

Understanding Sustainability via the South Park Film Festival Episode

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Key words: Sustainability, Animated TV Episode, South Park, Festival Planning, Environmental Impacts

SUMMARY

This teaching activity employs the use of a pop-culture animated television episode that illustrates fiscal, cultural, and environmental impacts that are the result of a festival increasing visitor traffic into a small town. Students review the concepts of fiscal, cultural, and environmental sustainability prior to watching the episode in class. A topic introduction lecture is delivered, the episode is shown in class and a discussion on impacts and strategies and policies that can protect the resources is facilitated. Real-world occurrences of the same issues in the episode are reviewed. A related writing assignment is assigned.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students discuss and articulate the concepts of fiscal, cultural, and environmental sustainability.
- Students examine real-world festival related impacts to community economies, cultures, environments, and infrastructure.
- Students examine policies that protect community resources.
- Students develop a written set of policies for sustainable festival operation in the fictional community of South Park, Colorado.

This class module introducing sustainability and how it is related to festival development, management, operation, and policies incorporates a brief introductory lecture, the viewing of an animated television episode, a post episode review of actual documented festival impacts, a class discussion on policy, and the assignment of a written homework assignment. This sequence has been developed to help develop the students' understanding of environmental, financial, and cultural sustainability and how community and tourism festivals can impact a community. The Southpark episode (animated) depicts a scenario where improper festival planning, infrastructure limitations, and lack of policy allow the event to negatively impact the small town culture, finances, and infrastructure of fictitious South Park, CO. Though the animated episode utilizes language, images, and situations that are crass and in some cases verbally inappropriate (mature audience rating) it is these over-the-top depictions that provide excellent examples that the students remember and can easily interpret.

The written homework assignment “A strategy for prevention” paper (2 pages) requires incorporation of examples from the following posted resources:

- Southpark episode
- Journal article on impact to culture via visitation
- Internet (newspaper) postings “real-world” result of failure to recognize the system/infrastructure impacts (literally volume of sewage into the city sewage system) that occurred from a major event hosted in that community
- Conference proceeding (paper) examining the impact of tourism to fiscal and political representation of a community/culture
- City departments that should be consulted and policies (examples) developed to prevent overload and guide sustainability

This module accounts for 10% of the grade for the class it is associated to.

IMPLEMENTATION CRITERIA

Equipment for activity:

- Presentable copy of episode (digital or DVD). AV equipment to present episode, computer or DVD player & projection system.
- Assessment material include the following: written assignment, 10 test items, instructor’s notes on the quality and depth of the in-class student discussion related to the material.

Timeline for development, delivery, and assignment grading:

- 4 hours : Review of the related materials on fiscal, cultural, and environmental sustainability.
- 4 hours: Review and selection of related documented festival impacts and instances.
- 6 hours: Development of personal class lecture notes, power-point slides (if preferred), handouts, written assignment instructions, written assignment grading rubric, quiz/test items.
- 1 hour: Instructor review of the episode in the classroom to be used to verify that the AV equipment is adequate.
- 1.15 hour: Class topic introduction, presentation of topic, viewing of episode, post episode discussion, review of written assignment and grading criteria.
- 1 hour: Post class documentation of class discussion.
- 2-5 hours: Grading of written assignments.

REFERENCES

Parker, T.(writer/director), Stone (writer/director), (1998). *Chefs Chocolate Salty Balls*, South Park (television series) episode 9, season 2.