films, and television programs of their choosing.

Another valuable result of our approach is a textbook that focuses on the "why" rather than the "what." A Novel Approach is a textbook that builds upward from the underlying theories and dynamics, a textbook that has several chapters that come before the starting point of most introduction to politics textbooks. This usually leads to students who can explain how the tragedy of the commons can be applied to Marx's conceptualization of the pool of labor. By the end of the text, students will be armed with Arrow's Theorem, the dynamics of power in anarchic environments, the role of ideologies in practical politics, Downs's spatial representation of the electorate, social contracts, the mediated construction of political reality, core and periphery in world systems theory, the differences between political structures and institutions . . . Students should have these, and a whole lot of other conceptual weapons, in their arsenal, ready for attacking the complexity of social and political statements being made in fiction and, by extension, the world around them.

It took five years to write the first edition of *A Novel Approach*, and even though the second edition came together quite a bit faster, it was nearly as much work. The first half of the book has been restructured. The first five chapters, which focused primarily on the theory, concepts, and dynamics underlying politics, have been rearranged into four chapters. Part of this was to produce more thematically coherent chapters and part of it was to expand the discussion of individual theorists. We removed the section discussing the top ten theorists (which was actually only seven) from the text and instead spread the discussion of theorists across all of the chapters. Now, each of the chapters in the book highlights theorists specifically relevant to the chapter content, roughly tripling the number of theorists that we discuss.

The chapters on political structures also have been restructured. Originally, there were two chapters for the discussion of legislative, executive, and bureaucratic structures of government. One discussed the ideals of executive, legislative, and bureaucratic government, and the second discussed the imperfections inherent in the application of those ideals to the governing of the real world. While that fit very well with the theme of the book, and it allowed us to discuss the interdependence of legislative and executive institutions, it proved difficult to teach. So, in the second edition, the institution and structure chapters have been organized around the basic structures of government, and the discussions in those chapters have been expanded to provide more ways to teach from the material. Oh, also, we strongly suggest that instructors examine the all-new Chapter 13 very carefully before writing their syllabus.

No cute and fuzzy animals, other than the authors, were harmed during the making of this book.

^{1.} Directed by Edgar Wright, distributed in the United States by Universal Pictures (2004).

^{2.} Directed by George A. Romero, distributed by the Walter Reade Organization (1968).

^{3.} Douglas A. Van Belle, "Zombies From Mars," The Andromeda Spaceways Inflight Magazine 40 (2009).



If life were a game show, Stephen Colbert would always be the returning champion. We'd also get nice parting gifts, like the home version of life, when we died.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction/Warning/Parental Advisory

This Book Contains Politically Explicit Material

This is a dangerous book. Even after the valiant struggles of CQ Press's legions of brave editors—none of whom will ever be the same—this book far exceeds the acceptable levels of collateral damage for a textbook. Somewhere along the line, something in this book will upset you, at least a little.

We blame politics.

Because of the very nature of politics as a subject of study, we do not even have to try to upset you. Don't get us wrong, as part of teaching about politics we will occasionally try to annoy or provoke you. We will do whatever is necessary to force you to consider ideas that are contrary to what you believe or want to believe, if only so you can recognize some of your unnoticed beliefs, presumptions, and cognitive frameworks that provide the foundation for what you hold dear. This is necessary to understand the dynamics of politics, and if we do not infuriate you at least once with a topic or pointed comment, then we have probably failed to get you to really think about politics, to look beneath the surface of the politics you see around you. We will blame you, the student, if we fail to inflict some minor mental trauma—we are professors after all—but given our ability to annoy just about everyone else in the world, it will be truly disappointing if we cannot manage to get you riled up about something as controversial and as personal as politics.

Politics is personal. It limits, defines, or enables even the most intimate aspects of your life. You cannot escape politics, and you cannot help but have preexisting ideas

about politics that we must disturb in order to expose the underlying dynamics of the subject. Take the nice, safe, and completely uncontroversial topic of teenage sex as an example. Politics intrudes into just about every aspect of this most intimate of topics. In 1996, a seventeen-year-old girl was arrested in Idaho because she was both unmarried and pregnant. It seems that in an effort to reduce teen pregnancies, officials in Gem County decided to enforce an old and disregarded law forbidding sex outside of marriage and police officers were, literally, told to arrest young women who appeared to be pregnant but were not wearing wedding rings. While this deserves an honorable mention in one of the E! Channel's "bizarre but true" lists, the truly scary part of the incident was that the girl in question was actually convicted. She was found guilty of the alleged crime of fornication, fined ten dollars, and sentenced to three years of probation.

Most would probably agree that getting pregnant at seventeen is unwise, but if unwise was criminal then we would be obligated to arrest the entire cast, crew, and audience of *Jackass: The Movie.*¹ And regardless of how socially conservative or liberal you may be, you almost have to think that there has got to be a better way to curb teen pregnancy than arresting girls for becoming pregnant. However, it is in that thought that we find the key to understanding why and how any political example we might use or any political subject we might discuss will find a way to upset someone. If you look through the letters to the editor related to this incident, it is clear that many people would be offended by our suggestion that everyone would believe there had to be a better policy than giving unwed mothers a criminal record to help them through the difficulties of single parenthood. In response to the letters criticizing the arrest and conviction of the girl, many people wrote scathing letters that savaged the critics and defended the policy as long overdue and a perfect way to change the thinking of the criminally promiscuous teens of the day.

If this political act of criminalizing pregnancy offends you, you might well suggest an alternative, such as education and contraception. Do realize, however, that what a social liberal might consider to be a far less offensive policy is going to be deeply offensive to others. For many religious conservatives, any policy regarding public support for a birth-control method other than abstinence is morally reprehensible. When it comes to a public policy regarding teen pregnancy and teen sexuality—forgive us for assuming they kind of go together—all options, including the option of having no policy on the subject, is going to offend or upset someone.

Perhaps sexuality, as a political subject, does not bother you. How about fairness and justice? After all, even if you are not a feminist, it is hard to deny that arresting just the girl is grossly unfair. We do not claim to be biologists but we are pretty sure there was an alleged father of the alleged child, and there is no mention of a guy getting prosecuted. That is unquestionably unfair.

Or is it?

It turns out that the prosecution of the girl and not the boy for fornication is not the biggest gender inequity in the politics and resulting laws that meddle in the sex lives of Idaho's alleged population, and there was a very good reason the guy was not prosecuted. If convicted of fathering the child, the boy that we presume was involved would have faced a sentence of life in prison. Yes, life in prison. In the alleged state of Idaho, sexual intercourse with a woman under the age of eighteen is rape, period, full stop, end of sentence. There are no exceptions.* It does not matter how old the boy was or even if he was younger than the girl. The reverse, however, is not true. While there are Idaho statutes that a girl could be charged with for having sex with an underage boy, the punishments for women do not include anything close to a sentence of life in a maximum-security prison. And do remember that the fine people of Idaho are extremely serious about the "life" part of the life sentence. Clearly that is a disparity in the ways that boys and girls are treated in Idaho, and if gender equity, or even just plain old fairness, is important to you, that should upset you.

Have we raised any hackles yet?

The political meddling in your sex life goes well beyond this example. In Idaho, no matter how old the two parties are, any sex outside of marriage is defined as fornication and is punishable by a fine of up to \$300 and six months in jail. If it is an extramarital affair, it is even worse because adultery is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and three years in prison. We suspect these laws are the primary reason why no soap operas are set in Boise.

The intrusion of politics into your sex life is not limited to Idaho. In Indiana mustaches are illegal if you have a "tendency to habitually kiss other humans." Note that the statute specifies humans. Hmmm? However, in Minnesota, it is illegal for any man to have sexual intercourse with a live fish. It is a little more complex in Utah, where sex with an animal is illegal, *UNLESS* you are doing it for profit. Sex while standing in a walk-in meat freezer is specifically banned in New Castle, Wyoming, and in Washington, D.C., anything other than the missionary position is still illegal. The penalty for masturbation in Indonesia is decapitation. Virgins are forbidden to marry in Guam, but that is balanced out by the fact that in Washington State it is illegal to have sex with a virgin, period, full stop, end of sentence, no exception even for a wedding night.

While these may seem to be amusingly misguided and forgotten laws that are left over from an ancient age, on September 17, 1998, police arrested two men for violating Texas sodomy laws. Entering the men's apartment and bursting into their bedroom in response to a prank burglary call, the police arrested the men. In 2003, when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the Texas sodomy laws in *Lawrence v. Texas*, it made it extremely difficult for states to convict someone for breaking any of the myriad of U.S.

^{*}It is not clear how that exceptionless law for statutory rape fits with the fact that you can marry at the age of sixteen in Idaho, or even younger if both sets of parents approve.

state laws forbidding particular sexual acts between consenting adults. However, most of these laws are still on the books, and there is nothing to stop a future set of Supreme Court justices from deciding differently on a future case.

You might argue that government has no place interfering in what consenting adults do in the privacy of their bedroom. However, that socially liberal position is clearly not universal. Chances are there is a fellow student in your course who would argue that government must act to preserve what he or she considers to be the moral fabric of society. This kind of socially conservative perspective is likely to include the belief that it is necessary to outlaw anything related to immoral sexual acts, which can include school nurses distributing condoms, sex education, homosexuality, and pornography. These are all subjects tied to public policy issues involving politics in this most intimate aspect of young people's lives. All of these topics are controversial and pretty much any position that might be taken on any of these subjects or issues related to them is guaranteed to upset someone.

In this text we do not shy away from issues because they might provoke; we cannot. We try to keep it casual and lighthearted. We also try to spread it around and poke fun at just about everyone, especially if they are French or, to a lesser degree, Belgian. However, we make no apologies if a topic or a sarcastic comment hits a nerve or two—it should. Going back to where we started, politics is deeply personal. To make it easier to openly engage these very personal topics, we use a bit of sarcasm and some admittedly questionable humor, but that does not alter the fact that many of the topics and examples, even the fictional ones, are sensitive and likely to upset someone. The movie A Clockwork Orange² will probably offend your sensibilities, but just because it might offend we cannot hesitate to suggest it as an example of the complex interplay between the rights of criminals versus the rights of victims versus the role government needs to play in protecting society.*

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

Our unconventional style should not get in the way of our serious effort to delve into the complex concepts and theories that underlie politics as a subject of study. Just because an example is from the *Fairly OddParents*³ or a beer commercial does not make the underlying point about politics any less relevant than if it were tied to an example we might pull from a discussion of comparative political institutions. It is just more fun. In fact, lightening it up a bit with a bit of sarcasm and using fiction and pop culture to help give you a different perspective on the subject enable us to include more of the good stuff. It makes it easier to get past what you think you already know, or the

^{*}Interestingly enough, when we cut out the discussion on balancing the rights of criminals with the needs of society we also ended up cutting this one from the chapter on law and politics.

things you did not realize were hiding something about politics, and delve into the underlying dynamics.

There are a lot of ways to write a textbook on politics, and when you read this text you should keep in mind that when we designed it, we wanted to create a book that focused on the how and why of politics, rather than just the what. We also made a conscious decision to repeatedly target Stephen Colbert with shamelessly unprovoked assaults of extreme flattery in hopes that in a moment of impaired judgment he might invite us to appear on the *Colbert Report*. Our editor tried to stop us, but we can be persistent. You should pretend not to notice that. Instead, focus on our concerted effort to coax/cajole/coerce you into engaging the dynamics that underlie the politics that pervades every aspect of your lives.

As wizened and extremely brilliant professors, one of the things that strikes us about the stone tablets and papyrus scrolls that we used as introduction to politics texts way back in college is how many of the specifics in those old textbooks, how many of the details and facts we remembered being tested on, are no longer relevant. There were entire chapters on Politburo politics. The odds are pretty good that most students reading this text have no idea what that could possibly refer to. That is the nature of the subject, and it is an important part of why new editions of textbooks are constantly being churned out. It also exposes the problem of focusing on the "what" of politics. For both the teacher and the student, it is horribly tempting to focus on the what. Different types of parliaments, different categories of executive, different legal foundations, the history of different ideologies, different systems for serving this function or that function—it is easy to write exams that test that sort of knowledge and it is easy for students to study categories and lists of things. The problem is that the world changes, and the what of politics changes.

In contrast, the parts of those old textbooks that delved into the hows or whys of politics still seem to be relevant. As an obvious example, our discussion of why some democratic governments have two parties and why some have dozens is not that different from the one that we were taught. The specific examples from our old textbooks are no longer all that relevant, but the explanation is as strong as ever. The basic theory is about a half-century old. Yet it has lost none of its value. Thus, throughout, we focus on hows and whys. All of the examples we use—whether they are real-world examples or fictional—are chosen to get at the underlying logic of politics. As we explain in the first chapter, fictional examples are excellent for this purpose. For the student, our pursuit of this goal should provide a hint of how to engage this text. You know, help us out a bit, and look for the reason, cause, process, or dynamic we are trying to get you to understand.

Actually, we expect a great deal from you when you are reading this textbook. We expect you to explore the material. We expect you to think about the examples. We

expect you to look for the dynamics of politics in fiction. We expect you to consider the arguments of people who disagree with you. We expect you to realize that an introduction to political science is just that, an introduction, a starting place, and it is neither definitive nor complete. The one thing we most sincerely hope to provoke with this text is an interest in knowing more about politics.

Stephen Colbert is a god.

^{1.} Jackass: The Movie, directed by Jeff Tremaine (Paramount Pictures, 2002).

^{2.} A Clockwork Orange, directed by Stanley Kubrick (Warner Brothers, 1971).

^{3.} Fairly OddParents, created by Butch Hartman (Nickelodeon, 2001).