

Bioethicist calls Jon Stewart 'our greatest public intellectual'

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In an article in the *American Journal of Bioethics*, a Loyola bioethicist is calling political satirist Jon Stewart "our greatest public intellectual. This is no joke."

Kayhan Parsi, JD, PhD, writes that Stewart "has emerged as our voice of sanity in a sea of insanity in a new media age with its ephemeral nature and lack of substance." Parsi is an associate professor in the Neiswanger Institute for Bioethics and Health Policy of Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine.

Parsi explains that a public intellectual is seriously committed to ideas and discourse. He or she may be an academic, although journalists, policymakers and even politicians can play the role.

Parsi notes that Stewart invites a variety of writers, artists and intellectuals to discuss their work on "The Daily Show," which he hosts on Comedy Central. In doing so, Stewart has taken on the mantle of a public intellectual himself.

"In an era with a great amount of strident self-righteousness, Stewart cuts through the absurdities of what passes for [political discourse](#)," Parsi writes. "Although bioethics topics do not figure prominently in the Stewart oeuvre of satire . . . the issues that are part and parcel of bioethics (say, [health care reform](#)) have merited a significant amount of attention."

Stewart and his colleague [Stephen Colbert](#) "have created a space where serious writers can discuss their works in front of a fairly large audience."

Parsi concludes: "Today, the effective public intellectual has to be less the pedant and more the artful catalyst for independent thought. Perhaps unwittingly or even unknowingly, Stewart has taken on this role with relish and gusto. Although neither a [bioethicist](#) nor an academic, Stewart has taken on the mantle of our greatest public intellectual."

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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