
Your fifth blog entry, which you will post on www.NetflixStudies.com, is due before **5:00 p.m. Wednesday, June 6** (note: **Monday’s assignment, BLOG #4, has been deleted from the syllabus**). Before posting your comments (which should be at least **700 words**), you should [1] watch the first six episodes of the Netflix original TV series **One Day at a Time**, [2] watch the YouTube video “**The One That Goes Behind the Scenes**” (a documentary concerning the making of a *Friends* episode), and [3] read the following short online articles about multi-camera sitcoms on Netflix:

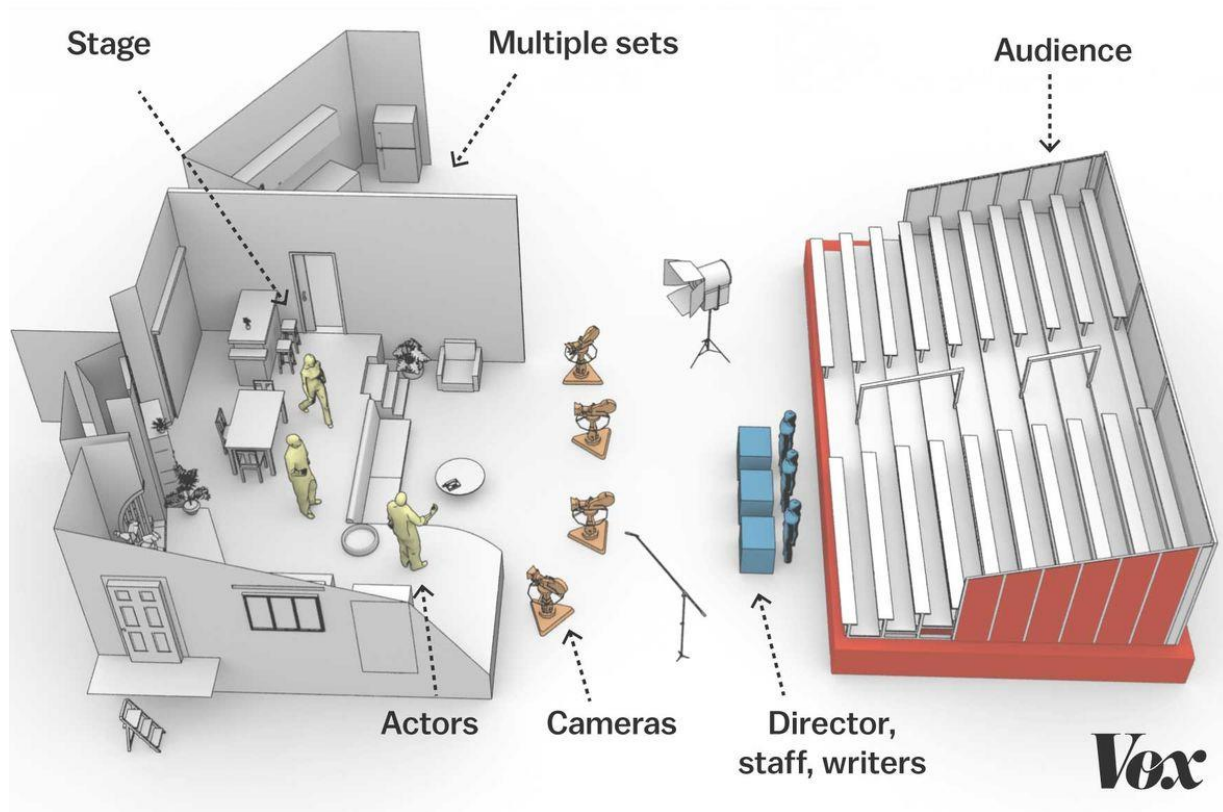
- Manuel Betancourt, “Make ‘Em Laugh Track: How Netflix’s *One Day at a Time* Resuscitates the Multi-Cam Sitcom,” *Paste* (January 18, 2017): <https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2017/01/make-em-laugh-track-how-netflixs-one-day-at-a-time.html>
- Pili Valdés, “What It’s Like to Attend a Live Taping of Netflix’s *One Day at a Time*,” *ReMezcla* (March 2018): <http://remezcla.com/features/film/live-taping-netflix-one-day-time/>

Recent **mini-lectures** (including some of the supplemental slides posted on CANVAS) have provided information about the formal, iconographic, and thematic elements present within many **situation comedies** (including that genre’s two main subgenres, **domestic comedies** and **workplace comedies**). That material, plus the information contained in the YouTube video “**The One That Goes Behind the Scenes**,” gives you a foundation to begin thinking about the continued relevance of TV’s oldest form of programming. Indeed, the history of the sitcom goes back to the very origins of the televisual medium, indicating that genre’s perennial status as a comforting source of consensus culture for millions of American and international viewers, then (in the late 1940s) and today (in the 2010s).

In this week’s blog posting, you should reflect on a number of issues pertaining to the production of multi-camera sitcoms generally and to the relative “conservatism” and/or “progressivism” of Netflix’s *One Day at a Time* specifically. What did you learn about the laborious yet streamlined process of making a single episode of *Friends* (presented in the abovementioned documentary)? Was any part of that process something that you had never thought about (i.e., as someone who has likely not attended a live-studio taping of a TV episode as an audience member)? Which members of the production company’s creative personnel/departments are typically overlooked by most viewers? Did the video give you a new appreciation for what is often disparaged by many cultural commentators as a form of “low-brow” entertainment?

Despite the popularity of more “cinematic,” less “theatrical,” single-camera TV comedies (e.g., *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, *Community*, *New Girl*, *Superstore*, *Veep*), multi-camera TV comedies (e.g., *The Big Bang Theory*, *The Carmichael Show*, *Mom*, *Roseanne*) continue to be produced each year. Netflix’s *One Day at a Time* is another recent example. As a remake of producer Norman Lear’s 1975–1984 sitcom of the same title, this “nostalgic throwback” to an earlier era features many of the hallmarks of traditional programming, including a relatively limited number of studio-bound sets, high-key lighting, and the audible presence of an in-studio audience, whose laughter provides punctuation for the performers’ broadly humorous interpretations of larger-than-life roles. However, as Manuel Betancourt notes in his article “Make ‘Em Laugh Track,” this seemingly “old-fashioned” approach to comedy belies the show’s “complex storylines” — its eagerness in tackling socially relevant subjects such as posttraumatic stress disorder, workplace discrimination, and the challenges faced by undocumented immigrants in these politically divisive times.

Typical multi-camera sitcom setup



Do you agree with Betancourt, who argues that *One Day at a Time* gives Netflix viewers an “urgent recasting of an old formula”? How, according to the author, does this and other multi-camera sitcoms (shot in front of a live studio audience) create “a sense of community” that might not otherwise be apparent when watching single-camera sitcoms lacking a laugh track? Why do you think that multi-camera sitcoms have fallen out of favor with so many audiences in recent years? Does this particular format lend itself to the presentation of potentially controversial topics? Do you think that *One Day at a Time*, like other notable examples (e.g. *Roseanne*) is ultimately a conservative cultural production? Or does the show’s representation of the Alvarez family (whose Cuban heritage is foregrounded throughout the entire first season) strike you as being progressive in any way?

NOTE: You will have an opportunity to explore/discuss issues of **performance** and **acting** in next week’s reading response, so do there is no need to feel pressed to mention such aspects in this week’s blog posting.

ALSO: If you would like to read additional online articles about two other multi-camera Netflix comedies, feel free to consult the following:

- Mike Spry, “KICKING TELEVISION: *The Ranch*, *Redemption*, and the Multi-Cam Sitcom,” *IndieWire* (April 29, 2016): <http://www.indiewire.com/2016/04/kicking-television-the-ranch-redemption-and-the-multi-cam-sitcom-287319/>
- Alejandra Reyes-Velarde, “Yes, it’s OK to laugh with *Alexa & Katie*, the new Netflix show about a teen with cancer,” *LA Times* (March 22, 2018): <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/tv/la-et-st-alexa-and-katie-20180322-story.html>