

= Lecture Circuit =

" Lecture Circuit " is a two @-@ part episode of the American comedy television series The Office . They constituted the sixteenth and seventeenth episodes of the fifth season , and the 88th and 89th overall episodes of the series . The first episode originally aired on NBC on February 5 , 2009 , and the second on February 12 .

During both episodes , Michael and Pam visit the various branches of Dunder Mifflin to make business lectures , and in particular visit the Utica branch - where Jim 's ex @-@ girlfriend Karen is regional manager , and the Nashua branch , where Michael 's ex @-@ girlfriend and the love of his life , Holly is an H.R. rep . In both episodes , Jim and Dwight hit a snag as the new heads of the Party Planning Committee when they forget Kelly 's birthday . In the first episode , Andy develops a crush on a customer , and in the second episode , Angela 's unhealthy obsession with her cats is spotlighted when she installs a nanny cam .

Both episodes were directed by Ken Kwapis and written by Mindy Kaling , who also plays Kelly Kapoor in the show . " Lecture Circuit " included guest appearances by screenwriter Dan Goor , comedian Rob Huebel and actress Rashida Jones , who reprises her role of Karen Filippelli , a regular character from the third season . Although the character Holly Flax played a major part in the storyline , actress Amy Ryan did not appear in " Lecture Circuit " . The episodes received generally positive reviews . According to Nielsen Media Research , the first part was watched by 8 @.@ 4 million viewers and the second part was watched by 8 @.@ 89 million viewers .

= = Plot = =

= = = Part one = = =

Michael ( Steve Carell ) is asked to visit the Dunder Mifflin branches to lecture about his success in Scranton . He and Pam ( Jenna Fischer ) , who is coming along as his assistant and driver , plan to visit every branch except Nashua because Michael is not ready to face his ex @-@ girlfriend Holly , who works there . They first visit the Utica branch , where former Scranton employee Karen ( Rashida Jones ) is now regional manager . Pam , who is engaged to Karen 's ex @-@ boyfriend Jim ( John Krasinski ) , fears the encounter will be awkward . But Karen is now married and pregnant , and the two get along very well - when Pam reveals her and Jim 's engagement , Karen even offers genuine congratulations . Michael 's lecture in Utica proves to be a disaster when he tries to teach the employees a trick for how to memorize names and ends up insulting everybody . Nevertheless , Pam is ecstatic to have found closure with Karen . Later , on the road , Michael tells Pam that he never found closure with Holly and , at Pam 's suggestion , they decide to blow off the other lectures and drive to Nashua to find Holly .

Back in Scranton , Jim and Dwight ( Rainn Wilson ) have been named the reluctant heads of the Party Planning Committee due to previous fights between Phyllis ( Phyllis Smith ) and Angela ( Angela Kinsey ) . Jim and Dwight prove terrible at the job , especially when an upset Kelly ( Mindy Kaling ) chastises them for forgetting her birthday . They try to make it up to her by throwing a party but they do a poor job , choosing horrible decorations and forgetting Kelly 's age . Dwight reads her file and learns Kelly spent time in juvenile hall , but is disappointed to learn it does not affect her job performance . Meanwhile , Andy ( Ed Helms ) finds himself attracted to Julia , a female potential client who is talking with Stanley ( Leslie David Baker ) . Andy repeatedly acts awkwardly in front of Julia , and accidentally sets off her car alarm while trying to look inside and find out what music she likes . Andy admits his attraction to her to Stanley , who then gives the potential client over to Andy in exchange for two of his clients . After walking her out to the car , Andy tries to kiss her , but is immediately rebuked . Andy apologizes and mentions that he just got out of a relationship . The client claims she also just got out of a relationship and Andy starts feeling a connection , but she still rejects him and he loses the account .

== Part two ==

Michael and Pam arrive at the Nashua branch , only to learn Holly is away on a human relations retreat . They also learn Holly is dating one of the Nashua salesmen named A. J. ( Rob Huebel ) . Deeply upset , Michael is at first unable to go forward with the presentation , but Pam tries to comfort him by telling him that she felt the same way when Jim was dating Karen . She encourages Michael to do the best presentation possible so people will tell Holly about it . He starts the presentation , but it falls apart when Michael starts asking A. J. intimate questions about his relationship with Holly . Michael leaves in the middle of the talk , leaving Pam to awkwardly finish the rest of the presentation . When Michael goes to Holly 's desk he cuts a sleeve off her sweater , and notices a document on her computer called " Dear Michael " , which he copies onto his flash drive . Later , at a diner , Michael tells Pam about the letter , but she insists reading it would be violating Holly 's trust . Pam herself reads the letter and does not tell him the exact contents , but she reassures him Holly still has feelings for Michael and it is not over , giving an ecstatic Michael the closure he sought .

Back in Scranton , the party planning continues to go poorly . Dwight publicly and loudly confronts Kelly about her time in juvenile hall , which turns out to be for stealing the boat of an ex @-@ boyfriend when she was 14 . Kelly also declares she hates the cake Jim picked for her , which is completely blank ; he later decorates it and spells her name incorrectly as " Kelley " . When Kelly insists the party needs a theme , Jim and Dwight are unable to think of anything . They finally settle on offering her one hour of napping or one hour of watching television . She loves the idea and chooses the nap . Meanwhile , Angela appears much happier than usual because she bought a new \$ 7 @,@ 000 cat with the money she received from selling Andy 's engagement ring . She has also set up a nanny cam so she can monitor the cats from work . However , she is horrified to see one of her other cats having sex with the new cat , and rushes home to stop it . Later , Kevin ( Brian Baumgartner ) and Oscar ( Oscar Nunez ) watch Angela arrive home on the nanny cam screen , and become disgusted when Angela starts licking the cat to help clean it . Angela eventually returns to work and coughs up a hairball . Oscar claims the image will haunt him for the rest of his life .

== Production ==

" Lecture Circuit " was directed by Ken Kwapis and written by Mindy Kaling , who also plays Kelly Kapoor in the show . The first episode included a cameo performance by Rashida Jones , a regular cast member during the third season , where she played Jim Halpert 's love interest Karen Filippelli . " Lecture Circuit " aired just two months before Jones began her regular role as Ann Perkins in the NBC comedy series Parks and Recreation , which was created by Office producers Greg Daniels and Michael Schur . Dan Goor , a future writer for Parks and Recreation , made a cameo as Karen 's husband in the photographs featured in the part one episode . Rob Huebel , a comedian best known for the MTV sketch comedy series Human Giant , guest starred as Holly 's boyfriend , A.J. Amy Ryan , who played Holly Flax in previous episodes , did not appear in either " Lecture Circuit " episode , although the decision by Michael and Pam to visit Holly at the end of the first episode led to speculation about whether she would appear in the second .

== Cultural references ==

Michael handing out candy bars during his lectures is a reference to the third season episode , " Business School " , where Michael passed out chocolate bars during his speech to a business school classroom . Michael expresses regret for insulting Tony Gardner , the heavyset man who briefly transferred from the Stamford branch of Dunder Mifflin to the Scranton branch , who Michael drives to quit by trying to lift onto a table for an orientation demonstration in the third season episode , " The Merger " . Among the Dunder Mifflin branches Michael visits is Nashua , New Hampshire , where Holly works , and Utica , New York , where Karen works . Michael said he can only prepare for his lectures by listening to " silence or Sam Kinison " , an American stand @-@ up comedian

known for his extreme and vulgar sense of humor . Michael said he learned the Pledge of Allegiance , the lyrical oath of loyalty to the United States flag , by setting the lyrics to the rhythm of " Old McDonald Had a Farm " , a children 's song about the various animals on a farm . During one lecture , Michael and Pam both do impressions of the protagonist from Forrest Gump , the 1994 film starring Tom Hanks as a mentally handicapped man . Michael also uses the title from the films Good Morning , Vietnam ( at his Nashua lecture by saying " Good morning , Vietna ... shua ! " ) The Princess Bride , Gone with the Wind and Jerry Maguire in his lectures . Holly 's computer has a screensaver with images of Ed Grimley , the nerdy character with a cowlick played by comedian Martin Short in the comedy shows SCTV and Saturday Night Live .

Angela said she sold Andy 's engagement ring on eBay , an online auction website . Creed gives Andy romantic advice and says , " This is how I got Squeaky Fromme " , a reference to the Manson family member who tried to assassinate U.S. President Gerald Ford . A picture of President George W. Bush appears on a fake three @-@ dollar bill Creed gives Jim to pay for the party . Creed suggests Kelly watch The Bonnie Hunt Show , a syndicated talk show hosted by actress Bonnie Hunt . Andy puts Splenda , an artificial sweetener , into Stanley 's coffee because he has adult onset diabetes , a disorder characterized by high blood glucose . Andy sings Julia a song by Feist , the Canadian singer and songwriter , after he spots a Feist CD in her car . Michael takes a document file from Holly 's computer that was created with Microsoft Word , the Microsoft word processing program . Pam said she hates the notion of even Al @-@ Qaeda hating her , a reference to the Islamist terrorist organization that organized the September 11 attacks against New York City . Kelly confesses she went to juvenile detention in Berks County , Pennsylvania , at age 14 for doing something " like Thelma & Louise , but with a boat " , a reference to the 1991 road movie starring Geena Davis and Susan Sarandon on the run from their troubled , caged lives . Jim said during a birthday trip to a museum at age seven , his father bought him a plastic toy triceratops , a three @-@ horned dinosaur from the Late Cretaceous Period , which Dwight insists is not a good dinosaur . Pam remembers the name of one audience member by comparing her to k.d. lang , the Canadian singer known for her extremely short hair .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast on February 5 , 2009 , the first part of " Lecture Circuit " was seen by 8 @.@ 4 million viewers , according to Nielsen Media Research . The original broadcast for the second part on February 12 was seen by 8 @.@ 89 million viewers . The second episode received a 4 @.@ 3 rating / 11 share among viewers aged between 18 and 34 , and a 3 @.@ 8 rating / 9 share among viewers aged between 18 and 49 , numbers which were close to the season 's average rating . The first episode received a 5 @.@ 0 rating / 14 share among viewers aged between 18 and 34 , and a 4 @.@ 3 rating / 11 share among viewers aged between 18 and 49 . Both ratings were three @-@ tenths of a drop from the previous episode , " Stress Relief " , which was heavily viewed because it immediately followed the broadcast of Super Bowl XLIII on NBC . The drop in ratings led some media outlets to speculate that the post @-@ Super Bowl ratings boost was only temporary and would not help The Office in the long run .

Both episodes of " Lecture Circuit " received generally positive reviews . Whitney Pastorek of Entertainment Weekly described them as " nearly perfect " , calling them the two best episodes of the season so far : " ( Writer Mindy Kaling ) nailed the characterizations , the interactions , the tossed @-@ off one @-@ liners , the weird @-@ yet @-@ realistic scenarios ... I wonder how much it helps that she 's out on the acting floor every day , getting attuned to her costars ' rhythms ? " Josh McAuliffe of The Times @-@ Tribune of Scranton , Pennsylvania , said the first " Lecture Circuit " episode was his favorite episode of the fifth season so far , which he said provided several laugh @-@ out @-@ loud moments and a poignancy with Michael 's decision to find Holly . McAuliffe described the second episode as a " satisfying wrap @-@ up " and said Michael 's outburst during the lecture was " one of the most painful Michael meltdown moments in the show 's history " . Alan Sepinwall of The Star @-@ Ledger said the first episode perfectly balanced drama and comedy . He particularly complimented the chemistry between both Carell and Fischer and

between Krasinski and Wilson , and said he was particularly pleased to receive closure over the Karen character . But Sepinwall said the second episode felt padded with " material I would have been fine seeing as deleted scenes " . Although he said Carell 's reaction to the news that Holly still has feelings for him as a " wonderful performance " , Sepinwall also said the subplot involving Angela 's cat was particularly unfunny and that subplot with Jim and Dwight , " so brilliant last week , ran out of steam quickly here . "

Nathan Rabin of The A.V. Club said the episode " was full of laughs but had a bit of a bittersweet aftertaste " and had " one hell of a cliffhanger " ending . Rabin praised the Jim and Dwight teaming in the first episode , but said the plot line of Michael 's lectures were predictable and " promised more than it delivered " . Rabin said the second episode " wrapped up everything nicely ( and ) delivered laughs aplenty " ; he particularly enjoyed the subplot involving Angela 's cats , and the fact that it " left the door open for Holly 's return " . Will Leitch of New York magazine praised the cliffhanger ending of the first episode and said he was pleased the Holly character was still in the show 's equation . Leitch also praised Ed Helms , who " is nailing the right combination of ridiculous and sad @-@ sack pathos " , although he said he " ( wasn 't ) nearly as inspired " by the Jim and Dwight subplot . Leitch also enjoyed the second episode , particularly the " legitimately sweet moment " when Pam tells Michael that Holly still has feelings for him . Leitch was less praiseworthy of the Angela subplot involving her cats , and said the character " appears to have officially gone batshit insane . " Travis Fickett of IGN criticized the first episode and said , " I 'm starting to wonder if the show is showing signs of winding down . " Fickett said the idea of Michael giving awkward lecture tours felt old and familiar , so much so that " I was convinced it was a repeat " . He also said the Jim and Dwight idea was funny , but " nothing the show hasn 't tapped before " . Likewise , Fickett described the second episode as " average Office and feels overly familiar without really blazing any new ground . " He also said it was disappointing Holly did not appear , and that Angela felt like a " caricature " in her subplot .

The first part of the episode was voted the fifth highest @-@ rated episode out of 26 from the fifth season , according to an episode poll at the fansite OfficeTally ; the episode was rated 8 @.@ 64 out of 10 . The second part of the episode , however , was voted the third @-@ worst of the season , with a rating of 7 @.@ 14 However , the scene with Angela licking her cat was heavily criticized by reviewers , prompting some observers to describe it as the moment when The Office jumped the shark , a phrase used to describe the moment of downturn for a previously successful television show . When asked about this during an interview , actor Oscar Nuñez responded , " No show is ' Jump the Shark ' -proof , but there have been other moments on The Office that I think were more ' Jump the Shark ' than that . " He did not specify what other moments he meant .