



WSUA102S On Humor, Fall 2021 *last updated 5/19/2021 6:10 AM*

- Instructor: Dr. Susan Castro
- Department: Philosophy
- Office Location: 310 Fiske Hall
- Telephone: 316-978-7882
- Email: susan.castro@wichita.edu
- Preferred Method of Contact: email
- Office Hours (virtual): MWF 12:00-12:30 and 2:20-3:00
- Class format: HYB, synchronous. MW in person; F varies (usually online)
- Classroom Day/Time: 162 CE (Corbin). MWF 12:30-1:20pm and 1:30-2:20pm
- Peer Coach: TBD
- Librarian: Professor Nathan.Filbert@wichita.edu

How to use this syllabus

This syllabus provides you with information specific to this course and information about important university policies. This document should be viewed as a course overview; it is not a contract and is subject to change as the semester evolves. Changes in the schedule or assignments will be announced in class (when possible) and posted on Blackboard (Bb). Bb is your friend. Always consult Bb.

Course Description

This course is a first year seminar on humor in which we will take a broad interdisciplinary approach to humor. Along the way we'll philosophize all the funny out of humor, muck into the politics of the absurd, and get down to some funny business. Is humor quintessentially human? Is your bank balance a joke? Does laughing at fart jokes demonstrate poor character? We'll ask all these questions and more, but answer none!

This course contains diversity content. Warning: Your professor is not funny. Side effects are typically mild to moderate.

Definition of a Credit Hour

Success in this 3 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction and preparation/studying or course related activities for a total of 135 hours. That's 10 hours a week to you. Seriously. Study time is no joke.

Required Texts

[Common Read](#): **What the Eyes Don't See: A Story of Crisis, Resistance, and Hope in an American City**, Mona Hanna-Attisha (free at student orientation)

[Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor](#), John Morreall. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. (\$30 to buy your own; free through our library)

[The Comedy Studies Reader](#), eds. Nick Marx and Matt Sienkiewicz. UT Austin Press, 2018. (\$20-25)

Other Equipment/Materials

Since many course materials, e.g. links to videos, will be provided on Bb, you will need reliable access to the course website.

You will also need streaming access to material. Since licensing changes, you might need to purchase more than one streaming subscription (or share access with friends!).

We will be working with .doc and .pdf files. Wichita State provides **free** access to Microsoft Office 365 for students. Follow the instructions below to get Microsoft Office:

1. Log in to [MyWSU](#)
2. Click on Office 365 located on the "Home" tab
3. Follow the Office 365 wizard instructions

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability, or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) www.wichita.edu/ods to discuss reasonable and appropriate accommodations and eligibility requirements. It is the University's goal that learning experiences be as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability ODS will review your concerns and determine, with you, what academic accommodations are necessary and appropriate for you. For example, adaptations of teaching methods, class materials or testing may be made on a case by case basis if warranted, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

All information and documentation of your disability is confidential and will not be released by DS without your written permission. (They'll only tell me *how* to accommodate, e.g. give you more time on quizzes, not *why*.)

Respect for Diversity

Wichita State University is committed to being an inclusive campus that reflects the evolving diversity of society. To further that goal, Wichita State University does not discriminate in its employment practices, educational programs or activities on the basis of age (40 years or older), ancestry, color, disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, political affiliation, pregnancy, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or status as a veteran. Retaliation against an individual filing or cooperating in a complaint process is also prohibited.

Students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives are welcome in this course and the diversity that students bring to this course should be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. All materials and activities are presented with the intent to be respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

Academic Integrity

Students at Wichita State University are expected to uphold high academic standards. WSU will not tolerate a lack of academic integrity. Students are responsible for knowing and following the [Student Code of Conduct](#) and the [Student Academic Honesty](#) policy.

When a faculty member determines sanctions are warranted for violations of academic integrity, regardless of severity, the faculty member must report the infraction to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards. If you need more information about the process or wish to appeal a decision, please visit our [Academic Dishonesty](#) site.

Any suspected violation of the WSU Academic Integrity Policy will be reported. You will receive 0 for the assignment. If there is a second instance, you fail the class. That is exactly the opposite of what we all want.

The two primary reasons students cheat are 1) panic, and 2) they don't fully understand the boundaries between collaboration and cheating. If you're **panicking**, ask for help. Ditto if you're not sure what's ok. We have lots of resources. I'm a resource. Ask me!

Contact Policy

Office hours (student hours!) are times that I set aside just for you. If I need to cancel office hours for any reason, I'll post an announcement on Bb. Since we're all busy and my office hours may not be convenient or possible for you, please email for an appointment any time. I'll do my best to find a time we can meet.

Students are welcome to come talk to me about anything that is appropriate to the student-teacher relationship. It doesn't have to be about our class.

Please note that I am a Mandated Reporter: I am required to report any information you convey to me regarding sexual or racial harassment or other misconduct. This does not mean that by talking to me you have formally filed a harassment complaint. It means that a basic description will confidentially be added to our database and an appropriate professional from [OIEC](#) will discreetly attempt to contact you for follow-up. Designating mandatory reporters in an institution is meant to facilitate communication and solve problems before they escalate. It doesn't always work, but we're seriously trying.

Shocker Alert System

Get the emergency information you need instantly and effortlessly! With the Shocker Alert System, we will contact you by email the moment there is an emergency or weather alert that affects the campus. Sign up at www.wichita.edu/alert. When aliens land in the quad, we'll let you know.

Class Protocol

This is a university course with commensurate expectations. We expect professional conduct in the classroom, meaning that you need to arrive on time with your electronics silenced and be prepared to take quizzes, take notes, ask questions, answer questions, debate an issue, etc. Unprofessional conduct, e.g. watching funny cat videos rather than taking notes on your tablet, may affect your grade. (Yes, I can tell.) This may be a course on humor, but it's not a free for all. We watch funny cat videos in a highly controlled, professional scientific manner. No laughing allowed.

- Reading/AV homework assignments. In order to be prepared for class, you will need to read/listen/watch the material more than once, take notes on the key definitions and theses, outline the arguments presented, and identify questions raised. Do your own analysis of the reading assignment before class so you can compare it to the analysis given in class, gauge your progress, and prepare for graded assignments. You should also do the exercises and check your work to make sure you're getting it. There is a world of difference between being able to follow along when someone else does it and actually doing it yourself.
- Attendance and participation are required. The purpose of the lectures is to demonstrate *what to do* with the material you've read, heard, or watched. I don't expect you to be able to do this on your own, and you shouldn't either.

Measurable Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, you will have started on your journey to:

General Education Outcomes (GEO)

1. Acquire knowledge in the arts, humanities, and sciences
2. Employ higher-order thinking that moves beyond rote memorization and factual acquisition to more advanced higher levels of thinking (e.g., thinking independently, critically and creatively)
3. Articulate and defend their positions through dialogue, discussion, or presentations, and writing
4. Employ analytical reasoning and problem-solving techniques
5. Identify appropriate library and other resources to facilitate research and accurately provide citations
6. Demonstrate an appreciation for diversity as it applies to the course content

Student Success Outcomes (SSO)

1. Understand the expectations of higher education and how they differ from secondary education
2. Learn strategically by developing skills and habits that promote deep learning and long-term retention of knowledge
3. Develop more effective life skills in areas including information literacy, time management, note taking, and personal finance
4. Develop an appreciation for the campus resources available to you, take part in campus traditions and culture, and engage in the campus community
5. Make friends and begin developing a support network

Disciplinary Course Outcomes (DCO)

1. Employ a more developed conceptual framework in discussing the deep and varied roles of humor in modern society
2. Reflect upon the functions and value of humor and laughter in human life, including your own
3. Develop and share an original work of humor in an academic presentation
4. Apply humor theory to analyze practice, critically compare theories, and use examples to test theory
5. Practice parsing and critically analyzing a technical text of your choice on humor, laughter, or comedy
6. Identify and critique uses of humor that marginalize, oppress, or do harm

Assignments / Activities	GEO 1	GEO 2	GEO 3	GEO 4	GEO 5	GEO 6	SSO 1	SSO 2	SSO 3	SSO 4	SSO 5	CDO 1	CDO 2	CDO 3	CDO 4	CDO 5	CDO 6
Quizzes				X			X								X		
Homework	X			X	X	X	X					X			X	X	X
Group activities		X	X	X		X	X	X			X				X		X
Class presentations		X	X	X	X							X		X	X	X	
Small group discussions		X	X	X		X	X				X	X	X		X		X
Out of class activity									X	X	X						
Participation	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X

Grading Scale

In this class, grades are assigned according to the following chart. (Other classes might assign grades differently: Be sure to understand the different grading scales in all of your classes.) A record of your grades will be kept on Blackboard for your convenience.

% on Blackboard	Letter Grade	Grade Points	Interpretation
94% and above	A	4.00	A range denotes excellent performance
90-94%	A-	3.70	
87-90%	B+	3.30	
84-87%	B	3.00	B range denotes good performance
80-84%	B-	2.70	
77-80%	C+	2.30	
74-77%	C	2.00	C range denotes satisfactory performance
70-74%	C-	1.70	
67-70%	D+	1.30	
64-67%	D	1.00	D range denotes unsatisfactory performance
60-64%	D-	0.70	
Below 60%	F	0.00	

WSU has a ["repeat and replace" policy](#) that allows you to retake a course for a higher grade. It has to be the *same* course, though, and there's no guarantee that the *same* course will be offered again. Let's make sure you do well!

Assignments

- There will be a short online quiz every week to test your knowledge and reasoning. Questions will be derived from the assigned chapters and supporting materials.
- We'll have a variety of other in-class and homework assignments. These will usually be creative activities or student success assignments. Most of these will help you adjust to campus life or prepare for your presentations.
- Students will be required to participate in 5 campus activities over the semester. Preference should be given to *fun* activities!

Some sites to find your 5 campus activities:

[Campus Events Calendar](#)

[Library Events](#)

[Student Involvement](#)

[School of Music](#)

[School of Performing Arts](#)

[WSU Athletics](#)

[Ulrich Museum of Art](#)

[Student Organizations](#)

Download the MEBO app for updates on campus events, study groups, and even free food on campus!

Late Assignments

0. Unless you have a *really* good, documented reason. Why? Because I need to get things graded and returned in a timely manner, and it isn't fair to the other students to let you hold things up. If you're having technical difficulties, let me know right away and take screen shots of the problem.

Missed Exams

Again, you need a really good reason to justify special treatment. But I will let you take a make-up exam. Those are usually more difficult, so it's really best to study regularly, get help early, and take the exam with the rest of the class.

Extra Credit

There's no extra credit in this course. Do the best you can on the assignments you have. The best way to get a good grade is by doing the work.

Schedule (~~Tentacled~~ Tentative)

I. **Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor**

Week 1: Aug 16-20

- M **Welcome to college**
Classroom conduct
Campus culture
How to Study
[First-Year Programs](#)
Transition to College [Reading](#)
- W,F **Philosophy of Humor** (Morreall, chapter 1)
Humor, Anarchy, and Aggression
The Superiority Theory
The Incongruity Theory
The Relief Theory
Playful Relaxation
- F *Introduction to* [Student Success](#) services ([Debra Haslam](#))
Introduction to [Academic Service-Learning](#) (Professor [Rhonda K. Lewis](#), Professor [Chelsea Redger-Marquardt](#))

Week 2: Aug 23-27

- M/W **Psychology of Humor** (Morreall, chapter 2)
Humor and disengagement
Humor as play
Laughter as play signal
- W/F **Evolution of Humor** (Morreall, chapter 3)
What was first funny?
The Basic Pattern
The Worth of Mirth

Week 3: Aug 20-Sept 3

M,W **The Common Read:** *What the Eyes Don't See: A Story of Crisis, Resistance, and Hope in an American City*, Mona Hanna-Attisha.

Thursday, Sept 2: Convocation (We'll sit together.)

F *Revisiting the Common Read*

Week 4: Sept 6-10

M Labor Day (Holiday)

W, F **Aesthetics of Humor** (Morreal, chapter 4)

Humor as aesthetic experience

Enjoying cognitive shifts from the fantastic to the grotesque

Spontaneous vs. prepared humor

Week 5: Sept 13-17

M **Negative Ethics of Humor** (Morreall, chapter 5)

8 traditional moral objections

Critique of contemporary ethics of humor

The Ethics of Disengagement

W Irresponsibility

Blocking compassion

Promoting prejudice

F [Library Research/Information Literacy](#) (Professor [Nathan Filbert](#))

Week 6: Sept 20-24

M, W **Positive Ethics of Humor** (Morreall, chapter 6)

Intellectual virtues fostered by humor

Moral virtues fostered by humor

Humor during the Holocaust

F *PowerPoint Essential Training* ([LinkedIn Learning at WSU](#))

Week 7: Sept 27-Oct 1

Philosophical Humor and Comic Wisdom (Morreall, chapter 7-8)

Socrates

Humor and the Existentialists

The Laughing Buddha

Comic Wisdom

Week 8: Oct 4-8

Presentation week

Student Presentations (5 min ea)

Share an original work of humor; then ruin it for us by explaining it.

Write your presentation (750-1,000 words). PowerPoint or alternative support is required.

You may read your presentation if you're uncomfortable extemporizing. Partnering is allowed (5 min per partner).

II. *The Comedy Studies Reader*

Week 9: Oxtail 11-15

- M Fall Break (Holiday)
- W Performing Humor: Guest Professor [Judy Babnich](#) *tentative*
- F Drawing Humor: Guest Professor [Robert Bubp](#)

Week 10: Oct 18-22

- The Business of Comedy** (Marx and Sienkiewicz, chapter 1)
- Irony** (Marx and Sienkiewicz, chapter 4)
 - Introduction: Stephen Colbert at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner 2006
 - Irony's Edge
 - Speaking too soon: SNL, 9/11, and the Remaking of American Irony
 - Welcome to the Clickhole: The Economics of Internet Parody and Critique

Week 11: Oct 25-29

- M *Diversity Training* ([Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#)) *tentative*
- W **Genre** (Marx and Sienkiewicz, chapter 5)
 - Introduction: 22 Jump Street
 - Popular Film and Television Comedy
 - Comedy Verité? The Observational Documentary Meets the Television Sitcom
 - Inventing the Situation Comedy: Jack Benny, the 'Fall Guy'
- F **Race & Ethnicity** (Marx and Sienkiewicz, chapter 6)
 - Introduction: Key and Peele
 - Watching Race

Week 12: Nov 1-5

- The Culture Behind Closed Doors: Issues of Gender and Race in the Writers' Room
- Naturalizing Racial Differences Through Comedy: Asian, Black, and White Views on Racial Stereotypes in Rush Hour 2
- Indians on TV (and Netflix)': The Comedic Trajectory of Aziz Ansari

Week 13: Nov 8-12

- Gender & Sexuality** (Marx and Sienkiewicz, chapter 7)
 - Introduction: Inside Amy Schumer
 - The Unruly Woman
 - Pretty/Funny
 - Generic Closets: Sitcoms, Audiences and Black Male Gayness

Week 14: Nov 15-19

Nation & Globalization (Marx and Sienkiewicz, chapter 8)

Introduction: *Klown* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*

A National Joke

Transnational TV Comedy Audiences

Transgressing Boundaries as the Hybrid Global: Parody and Postcoloniality on Indian Television

Comedy and the Nation in 'The Trip'

Week 15: Nov 22-26

M **Presentations** (need 5 volunteers to present today!)

W,F **Thanksgiving Holiday**

Week 16: Nov 29 – Dec 1

Final Project Presentations (see Bb for details)

Finals Week Final exam is comprehensive, modeled on quiz questions.

Syllabus Policies and Student Resources

All students should familiarize themselves with the course-related policies and student resources that can be found at: www.wichita.edu/syllabuspolicies

These include, but may not be limited to:

- COVID-19 Conditions
- Important Academic Dates
- Academic Integrity
- Definition of a credit hour
- Video and Audio recording
- Shocker Alert System
- Intellectual Property
- CARE Team
- Counseling and Prevention Services
- Student Health Services
- Heskett Center and Campus Recreation
- Inclusive Excellence and Respect for Diversity
- First Generation Students
- Names and Pronouns
- Disability Services
- Title IX
- Concealed Carry Policy