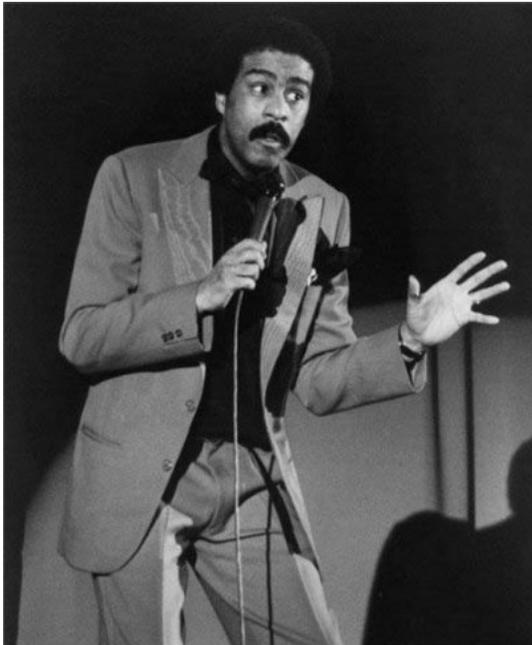


Introduction to Popular Culture: Comedy and Controversy

Fall 2011
TR 2:30pm-3:45pm
Ballantine Hall 138

Instructor: Holly Schreiber
Email: heschrei@indiana.edu
Office: Ballantine Hall 908
Office Hours: TR 1:00pm-2:30pm

CMLT C151-7352



Welcome to CMLT C151: Introduction to Popular Culture! The goal of this course is to take comedy seriously. We will explore the significance of stand-up comedy as a unique cultural form and ask the following questions: What role do comics play in society? Are they fools, prophets, or simply entertainers? Why exactly is stand-up such an appropriate medium to address issues of race, politics, and social inequality? The semester will begin with a brief introduction to the origins of stand-up comedy and a survey of several theories of humor. We will then view and analyze some of the most famous (and infamous) moments in stand-up history with the help of theoretical and critical readings, magazine articles, and news segments.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Explore the cultural, historical, and intellectual contexts of works of human expression within popular culture
2. Critically evaluate examples of artistic expression from a variety of popular traditions, including: (a) original written texts in various literary forms, (b) works of visual art and design, (c) musical compositions, (d) dramatic performance (live theater, dance, film, video, digital, etc.).
3. Incorporate basic methods and concepts of literary and semiotic analysis, such as close reading, explication and comparison, to evaluate and interpret popular works of art or expression
4. Hone your critical thinking skills by comparing texts analytically which feature thematic similarities but come from different linguistic, generic, or cultural traditions through in-class writing exercises, essay assignments, object analyses, and written exams.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

All required texts will be posted on Oncourse. I expect that you complete all readings in advance and bring an annotated copy of your text to class (whether in print or on your laptop).

「 COURSE POLICIES 」

PARTICIPATION AND PREPARATION:

You are expected to seriously prepare for and participate in class discussions. Your participation grade will reflect both the quantity and quality of your comments in class.

CLASS CONDUCT:

While you are in class I hold you to professional forms of conduct. Text messaging, falling asleep, doing homework for another class, reading the newspaper, or being otherwise disengaged or disruptive is unprofessional and will lower your participation grade.

ATTENDANCE:

You may have 3 unexcused absences without penalty. After that, 3% will be deducted from your final grade for each unexcused absence. Absences can be excused in the case of:

- **Illness**, provided I am notified within 24 hours of the class missed. For more than 2 consecutive days of absence I require a note from the IU Health Center or other healthcare provider.
- **Major family matters** (such as weddings or funerals). For weddings I require at least 2 weeks notice in advance.
- **Religious observances**, provided I am notified at least 2 weeks in advance.

LATE WORK:

Even if you cannot make it to class, make every effort to get your work in on time. You or someone you trust can drop off hard copies of your assignments in my mailbox (in Ballantine 901, open M-F 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.).

If you are unable to complete your work on time due to illness or other circumstances, you must contact me in a timely manner if you wish to arrange make-up work or an extension. I reserve the right to refuse late work or an extension if I determine that your reason for missing the deadline is not adequate.

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

At IUB, plagiarism is considered a violation of academic integrity and can result in automatic failure of the course (see the Code of Student Conduct for more information:

<http://www.iu.edu/~code/code/responsibilities/academic/index.shtml>.) Plagiarism occurs when you represent someone else's work as your own work in the following ways:

- having someone write your paper for you or turning in someone else's work
- purchasing someone else's work and using it as your own
- simply copying and pasting published information into your paper
- deliberately using sources without attributing them.

Our course will teach you ways of integrating the ideas of other writers and documenting the source of those ideas, but please ask if you ever have any questions about plagiarism.

「 ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION 」

ASSIGNMENTS:

All assignments and homework are due at the beginning of the class period for which they are assigned. For major papers, please bring a hard copy to class and upload a copy on Oncourse. Homework will be completed on Oncourse. There are nine homework assignments throughout the semester; the lowest will be dropped in the final grade calculations.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

Attendance and Participation	100 points
Homework (8 x 25 points each)	200 points
Theoretical Synthesis (4-5 pages)	200 points
Performance Analysis (4-5 pages)	200 points
Midterm Exam	100 points
Final Exam	200 points

Total	1000 points
--------------	--------------------

GRADING:

The final grade distribution is as follows:

	899-870 points (B+)	799-770 points (C+)	699-600 (D)
1000-930 points (A)	869-830 points (B)	769-730 points (C)	599 and below (F)
929-900 points (A-)	829-800 points (B-)	729-700 points (C-)	

Please keep in the mind that at Indiana University, an “A” indicates exemplary work and means you have mastered the concepts of the assignment. A “B” indicates very good work in which you have not only met all of the assignment requirements, but you have also met them at a level above expectations. A “C” indicates that you have sufficiently completed the assignment. A “D” indicates that you have failed to execute some portion of the assignment properly and need help with the assignment. And an “F” indicates that you either did not understand or did not follow through with the assignment.

「 RESOURCES 」

OFFICE HOURS:

My office hours are scheduled specifically for you, and I encourage you to stop by with any questions or concerns. No appointment is necessary. If you cannot make it to office hours, email is the best method to get in touch with me with a simple question or to set up another meeting time. I will do my best to get back to you within 48 hours, but please do not wait until the last minute to contact me. If I have not responded to an email about an assignment by the time that the assignment is due, it is by no means an excuse for turning the assignment in late.

WRITING TUTORIAL SERVICES:

I highly encourage you to seek out additional readers for your writing at Writing Tutorial Services (WTS) in the Information Commons (1st floor) of Wells Library. The tutors there can provide you with valuable feedback at any stage of your writing process.

SUPPORT SERVICES:

Disability Services and The Adaptive Technologies divisions of the Office of Student Affairs can arrange for assistance, auxiliary aids, or related services if you think a temporary or permanent disability will prevent you from being a full participant in the class. Contact them at <http://www.dsa.indiana.edu> or 855-7578 with any individual concerns. Students with special needs must be registered with Disability Services before classroom accommodations can be provided.

「 COURSE SCHEDULE 」

You will be expected to complete all readings and assignments prior the class for which they are assigned. Please bring a copy of your text for each day (whether in print or on a laptop). I reserve the right to make changes to assignments and due dates. I will announce any changes in class and on Oncourse.

Date	Topic	Reading/Assignment
Tues., Aug. 30	Introduction to the semester	
Thurs., Sept. 1	Analyzing popular culture	John Storey, "What is Popular Culture?"
Tues., Sept. 6	Theories of humor	Selections from Thomas Hobbes and Francis Hutcheson, HW 1 due
Thurs., Sept. 8	Theories of humor, cont.	Selections from Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer
Tues., Sept. 13	Theories of humor, cont.	Selections from George Santayana, Sigmund Freud, and Henri Bergson, HW 2 due
Thurs., Sept. 15	The history of stand-up	Eddie Tafoya, "A History of Stand-up"
Tues., Sept. 20	The comedy of Lenny Bruce	HW 3 due
Thurs., Sept. 22	In-class peer review	Draft of Theoretical Synthesis due
Tues., Sept. 27	The comedy of Steve Martin	Selections from Steve Martin, "Born Standing Up"
Thurs., Sept. 29	Analyzing stand-up	Lawrence E. Mintz, "Standup Comedy as Social and Cultural Mediation"
Tues., Oct. 4	The comedy of Richard Pryor	Theoretical Synthesis due
Thurs., Oct. 6	The role of the comedian	Stephanie Kozisky, "The Stand-up Comedian as Anthropologist"
Tues., Oct. 11	The comedy of Bill Cosby	HW 4 due
Thurs., Oct. 13	Midterm Review	
Tues., Oct. 18	Midterm	
Thurs., Oct. 20	<i>Class cancelled</i>	HW 5 due
Tues., Oct. 25	The limits of comedy	Jerry Palmer, "Performance and Offence"

Thurs., Oct. 27	Profanity and offense	Richard Beck, "Profanity: The Gnostic Affront of the Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television"
Tues., Nov. 1	The comedy of George Carlin	HW 6 due
Thurs., Nov. 3	Gendered profanity	Geoffrey Hughes, "Sexuality in Swearing"
Tues., Nov. 8	Gender in stand-up	Jerry Palmer, "Gender and Humor"
Thurs., Nov. 10	The comedy of Roseanne Barr	HW 7 due
Tues., Nov. 15	Nationality and humor	Leon Rappoport, "The Origins and Psychology of Stereotypes and Slurs"
Thurs., Nov. 17	Humor and ethnicity	John Lowe, "Theories of Ethnic Humor", HW 8 due
Tues., Nov. 22	<i>Thanksgiving Break (no class)</i>	
Thurs., Nov. 24	<i>Thanksgiving Break (no class)</i>	
Tues., Nov. 29	The comedy of Dave Chappelle	HW 9 due
Thurs., Dec. 1	Comedy and politics	Aaron McKain, "Not Necessarily Not the News"
Tues., Dec. 6	In-class screening and discussion: The Daily Show, Colbert Report, etc.	Performance Analysis due
Thurs., Dec. 8	Final Exam Review, Course Evaluations	
Tues., Dec. 13	Final Exam (2:45pm)	

Theoretical Synthesis

For this essay, I ask that you put three of our theoretical texts into conversation with one another. You may choose from Storey, Hobbes, Hutcheson, Kant, Schopenhauer, Santayana, Freud, or Bergson. You will weave together key claims from these texts in order to arrive at an original **theoretical claim**. I then ask that you use a humorous text of your own choosing to support this claim. This can be a video, film, book, magazine, song, etc. Please cite all of your sources.

Suggestions for arriving at a theoretical claim

***please do not use this example for your papers!

	Example
Choose a claim from your first author	Bergson believes that laughter has a definite social function. He writes: "Laughter, then, does not belong to the province of esthetics alone, since unconsciously (and even immorally in many particular instances) it pursues a utilitarian aim of general improvement" (Bergson 125).
Add a claim from your second author, explaining how it relates to the first. (It is helpful here to point out a similarity-within-a-difference or a difference-within-a-similarity)	Hutcheson would agree with this aspect of Bergson's theory. In <i>Reflections Upon Laughter</i> , he writes: "Another valuable purpose of ridicule is with relation to smaller vices, which are often more effectually corrected by ridicule, than by grave admonition" (Hutcheson 39). However, his use of humor only includes the intentional joke or jest and emphasizes that we should exercise control over our use of humor. Bergson, on the other hand, sees all aspects of laughter as social control, whether intentional or not.
Pause to explain the problem or theme that this comparison raises	This raises an interesting problem: How can an unintentional act (such as slipping on a banana peel) serve as a form of social control?
Bring in your third reading, explaining how it either: resolves a tension between the two previous authors; contributes to the debate; complicates the debate in an interesting way; etc.	One of Storey's definitions of ideology is helpful in understanding how Bergson can say that all laughter (even from accidents or unintentional jokes) can be a form of social control. Storey explains that ideology is imbedded into the practices of everyday life (such as traditions or celebrations) and that these practices actually can encourage people to conform to certain behaviors and attitudes without realizing it (Storey 4).
Summarize this new concept in a sentence or two (feel free to only use two of your sources for this part—as long as the other source helped develop the debate). This is your theoretical claim .	Adding Storey's definition of ideology to Bergson's philosophy allows us to see how humor, even when it is unintentional, can be an especially powerful form of ideological control.

Length and Formatting

This paper should be 4-5 pages, double-spaced with 1-inch margins throughout. The font should be Times New Roman 12 point. Follow MLA guidelines for the heading, page numbers and Works Cited page.

Due Dates (please bring a hard copy to class with you)

Draft: September 22
Final Draft: October 4

Schreiber—CMLT C151

CWP ISS 9/20/11 9:47 AM

Comment [1]: This paper does not follow a standard "5 paragraph essay" format—your thesis (theoretical synthesis) will only appear near the end of your paper. Each paragraph should follow the progression of your analysis rather than be based on a specific theme or author.

CWP ISS 9/20/11 9:47 AM

Comment [2]: Overall, you should cite 4 sources: 3 theoretical texts and 1 humorous text.

CWP ISS 9/20/11 9:39 AM

Comment [3]: In your essay, be sure to give background about the philosopher's overall theory and how this particular claim fits in.

CWP ISS 9/20/11 9:51 AM

Comment [4]: I quote Hutcheson here to support my claim that he would agree with Bergson. In the essay, I would also explain this further: What is the basis of their agreement. How exactly are their concepts similar?

CWP ISS 9/20/11 9:40 AM

Comment [5]: This claim requires support as well. I would have to look through Hutcheson again to find evidence for this assertion.

CWP ISS 9/20/11 9:45 AM

Comment [6]: This does not need to be its own paragraph—you can attach this question to the end of a paragraph or make it the topic sentence of the next.

CWP ISS 9/20/11 9:41 AM

Comment [7]: In the essay, I would discuss the limitations of this comparison as well—Storey discusses pop culture generally, and I am applying his definition in a different context (this isn't a bad thing, it is just something that my readers should be aware of).

CWP ISS 9/20/11 9:42 AM

Comment [9]: You may want to underline your theoretical synthesis in your draft. This will make it easier for your peers to discuss it in class.

CWP ISS 9/20/11 9:43 AM

Comment [8]: After you have come up with your theoretical claim, you should apply it to a humorous text. You can do this in a body paragraph or in your conclusion. Just make sure that you offer enough details about the text so that your example really supports your theoretical synthesis.

Peer Review: Theoretical Synthesis

Name of Reviewer: _____

Author of Paper: _____

<p>Theoretical Claim: Is it clear? Does it develop logically from the sources? Is it arguable and non-obvious?</p>	
<p>Source #1: Is the depiction of the source accurate? Is there enough background information for you to understand the claims/quotes?</p>	
<p>Source #2: Is the depiction of the source accurate? Is there enough background information for you to understand the claims/quotes? Is the source used to further to argument?</p>	
<p>Source #3: Is the depiction of the source accurate? Is there enough background information for you to understand the claims/quotes? Is the source used to further the argument?</p>	
<p>Humorous Text: Does the analysis of the humorous text support the theoretical claim? Is there enough background information about the text for you to understand the analysis?</p>	
<p>Style and Formatting: Are there repeated or distracting errors in grammar, style or formatting? Are areas of the essay unclear or confusing? (Please point these out and/or offer suggestions for improvement)</p>	

****Please print out 2 copies of this form and bring it to class with you on Thursday, September 22.

Performance Analysis

For this essay, I ask that you closely analyze a performance of standup comedy. You should include a thesis that is supported by specific evidence. Also, I ask that you include concepts from two of our class readings to help you connect your observations with your thesis.

Thesis: Your thesis should be specific, arguable, and insightful. Two good ways to start brainstorming for your thesis are to:

- Notice if there is a contradiction between content and message. Does the comedian say something but mean another? How does he make it clear to the audience what his underlying message is?
- Notice if there is a gap between content and audience reception. Is an act humorous that treats content that wouldn't ordinarily be considered funny? How does the comedian accomplish this?

Summary: Your summary of the performance should be brief brief brief! This section should serve to orient the reader and explain the context, which includes the year and location of the performance (both the city and the venue: live show, variety show, small audience, sold-out theatre). From your summary, the reader should have a basic idea of the content and theme of the bit. You can choose to include this information in your introduction or in your first body paragraph.

Evidence: You should draw from several types of evidence to support your argument.

- Quote sparingly from the bit. Only quote if the line is particularly important/funny or if you are analyzing it closely for the reader. Don't simply type up a transcript of the bit in order to summarize it.
- Introduce quotes by describing the tone, mannerisms, and delivery of the lines. The more specific, the better! Ask yourself
 - How fast is the comedian talking? Does he slow down in certain areas?
 - Does he pause between lines?
 - Does he change his voice? Take on another persona? (feel free to "name" these personas if it helps you to keep track of them)
 - Are specific mannerisms connected to certain lines/personas/ideas?
- If possible, include audience reaction. If this is a live session, note when the audience laughs, cringes, applauds, or boos.

Analysis: It is not enough to simply describe your observations about the performance. You must group them into common threads and describe how they relate to your thesis. To help you with the process, I ask that you include two concepts from our class readings. These concepts need not be mentioned in your thesis statement, but they should help you to explain how certain aspects of performance contribute to the overall message and effectiveness of the comedian.

Length and Formatting

This paper should be 4-5 pages, double-spaced with 1-inch margins throughout. The font should be Times New Roman 12 point. Follow MLA guidelines for the heading, page numbers and Works Cited page.

Due Dates (please bring a hard copy to class with you)

Final Draft: December 6

Holly Schreiber 11/29/11 9:51 AM

Comment [1]: I suggest choosing a short segment or bit—just a few minutes. This will allow you to watch it carefully (over and over again) and describe key details for your reader.

Holly Schreiber 11/29/11 9:51 AM

Comment [2]: Please make a reasonable effort to find out this information. It's okay, though, if it is unavailable.

Holly Schreiber 11/29/11 9:53 AM

Comment [3]: These concepts can be from any of our readings, but you may find that the more theoretical and analytical ones move your analysis forward the best (rather than a historical one, like Tafoya)

Holly Schreiber 11/29/11 9:58 AM

Comment [4]: The Works Cited page does not count toward the 4-5 page range. Please pay attention to formatting here—I do take it into account when assigning grades!

Performance Analysis Grid

Guiding Question		
Observation	Interpretation/Significance	Themes/Threads
Tentative Thesis		