
CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION BY HORACE NEWCOMB ix

ONE History of Television Talk: Defining a Genre i

Introduction 1
Unspoken Rules 3
History 6
Three Major Subgenres 6
Cycles 9
Star Hosts 12
Talk Worlds 15

TWO The First Cycle (1948–1962): Experimentation, Consolidation, and Network Control—CBS 19

Introduction to the First Cycle 19
Founders at CBS: Murrow and Godfrey 21
CLOSE-UP: “The Case of Milo Radulovich,” *See It Now*,
October 20, 1953 24

THREE The First Cycle, Part II: Experimentation, Consolidation, and Network Control—NBC and DuMont 34

Sylvester “Pat” Weaver: NBC’s Executive Visionary of
Television Talk (1949–1955) 34
Dave Garroway (1952–1961) 35
Arlene Francis and *Home* (1954–1957) 39

CLOSE-UP: Arlene Francis' Last <i>Home Show</i> , August 9, 1957, NBC	42
Steve Allen, Jack Paar, and <i>Tonight!</i> Founding Traditions of Late-Night Entertainment Talk (1954-1962)	45
CLOSE-UP: Jack Paar's Walk Off the Set of <i>The Tonight Show</i> , February 1960	48
Mike Wallace: The Grand Inquisitor of Television Talk (1956-1958)	51
Conclusion	54

FOUR The Second Cycle (1962-1974): Network Consolidation and New Challenges 56

Introduction	56
Johnny Carson and <i>The Tonight Show</i> (1962-1967)	58
Mike Wallace: "The Grand Inquisitor" Returns (1962-1967)	62
Barbara Walters: The "Tender Trap" (1962-1967)	63
Challenges to Network Domination (1969-1974)	66
Phil Donahue (1967-1974)	68

FIVE Competitive Ferment in the Late Second Cycle:

The First Late-Night Talk-Show Wars (1967-1974)	72
Introduction	72
The Challengers: Bishop, Frost, Griffin, and Cavett	73
CLOSE-UP: Norman Mailer vs. Gore Vidal on <i>The Dick Cavett Show</i> , ABC, December 1, 1971	78
Johnny Carson (1967-1974)	85
Conclusion	87

SIX The Third Cycle (1974-1980): Transitions 89

1974: A Year of Change	89
Watergate as National Talk Event	92
New Voices in Syndication: Phil Donahue and Mike Douglas	93
An Independent Voice: Bill Moyers	95
The Voices of Women: Barbara Walters and Dinah Shore	100
Battling from Within: Johnny Carson and NBC (1974-1980)	106
CLOSE-UP: Johnny Carson's <i>Tonight</i> : "The Execution	

Game," A Censored Monologue Routine, January 18, 1977,

NBC 106

Conclusion: The End of the Network Era 109

SEVEN The Fourth Cycle (1980–1990): The Post-Network Era 111

Introduction 111

David Letterman and the Reinvention of the Late-Night Talk Show 113

CLOSE-UP: *Late Night with David Letterman* 117

"America Held Hostage": The Genesis of ABC's *Nightline* with Ted Koppel 123

CLOSE-UP: News Talk, Entertainment Talk, and the Chernobyl Nuclear Reactor Disaster of 1986 127

New Hosts, New Audiences 130

Joan Rivers and the Late-Night Talk-Show Wars of 1986–1987 131

Oprah Winfrey 134

Geraldo Rivera 140

Arsenio Hall 143

New Consciousness of the Power of TV Talk 145

EIGHT The Fifth Cycle (1990–1995): News as Entertainment 147

Introduction 147

Leno, Letterman, and the Late-Night Talk-Show Wars (1992–1995) 150

News Talk as Entertainment and Politics: McLaughlin and King (1992–1995) 158

The O. J. Simpson Verdict as a National Talk Event (1995) 169

NINE The Fifth Cycle (1996–2000): Trash Talk, Nice Talk, and Blended Talk 175

Ricki Lake and the National "Trash Talk" Debate 175

When Words Break Down: Jerry Springer (1991–) 178

Rosie O'Donnell's "Nice Talk" (1996–2002) 181

New Blends 183

Bill Maher and *Politically Incorrect* (1993–2002) 184

Garry Shandling and *The Larry Sanders Show* (1992–1998) 186

Conclusion 190

APPENDIX

A Taxonomy of Television Talk by Robert J. Erler and Bernard M.

Timberg 195

A Guide to Television Talk by Robert J. Erler 204

NOTES 305

SOURCES 337

INDEX 343

Late Night with David Letterman photo/chart section
follows page 122.

"Press Portraits of TV Talk-Show Stars" photo section follows
page 146.