

York University
Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies
Department of English

Course: AP/EN 3191 M – Comedy (S2 2019)
Online Delivery

Course Director: Dr. Natalia Khomenko
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Online contact hours: Wednesday 10-11 am or by appointment
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Course Description:

In the history of English literature, comedy has often been viewed as a “low” genre, unsuitable for dealing with serious matters. Its interest in seemingly insignificant everyday concerns, in the grotesque and embarrassing, and in general hilarity of human interaction has sometimes been interpreted as lack of sophistication and cultural value. To query these assumptions, this course will examine the conventions of comedy and the specific objectives targeted through the use of these conventions. From Chaucer’s famously bawdy “The Miller’s Tale” to Carlin’s stand-up comedy, we will analyze the specific rhetorical devices used in creating humour, engage with a range of theoretical approaches to creating humour, and explore the central themes of comedy – the difficulty of interpersonal relationships, communication failures and social confusion, and the eternal hope for happy endings.

Learning Outcomes:

- Gaining an understanding of the changing views of comedy in English literature and culture.
- Evaluating the function of humour and comedy within specific cultural and social contexts.
- Developing close familiarity with a range of comedic works, including poetry, prose, plays, and film.
- Successfully using a variety of theoretical approaches in reading and interpreting comedy, and building familiarity with the relevant terminology.
- Advancing critical thinking, as well as analytical and writing skills.

Required Texts:

William Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors* (Signet), OR electronic through York: ed. Charles Whitworth, Oxford University Press, 2002: <https://www.library.yorku.ca/find/Record/3133224>

Susannah Centlivre, *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (Broadview), OR electronic through York: ed. Nancy Copeland, Broadview, 1995: <https://www.library.yorku.ca/find/Record/1548986>

Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Dover), OR electronic through York: Chadwyck-Healey, 1996 [based on the 1899 edition]: <https://www.library.yorku.ca/find/Record/1879138>

Anita Loos, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes: The Intimate Diary of a Professional Lady* (Penguin).

Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (Grove Press)

Evaluation:

Reading responses (2): 20%

Final essay: 30%

Take-home test: 15%

Final exam: 25%

Online Participation: 10%

Important Course Information:

Lectures: Online lectures will be uploaded to Moodle by Tuesday and Thursday evening every week (please consult the weekly schedule). The lectures will be recorded as audio over PowerPoint slides.

Online Contact Hours: Online contact hours are the equivalent of face-to-face weekly office hours. At a set time each week, I will be available in real time for one-on-one real-time discussion of issues connected with the course. This interaction can be conducted through Skype, and must be arranged via e-mail at least a day in advance. Online contact hours begin in the first week of class.

Participation in Online Discussion: After each class (except for the first one), a question based on the reading material will be posted to the discussion forum. You are responsible for responding to 2 of these questions during the semester. Ideally, you should be contributing to general discussion and, when possible, commenting on other people's contributions. Each of these two discussion contributions is worth 5%, and should be a thoughtful, written in complete sentences, **at least** 250 words long, and drawing on the class materials for support. If the discussion contribution is incoherent, non-specific, late, or too short, it will not receive a mark. When quoting, use proper MLA citation.

Please note that the online questions are intended to prepare you for the final exam. Read them carefully even if you are choosing not to respond on a particular week.

Policies and Important Dates

Attendance: As this is an online course, there are no in-class lectures or tutorials. However, there IS a final examination for this course, which will be held at Keele Campus during the official examination period (July 31-August 9).

Off-Site Examinations: If you are more than 3 hours away from Keele Campus, York University, you are eligible to apply to write the final exam off-site. Off-site means that if you are eligible, you can arrange to write your final exam at a location other than Keele Campus. Students are responsible for booking/scheduling their off-site exam with the assistance of eLearning Services. If you wish to make such arrangements, **you must do so well in advance**. Please consult the guidelines here: <https://offsite-exams.elearning.laps.yorku.ca/>

Due Dates: Unless other arrangements have been made with your instructor, all assignments are to be submitted on the day they are due. Assignments must be submitted electronically through Moodle.

Extensions: You are responsible for meeting all course deadlines in a timely fashion. If an extension is required, though, you must negotiate a new due date well in advance of the assignment. Last minute requests (i.e. within 24 hours of the deadline) are generally not accepted, and will only be considered under exceptional circumstances. Extensions will not be granted once the deadline for the assignment has passed.

Discussion Forums: This course relies on online discussion of the material. While you are encouraged to contribute freely, be courteous to others, avoid offensive language, and avoid revealing overly private information. Everything posted on Moodle is archived by the university. Remember to treat your peers with respect and abide by the university policies concerning racist, sexist, and homophobic remarks. Inappropriate comments will be deleted. If you find someone's comment inappropriate, please email me directly to notify me of the problem (I will be monitoring the forums but might not see the inappropriate comment immediately).

Email Etiquette: Email is the best way to reach me. However, keep in mind that I receive a large volume of emails each day and might take up to 2 business days to respond to your email. Before writing, consult the syllabus, assignments descriptions, or an MLA guide to make sure that your question does not have a ready answer. When writing the email, please include the course code and your name. If you would prefer to have a longer discussion, I am happy to make an online or on-campus appointment.

Dropping the Course: You are responsible for knowing sessional dates for this course, including the last day to drop this course without receiving a grade. If you wish to drop this course, you must do so by the drop date and do so through the Registrar's Office; you cannot simply stop coming to class. If your name is on the class list by the end of the course, and you have done none or very little of the work, you will receive an F.

Last Day to Drop this Course Without Receiving a Grade: July 15, 2019

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (June 18)

Introductions
Theories of humour and laughter
Comedy in the ancient world

Week 2 (June 20)

Geoffrey Chaucer, “The Miller’s Tale” (from *The Canterbury Tales*, 1380-1390)
<http://www.librarius.com/cantales.htm>

Week 3 (June 25)

William Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors* (late 1580s or early 1590s)

Week 4 (June 27)

Reading response #1 due (10%)

John Wilmot, the 2nd Earl of Rochester, “A Ramble in St. James’ Park,” “A Satyre on Charles II,” “The Imperfect Enjoyment” (late seventeenth century): on Moodle
Aphra Behn, “The Disappointment” (1680)
<https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/html/1807/4350/poem142.html>

Week 5 (July 2)

Susannah Centlivre, *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1717)

Week 6 (July 4)

Take-home Test (15%)

Jonathan Swift, “The Lady’s Dressing Room” (1732)
<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Texts/dressing.html>
“A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed” (1734):
<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Texts/nymphbed.html>

Lady Mary Wortley Montague, “The Reasons that Induced Dr. Swift to write a Poem Call’d the Lady’s Dressing Room” (1734)

<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~mgamer/Etexts/montagu>

Week 7 (July 9)

Lewis Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark, an Agony in Ten Fits* (1874) (electronic through York)
Edward Lear, “The Owl and the Pussy-Cat” [online: <https://www.bartleby.com/360/1/125.html>],
“The Dong with a Luminous Nose”
[<http://www.bencourtney.com/ebooks/lear/index4.html#dong>], “Some Incidents in the Life of My Uncle Arly” [<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2009/jul/27/poem-of-the-week-edward-lear>]

Week 8 (July 11)

Reading Response #2 due (10%)

Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895)

NOTE: July 15 is the last day to drop without receiving a grade.

Week 9 (July 15)

Dorothy Parker, "One Perfect Rose" (1923)

<http://public.wsu.edu/~delahoyd/parker.rose.html>

Anita Loos, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes: The Intimate Diary of a Professional Lady* (1925)

Week 10 (July 17)

Bringing Up Baby, dir. Howard Hawks (1938) (full movie available online)

Week 11 (July 22)

Final Essay due (30%)

Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (1953)

Week 12 (July 24)

George Carlin's stand-up comedy selections (watch on YouTube): "Pissing Off the Feminists,"

"Religion is Bullshit," "The Ten Commandments," "Stuff," "Death"

"My Angry Vagina" from Eve Ensler's *Vagina Monologues* – handout

Exam Review

FINAL EXAM (25%): TBA

Additional Information

Lateness Penalties and Extensions: Late assignments submitted will be penalized 2% per day. I am open to the idea of extensions, but they should be discussed in advance of the due date. Exceptions may be made in cases of illness or emergency if proper supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor's letter) is provided.

Special Accommodations: If you require special accommodations for assignments or classroom engagement, let me know as early as possible.

Academic Integrity: I expect that by now you are very familiar with the academic integrity definitions and policies (but here is the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty, just in case:

<http://secretariat-policies.info.yorku.ca/policies/academic-honesty-senate-policy-on/>).

Plagiarism includes trying to pass off somebody else's words and ideas as your own (even if you are paraphrasing), as well as giving and receiving excessive assistance on an assignment.

Substantial difference in writing style between assignments or significant quotation and citation problems can be grounds for an academic honesty case. Please be aware that this course uses Turnitin.

If you are having trouble with an assignment, please talk to me. Academic dishonesty is never a good solution, and penalties for it are severe.

The Writing Department: The Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies Writing Centre, located at S329 Ross, offers one-on-one tutoring, as well as a series of non-credit writing workshops. For more information, have a look at their website: <http://writing-centre.writ.laps.yorku.ca/>. If you need help with a specific writing assignment, book your appointment well in advance, as there are often waiting lists.