



Doreen MacAulay, a lecturer at the UNBSJ Faculty of Business, displays the Apprentice website.

Peter Walsh/Telegraph-Journal

Lessons from The Donald part of class discussion

By DAVID STONEHOUSE
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When Doreen MacAulay mentions *The Apprentice* to her students at the University of New Brunswick Saint John, there is both a buzz of excitement and audible groaning.

Not everybody, it seems, is a fan of the reality TV series starring Donald Trump.

But at least she is provoking a reaction in her students - at least she is launching a lively discussion about various facets of the corporate world.

"With this, you get a reaction from students because they were watching it, they knew the characters and they understand how something happened," says Ms. MacAulay, a lecturer at the UNBSJ Faculty of Business.

She started launching into discussions of the show last year. At first, she had tuned into *The Apprentice* to satisfy her own curiosity for the show. But then the plot of one episode caught her attention and she decided to use its lessons in an organizational behaviour class the next day.

She can't remember the details of the episode now, but from then on *The Apprentice* became a launching pad for debate at least twice a month in the class, which deals with issues such as leadership, ethics and decision making.

Discussions around the show help translate theory into practice for those assembled in the lecture hall - particularly for those students who have had little or no exposure to the corporate culture.

"I teach a lot of first-year students. Once you get to your third and fourth year, people have probably worked a few jobs so they have something that they can kind of grab on to so that they can relate to the theories and the things you are discussing," says Ms. MacAulay, who is also director of undergraduate studies for the faculty of business. "But when you are first-year students it is hard sometimes to have that foundation."

She acknowledges there is a lot of debate over how much reality is really reflected in *The Apprentice*. But fits of drama and theatre aside, the show does mirror some of the situations students will face out in the wily world of business.

"There was one episode where they had to go into The Home Depot and create a do-it-yourself workshop. In the kind of brainstorming phase of it, everyone was trying to come up with these elaborate ideas - 'how can we make it wonderful?' and 'how can we make it great?'"

One of the candidates vying to become Mr. Trump's Apprentice suggested to the group that they focus instead building storage trunks. The other candidates dismissed his idea as uncreative, unoriginal and too

simple.

"But in the end he stuck to his guns because he was the leader and he felt this was going to be a good idea. He could see the whole vision, the whole big picture of how it would end up - that it would be a good product for these do-it-yourself workshops you had to encompass the whole family," says Ms. MacAulay.

"So what happened was the trunk was very successful - kids were willing to hand paint them and the product they were putting together was simple enough so that father and son could do it together. And Hope Depot ran with the idea. The concept there is when you are starting a business you just need to do something simple and you need to do it well. You are not going to be a Donald Trump over night."

The show can teach other lessons too, she says. Like how to come up with strategies to win over difficult people or lazy employees. But even the onscreen theatrics with little or no grounding in reality can be fodder for useful discussion.

"At that point, you can filter out a bit of what is the fluff - you let them know what is probably not that realistic. But then you also can focus in on what is a reality of the workplace and how would you deal with it," she says.

"And what is really great is we have a population of mature students, so we have some students in there who do have quite a bit of work experience. So they can comment on the show and give a real-life example that mirrors it. That helps students as well."

She says there are some students who absorb learning better reading about concepts rather than listening to lectures or watching a slice of reality TV. But the challenge in teaching is to reach out to people with different learning styles.

"Some of your students need to see it in writing in front of them for them to be able to digest it - absolutely. But for the majority of students, especially if it is a concept that they are not familiar with, giving them a concrete example where they are using different senses is more beneficial."

For the most part, using *The Apprentice* in class tends to grab the attention of students. Indeed, it has worked so well that Ms. MacAulay plans to go beyond merely discussing the show last year to introducing clips from the show to students in this year's introduction to business class.

"It opens the door for them to be able to give feedback and I think in a comfortable manner. Because often times if you read a textbook before you go into class and you didn't quite understand it or maybe your impression of it is not right. But with a TV show, you are pretty safe: you've



Donald Trump does a parody of famous television theme songs with Megan Mullally, of the comedy series "Will & Grace" during the 57th Annual Primetime Emmy Awards on Sunday at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

watched it like anybody else and it is easier to recall. So I find that I get students willing to comment, and more easily. It is great discussion."

She says it would be great if all students gravitated towards textbooks.

"If they did, then maybe I could get them reading Harvard Business Review right off the bat on a regular basis. But to introduce them to it you have to take them in gradually. That is where I find this type of more 'fun' avenue is good for them."

Laura Pinto, a PhD candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, has studied *The Apprentice* and its increasing use in classrooms at the public school level through to colleges and universities. She isn't as enthusiastic.

"I have to say I found it very entertaining. I watched that first season very carefully. But I in various episodes I'd watch and say, 'Holy cow - they didn't just say that did they? They didn't just do that did they?'" says Ms. Pinto, who is also past president of the Ontario Business Education Association.

"And then at various business conferences, I'd chat with other teachers and I'd found that a lot of people said that they were using that in the classroom. When I asked how deal with such and such a thing that

I thought was outrageous in one way or another, they would say: 'That's not outrageous - we show them the tape and that's how they learn to act in the business world.' And so I started thinking if that is what they are teaching people to act like, I feel sorry for any racial minorities and women in the classroom."

In the show, she argues, Mr. Trump approves of men using their masculinity to get ahead but frowns on women using their sexuality and it re-enforces "white privilege."

And she says the show discourages candidates from challenging authority.

"It is training a certain kind of compliance that I think is dangerous, the sorts of things that are necessary but not sufficient conditions for disasters like Enron - and disasters like Trump's multiple bankruptcies, which are not mentioned on that show either."

But she is not completely dismissive of the show as a learning tool for business.

"Like any piece of information you share with the class, if you share it responsibly, if there is good teaching involved, then I think it is great. If you are just giving it over and not asking them to apply some critical thinking to it, then I think it is dangerous."

"We're creating a problem is the recreation facility to people in same story," she

He worries recreation facility acted upon which that it came. It can't be a plus

The atom children ages 7 who is also in groups, said across the ball, but in lac hockey.

"There seem encouraging it and they're tall inactivity to us "If we had more facilities kids playing."

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He said that day is divided physical activity and culture.

"Results from tried in France well academically in full-day acad

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At the same boys increased cent and girls, 15 per cent.

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He believes families, the local government mu schools to corre

"We have to Many people re the local sandlot I think we have to do that and that."

'Original to perform Thursda

Telegra

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