

ENC 1145 – (section 0525), SPRING 2018

Writing About Humor: Jokes, Jokes, Jokes



Instructor Name: Christopher Smith

Course meeting times & locations: MWF Period 9

Office Location and Hours: TUR 4335 MWF Period 8, and by appointment

Course website: Canvas

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Course Description:

What's the deal with laughter?? Why do people laugh when their friend falls, and why are comedians who say inappropriate things so popular? "Humor" as we understand it today is a relatively recent phenomenon, but its roots follow humanity back millenia, with Ancient Greek statues like Plato and Aristotle trying to figure out what's funny and why people laugh. It's not always clear why we do it, though, and it is still a topic up for discussion. Indeed, when we examine the range of things that elicit laughter or amusement, it becomes clear that not only can humor not be boiled down to a formula, but it is also deeply subjective.

The goals of this course are to provide students the tools to identify the characteristics of various types of humor, understand how humor functions and the role it plays in different cultural situations, and help them analyze and write about humor in a way that, hopefully, allows it to continue being funny. Texts in this class will include satires, such as *Candide* (Voltaire) and "A Modest Proposal" (Swift), as well as farcical and physical comedies, such as *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Wilde). We will also trace humor's particularly critical side, from subtle social commentaries, such as *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen), to political cartoons and comic strips, to the increasingly absurd meta-humor that can be found in twenty-first century meme culture and television, such as *One Punch Man* and *Rick and Morty*.

Writing assignments will include short analyses of image-texts and two extended critical essays. Students will address the role humor plays not only as entertainment, but also as commentary on contemporary issues—including its cultural impact on members of various socio-economic classes.

General Education Objectives:

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) *or* Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).

- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

General Education Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Required Texts:

Plato and a Platypus Walk into a Bar – Thomas Cathcart and Daniel Klein
Good Omens – Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett
Pride and Prejudice – Jane Austen

Other Texts (Links to all of the following texts will be provided on Canvas):

The Humor Code – Peter McGraw, Joel Warner
Encyclopedia of Humor Studies – Salvatore Attardo
 “A Modest Proposal” – Jonathan Swift
Candide – Voltaire
The Importance of Being Earnest – Oscar Wilde
One Punch Man
Rick and Morty
Hark, A Vagrant! – Kate Beaton
 Assorted Comic strips
 Assorted Memes
The Onion
McSweeney’s

PLEASE NOTE: Students must bring the assigned readings to class on the appropriate day(s). If you are using an eBook or we are discussing digital materials that day, you must bring either a laptop or a tablet on which to view digital materials in class. A cell phone is not sufficient, as some materials may not be compatible with small-screen devices. If you cannot bring a laptop or tablet to class, printing out some of the materials may be acceptable; discuss with instructor.

Assignments (see below for Grading Rubric):

Short Analysis: 8 @ 350 words each – 30 points

The goal of the Reader Response assignments is to prompt students to engage with the text analytically, particularly with regards to the questions and themes we have discussed in the course. What kind of humor is the text engaging in? What are the characteristics of the text that give you that indicate this? Based on this information, what do you think the text is trying to do or say?

Students must go beyond the “I like this, because…” type of response, and should recall some of the points we have discussed in class. There is no strictly “correct” answer, but I will provide feedback and explain why certain points are or are not relevant and supported by the reading. Think of this as on-going preparation for your first major assignment.

Analysis Paper: 1000 words (Draft: 750 words minimum) – 200 points (Draft 50 points, Final 150 points)

You will choose one or two texts that we have read so far this semester and conduct a persuasive close reading of those works. In this assignment, you will analyze the selections and develop an argument about what kind of humor the text is engaging in, as well as why and how it does so. Additionally, you will discuss what kind of cultural or social impact the piece may have had or continues to have. This should consist of primarily an analysis and commentary on the texts themselves, so outside sources are not needed for this assignment.

Annotated Bibliography – 150 points

For this assignment, students will be asked to make a list of 5 reference works that they intend to use for their Final Critical Research paper. 2 of those works must be books, and 3 must be articles. These works must be relevant to the intended topic of the paper. For each of these sources, the student will write a detailed paragraph describing the subject of the book, how the text is laid out, which part of the text may be relevant to their paper, and how it may be relevant. The bibliography does not mean that you are stuck with these sources. If you realize later that one of your sources does not work as well as you thought, you can substitute it out. Do not hesitate to utilize the library resources or ask librarians for help finding sources. They are a rich source of knowledge and can provide great insight.

Final Critical Research Paper: 2200 words (Draft 1700 words minimum) – 300 points (Draft 100 points, Final 200 points)

In this assignment, you will use the skills developed throughout the course and in previous papers. This assignment is a sustained, formally researched critical analysis in which you will make an original argument about one of the novels or forms of humor that we have studied this semester. If you choose to write about a form of humor, you will be expected to provide and examine several example pieces in order to demonstrate that you grasp the nuance of that particular movement. You will develop a topic of your own choosing, subject to my approval. This assignment is an opportunity to develop unique, interesting arguments. The paper should incorporate both primary and secondary texts and offer evidence of your critical thinking and interpretive abilities. We will discuss the assignment and possible topics in more depth as the semester progresses.

Please be aware that word count does not include the title, header, or works cited. It is only the body of the text.

1. Course Policies:

You must complete *all assignments* to receive writing credit for this course. The word count of the assignments adds up to the 6000-word total. You **will not** have the option to make another assignment longer to make up the word count.

2. Attendance Policies:

ENC 1145 is a participation-oriented, discussion-based writing course. Much of the learning that takes place is spontaneous and difficult to reproduce outside of class, so it is important that students be present, as well as engaged and attentive.

You are expected to **attend all class meetings**. You are allowed to be absent for a maximum of three class periods. Any absence beyond the third will result in a one-letter grade reduction from the student's final grade for each missed class. Absences beyond six class periods will result in an automatic fail for the class. The only exemptions to this policy are those absences involving university-sponsored events, military duty, court-mandated responsibilities, and religious holidays. Other exceptions may be made at the instructor's discretion for extenuating circumstances. The full official UF Attendance Policy can be found [here](#).

3. Participation:

Participation is a crucial part of success in this class. Students will be expected to work in small groups and participate in group discussions and peer reviews. Peer reviews require that students provide constructive feedback about their peers' writing.

4. Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the [Student Honor Code](#). The Honor Code prohibits and defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism. A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to):

- a.) Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
- b.) Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student. (University of Florida, Student Honor Code, 15 Aug. 2007 <<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honorcode.php>>)

University of Florida students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire [Student Honor Code](#).

Important Tip: You should never copy and paste something from the internet without providing the exact location from which it came

5. Physical, Mental, Emotional Support:

The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students requesting accommodation should contact the Students with Disabilities Office, Peabody 202 (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.

Students who face difficulties completing the course due to personal, social, or other circumstances, or who need counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352) 392-1575, or contact them online: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>

UF's policy on Harassment: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty: <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equity-diversity/resources/harassment/>

6. Classroom Behavior:

Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Many of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own.

Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class.

Laptops are only open for composing research or reading. No internet surfing during class. And stay off your phones. Please keep your earbuds and headphones in your bag for the entirety of the class.

7. Course questions and Formatting concerns:

If you wish to discuss your work or if you have questions regarding the course or assignments, feel free to make an appointment or come to my office hours.

If you have a question about how to format your paper according to a certain style, such as MLA or APA, please consult the Purdue Online Writing Lab:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>

If you cannot find the information on the Purdue web site, let me know and I will do my best to help.

8. Paper Maintenance Responsibilities:

Students are responsible for maintaining duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course and retaining all returned, graded work until the semester is over. Should the need arise for a resubmission of papers or a review of graded papers, it is the student's responsibility to have and to make available this material.

9. Assignment Submission:

All papers must be in 12-point Times New Roman/Arial font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins, and every page should include your name and a number. If a source has been used in a paper, it **must** be cited on a references page.

Every paper will be submitted as MS Word (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) documents to Canvas by the due date and time. Canvas does not read other formats. To prevent issues, please use only .doc or .rtf files.

Assignments on Canvas will close at the time they are due, meaning students will not be able to submit the assignment after that point.

Save and submit all papers in Canvas using the following file name:
lastnameAML2070nameofassignment (SmithAML2070Analysis).

Course Evaluations:

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open.

Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

Writing Studio:

The University Writing Studio, a valuable resource for students who would like extra help with writing mechanics, is located in Tigert 302 and is available and free for all UF students.

SYLLABUS

Wk	Day	Reading/Discussion Material	Due
1	M 1/8	General Introduction. Course Goals. Brief history of “humor.” Discuss: <i>Encyclopedia of Humor Studies</i> – “Humor, Etymology of”	
	W 1/10	Discuss: <i>Encyclopedia of Humor Studies</i> – “Humor, Forms of” and “Humor Theories”	
	F 1/12	Discuss: <i>The Humor Code</i> – Chapter 1	
2	M 1/15	NO CLASS - Holiday	
	W 1/17	Discuss: <i>Plato and a Platypus Walk into a Bar</i> – “Philogagging” and “Metaphysics” – pages 1-26.	Short Analysis 1: Humor
	F 1/19	Discuss: <i>Plato and a Platypus Walk into a Bar</i> – “Ethics” – pages 77-96 “A Modest Proposal” – Jonathan Swift.	
3	M 1/22	Discuss: <i>Encyclopedia of Humor Studies</i> – “Satire” <i>Candide</i> – Voltaire – Various Notes and Chapters 1-10 – pages 1-25.	
	W 1/24	Discuss: <i>Plato and a Platypus Walk into a Bar</i> – “Existentialism” – pages 115-125 <i>Candide</i> – Voltaire – Chapters 11-21 – pages 25-59.	
	F 1/26	Discuss: <i>Candide</i> – Voltaire – Chapters 22-30 – pages 59-94.	Short Analysis 2: <i>Candide</i>
4	M 1/29	Discuss: “Buying Gloves in Gibraltar” – Mark Twain Creative Activity: Homemade Satire.	
	W 1/31	Discuss: <i>Encyclopedia of Humor Studies</i> – “Farce” <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> – Oscar Wilde – Act 1	
	F 2/2	Discuss: <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> – Oscar Wilde – Act 2	
5	M 2/5	Discuss: <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> – Oscar Wilde – Act 3	
	W 2/7	Watch Brian Regan stand up. Discuss: physicality and the body in humor.	Short Analysis 3

	F 2/9	Discuss: <i>Plato and a Platypus Walk into a Bar</i> – “Philosophy of Language,” “Social and Political Philosophy,” and “Relativity” – pages 127-169.	
6	M 2/12	Discuss: <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> – Jane Austin – pages 1-60 <i>Plato and a Platypus Walk into a Bar</i> – “Metaphilosophy” – pages 181-185.	
	W 2/14	Discuss: <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> – Jane Austin – pages 61-120	
	F 2/16	Discuss: <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> – Jane Austin – pages 121-180	
7	M 2/19	Discuss: <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> – Jane Austen – pages 181-240	Short Analysis 4: Humor as Social Commentary
	W 2/21	Peer Review	Analysis Paper Draft Due
	F 2/23	Discuss: <i>Encyclopedia of Humor Studies</i> – “Comic Strips” <i>Hark! A Vagrant</i> – Kate Beaton	
8	M 2/26	Discuss: “How Comedy Makes Us Better People” http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20160829-how-laughter-makes-us-better-people “Pearls Before Swine,” “Garfield,” “Garfield Without Garfield” Comic Strips.	
	W 2/28	Discuss: <i>Encyclopedia of Humor Studies</i> – “Cartoons” Political Cartoons	
	F 3/2	Discuss: <i>The Onion, McSweeney’s</i> – Bring one example article or list from <i>McSweeney’s</i> or <i>The Onion</i> to class for discussion.	
	M-F 3/5-3/9	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS	
9	M 3/12	Discuss: Mickey Mouse and Looney Tunes. Animation – Early animation.	Short Analysis 5: Humorous News/Blogs

	W 3/14	Discuss: Shrek 2. Humorous animation for adults v. for children.	
	F 3/16	Discuss: Comedy films – Various forms, how do they function differently?	
10	M 3/19	Discuss: <i>Encyclopedia of Humor Studies</i> – “Slapstick” Comedy films – Slapstick What makes these types of films funny?	
	W 3/21	Creative Activity: Group work to come up with comedy movie plot.	
	F 3/23	Discuss: Live Action comedy/variety shows	Short Analysis 6: Comedy Films
11	M 3/26	Discuss: <i>Encyclopedia of Humor Studies</i> – “Parodies”	
	W 3/28	Discuss: <i>One Punch Man</i>	
	F 3/30	Discuss: Commentary shows (example: <i>Mystery Science Theater</i>)	
12	M 4/3	Discuss: <i>Good Omens</i> – Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett – pages 1-60 <i>Encyclopedia of Humor Studies</i> – “Absurdist Humor”	
	W 4/5	Discuss: <i>Good Omens</i> – Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett – pages 61-120 Irreverance	
	F 4/7	Discuss: <i>Good Omens</i> – Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett – pages 121-180	
13	M 4/9	Discuss: <i>Good Omens</i> – Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett – pages 181-240	
	W 4/11	Discuss: <i>Good Omens</i> – Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett – pages 241-300	
	F 4/13	Discuss: <i>Good Omens</i> – Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett – pages 300-369	Short Analysis 7: Parodies and Absurdism
14	M 4/16	Peer Review	Final Paper Draft Due
	W 4/18	Discuss: <i>Encyclopedia of Humor Studies</i> – “Internet Humor” Memes	
	F 4/20	Discuss: Memes – “Mimetic Mutation” - http://vtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/MemeticMutation	Short Analysis 8:

		“Image Macro” - http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/ImageMacro	Memes
15	M 4/23	Discuss: Metacomedy. Reading TBA.	
	W 4/25	Discuss: <i>Rick and Morty</i>, impact of popular cultural comedy	Final Paper Due

Grading:

Short Analysis – 8 @ 30 points each: 240 points total

Analysis Paper – 200 points

Annotated Bibliography – 150 points

Final Critical Research Paper – 300 points

Participation and Attendance – 110 points

Grading for this course will be rigorous. If an assignment illustrates disregard for spelling, grammar, citation guidelines, or a general carelessness in the writing, the assignment will not receive a passing grade. The writing assignments for this course are designed to meet the requirements of the University Writing Requirement credit. To satisfy this requirement, **every** assignment’s word count must be fulfilled. I **will not** grade assignments that do not meet the word count; the assignment will be returned to you and you will have the opportunity to turn it in late for a reduced grade.

As your instructor, I will evaluate and provide feedback on your written assignments with respect to content, organization and coherence, argument and support, style, clarity, grammar, punctuation, and mechanics. I will also deliver more specific rubrics and guidelines applicable to individual assignments over the course of the semester.

For information on UF Grading policies, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Grade Appeals. In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

Grade Issues

University policy prohibits discussions of grades via email. If you have a question about a grade, you may schedule an appointment to meet with me to discuss it.

Grade Scale

A:	930-1000	C:	730-769
A-:	900-929	C-:	700-729
B+:	870-899	D+:	670-699

B: 830-869
 B-: 800-829
 C+: 770-799

D: 630-669
 D-: 600-629
 E: 0-599

ASSIGNMENT RUBRIC

	SATISFACTORY (Y)	UNSATISFACTORY (N)
CONTENT	Papers exhibit evidence of ideas that respond to the topic with complexity, critically evaluating and synthesizing sources, and provide an adequate discussion with basic understanding of sources.	Papers either include a central idea(s) that is unclear or off- topic or provide only minimal or inadequate discussion of ideas. Papers may also lack sufficient or appropriate sources.
ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE	Documents and paragraphs exhibit identifiable structure for topics, including a clear thesis statement and topic sentences.	Documents and paragraphs lack clearly identifiable organization, may lack any coherent sense of logic in associating and organizing ideas, and may also lack transitions and coherence to guide the reader.
ARGUMENT AND SUPPORT	Documents use persuasive and confident presentation of ideas, strongly supported with evidence. At the weak end of the satisfactory range, documents may provide only generalized discussion of ideas or may provide adequate discussion but rely on weak support for arguments.	Documents make only weak generalizations, providing little or no support, as in summaries or narratives that fail to provide critical analysis.

STYLE	Documents use a writing style with word choice appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline. Sentences should display complexity and logical structure.	Documents rely on word usage that is inappropriate for the context, genre, or discipline. Sentences may be overly long or short with awkward construction. Documents may also use words incorrectly.
MECHANICS	Papers will feature correct or error-free presentation of ideas. At the weak end of the satisfactory range, papers may contain a few spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors that remain unobtrusive and do not obscure the paper's argument or points.	Papers contain so many mechanical or grammatical errors that they impede the reader's understanding or severely undermine the writer's credibility.