



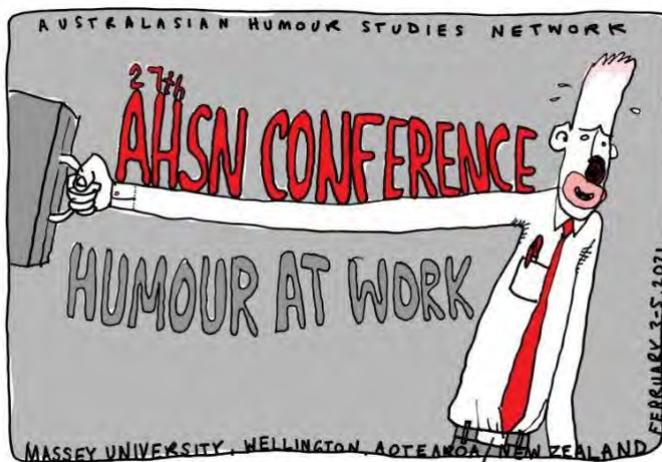
Australasian Humour Studies Network

THE HUMOUR STUDIES DIGEST



Important Update - 27th Conference of the Australasian Humour Studies Network

REMINDER: REGISTRATION NOW OPEN



Dear AHSN Members,

Registration for the 2021 AHSN Conference is open for all presenters and in-person attendees, including scholarship winners. Please visit:

<https://www.massey.ac.nz/learning/departments/school-english-media-studies/news-and-events/conferences--symposiums/humour-at-work-payment.cfm>

All presenters, whether on-line or in person, and all in-person attendees at the conference must register and pay the appropriate fee.

The online event will be run on an open access model for non-presenters. While online presenters pay registration to cover technical support and online infrastructure costs, on-line audience members may access the program without registration. Details of the link to the conference will be posted on the AHSN websites closer to the date, along with the **draft program** which is currently in preparation and will be released to presenters as soon as possible, followed by posting online.

January 2021 Edition

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Registration options are as follows (in NZ dollars):

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| Online Presenter (Waged/Faculty) | \$50.00 |
| Online Presenter (Unwaged/student/under-employed) | \$30.00 |
| Earlybird In-person Attendee (Waged/Faculty) | \$300.00 |
| Earlybird In-person Attendee (Unwaged/student/under-employed) | \$220.00 |
| In-person Attendee (Waged/Faculty) | \$350.00 |
| In-person Attendee (Unwaged/student/under-employed) | \$250.00 |

IMPORTANT NOTE: *The cut-off date for Early Bird registrations is 15 January 2021.
Registration will close on 29 January 2021.*

Contacts and More Information

Please contact Nicholas Holm [nhfholm@massey.ac.nz] for any general queries.

For technical issues when registering, please contact Joanne Ervine at Massey University [J.Ervine@massey.ac.nz]

For more information on the conference and visiting Wellington, please go to the conference website at:
<https://ahsn-conference-2021.netlify.app/>

For more information on the Australasian Humour Studies Network (AHSN), please go to the AHSN website at:
<https://ahsn.org.au/>

We're looking forward to an exciting new way for AHSN members to meet, share insights and discuss humour studies, thanks to our indefatigable Conference Committee!

With best wishes to all AHSN members and hoping to see as many of you as possible, either virtually or physically,

Nick Holm

On behalf of the Organising Committee:

Massey University: Nicholas Holm, Bryce Galloway

Victoria University of Wellington: Meredith Marra, Stephen Skalicky



Massey University - Wellington Campus

Congratulations to the AHSN 2021 Scholarship Winners!

Ying Cao, University of Western Sydney, for a paper entitled, “‘Ha, I should identify myself as an expert?’: Humour and affiliation in workplace online group chat’

Nicholas Hugman, Victoria University of Wellington, for a paper entitled, ‘Football Banter: Balancing Identities through Humour’

Til Knowles, University of Melbourne, for a paper entitled, “‘How did you get that?’ Comedy as an industry, mateship and Australian conversational comedy podcasts’

Al Marsden, RMIT Melbourne, for a paper entitled, ‘Irony and satire in glam metal media from the 1980s to present’

Reuben Sanderson, Victoria University of Wellington, for a paper entitled, ‘Building Communities with Babish: The bonding function of humour in the YouTube workspace’

Eds: Well done to all, and we’re looking forward to hearing you all present at the 27th AHSN Conference, 3-4 February 2021

From the AHSN Board Chair

Assoc. Prof. Kerry Mullan, RMIT University, Melbourne

Dear AHSN members,

Hoping this message finds you all well and that 2021 has got off to a good start for you.

I am delighted to announce that **three new scholars have agreed to join our AHSN Review Panel**, to enhance the areas in which this remarkable body, established in 2009, provides expert guidance in steering the activities of the AHSN. I thank all those members who have served beforehand and those who continue to serve, and warmly welcome the new appointments. If you are interested, you will find a complete list of the membership and backgrounds of the AHSN Review Panel on our website (<https://ahsn.org.au/about/review-panel/>).

2021 New Members

Dr Barbara Plester is currently Senior Lecturer in the Department of Management and International Business at the University of Auckland. Her research explores workplace humour, fun, play, organizational culture, food rituals and she is interested in critical perspectives of organizational life. Within her university Barbara belongs to the Organization Studies group and she teaches Organizational Behavior, Organizational Theory, and Human Resource Management (HRM) at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. She chairs the Business School Equity Committee and serves on the University of Auckland Education Committee. Prior to her academic career, Barbara worked in Publishing and Information Technology companies and has practical experience in Sales, Marketing and HRM.



Dr Meredith Marra is Professor in Linguistics at Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington. Since 2015 she has been Director of the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project, a long-standing sociolinguistic research project investigating effective workplace communication in a range of contexts. Meredith has been analysing humour in workplace talk for 20 years, most notably the use of humour to subvert authority, as a leadership strategy and as a means of creating boundaries between in-group and out-group members. Her recent books include *Negotiating Boundaries at Work: Talking and Transitions* (with Jo Angouri and Janet Holmes, 2017, EUP), *Leadership, Discourse, and Ethnicity* (with Janet Holmes and Bernadette Vine, 2011, OUP), and *Constructing Identities at Work* (with Bernadette Vine, 2011, Palgrave Macmillan).



Dr Benjamin Nickl lectures in international comparative literature and culture and translation studies at the University of Sydney. He has published on transnational mass media and comedy, and is co-editor of the *Global Germany in Transnational Dialogues* book series. He recently published a book on Turkish German comedy in the 21st century (2020, Leuven University Press) and is currently working on the morality of humour in popular TV and film.



I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our upcoming 27th Annual AHSN Conference,

Kerry

A/Prof. Kerry Mullan | Convenor of Languages | Global and Language Studies
Higher Degree Research Leader [Social and Global Studies Centre](#) (SGSC)
School of Global, Urban and Social Studies | RMIT University, Melbourne
Chair, Australasian Humour Studies Network Board
E: kerry.mullan@rmit.edu.au

Member's News and New Publications

New Project and Website from Mark St Leon

The Penny Gaff - <https://www.pennygaff.com.au/>

Mark writes:

For centuries, London fun-seekers with time but little money could pay a penny to visit one of the outdoor equestrian shows conducted on vacant lots of land on London's outskirts. By the 19th century, these shows were commonly called 'penny gaffs', the 'gaff' being the secret waiting to be discovered behind canvas sidewalls. Thus, did British showmen become known as 'gaffers'.

Some of these outdoor equestrian shows held more promise than others. In London in 1768, in a roped-off enclosure in a field at Lambeth on the south side of the Thames, former cavalryman Philip Astley gave open-air displays of trick horsemanship. Astley was not the first to present such displays but when he dressed them with elements of comedy and inserted displays of tumbling, juggling and rope-dancing, in between feats of horsemanship, he



Mark visiting Castletown House, seat of the eminent Conolly family, Celbridge, Co. Kildare, Ireland – distant relatives he is exploring connections with (photo, 2017)

serendipitously invented a new genre of entertainment. It became known as 'circus' and then, as now, comedy was an essential feature. He built and opened Astley's Amphitheatre which remained the international focal point of circus throughout the 19th century.

In 1847, almost 80 years after Astley's first displays, Robert Avis Radford opened his 'Royal Circus' in York Street, Launceston, a 'humble imitation' of Astley's Amphitheatre. Its programs peppered, just like those of Astley with displays of humour: clowns, comic riding displays and comic songs especially. During the gold rush era of the 1850s, many of Radford's artists moved on to the mainland to develop a colonial circus industry. In the century or so before the introduction of television in Australia, the travelling show - circus, especially - solved a fundamental economic problem: how to deliver entertainment to a small, widely-distributed population. Despite the rise of the electronic media, the last four decades have witnessed the renaissance of circus in Australia. Although the use of (non-human) animals has largely been eliminated, humour remains the bedrock of contemporary circus in Australia.



Mark playing a celebratory cadenza within the International College of Management (the former St Joseph's Seminary), Manly, where he taught accounting (not trumpet) for four years. Wonderful acoustics, he says! (photo, 2000)

I descend from one of Australia's original circus families, the St Leon's (see quote from 1874 in the *South Australian Register* below) and have dedicated some 50 years to recovering the lost and overlooked history of Australia's circus and wider industry of travelling show people. I am the author of *Circus: The Australian Story* (Melbourne Books, 2011) and I have given presentations on circus humour at recent AHSN annual conferences.

To showcase my research and to provide a resource and forum for the growing number of researchers exploring Australia's show business history, I have recently launched my website, 'The Penny Gaff' [www.pennygaff.com.au]. Please visit and explore it. I will continue adding to the website in 2021 and plan to devote a significant section of 'The Penny Gaff' to the role of humour in circus in Australia - the clowns, the jokes, the songs, the routines, the costumes ... and the criticism.

'As to the clown, Mons[ieur] M. St Leon of jovial memory, some of the audience might say 'a merrier man within the limit of becoming mirth I never spent an hour's talk withal', and his advent was greeted with usual roar of ready laughter, albeit some of the jokes bore the mark of time, but, like old port, seemed to improve with the keeping.' South Australian Register, 24 March 1874.

Angelina Hurley, PhD Candidate at Griffith University, and a Keynote Speaker at the 2020 AHSN Conference.

The Joy of Writing and Storytelling and my Work in 2020

Angelina writes:

Cathartic is a common expression used to describe the practices of writing and storytelling. These two traditions provide insight into what makes us tick. For me as an Aboriginal writer and storyteller, it's about authenticity, truth and perspective. Much has been discussed about of the functions and purpose of writing and storytelling to maintain culture, educate, heal, validate, affirm, resist, rebut and also to unify and encourage a sense of empathy and understanding.

All of these factors play important and central roles in well-being; however, there is one key ingredient added to my list which is why I chose to mainly work with the genre of humour and comedy. That is simply joy. The joy of doing it and the joy it brings. There's the satisfaction of being able to express an idea or a yarn and getting permission from mob to do so. There's the bliss of finally creating that sentence that kicks off your piece. There's the glee of finding the perfect word/s to express and emphasis moments, people, places and events. There's the comfort of recall and love of reminisce. There's the amusement, laughing out loud at your own material. There's the euphoric stress relief of the completion. There's the pride in sharing your work. There's the delight of audience reaction and hopefully embrace. There's the elation of enjoyment for the end result.

Storytelling is more than just catharsis and entertainment. The spirit of Aboriginal storytelling embodies ways to develop alternative forms of communicating and thinking. Through the preservation of traditional storytelling the transfer of wisdom and knowledge are passed on to communities. It allows us to celebrate life and keep the strains of the everyday at bay. This is part of my methodology for writing and storytelling in the genre of humour and comedy.

Even though 2020 has been hard, it gave me the opportunity to do just that, celebrate. I was awarded the opportunity along with ten other amazing writers to take on my first novel as one of the recipients of The Wheeler Centre's [The Next Chapter](#) program. More writing and my directing debut wrapped up this December with the filming of the documentary, *Always Blak, Always Cracked*, about Aboriginal humour. Produced by [EJ Garret Media and Consulting](#) as part of the [Our Stories](#) series on NITV/SBS, it will be ready for broadcast in 2021. I hope with these projects I will be able to spread the joy.

Please visit the links above to view more of my work and if you would like to contact me, email me at: angelina.hurley@griffithuni.edu.au

Dr Ying Cao - AHSN Member and Scholarship Winner at Four AHSN Conferences

Brief description of my research focus and the status of studies of humour in the PRC

Ying Cao writes from Wuhan, PRC:

My dissertation, entitled Humour and (im)politeness in Chinese sitcom discourse: A case study of 'Ipartment', has been my major research focus in the past four years while I was at University of Western Sydney. This project delved into the interaction of humour and (im)politeness in Chinese sitcom discourse with a special attention on the linguistic features of aggressive humour and non-aggressive humour in an interactional setting. It disclosed the intricate relation of humour and aggression from both the production and reception ends. An analytical framework investigating conversational humour in media discourse, where at least two conversational levels involved, was presented, offering a systematic approach to decoding the conversational mechanisms of humour, ranging from identification and classification to interpretation. In addition, my thesis also touched upon the concept of humour and aggression in Chinese in the wider context of Chinese culture and society.



Ying Cao at Dali River, Yunan

My recent research focus slightly diverts away from humour in sitcom discourse to investigate the characteristics

of humour used by females in conversational settings. Although humour and gender has long been a heated and widely-discussed topic in humour research, there is still a huge research gap in locating females' humour research in different languages, other than English. To begin research into Chinese females' humour, I explored the characteristics of females' teasing and jocular behaviours in media discourse, such as reality TV shows. Undoubtedly, this is an easy and convenient way to retrieve conversational data in media discourse, and I think the analysis of humour that occurred in the (seemingly) "unscripted" or semi-scripted conversational data in reality TV shows could be a good starting point for my future studies of Chinese females' humour in real conversations. Based on these initial findings, I hope to further decode the features of humour used by Chinese females, and by young Chinese females (e.g. university students) in particular, in their daily interactions by building a spoken data corpus. This is a huge and complex research project, and it is what I plan to achieve in the future five or maybe more years.

In addition, as a lecturer in translation and interpreting, I always try to connect the study of humour, and the study of translation and interpreting. I am drafting a national research project proposal, titled Translating humour in media discourse, with other lecturers and professors in our school. This project concentrates on the central issue, namely, how to translate humour in Chinese TV and media discourse, and it covers several sub-topics, such as the translation strategies of humour in entertaining TV programmes and non-entertaining TV programmes, and how to cope with humour in consecutive/simultaneous interpreting in TV discourse (e.g. press conference).

Like the situation elsewhere, there are few scholarly efforts devoted to studying humour in China. I also sometime feel it is hard to continue studying humour due to the harsh realities surrounding us. The difficulties that most humour researchers may encounter, such as receiving research funding and support, building a research team, collecting data, publishing in high-rank international journals and so on, seem to be even more prominent in the second-tier cities in China, like Wuhan, where academic resources are rather rare. In addition, it needs to be admitted that humour studies in China lags far behind compared with its western counterparts. Although major humour theories and theoretical frameworks have universal value and could be readily be applied to analyse humour in Chinese contexts, as Milner Davis (2013) indicate, it is also necessary to clarify some fundamental issues of humour in Chinese, such as terminology and even the concept of humour in Chinese.



Yangtze River, Wuhan, Night view

Despite these difficulties and inadequacies, I indeed notice some positive signals. There are more and more Chinese scholars showing their interest in investigating humour, and they have laid a solid and sound research foundation for humour in Chinese no matter whether in Chinese classics and philosophy (W. Xu, 2011, 2014), in educational settings (Chen, 2013; Chen & Martin, 2007; Martin & Ford, 2018), and in media discourse (Y. Xu & Xu, 2013; Z. Xu, 2014; Yang & Ren, 2020). In addition, there is also a growing number of scholars, outside China, who contributed distinguished works to humour in Chinese research, including but not limited to Chey (2011, 2016), Davis and Chey (2013), Rea (2013, 2015), Sohigian (2013), Crawford (2013) and Chan et al. (2011). I hope that I can play my own bit to push ahead the studies of humour in Chinese, to gain more attention and recognition for Chinese humour researchers.

Ying Cao PHD, linguistics, pragmatics, media studies, cultural studies, translation and interpreting, Lecturer in the School of Foreign Languages, Wuhan Polytechnic University, PRC

References:

For a complete set of references please contact Dr Ying Cao. yingcao@whpu.edu.cn

Dr Christine Nicholls, Hon. Senior Lecturer, ANU

Christine writes:

I recently published an article on the online humour that has blossomed during the COVID-19 pandemic. A second co-published article is in the report of my former colleague Colette Mrowa-Hopkins (see below). The first appeared in late November 2020 in an anglophone Polish journal published annually *Text Matters*, (Ed, Professor Dorota Filipczak, The University of Łódź). The CFP for this volume was originally titled *Literature Goes Pop! Literary Intertexts in Popular Culture*, although later it broadened out to include inter-pictoriality and other interrelated themes. My article is:

Nicholls, Christine. 2020. "Online Humour, Cartoons, Videos, Memes, Jokes and Laughter in the Epoch of the Coronavirus". *Text Matters: A Journal of Literature, Theory and Culture*, 10 (10): 274-318. doi:10.18778/2083-2931.10.17 [open access; peer-reviewed; published hard copy and online via De Gruyter 24 November 2020:

<https://czasopisma.uni.lodz.pl/textmatters/article/view/8676/8502>]



Christine and her dog Quincy (aged 13), enjoying a swing together at their local park.

Abstract:

From the onset of the indefinite deferral of our previously taken-for-granted lives, an abundance of humorous online cartoons, jokes, memes, videos and other satirical material relating to the COVID-19 outbreak—and its consequences—has emerged. Humorous responses to this dire global pandemic proliferate irrespective of location, nationality, ethnicity, age, gender and/or socio-political affiliations. Against a background of enforced lockdowns, quarantine, and sometimes gross political ineptitude, with a mounting daily global death toll, humour referencing this scourge continues to blossom. This may seem counterintuitive or inappropriate at a time of heightened anxiety and fear apropos of an invisible killer-virus, known only in diagrammatic—and, ironically, aesthetically pleasing—visual form. Online humour evoking the COVID-19 crisis is expressed recursively via intertextuality referencing literary, visual, written, oral or other “texts.” Interpictoriality is evident with memes that reconfigure renowned visual artworks. The internet enables copious discourse related to the COVID-19 eruption/disruption. Embedded in this article are examples to support the article’s theoretical basis, with intertextuality its major focus. Discussion follows, with speculation as to why humour, absurdity and wit are able to prosper in an environment of radical uncertainty and why joking about our parlous global predicament acts as a vital coping mechanism.

Keywords:

viral humour, COVID-19 quarantine, online exemplars, analysis of specific works, validity of humorous discourse amidst a global pandemic.

Originally, I chose this topic largely for personal reasons. I have been under quarantine since March 2020 and remain so to the present day. COVID-19 is actually the second pandemic I’ve experienced in my life, the first being in 1957-58, known at that time as the Asian flu (see: Kara Rogers, senior editor of biomedical sciences at *Encyclopædia Britannica*, n.d., at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/1957-flu-pandemic>). That first pandemic in my then young life struck down my mother. Understandably this had severe consequences for my family. As the eldest child with three younger siblings, I retain vivid memories of its impact. Over the past year, the 1918 “Spanish” flu has often been evoked, but the “Asian” flu seems to be the ‘forgotten flu’, despite its death toll estimated as being between 1 million-4 million worldwide.

While at Flinders University in Adelaide, I taught a unit on Australian humour as part of a topic titled 'Australian Cultural and Political Identities', so my passion for humour and comedy can be traced considerably further back. While I was undertaking an honours degree in Drama at UNSW in Sydney, beginning in 1970, our pre-Honours year class spent the year studying comedy and humour specifically in relation to the dramatic arts. It included examples including the plays of Aristophanes, Commedia dell'arte, Restoration comedy, humour and comedy theory (e.g., Bergson's *oeuvre*) and more, all taught by academics with in-depth knowledge of these specific fields. We also performed in plays – audiences actually paid to watch our performances! – that covered the particular areas on which our class was working.

For me, the most memorable example remains *Ubu Roi* (Alfred Jarry, 1896, first performed at Théâtre de l'Œuvre in Paris), directed and acted by members of the class a year ahead of us. That play, just as relevant today (especially its principal character, Ubu Roi, Ubu the King), immediately came to the fore in my thinking when Trump took to the political stage and quickly became the satirists' wet dream – even putting aside the fact that Trump himself did an outstanding job of providing top-quality raw material, absolutely ripe for the picking.

This COVID humour article has also been a trial run for a long article that I am writing about Warlpiri humour (the humour of a large group of Aboriginal people living in the Tanami Desert, with whom I lived and worked for more than a decade). The greatest challenge in regard to this forthcoming monograph (already 50,000 words plus in length) is to create a theoretical model of Warlpiri humour genres or categories – that is, Warlpiri humour's epistemological underpinnings – that are mostly *very* different from the Western theories of humour with which we in the AHSN are reasonably conversant. As much as possible I am using Warlpiri concepts (and Warlpiri vocabulary, translated into English where possible) to indicate these significant differences. While some Warlpiri humour overlaps conceptually (or partially so) with certain western models, much does not. Hence, I created a mud-map of humour theories (a quasi-Venn diagram of the major threads in 'western' humour) and used this in the *Text Matters* article. It is intended to provide a control 'base', or determinative arbiter, to differentiate between Warlpiri and "western" humour.

Finally, I genuinely enjoyed writing this article and searching for relevant examples, which has been a pleasurable distraction from the health conditions that have kept me under quarantine. Now, *that* is testament to humour's redemptive power.

This article is dedicated to Professor Dorota Filipzak, Editor of Text Matters and an editor for Peter Lang, who died prematurely a short time after the article was published.

Please feel free to email me about my work at: Christine.Nicholls@anu.edu.au

Dr Colette Mrowa-Hopkins, Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Flinders University, Adelaide.

Colette writes:

With Christine Nicholls, I recently co-authored an article titled « Humour et Covid-19 sur les réseaux sociaux : mieux vaut rire que périr ! » (literal English translation: "Humour and Covid-19 on social networks - better to laugh than perish!"). It was published on *The Conversation France* on 22 December 2020 (Australian time 23 December 2020).



Link to article: <https://theconversation.com/humour-et-covid-19-sur-les-reseaux-sociaux-mieux-vaut-rire-que-perir-152091>

Initially we had written a different article on a similar topic for *The Conversation Australia*. Its provisional title was “COVID-19 humour: Larking about—maybe—carking?”, which we intend to publish soon. It encompassed an overview of COVID-19 humour covering many parts of the world, including Iranian and Chinese coronavirus humour and more.

Instead, we decided to submit an article on coronavirus-based joking to *The Conversation France*. It includes a majority of French exemplars found on social media. *TC France* was keen to publish but that left us a very short space of time in which to write and edit it to knock it into good enough shape for release before the Christmas/New Year break. Owing to the current significant time difference between Australia and Europe, there was pressure to communicate with the *TC France* staff during their daily working hours, which meant on occasions to write quite late at night. There was no alternative. It meant that on the final night both of us had to send emails back to and fro between the two hemispheres to make amendments or reply to editor’s comments until well after 2 am Australian time. While Colette bore the brunt of those marathon *nuits blanches*, there was also the imperative to email one another as this is a joint article. As we’re both now somewhat “chronologically challenged” that was quite stressful. In retrospect it was worth it, as there has been a good deal of interest in the article (in excess of 15K readers to date).

In terms of writing the article, what could be glossed as “the politics of translation” was the greatest challenge. Having one French-born/educated author (Colette) and one Australian-born/educated writer (Christine) proved to be a good balance. We wanted our article to have a catchy title that would include a rhyme. Our original English title would never have worked in French as it relied on two English colloquialisms. Our initial title for the French article was « Humour et Covid-19 sur les réseaux sociaux : mieux vaut rire que mourir », but we unanimously decided that « mourir » (‘to die’) was an insensitive term to use at a time when people in Europe were dying in large numbers from COVID-19. So, eventually we settled on « périr » (‘to perish’) which is less confronting than « mourir », but which also rhymes with « rire ». Our chosen title echoes the well-known French proverb *Mieux vaut prévenir que guérir* (in English, ‘Prevention is better than cure’) with its semantic emphasis on foresight, rather than simply ignoring possibly severe consequences.

Please feel free to email me about this and my other work at: Colette.Mrowa-Hopkins@flinders.edu.au

Special Issue on Humor – ASAP/Journal Vol 5, No. 3, November 2020

The Journal Editor writes:

I am writing to announce the publication of ASAP/Journal’s special issue on “Humor” (5.3), guest edited by the amazing Jonathan Eburne. As the outgoing Editor-in-Chief of the journal, Jonathan’s parting shot has been the editing and curating of an amazing set of essays, comics, artwork, and interviews that answer the question of what is so damn funny about academia...

If you’re looking for the smartest dick (“Exposing Cocksman Charisma: Sex and the Dic(k)tator’s National



Romance” by Allison Harris”) and poo (“The Non Olet System, 2020-2035: A Fecal Economy from First Sketch to Contemporary” by Ulla Hvejsel) jokes, then you need look no further!

This issue features interviews with Wanda Raimundi-Ortiz, Martha Wilson and Sheila Pepe, and a dialogue between Rita Raley and Jarett Kobek. Articles on Sean Fader’s social media performances; the miniature art of Tanaka Tatsuya; and the queerness of Peacocks are punctuated by some toilet humor (“Reclaiming the Throne” by Katerina Zacharopoulou) and comics ranging from “Teaching During a Pandemic” (Angel Trazo) to the “Plantanito Protest” (Aurelie Matheron). The issue also contains pieces that stand slightly askew from academic essays: David Hollingshead’s “The Parasitology Unbound Collective: Commission Report” and Jocelyn Chey’s “How to Understand Barbarian Speech in the Eight Directions: The New Pragmatics Irrelevance Theory”. Finally, ruminations from art practitioners, performers and children on laughter, humor, activism and political and academic life.

You can also preview the issue on Project Muse (<https://muse.jhu.edu/issue/43232>).

The Association for the Study of the Arts of the Present (ASAP) is at: <http://www.artsofthepresent.org/about/>

A library recommendation form is at: <https://www.press.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/ASJ-lib-rec.pdf>

Laughing with you,

Liz

Elizabeth Ho, Editor

Michael B. Gillespie, Senior Editor

Simon Whitaker, Editorial Assistant

ASAP/Journal

Humour Studies Courses in France – Lessons for Us All!

Former AHSN Review Panel member, Dr Will Noonan, writes from the University of Bourgogne in Dijon:

For the 2019-20 academic year, I developed a teaching module called “**Research Methods and Tools**”, designed for second-year BA English literature students at the Université de Bourgogne, France, which used humour studies as a case study to explore how interdisciplinary research fields are constructed and studied. The course gave an overview of trends in humour theory, but mainly focused on the questions (familiar to seasoned humour researchers!) of how to integrate ideas drawn from many different traditional disciplines and of how best to situate research conducted within what is still a relatively unknown field.

Students were assessed by exercises designed to test basic research skills (finding academic sources, writing an annotated bibliography), which they then developed into humour-related research projects on topics as diverse as race in US political cartooning, parody and satire in the work of Arundhati Roy and the relationship between humour and Nazism in the film *Jojo Rabbit*. The forced switch to online teaching in March 2020 meant that I wasn’t able to grade the planned in-class project presentations, though I was pleased to see that three-quarters of the class volunteered to present their work anyway, during a well-attended interactive online session that lasted an entire afternoon.

As we’re all aware, humour is both an engaging and a difficult topic to grapple with and interestingly most students rose to a challenge that forced them to stand outside the usual top-down instruction and Cartesian silos - “the [Bergsonian] mechanical encrusted on the living”? - that characterise so much French Humanities teaching.

What I hadn't anticipated was that our discussion of humour would also feed back into our discussion of research methodologies. But perhaps this is not so surprising, after all. Students easily identified with Foucault's uneasy laughter on realising the necessarily arbitrary nature of knowledge classification. That said, I confess I hadn't expected them to greet the my photocopied extracts from the *MLA Handbook* (the usual platitudes about how research aims at a structured expression of intellectual freedom, etc) with the type of reaction we are more used to associating with anti-regime jokes!

For more information, email Will at: Will.noonan@u-bourgogne.fr

And at the Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris:

Dr. Yen-Mai Tran-Gervat, Director of the Dept of General and Comparative Literature and AHSN Visiting Scholar in 2016, collaborated with **Will Noonan** on a program entitled "**Humour anglais, humour en anglais**" (English humour, humour in English) which continues to prove highly popular. In 2017, when joining the teaching team for an English language course for first year students from majors other than English, they seized the opportunity to provide an initiation to humour studies (with a "u"!)" while encouraging French students to speak and write correctly in English. Co-ordinated by a Sorbonne Nouvelle English teacher, Céline Thurel, the course achieves 10 sections or groups of students, each with its own instructor. This year, due to the pandemic, each section had to be divided in 2 subgroups that attended class every 2 weeks, so that the programme had to be reduced. Since a new lockdown has been proclaimed in France, teaching is now delivered online. Yen-Mai's own section had the following original description and components (developed with Will, who then had to stop teaching his own section). In bold letters are the topics that have been kept in this year's pandemic-reduced programme.

Aims: This course has both a general aim, to work on English reading, writing, oral comprehension and oral expression skills, and a specific aim, to study the different forms and categories of "English" humour. During the semester, we will be working on examples of humour in English, but also trying to identify and analyse specifically "English" aspects of humour. American writer Mark Twain once complained that "Explaining humor is a lot like dissecting a frog. you learn a lot in the process, but in the end you kill it." Hopefully, Twain was exaggerating: certainly, analysing humour can be difficult, and, as we shall see, part of the problem is that scholars do not always agree about what humour is. Where do we start with a concept that is both universal (everyone laughs, surely?) but also very sensitive to culture and context (people from different times and places – and different individuals in any given time or place – don't always laugh at the same things)? This course will try to demonstrate that we can analyse and appreciate different kinds of humour, and that studying humour can help us enjoy it while also practicing our language skills.

Organisation: Each week's class is built around a specific theme, designed to help students think about humour, and explore the similarities and differences between its different forms. For each session, there is reading or activities to prepare, in class or via iCampus, which forms the basis of the exercises worked on in class. Since the purpose is also to work on English expression, students are asked to come prepared to share ideas and participate in group discussions. As comedian Tom Lehrer once said, "Life is like a sewer. What you get out of it depends on what you put in".

Topics covered: Introduction; "Humour" and its relatives: a lexical history; Physical humour and slapstick; Burlesque and its different meanings; Jokes and puns; Satire and caricature; The grotesque; Parody and pastiche; reflexive humour; Nonsense

Yen-Mai is also teaching **two other courses based on humour**. One is a first-year comparative literature course entitled "**The comic novel in the 17th and 18th centuries**". It focuses on comedy as an essential component of the rise of the novel in 17th and 18th century Europe and shows the decisive role played by Cervantes' *Don Quixote* in the genre history. A close reading of the novels and their comparison with each other allows students to understand more clearly various notions related with humour, comedy and laughter: parody, burlesque, mock-heroic pastiche. The importance of dramatic writing within fiction is also considered, as is the role of the short-story form in the

history of the novel, and broach the question of metafiction. **Corpus:** Cervantes, *Don Quixote* (in French translation); Scarron, *The Comic Novel* (in French); Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*.

The second course is a 3rd year comparative literature course for both French Literature major and minor students. This is entitled “**Literary parody through the close reading of Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy***” and aims at defining and studying parody as a literary device, particularly through its humorous and reflexive effects. Studying parody also allows students to approach various aspects of comparative literature: translation studies, intertextuality, adaptations from a literary work to graphic novel or film, humour studies in an intercultural context, literary history and theory. The course asks, What is parody? What are its relationships with satire, irony, burlesque, pastiche, caricature? What is at stake in a parodic work or text? Is parody always funny? These are a few questions that are considered while studying Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* and various works it is directly related to. **Main corpus:** Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (in French translation). Related works that are studied during the course: François Rabelais, *Gargantua*; Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*; Denis Diderot, *Jacques le fataliste et son maître*; Martin Rowson, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*; Michael Winterbottom: *Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull Story*.

For more information, email Yen-Mai at: yen-mai.tran-geroat@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr

Eds: Are you involved in teaching or planning to teach courses based on studying humour? Please write to us if you are or can tell us someone you know who is, or if you are a student in such a course. Dr Yen-Mai would love to hear from you.

Online Course on ‘Ethics, Humour and Satire in Dante’s Divine Comedy’

This course is based on the discussion of the role of humor and satire in Dante’s masterpiece. ‘Pt 1: Inferno’, is an online course that is open to the public. Members of AHSN are very welcome to join, or to suggest it to their students or colleagues. Later courses will follow on Purgatorio and Paradiso.

You are invited to embark in an extraordinary journey. This virtual course focuses on one of the most important Italian masterpieces of all time: Dante’s Divine Comedy. By reading the original medieval text (alongside with modern Italian and English translations), students will deepen their understanding of the Inferno by appreciating its moral construction and satirical tradition as well as learning how Dante’s work connects to contemporary morality, literature, music, art, and cinema.

The 12-week course (in Italian) will be taught by Dr. Nicolino Applauso, starting on December 8th, geared toward the intermediate and advanced students of Italian (of all ages).

Although Nicolino teaches Italian classes at Loyola University Maryland and at Morgan State University, a few years ago, he opened a school called the Applauso Italian Learning Center as a community outreach program and educational enterprise operating for the community in Baltimore and Maryland (and it currently teaches online courses nationwide).

More information on this and other courses: <https://www.applausoitaliancenter.com/dantes-divine-comedy.html>

If interested in this or later courses, please contact applausoitalian@gmail.com

The Applauso Italian Learning Center invites you to:
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Ethics, Humor, and Satire
in Dante's Inferno

By Professor Nicolino Applauso

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This 12-weeks course will be conducted in Italian and is taught by one of the most distinguished Dante scholars in the field, Prof. Nicolino Applauso (PhD), author of the book *Dante's Comedy and the Ethics of Invektive in Medieval Italy: Humor and Evil* (2019) and co-editor of *Dante satira: Satire in Dante Alighieri's Comedy and Other Works* (2020).

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von Friedrich W. Block, Helga Kotthoff und Walter Pape.

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Publisher's description

The interest in the boundaries of humour aims at the centre of the phenomenon 'humour'. Humour creates impossible situations, which, to speak in accord with Helmuth Plessner, puts us in 'borderline situations'. For this very reason, the concept of humour also makes the concept of the boundary thematic. Accordingly, this book addresses borderline questions such as: Is appropriate humour about Hitler or even the Holocaust possible? Do kitsch and humour get along? What were the consequences of Pussy Riot's "punk prayer"? And is the New Testament really completely humourless? This volume collects interdisciplinary essays written in the wake of two conferences of the Kasseler Komik-Kolloquium. One of them dealt with the 'boundaries of humour' and the other with the relationship between 'humour and religion'.

Editors' Bionotes

Dr. Friedrich W. Block, literary scholar, curator und director of the Brueckner-Kuehner Foundation in Kassel, Germany.

Dr. Uwe Wirth, professor of Modern German Literature und Culture Studies at Justus-Liebig-University, Gießen, Germany.

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Occurring Soon – 16-17 January 2021

Free Online Workshop on Humour and Religion in Early Modern Europe

'Faith in Jest: Humour and Religion in Early Modern Europe'

About this Event

In recent decades, early modern conceptions of both humour and religion have received much scholarly attention. Humour has been studied as a rhetorical instrument, as an important aspect of theatrical and political culture, and for its role in shaping notions of class, race, gender and other social identities. Similarly, the renewed interest in religion that is part of the 'turn to religion' in early modern cultural history has yielded new insights into sensory, emotive, affective, and various other aspects of religious experience. At the same time, however, the mutual relationships between humour and religion as equally complex and pervasive features of early modern society have received significantly less attention. This workshop, which is intended to be informal and explorative in nature, aims to investigate the variety of ways in which humour and religion interacted with each other in the early modern period.

Date and Time

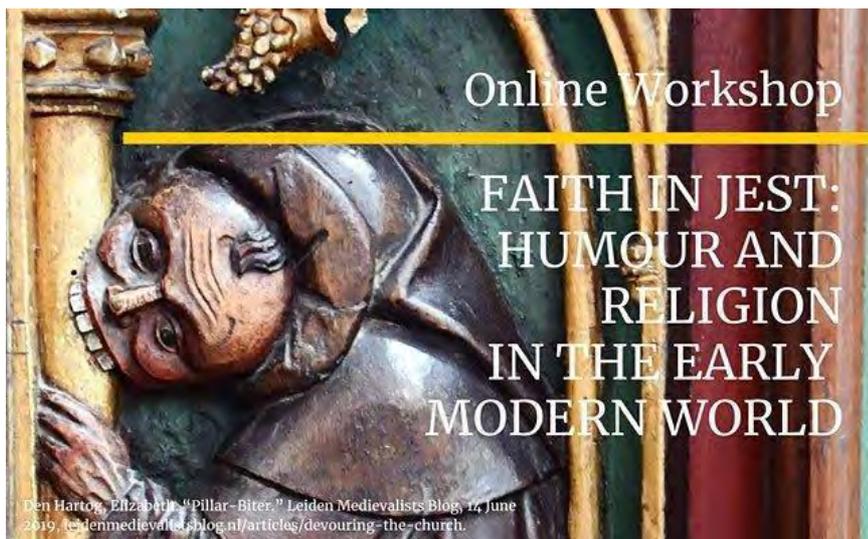
Sat, 16 Jan 2021, 00:00 –

Sun, 17 Jan 2021, 04:40 AEDT

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/faith-in-jest-humour-and-religion-in-the-early-modern-world-tickets-133322405905>

Lieke Stelling, Sonja Kleij, Johan Verberckmoes

Organisers of 'Faith in Jest: Humour and Religion in the Early Modern World'



Online Workshop

**FAITH IN JEST:
HUMOUR AND
RELIGION
IN THE EARLY
MODERN WORLD**

15 JANUARY 2021
14.00-18.10 (CET)
&
16 JANUARI 2021
14:30-18:40 (CET)

For any inquiries, please
contact Saskia
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s.f.soelaksana@uu.nl

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Den Hartog, Elizabeth. "Pillar-Biter." Leiden Medievalists Blog, 14 June 2019. denmedievalistsblog.nl/articles/devouring-the-church.

Details of how to join the online discussions will be shared with participants shortly prior to the event.



FAITH IN JEST: HUMOUR AND RELIGION IN THE EARLY MODERN WORLD

Workshop Schedule

DAY 1: FRIDAY 15 JANUARY 2021
14.00 - 18.10*

OPENING AND INTRODUCTION (20 MINS)

Panel 1: Reformation Polemic

Adrian Streete (University of Glasgow)
Martinists and Brownists: Laughing with Perfection

David Bagchi (University of Hull)
'In the Manner of a Comedy': Religious Satire as Polemic and Propaganda in Cochlaeus' A Secret Conversation (1538)

10 MINUTE BREAK

Panel 2: Laughter, Death and Trauma

Nicole Graham (University of Kent)
Laughter Which Condemns: Considering the Laughter of the Accused in the Salem Witch Trials

Sonja Kleij (Utrecht University)
'Een vromen held': Parodying the *Wilhelmus* to Discuss Religious War Trauma

10 MINUTE BREAK

Panel 3: Reflections on Piety, Religious Wit & Humour

Todd Anderson (Carleton University)
'Wit's An Unruly Engine': George Herbert and the Problem of Religious Humour

Daniel Derrin (Durham University)
'Is it but a cake': Luke Shepherd's Anti-Catholic Humour

Ethan Shagan (UC Berkeley)
Jokes about Piety in Early Modern England

DRINKS/SOCIAL

*CENTRAL EUROPEAN TIME



FAITH IN JEST: HUMOUR AND RELIGION IN THE EARLY MODERN WORLD

DAY 2: SATURDAY 16 JANUARY 2021
14.30 - 18.40*

SOCIAL

Panel 4: Community Building

Rozanne Versendaal (Utrecht University)
Ordinances from Heaven and Hell: The Social and Unifying Impact of Parodic Writs in France and the Low Countries

Johan Verberckmoes (KU Leuven)
Richard Verstegen and the Risky Humour of Everyday Interaction

Timothy Somers (Newcastle University)
Sharing the Highway to Heaven: Popular Jests and the Negotiation of Religious Anxieties in Seventeenth-Century England

10 MINUTE BREAK

Panel 5: Mocking Aspects of Religion

Khristian Smith (The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)
Scorning Satan: The Devil, Theatre and Reformation Humour

Arjan van Dixhoorn (University College Roosevelt) and **Michelle Vergeer** (freelance painting conservator)
More than Meets the Eye: Radical Christianity in a Painted Satire of Rhetorician Life

Emma Bartel (Sorbonne Université)
'Snow Covered Dung-Hills and Deformed Churches': Upstaging the Stage Puritan in John Marston's *The Malcontent* and *The Dutch Courtesan*

10 MINUTE BREAK

Closing discussion (20 mins)

End

*CENTRAL EUROPEAN TIME

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