Instructor: Cassie Miura, Ph.D.

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Office: Birmingham Hay and Seed Building (BHS) 105C

Hours: Tuesdays 1:30PM-3:30PM and by appointment

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# **TCORE 114: Introduction to Humanities**

Comedy and the Carnivalesque: Laughter in Dark Times

**Section F**: Tuesday and Thursday 8:00am- 10am

Garretson Woodruff & Pratt (GWP) 101

Course Description:

This introductory humanities course explores the way that literary and visual artists from diverse cultural traditions and historical periods have harnessed the power of laughter in order to process painful events, build community among the oppressed, and critique those in power. Together, we will assess laughter’s healing and revolutionary potential as well as its limitations in times of crisis. From Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, written in Italy during the time of the bubonic plague, to Spike Lee’s most recent *BlacKkKlansman*, this introductory humanities survey focuses on works engaged in the most pressing issues of their time.

Core Learning Goals:

The Core program consists of a coordinated series of courses that represent the various disciplines in the university. This course, along with the others in your cohort, fulfills one of the university’s general education requirements in each of the areas of knowledge plus composition. The courses are designed to both support and challenge you to develop the critical thinking, writing, research, and analytical skills you’ll need at UWT while introducing you to relevant topics in the social sciences, humanities, and sciences.

**INQUIRY AND CRITICAL THINKING**

* inquiry & problem solving: collect, evaluate, and analyze information and resources to solve problems or answer questions.
* research methods & application: approach complex issues by taking a large question and breaking it down into manageable pieces.
* synthesis & context: make meaningful connections among assignments and readings in order to develop a sense of the ‘big picture.’

**COMMUNICATION/SELF-EXPRESSION**

* argumentation: formulate an original thesis-driven argument and sustain it in both written and verbal communication.
* analysis: identify, analyze, and summarize/represent the key elements of a text.
* disciplinary awareness: enter/place themselves into an existing dialogue (intellectual, political, etc.).
* expression of ideas: express ideas clearly in writing and speaking in order to
* synthesize and evaluate information before presenting it.

**GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE-DIVERSITY-CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

* disciplinary perspective: understand events and processes as ‘disciplinarily’ situated.
* global perspective: interact with concepts, ideas, and processes related to the
* interdependences between personal, local, and global relationships.
* diversity: think outside of cultural norms and values, including their own
* perspectives, to critically engage the larger world.
* civic engagement: interact with concepts, ideas, and processes related to civic
* engagement.

Visual Literary Performing Arts (VLPA) Learning Objectives:

* Demonstrate an ability to situate one's self in relation to a broader human context
* Demonstrate an ability to critically read an artistic, literary, or historical text or artifact
* Demonstrate an ability to analyze a text or artifact by applying a theoretical or aesthetic framework

Required Texts and Materials:

* All assigned materials will be available to download or print on the Canvas course site.
* You will need access to **a computer with a reliable internet connection**. If you do not have a personal computer, you may use a campus computer lab or check out a laptop at the UWT library using your student ID card.
* I require that students turn in some assignments as MS Word documents. The entire **Microsoft Office 365 ProPlus suite** is available for all UWT students to download free of charge here: <https://itconnect.uw.edu/wares/uware/microsoft/microsoft-office-365-proplus/>.
* Please bring **required reading**, **paper, and a writing utensil** to each class meeting.

Grade Distribution:

Grades at UWT are reported on a 4.0 to 0.0 scale in .1 increments. In order to fulfill the VPLA requirement for graduation, you must receive **at least a 2.0** in this course. Your final grade will be determined using the following distribution.

**15% Participation and In-class work**

Participation includes the following: coming to class with readings and assignments fully prepared, listening attentively to others, engaging in classroom activities, and contributing to group discussion. I will regularly assign and collect in-class work including quizzes, exercises, and short-writing assignments.

**10% Group Presentation**

Students will sign up to present assigned course reading in groups of 2-3. Since all students will be expected to have completed the reading in preparation for class, these presentations should pose questions, highlight key passages for discussion, and brainstorm contemporary applications. These 10-15 minutes presentations should include at least one visual, interactive, or material element (powerpoint, handout, activity, etc.).

**20% Reading Responses and Discussion Forum**

Throughout the term, students will be asked to demonstrate their understanding of select readings by uploading a response to a discussion question on Canvas or by contributing to an online discussion forum.

**15% Midterm**

The midterm exam asks students to identify and analyze select passages of assigned readings, respond to short essay questions, and apply theoretical concepts. This in-class exam is closed-book, but one page of notes is permitted.

**20% Final Exam**

The final exam asks students to identify and analyze select passages of assigned readings, respond to short essay questions, and apply theoretical concepts. This in-class exam is closed-book, but one page of notes is permitted.

**20% Short Essay**

Students will propose and research a topic of their own choosing related to the course theme. This 4-5 page (double-spaced) paper may address the psychological/physiological, social, political, or aesthetic elements of laughter in any relevant context. It should include at least 2 scholarly sources and one assigned reading.

Grading Scale:

Here is the chart used to convert weighted percentages to the 4.0 grade scale at the end of the term:

4.0 100-94

3.9 93

3.8 92

3.7 91

3.6 90

3.5 89

3.4 88

3.3 87

3.2 86

3.1 85

3.0 84

2.9 83

2.8 82

2.7 81

2.6 80

2.5 79

2.4 78

2.3 77

2.2 76

2.1 75

2.0 74

**Course Policies:**

* A copy of this **Course Syllabus** is available on Canvas along with a **Campus e-Syllabus** containing a complete list of **university wide policies and resources** (plagiarism, disability accommodations, campus safety, counseling, etc.).
* Please consult Canvas for an up-to-date **Course Schedule**. Be sure to turn on notifications in your user settings since I primarily use Canvas announcements and messaging to communicate important information.
* Please consult the **Grading Contract** appropriate for your section on Canvas for information regarding **attendance,** **late work policies** and **classroom ground rules**.
* While your attendance and participation are expected each day, **excused absences** will be issued for religious observances, authorized extracurricular activities, and in the event of serious illness or family emergency. In such cases, please notify me prior to missing class.
* Take responsibility for your own learning. This includes coming to class fully prepared, contributing to discussion, participating in group activities, and seeking help when necessary.
* **Please take advantage of office hours**. I welcome the opportunity to provide individual assistance to students at any point during the term and at any point in the writing process!
* The [**Teaching and Learning Center**](http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/teaching-learning-center/teaching-learning-center) offers free academic support for students at all levels. They offer one-on-one consultations and group workshops in writing, math, statistics, science, and Spanish. They also work with students on questions about English grammar & vocabulary, reading, and learning strategies.

*Please note that this course schedule is subject to change. Be sure to consult the course announcements as well as the most recent version of the schedule posted online. All readings should be completed prior to the day they are assigned.*

**Course Calendar**

# Humor and Health

**Week 1**

1/18

Introduction: Three theories of humor

1/10

Simon Critchley’s “Introduction” from On Humour, pp.1-20

Grading Contract

**Due:**Contribute to "Limits of Laughter" Canvas Discussion Forum by 8AM and submit Student Questionnaire by 11:55PM

**Week 2**

1/15 Boccaccio I (pp.1-44)

Sign up for student presentations

1/17 Boccaccio II (pp. 444-483 and epilogue)

**Due:**Reading Response I due to Canvas by 11:55PM

**Due:**Complete Syllabus and Grading Contract Quiz by Friday 1/18 at 11:55PM

**Week 3**

1/22

Critchley, "Why the Super Ego is Your Amigo," pp.93-111

Notaro, Tig. "Hello, I Have Cancer" (in-class listening)

1/24

Freud, On Humor

Beck, Julie. "Funny or Die" The Atlantic

Due: Contribute to "Psychology of Humor" Canvas Discussion Forum by 8AM

**Week 4**

1/29

Critchley, "Is Humor Human?," pp. 25-40

Kafka "Metamorphoses"

**Due:**Reading Response II due to Canvas by 11:55PM

# Laughter and Revolution

1/31

Bakhtin, Mikhail. Except from Rabelais and His World

Charlie Chaplain's The Great Dictator (in-class screening)

**Due:**Contribute to "Power to the People" Canvas Discussion forum by 8AM

**Week 5**

2/5

Žižek’s, Slavoj. “Totalitarian Laughter” from Sublime Object of Ideology

Stephen Colbert, clips from The Late Show (screen in-class)

2/7

**Midterm Exam**in GWP 101 from 8AM-10AM. This is a closed book exam, but one single-sided sheet of notes is permitted.

**Week 6**

2/12

Class cancelled for small group conferences in The Teaching and Learning Center (see Canvas for appointment schedule)

**Due:**Research proposal due to Canvas; submit via Canvas by 9AM

2/14

Swift, Jonathan. A Modest Proposal

**Due**: Reading Response III - Creative Adaptation

# Comedy, Race, and Gender

**Week 7**

2/19

Critchley, "Foreigners are Funny – the Ethicity and Ethnicity of Humour" (pp.65-78)

**Due:**Discussion Forum on Canvas due by 8AM

2/21

Carpio, Glenda. Excerpt from Laughing Fit to Kill: Black Humor in the Fictions of Slavery

**Due**: Bring two hard copies of your Short Essay to class for peer review workshop and upload to Canvas by 8AM

**Week 8**

2/26

Lee, Spike. BlackKklansman (in-class screening)

2/28

Lee, Spike. BlackKklansman (in-class screening)

Riley, Boots. "Here are some thoughts..."

**Due:**Reading Response Due to Canvas by 11:55PM

**Week 9**

3/5

Gadsby, Hannah. Nanette (excerpts in-class)

**Due**: Short Essay due to Canvas by 11:55PM

3/7

Mizejewski, Linda. "Pretty/Funny Women and Comedy's Body Politics: Funniness, Prettiness, and Feminism"

**Week 10**

3/12

Final Presentations

3/14

Final Presentation and Wrap Up

**Finals Week**

3/19

**Final Exam** in GWP 101 from 8AM-10AM. This is a closed book exam, but one single-sided sheet of notes is permitted.