We may watch *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* for its award-winning satire of contemporary politics and media, but that isn’t why a network like Comedy Central produces and broadcasts the program. From a business perspective, *The Daily Show* attracts viewers ages 18-34, who are the target market for advertisers selling movies, booze, and video games. *The Daily Show* is clearly more than a marketing scheme, but the bottom line is that Comedy Central uses *The Daily Show* to attract our attention and then sell us to advertisers.

We live in a society in which culture is a product: organized into industries with their own lobbying groups in Washington, produced and distributed by corporations, and sold to consumers in the marketplace. The buying and selling of mass-produced cultural products dates back to the origins of book and newspaper publishing, accelerated with the rise of motion pictures and the expansion of national advertising in the early 20th century, and now – in the age of social media -- pervades every aspect of our lives. It is virtually impossible to imagine how one might live a life beyond the reach of commercial culture. The cultural industry makes cultural products like *The Daily Show* widely available, but it also means that the market determines cultural value in ways that are clearly worth examining more closely. How does the business of culture shape movies, books, music, news, and even social media like Facebook? To answer this question we will explore many of the defining features of commercial culture, including the role of copyright, the power of advertising, the expansion of media conglomerates, and the forces of globalization.