

= Pilot (Community) =

The pilot episode of the NBC sitcom *Community* aired on Thursday , September 17 , 2009 . Written by Dan Harmon , the show 's creator , the episode was directed by Anthony Russo and Joe Russo . The episode introduces Jeff Winger (Joel McHale) , a debarred lawyer who is forced to attend community college to get his license back . He tries to exploit his friendship with one of the faculty members for easy credits , but fails , and is forced to join a Spanish study group . The members of this study group make up the main cast of the series , which includes Chevy Chase as retired entrepreneur Pierce Hawthorne .

The show takes place at the fictional Greendale Community College in Greendale , Colorado . Harmon based the show on his own experiences in community college , and partly modeled the character of Jeff Winger on himself . He emphasized the cast 's importance to the show , and also credited some of the actors for their improvisational skills . The episode attracted generally favorable reviews from critics , who praised both the actors and the comedy writing . The show received good viewership , and stood out in NBC 's Thursday lineup , where the network 's other shows suffered declines in ratings .

= = Plot = =

Jeff Winger , a disbarred lawyer , has enrolled at Greendale Community College as a condition for getting his license back . His plan is to use his friendship with Dr. Ian Duncan to obtain test answers . In the cafeteria Jeff meets the attractive Britta , and (in an attempt to get closer to her) convinces her to join his non @-@ existent Spanish study group . As the study group convenes , Jeff pretends the other members simply did not show up . Britta , however , has invited Abed to join them . Jeff unsuccessfully tries to make him leave , and then gets called to the football field by Dr. Duncan . The professor makes a futile attempt to appeal to Jeff 's conscience , and eventually agrees to provide the answers . Jeff returns to the study group , discovering that Abed has also invited Troy , Shirley , Pierce and Annie . Finding Britta smoking outside , he suggests the two study alone , but she persuades him to return .

Jeff , eager to get away , deliberately stirs a fight among the group , then leaves once more to get the test answers . Dr. Duncan hands him a sealed envelope , but only in return for Jeff 's Lexus . When Jeff returns , the group is in turmoil , and Britta promises to go out with him if he can restore order . He does this through an inspirational speech , but Britta sees through his vacuous rhetoric and asks him to leave . Jeff then comes clean about everything , adding that since he now has the test answers he does not need the study group . As the group turns against him he takes off .

Leaving the building , Jeff finds all the pages in the envelope to be blank . He returns to the office of Dr. Duncan who tells him that he wanted to teach him a lesson although Jeff gets his car keys back . As he is about to leave campus , Jeff runs into Pierce and Troy , and shows his ability to make people feel better about themselves through advice and encouragement . The others join , and Jeff admits to being a fraud . He says that he does not have the test answers , and that he will probably flunk next day 's test . The group has now taken a liking to him , and they invite him back in . The episode ends with a dedication to the recently deceased John Hughes , whose film *The Breakfast Club* has been repeatedly referenced throughout the episode .

= = Cast and characters = =

The pilot emphasizes character introduction , and a great deal of biographical information about the various main characters is revealed in the episode .

Joel McHale as Jeff Winger ? Jeff is a smooth talking lawyer who was debarred once it was revealed that his college degree was " less than legitimate " . The condition of his reinstatement is that he finishes a college degree .

Chevy Chase as Pierce Hawthorne ? Pierce is implicitly described by the college dean as one of the school 's " old people keeping their minds active as they circle the drains of eternity " . He is a

retired entrepreneur who made a fortune on moist towelettes . He has been married seven times , and has now decided to go back to college .

Gillian Jacobs as Britta Perry ? Britta dropped out of high school because she thought it would impress Radiohead . She then joined a group of anarchists who vandalized billboards . She has been in the Peace Corps , and done foot modeling before she enrolled at Greendale . She is strongly concerned with honesty , and does not take lightly to anyone lying to her .

Danny Pudi as Abed Nadir ? Abed is a Palestinian / Polish boy who ? according to Jeff ? has Asperger syndrome . He proves helpful to Jeff with his ability to obtain quick and detailed knowledge of everyone he meets .

Yvette Nicole Brown as Shirley Bennett ? Shirley is a " middle @-@ aged divorcee " who " has made some bad life choices " .

Alison Brie as Annie Edison ? Annie got addicted to pills and had to drop out of high school .

Donald Glover as Troy Barnes ? Troy was a high school football star who got injured and failed to get a scholarship .

John Oliver as Professor Ian Duncan , psychology teacher at Greendale . ? Professor Duncan once faced a DUI charge , but was acquitted thanks to Jeff 's help .

Jim Rash as Dean Pelton ? Dean Pelton is first introduced while giving his introductory speech to the new students , a speech that ends up being unintentionally offensive .

= = Casting = =

Harmon has emphasized the importance of the cast to making the premise of the comedy work . " Casting was 95 percent of putting the show together , " he said in an interview . He had worked with several of the cast members earlier ; Joel McHale , John Oliver and Chevy Chase all had cameo roles in episode 9 of Water and Power , the short film series produced by Harmon for Channel 101 . Actor Chevy Chase had long been a favorite of Harmon . Though principally not very partial to sitcoms , Chase was persuaded to take the job by the quality of the show 's writing . Harmon saw similarities between Chase and the character he plays on the show . Though Chase has often been ridiculed for his career choices , Harmon believed this role could be redeeming : " What makes Chevy and Pierce heroic is this refusal to stop . " Harmon had to warn Chase against playing a " wise @-@ ass " the way he often does in his roles , since the character of Pierce is a rather pathetic figure who is normally the butt of the joke himself .

McHale ? known from the E ! comedy The Soup ? was also , like Chase , impressed by Harmon 's writing . He commented that " after reading Dan 's script it was so head and shoulders above everything else that I was reading . " McHale appealed to Harmon because of his likable quality , which allowed the character to possess certain unsympathetic traits without turning the viewer against him . For the role of Annie , Harmon wanted someone who would resemble Tracy Flick , Reese Witherspoon 's character from the 1999 movie Election . Originally the producers were looking for a Latina or Asian Tracy Flick , for greater diversity , but could not find any . Instead they ended up casting Alison Brie , known from her role as Trudy Campbell on Mad Men .

= = Production = =

The premise of Community was based on Harmon 's real @-@ life experiences . In an attempt to save his relationship with his then @-@ girlfriend , he once enrolled in Glendale Community College , north of Los Angeles , where they would take Spanish together . Harmon got involved in a study group and ? somewhat against his own instincts ? became closely connected to the group of people with whom he had very little in common . " ... I was in this group with these knuckleheads and I started really liking them , " he explained , " even though they had nothing to do with the film industry and I had nothing to gain from them and nothing to offer them . " With this as the background , Harmon wrote the show with a main character largely based on himself . He had , like Jeff , been self @-@ centered and independent to the extreme before he realised the value of connecting with other people .

About the creative process behind the writing , Harmon says that he had to write the show as if it were a movie , not a sitcom . Essentially , he says , the process was no different from the earlier work he had done , except for the length and the target demographic . Filming the show involved a lot of improvisation , particularly from Chevy Chase . Harmon said about Chase that he " tends to come up with lines that you can actually end scenes with sometimes . " He also mentioned Joel McHale and Donald Glover , the actor who portrays Troy , as adept improvisers .

= = Reception = =

Premiering in the 9 : 30 pm time slot on September 17 , 2009 , the pilot episode had a viewership of 7 @. @ 680 million . In the 18 ? 49 audience , it had a rating of 3 @. @ 7 . As such , it held 93 % of this audience from The Office , which had been in the previous time slot . The show was called the " bright spot for the night " for NBC , considering that The Office was down 18 % from the previous year 's premiere , while Parks and Recreation , in the preceding time slot , was down 30 % .

The pilot episode of Community received generally favorable reviews from critics . The aggregate review website Metacritic gives the show a score of 69 out of 100 , based on 23 reviews . Entertainment Weekly 's Ken Tucker called it " One of the new season 's best sitcoms " , and gave it a grade B + . Heather Havrilesky , writing for Salon.com , agreed with this assessment , and commended the " alarmingly smart writing " . Alan Sepinwall at The Star @-@ Ledger similarly called it " the best , and funniest , new show of the season " , and said he laughed just as much after seeing the pilot four times . Others were less impressed ; Variety 's Brian Lowry found the satire wanting , and did not much appreciate McHale 's performance . The Miami Herald 's Glenn Garvin found that , though particularly McHale was capable of generating " sporadic laughter " , the show was just not very amusing .