



## Episode 1,041: How to Make (Funny) Two-Minute Arguments Against Statism

Guest: Seamus Coughlin

**WOODS:** You've produced more content since we spoke last, and I'm glad to say I'm one of your Patreon supporters, continue to be to this day. And I've been interested to follow your progress since then. Just maybe to recap for anybody who may have missed your previous appearance – I find that impossible to believe, that somebody could have missed that, but just in case, describe for folks what it is you do. I mean, you're in school, and somehow in your spare time, you're also doing what?

**COUGHLIN:** A whole lot. I'm a maniac. So when I was 18 years old and I graduated high school, I noticed that the demand for animators, the market demand had risen about 30%. And I animated as a hobby and did a little bit of freelance work, so I figured I would go into business doing this full time. My parents had other plans. They said, if you're going to be staying with us, you need to attend community college. I said okay. So I did community college for two years while I built this small business in animation production. Then after two years, I went away to a four-year university, and I continued working because I didn't want to lose my clients, and then I also began producing Freedom Toons along the way. So I don't sleep often, but I love what I do, so it's worth it.

And I'm one of the few young people lucky enough to be able to sustain myself off of my craft while working in a creative field, and I'm very grateful for that. And I'm also grateful to donors such as yourself who are helping me live that dream. I can't take all the credit for what I've been producing here, because as of about last year, I have been able to use the money I've acquired through Patreon to hire a small staff to help me animate some of these videos, and occasionally I'll outsource a little bit of the writing too.

**WOODS:** Now, that seems tricky, because of course these are libertarian videos, they're funny –

**COUGHLIN:** Absolutely.

**WOODS:** – and I would – see, I have to produce podcast episodes, but it helps that most of the time I have guests, and the guest helps me think of things to talk about, or I find topics and whatever. But to find something to be entertaining and funny about every single week, I would be afraid that would be too much pressure. I'd be afraid that I wouldn't be able to meet the expectations that I had laid for myself.

**COUGHLIN:** Absolutely. So the way I've always looked at this is that – I should say that my personal philosophy on comedy is that satire is the art of turning your rage into someone else's laughter. So there's no shortage of topics that I'm livid about, to say the least, and there's all this nonsense being shoved in my face, especially attending an art school – which, by the way, I don't want to trash the institution I'm being educated at. I love the Savannah College of Art and Design, but unfortunately, a lot of the students tend to be left-leaning. And so hear people's perspectives on virtually every issue imaginable constantly, and they're always wrong of course. And it just feels like this is the only way I can remain sane.

And I suppose another way that I'm able to come up with these topics so frequently is, generally what I'll do is I'll take about a month out of the year to contemplate as many topics as I possibly can for the upcoming volume of Freedom Toons. And fortunately, throughout the year, I'll generally jot down little ideas in a notebook whenever I get them, and so when it comes time to compile an actual list, I'll watch the news for a little bit, read some articles in Huffington Post or Salon.com, include some of the ideas I jotted down throughout the year, and that usually gives me ample material to work with. But yeah, you're right that it's definitely a lot to have to think of a new topic every single week.

**WOODS:** Yeah, yeah, but that is a smart way of doing it. You get the topics and then it's just a matter of fleshing them out over the course of the year or whatever.

**COUGHLIN:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** All right, smart.

**COUGHLIN:** Thank you.

**WOODS:** So you had a video that wound up being picked up by Milo Yiannopoulos and was shared on his Facebook page, which couldn't have hurt in terms of views and people knowing about you. That was the birth control video.

**COUGHLIN:** Yes, absolutely. So Milo shared that. That's a video I released about a month ago, and it's one I created towards the end of the summer. I think I actually scribbled it out in roughly a day in September. And so one thing I should mention is it's a bit different from most of the other videos I do. Towards the end of the Freedom Toons production cycle, what I'll do is I'll just throw together something low-budget and silly because the mood will strike and I'll have some funny idea that I want to run with. And this video happened to be a product of that. It's a very silly cartoon of this feminist woman screaming about "My birth control!" because I notice that so often the left really sounds like that to me, and it's sort of a play on this stereotype of the redneck conservative libertarian who thinks the government's coming for their guns and they're extremely paranoid, and I just kind of wanted to take that stereotype and rework it to fit a left-leaning person. You can see at the beginning she's holding a shotgun defending her boxes of birth control. And so inspiration struck, and as I mentioned, I scribbled it out. It's not really the highest quality thing I've ever done, but I think it's pretty funny. And Milo seemed to think so too, because he shared it. So I appreciate that, Mr. Yiannopoulos.

**WOODS:** Well, where did that come from? Where did that topic come from? That was in the news at the time.

**COUGHLIN:** That's a good question. So a lot of this stuff actually just comes from scrolling my newsfeed on Facebook and seeing the things that people are sharing. And I noticed that one particular friend who had been posting about the government trying to take her birth control, etc., which is just a complete, paranoid fantasy, posted something about gun control and how Democrats don't actually want to take your guns away; they just want to restrict gun ownership to a sensible extent, as they call it. And I thought that was so silly because they constantly laugh at right-wingers for thinking that our guns are going to be taken when the government supposedly, as they say, only wants to institute minor restrictions, yet birth control is completely legal. It's been completely legal. No law has made it any more difficult to procure. We're simply saying that we don't want to pay for it as conservative and libertarian individuals who have the right under the First Amendment and religious freedom laws to not sponsor activity we view to be immoral and antithetical to our sympathies.

**WOODS:** So in other words, it involves other people paying for your birth control. Is that what the issue was?

**COUGHLIN:** Exactly. And so they were insinuating that women's reproductive rights were under threat and that everyone's ability to use birth control and contraceptives was being stripped from them simply by virtue of the fact that conservatives don't want to have to pay for birth control for them.

**WOODS:** So the video, let's just say – the video is extremely well done.

**COUGHLIN:** Thank you.

**WOODS:** My favorite video of yours still remains the one about the gender pronouns, simply because it's one of your straw man entries. There you have two – well, I guess they're not really people. They're made of straw. They're straw men.

**COUGHLIN:** [laughing] Yeah, exactly. They're men, straw men.

**WOODS:** And each one of them takes a position that is the most ridiculous, extreme, exaggerated version of one side of the question. So on one side, you have somebody arguing there's only one gender. Now, of course nobody takes that view [laughing].

**COUGHLIN:** Yeah, exactly.

**WOODS:** And then on the other side, you have somebody whose pronouns are changing like every three seconds, and nobody takes that view either. But it's funny the way you take an issue and you do that. So you did that with health care also, the one I just watched just before we started recording. This is a recent one where you've got a guy who is suffering, he's got some disease, and he needs somebody to pay for his health care. And the funny thing is, by the end of the video, he discovers that the other straw man, who of course believes in social Darwinism and that the guy should just go ahead

and die already – they realize that actually the two of them have something rather important in common.

**COUGHLIN:** Yes, exactly. So one of my favorite ways to wrap up a straw man video if I'm able to do so was to sort of tie it in together with the horseshoe theory and actually have the straw men agree with each other, because once you get to the ridiculous extremes, there tend to be more similarities than differences, at least in the most important respects.

And so I thought it would be really cool to play on this idea that neither straw man wants to pay for the health care system proposed by the other. And the straw man argument that's generally made of people who oppose a single-payer system or a socialized medicine system is that they're selfish, they're greedy, they just don't want to pay for your health insurance or anyone else's. And I always found that to be a lovely example of projection, because obviously most of the people supporting a single-payer system or socialized medicine themselves just don't want to pay for their own insurance. And so again, I'm greedy for not wanting to pay for your insurance, but you're not greedy for wanting to take money from me to pay for your insurance. It's sort of some silly mental gymnastics.

But again, I have to make both sides look ridiculous because it is debates with straw men and that's the purpose. And so I figured I would just boil both arguments down to not wanting to pay for health care. And they both realized that they can have what they want without having to pay for it; they just need to outsource it to future generations through debt spending and deficit spending. And so that's sort of the punchline of the video, that they're just screwing the future of this country.

**WOODS:** But their argument that they're having is just so funny, first of all because the voices you do are great.

**COUGHLIN:** Thank you.

**WOODS:** Those voices are just tremendous. Gun control has just been – apparently it's just going to keep coming up until one of us dies, just forever –

**COUGHLIN:** Oh my gosh, I know.

**WOODS:** – and you've handled that in your videos, and that's what I want to talk about next after we thank our sponsor.

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So let's talk about gun control. You have a recent video and then one from the more distant past. But you have a recent video featuring a couple of, let's say, well-known commentators and what they might have to say on the subject, and I'd like you to talk about that. I just got done watching it. It was great.

**COUGHLIN:** Thank you so much. It's interesting. I'm glad you called them commentators. I actually have Dr. Mac refer to them as journalists in the video, but

you're right that they're more or less commentators. And unfortunately, the line between the two has become blurred.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**COUGHLIN:** So you have Cenk Uygur and Piers Morgan, who I parodied in this video, and they're both blurting out their opinions on gun control as per usual. And if you know anything about them – I'm sure you do, but for the audience, they're heavily left-leaning commentators who refer to themselves as journalists. And they are horribly, horribly misinformed when it comes to guns, and the reason I picked them for this video is because I knew I wanted to parody some of the left-leaning attitudes and also explore some of their ignorance on gun issues. And I knew that Piers Morgan and Cenk Uygur are two very anti-Second Amendment commentators and public figures.

And so the whole premise of the video is that the NRA is giving the left an opportunity to have any gun banned that they can name and describe accurately, and that's the twist. They have to be able to accurately name and describe it. And of course they aren't able to. They think they can. They're very confident about their ability to discuss this issue, and yet they – I'll just put it this way: there is little basis for their confidence.

**WOODS:** Yeah, that's the least you could say about it, I would say. It is funny to see them floundering around when presented with what you would think is a fairly reasonable request and challenge and then there it is. And then before that, you've done a video where you use what I – one of your voices that I love is the old-timey announcer voice where there's a narrator in the background who's going to describe what's going on. And it's like an old-timey public service announcement kind of voice.

**COUGHLIN:** Yes, so there are a few videos I've done like that, namely the Planned Parenthood video I did a while ago –

**WOODS:** Oh yeah, we'll talk about that one too.

**COUGHLIN:** Oh yeah, that's one of my favorite videos that I've done. And the gun control video. And so this gun control video goes through a lot of the anti-gun myths that we hear from people on the left. One, for example, is that in Australia, they have banned guns completely and, as a result, gun crime has plummeted. That's actually fallacious because gun crime was trending downwards at a near-identical rate prior to the banning of guns in Australia. There are a couple of other points I make like that. If you want to get the full effect, I really recommend checking out the video because I did a fair amount of research for it. And I feel as though I pretty thoroughly debunked a number of talking points that they make. Now they're starting to make some new talking points, and so I plan on doing another video on this in the future. But in the meantime, I released this video with Piers Morgan and Cenk Uygur because I was more interested in making fun of them than their arguments, as needs to be done on occasion.

**WOODS:** Tell me about the Planned Parenthood video that you made. And what was the context? What was the – was that in the news at the time?

**COUGHLIN:** Yes, so it's interesting. I think this was two summers ago, if I'm not mistaken. Planned Parenthood was caught by two journalists from Live Action, if I'm not mistaken, harvesting and profiting off of the sale of fetal tissue and organs. And this is the worst thing I can imagine an organization getting caught red-handed doing, and it was just incredible the mental gymnastics we saw the mainstream media going through to defend them. And I knew I had to do a video poking fun at all these ridiculous arguments, and I also wanted to take it a step further and debunk some Planned Parenthood myths that have been around forever. So for example, they talk about this 3% number, abortion is only 3% of our services. In the video, I explain why that's completely bogus. I recommend you check it out because that number is entirely fallacious and really meaningless.

And so after this story broke, you had the people at Planned Parenthood, their public relations team – and let's face it, most of the mainstream media is the public relations team for Planned Parenthood. They were on the defense, doing damage control, how do we make this look less terrible than it is? And the arguments that they were making were so ridiculous.

And like three or four or five days passed, and I remember thinking this is old news, I probably shouldn't do a video on it because it's already happened about a week ago and no one's going to pay attention to it. And then I figured, you know what? I've got to try to do it anyway because I've been meaning to take a hit at Planned Parenthood. And so I did and it ended up being one my most viewed videos ever, so I'm glad that I did that, and I'm also glad that I stuck it to the people at Planned Parenthood and provided my audience with a lot of factual information about Planned Parenthood and the lies that they tell. I firmly believe that they are the most evil organization on the planet, or at least one of them.

**WOODS:** Wow. All right, nice. Well, look, I like the video. I like all your videos. I'm an easy person to please. I like all your videos. And I mean, I'm an easy person for you to please, because you and I basically agree on pretty much everything in the world.

**COUGHLIN:** Yeah, exactly.

**WOODS:** I'm interested actually in something of the science of animation itself.

**COUGHLIN:** Yes.

**WOODS:** It's one thing to draw a picture. It's quite another to make a person walk around a screen.

**COUGHLIN:** Yes, it is. It's quite a process.

**WOODS:** So how has that changed over the years? It seems like in the old days, that must have been really, really annoying. Now, in the old days, if I were watching an old Woody Woodpecker cartoon – that's way before your time. That's even before mine.

**COUGHLIN:** [laughing] Yeah.

**WOODS:** But I could always tell what part of what I'm seeing on the screen is not ever going to move. I could always tell.

**COUGHLIN:** Yes.

**WOODS:** *Okay, that's not very colorful, so that's not going to move, but Woody's going to move.*

**COUGHLIN:** Yes, that's exactly right.

**WOODS:** *And then there's a bottle over there on the rock. Obviously he's going to take that bottle.* Like I could tell that. So obviously there are some things that you don't have to draw in every frame. This is to save time. But I don't know how this — have computers made it easier for you? What can you tell a layman about how you actually do it?

**COUGHLIN:** Yeah, so the computer has been one of the best things to happen to animation. Unfortunately, people abuse it as a tool on occasion, and they get really lazy and they rely heavily on the computer animation techniques, or at least more so than they probably should if they want to get something of quality. But what the computer's done is it's made animating far less expensive, first of all, because you don't actually have to buy the paper anymore — which doesn't seem like it would be too costly, but it really does add up. You consider the fact that you're drawing between 12 and 24 pictures for every second of animation and you're going through a lot of paper and a lot of pencils and a lot of erasers.

And it's also much more time consuming. What they used to have to do is they would draw the animation on paper, traditional animation paper, which I've worked with. I've actually animated in the traditional way in the past. And you draw it out, you have your animation finished. Then you place the paper on pegs. You photograph one frame. You pull the paper off the pegs. You put the next frame up, take a picture. And so it's this very slow, arduous process, and it takes you a really long time to actually sort of see the finished result, or even the first test.

Now, the awesome thing about the computer is you still ideally want to draw every frame for quality's sake, but you can scrub through that animation really quickly with your mouse. You don't have to actually photograph each image onto film and then develop the film and then play it back from a projector. And so obviously that cuts the time and expense down dramatically.

And then in terms of what you mentioned with being able to tell what's about to move in most cartoons, I think that's something a lot of people begin to notice, because the backgrounds are very detailed and then all of the moving parts are drawn and shaded and colored with time constraints in mind because they know they're going to have to draw that object over and over and over again as opposed to drawing it once and being finished with it, which is the case with the background. And it's also an issue of expense, because you're paying for the paint for each frame that you draw that object

you move within, and the awesome thing about the computer is the paint is free. And so you can shade things however you want. It might take you a little longer, but it's not costing you a whole lot of extra money.

And so hopefully that's a thorough enough explanation to what you were asking. There's a lot more I can tell you about computer animation if you're interested, as well, because again, that is my field.

**WOODS:** Well, I'm extremely interested in it. I'm a little – I wonder a bit about the potential monotony of doing it, though. I could imagine painting a big picture and each part of the picture is different, so that makes it exciting for me. But to sit down and know for a fact I have to draw this stupid jerk 500 times, it would just – I'm exhausted just thinking about it.

**COUGHLIN:** Yes, no, it's definitely very time consuming, and that's part of why I appreciate so much the generosity of my donors on Patreon, because what the money I'm earning from this allows me to do is outsource some of this work to other people so that I can get it done more quickly. And what I generally outsource are things like the lip-synching, for example. I try to focus more or less on the character movement and animation as a whole, and then I'll have separate animators draw the mouth opening and closing and putting all the right phonings in. Fortunately, with the computer there are all sorts of workarounds, especially when you're working with Adobe Animate or Flash, which is the software that I use.

And you know, it's no mystery that while I do strive for quality in these cartoons, this isn't Disney. I mean, this is a web cartoon, and so there are certain things you can get away with that you wouldn't on the big screen. One of those things is I use a lot of repetition. One thing that can help you get videos done more quickly, and it's basically a necessity if you're releasing once every week like I do, is you're going to be reusing frames a lot. So I might have the character lift their arms up to express something, and I'm going to reuse that motion two or three times in that video. And so it's still extremely tedious and time consuming, but as animators, we are incredibly lazy so we figure out as many workarounds as possible to make the laborious process a little bit less tedious and monotonous.

**WOODS:** Well, how difficult is it to get the mouth of the character coordinated with the words that are supposed to be coming out?

**COUGHLIN:** Yeah, interesting question. It's not difficult; it's just tedious. So it's really quite simple, actually, and it's something you notice more so once you begin animating. But there aren't really that many shapes that you make with your mouth. In a low-budget production, you can get away with maybe five or six mouth shapes. Ideally on a larger budget production, you're going to want more than that, but you really only need a mouth shape for the mouth being closed; the mouth shaped for the O shape, which you make when you make for the letter O or the letter R as a sound; two different frames of the mouth being open in different positions; the teeth showing for an S sounds; and then sort of biting of the lower lip for an F sound or a V sound. And as long as you draw that on a frame where you're hearing the noise in the audio bed, it's going to look right.

But it's just the problem is it isn't fun doing that for hours on end. You know, you've got like a three- or four-minute video with four different characters talking, and you've got to draw that mouth shape for every single character for every single sound they make. It takes up quite a bit of time. And again, I'm throwing this word around a lot, but it's appropriate for the art of animation – it's very tedious.

**WOODS:** And you're doing the voices – are you doing all the voices?

**COUGHLIN:** Yes, sir. I do all the voices with a few exceptions. When someone else does a voice, I mention it in the end credits usually or in the description of the video.

**WOODS:** It just seems like also the speed of the movement of the mouth and that has to correspond.

**COUGHLIN:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** I just – I can't do – I'm glad you're doing this, because this is just making me – People say they don't know how I can do 1,000 podcast episodes. That seems like a walk in the park compared to what you do.

**COUGHLIN:** Well, I appreciate that, but let me tell you, 1,000 podcasts is nothing to scoff at.

**WOODS:** Yeah, and nor should people –

**COUGHLIN:** [laughing] Yeah.

**WOODS:** But what you're doing, really, you deserve extra super-duper support or something. Well, tell me what are your ambitions for Freedom Toons, because I think you're doing great work because not everybody sits through an hour-long lecture or will read a super long book, but you can distill a lot of what we're saying in these really clever videos that don't take much of people's time at all. That sometimes is what wakes people up. So what is your ambition? If you could look ahead five or ten years, where would you want Freedom Toons to be?

**COUGHLIN:** That's a really good question. I've sometimes thought about attempting to pitch Freedom Toons or at least one of the Freedom Toons properties as a television series down the line, though of course that's something that wouldn't be for a good bit of time. I know that the Freedom Toons channel is projected to reach 100,000 subscribers by January, so I'm very excited to reach that goal and I'm hoping that what I'm going to be able to do is continue to use the money that I'm earning on Patreon and also some of the money that I'm going to be attempting to earn through things like T-shirt sales and merchandising of other sorts to continue to produce Freedom Toons for as long as the market calls for its production.

And as I mentioned, I'm fortunate enough to be a young person making my living, and that's not entirely off of Freedom Toons – you know, I still do freelance work with various clients. But I'm making enough off of Freedom Toons that I'm able to dedicate a substantial amount of my time to it, and I'm hoping the amount of time I'm able to

dedicate to it continues to grow and it would be wonderful to either focus on it as a full-time job or to be pulling in enough doing it that I can hire other minions full time to work on it so that we can always be pushing out content. Because the unfortunate reality is that the media tends to be heavily left-leaning and it's extremely authoritarian, and libertarian folks need some way to spread the message. And for as long as the imbalance exists, I'm going to be here trying to make cartoons to sort things out a bit.

**WOODS:** Well, tell me how people can follow Freedom Toons. Of course I'm going to put all the stuff, all the links to your Patreon, to your YouTube channel, all this stuff at [TomWoods.com/1041](http://TomWoods.com/1041). But supposing somebody wanted to go directly to find out about you, what would they do?

**COUGHLIN:** Sure, so one thing you can do is you can check out my Patreon page. This isn't just me plugging my Patreon page for donations, though I will do that. It's partially because my Patreon page has the links to the Freedom Toons Facebook page, the Freedom Toons YouTube, and it will have any other relevant links. Right now, the Being Libertarian website is working on adding a page for some of my material, so when that's up, I'll shoot you a link to that. But for now, just go to [Patreon.com/FreedomToons](http://Patreon.com/FreedomToons), and you should be able to see links to just about every website that I'm on there.

**WOODS:** All right, excellent, so we'll do that and then you'll get to the YouTube channel, and you can go through all the videos at your leisure. And you will laugh.

**COUGHLIN:** Thank you.

**WOODS:** In fact, while we were sitting here, I was watching one because I said I need to watch this one before we go on. And then I was silent and silent and then smiling and smiling, and then at the end, I couldn't help it. I had to laugh. But I'm telling you, those straw men, the pronouns one —

**COUGHLIN:** Thank you so much.

**WOODS:** — that was so ridiculously over the top. And by the end, it's so absurd, you have to laugh no matter what your opinion of this is. Even if you are a humorless automaton, you just have to break down and laugh after that. Well, I'm glad you're doing what you're doing. I'm very glad to be a supporter of yours. I hope some of my listeners will agree and join me in doing that, and they'll find all the information at [TomWoods.com/1041](http://TomWoods.com/1041). Well, best of luck —

**COUGHLIN:** Thank you.

**WOODS:** — continue forward, and I'm looking forward to seeing what comes next.

**COUGHLIN:** Thank you so much. I appreciate you having me on. I appreciate your financial support, and thank you so much for introducing me to your audience.