

PSYO 380G:  
**Psychology of Humor**

**Course Outline**

(Any updates will be posted on the course website)

**Professor:** Liane Gabora

**Location:** SCI 337

**Day & Time:** Mon & Wed 2:00 – 3:30 PM

**Professor Contact Information**

Office: FIPKE 235

Phone: (250) 807-9849

Email: liane.gabora@ubc.ca (you must put PSYO380G in subject line or else I may not respond)

Office hours: Monday 12:30 – 1:30 PM and Wednesday 9:30 – 10:30 AM or by appointment

**Teaching Assistant Contact Information**

Name: Zak Draper

Office: ART 338

Email: zakary.draper@alumni.ubc.ca

Office hour: Tuesday 10:00-11:00 AM or by appointment

**Textbook**

Earleywine, M. (2011). *The Psychology of Humor: An Integrative Approach*. New York: Elsevier.

**Calendar Description**

Cognitive, social, and biological perspectives on humour and comedy. Applications of humour research in educational, business, and clinical settings, as well as in everyday life. [3-0-0].

**Prerequisites**

Two of PSYO 219, PSYO 220, PSYO 230, PSYO 241, PSYO 252, PSYO 270, PSYO 271, PSYO 298, PSYO 299 or Six credits of 200-level psychology. If you do not have the prerequisites please speak with the professor at your earliest convenience. Students who remain in the course without written consent of the professor will fail the course.

**Course Format**

Each week (more or less) will focus on a different aspect of or approach to the psychology of humour, loosely following the textbook. There may be the occasional video or guest speaker. Your participation in class is welcome!

**Course Summary and Objectives**

In this course, you will learn about different approaches to the study of humour and the cognitive mechanisms underlying the generation and understanding of humour. We will use examples from cartoons, animation, film, and stand-up comedy, as well as spontaneous, unintentional humour. The

course will also cover issues such as what makes something or someone funny, enhancing communication through humour, and appealing to different demographics. It is hoped the course will fuel insight into humour and enhance awareness of the role it can play in the student's own life.

### Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the history of scholarly research on humor
- Demonstrate an understanding of the cognitive, social, personality, and biological aspects of humour and comedy
- Demonstrate an understanding of how humor research is applied in educational, business, health, and clinical settings
- Explain what makes particular instances of everyday humour funny, using theories and research on humour discussed in class and in the textbook
- Gain an enhanced awareness of opportunities for humour as they arise in real life contexts, and of the impact of humour on mood, perspective, and social dynamics

### Evaluation

The learning outcome of gaining an appreciation and understanding of the history of scholarly research on humor, cognitive, social, and biological perspectives on humour and comedy, and applications of humour research in educational, business, and clinical settings, will be evaluated through performance on a midterm and a final exam. The learning outcome of gaining an appreciation and understanding humour as it arises in everyday life will be evaluated through a humour diary that the student will work on throughout the semester.

**Humor Diary:** 30% (Due beginning of last day of class)

**Midterm:** 30%, *Tentative Date: TBA*

**Final Exam:** 40% (Comprehensive, *i.e.* covers material prior to midterm)

Some years I allow those who want to improve their midterm mark to do a comedy sketch or presentation of a peer-reviewed article in front of the class. We will decide together when you get the midterm back if you would like to include this option.

### Grading Practices

Faculties, departments, and schools reserve the right to scale grades in order to maintain equity among sections and conformity to University, faculty, department, or school norms. Students should therefore note that an unofficial grade given by an instructor might be changed by the faculty, department, or school. Grades are not official until they appear on a student's academic record.

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/okanagan/index.cfm?tree=3,41,90,1014>

### Humour Diary

You are asked to keep a record of humorous events you witness, come across, or participate in, between January 4 and April 8 (first and last days of class). The humorous events can come from everyday life, social media, movies, TV, etc. The events should be presented in chronological order.

For each event, you are asked to (1) give the date and location where it occurred, and describe it in sufficient detail so as to convey why it was funny, (2) analyze it as best you can, using material covered in this class up to that date, and (3) evaluate how funny you think it was and why. You are invited to include anything that you think is relevant, such as the origin of the humour, whether it was spontaneous or scripted, and how it made you (and/or others) feel. It is hoped that your humour diary will include at least a few entries per week.

**Format.** Your Humor Diary must be submitted as a typed, printed, bound document (a staple or reliable clip is ok), using 12-point Times New Roman font. It should begin with a title page labeled “PSYO380G Humor Diary” with your name, student number, and date submitted. Your name and student number should be on the top right corner of every page. It is essential to proofread and revise prior to submission to eliminate awkward phrasing and spelling / grammar errors. Failure to follow these instructions could result in a mark of zero.

**Evaluation.** Your Humor Diary will be evaluated according to three criteria: (1) *Effort and Comprehensiveness* (35%). How many entries are there? Have they been described in sufficient detail to understand what was humorous? (2) *Analysis and Insight* (50%). To what extent have you successfully applied principles learned in this class to humour as it arises in your own life? (3) *Organization and Style* (15%). Is it well-organized and free of awkward phrasing, spelling and grammatical errors?

### **Policy Concerning Late Assignments or Missed Exams**

If the date for handing in an assignment is missed, the mark will be reduced by 3% for each calendar day (or part thereof). Exams MUST be written during the designated times. If a student anticipates missing an exam or assignment due to illness or some other reason, I MUST be contacted beforehand, and you will be required to provide a doctor’s note before alternative arrangements will be made. If I am not available, leave a message that includes your reason and a phone number where you can be reached. Failure to do so may mean that you will not be allowed to sit the exam or receive a mark for that component. All students who miss or plan to miss a scheduled final examination will be sent to the office of the Associate Dean, Curriculum and Students.

### **Policy Concerning Computers**

Computers are allowed in the classroom on a tentative basis. If I see or hear of anyone using their computer for Facebook, email, or *anything other than taking notes*, the privilege of using a computer in class will be taken away for everyone. Computers are absolutely not allowed during exams.

### **Disability Services**

If you require disability-related accommodations to meet the course objectives, please contact the Coordinator of Disability Resources located in the Student Development and Advising area of the student services building. For more information about Disability Resources or academic accommodations, please visit the website at:

<http://web.ubc.ca/okanagan/students/disres/welcome.html>

### **Final Examinations**

Except in the case of examination clashes and hardships (three or more formal examinations scheduled within a 24-hour period) or unforeseen events, students will be permitted to apply for out-of-time final examinations only if they are representing the University, the province, or the country

in a competition or performance; serving in the Canadian military; observing a religious rite; working to support themselves or their family; or caring for a family member. Unforeseen events include (but may not be limited to) the following: ill health or other personal challenges that arise during a term and changes in the requirements of an ongoing job.

Further information on Academic Concession can be found under Policies and Regulation in the *Okanagan Academic Calendar* <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/okanagan/index.cfm?tree=3,48,0,0>

### **Academic Integrity**

The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required.

This also means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise and harsh sanctions are imposed. For example, incidences of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or exam and more serious consequences may apply if the matter is referred to the President's Advisory Committee on Student Discipline. Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences. A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the policies and procedures, may be found at <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/okanagan/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>. If you have any questions about how academic integrity applies to this course, please consult with your professor.

### **UBC Okanagan Disability Resource Centre**

The Disability Resource Centre ensures educational equity for students with disabilities and chronic medical conditions. If you are disabled, have an injury or illness and require academic accommodations to meet the course objectives, please contact Earllene Roberts, the Diversity Advisor for the Disability Resource Centre located in the University Centre building (UNC 214).

**UNC 214** 250.807.9263 / email [earllene.roberts@ubc.ca](mailto:earllene.roberts@ubc.ca) / Web: [www.students.ok.ubc.ca/drc](http://www.students.ok.ubc.ca/drc)

### **Ombuds Office**

The Ombuds Office offers independent, impartial, and confidential support to students in navigating UBC policies, processes, and resources, as well as guidance in resolving concerns related to fairness.

UBC Vancouver Ombuds Office email: [ombuds.office@ubc.ca](mailto:ombuds.office@ubc.ca) / Web: [www.ombudsoffice.ubc.ca](http://www.ombudsoffice.ubc.ca)

### **UBC Okanagan Equity and Inclusion Office**

UBC Okanagan is a place where every student, staff and faculty member should be able to study and work in an environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. UBC prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of the following grounds: age, ancestry, colour, family status, marital status, physical or mental disability, place of origin, political belief, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation or unrelated criminal conviction. If you require assistance related to an issue of equity, discrimination or harassment, or to get involved in human rights work on campus, please contact the Equity and Inclusion Office.

**UNC 216** 250.807.9291 / email: [equity.ubco@ubc.ca](mailto:equity.ubco@ubc.ca) / Web: [www.equity.ok.ubc.ca](http://www.equity.ok.ubc.ca)

### **Health & Wellness**

At UBC Okanagan health services to students are provided by Health and Wellness. Nurses, physicians and counsellors provide health care and counselling related to physical health, emotional/mental health and sexual/reproductive health concerns. As well, health promotion, education and research activities are provided to the campus community. If you require assistance with your health, please contact Health and Wellness for more information or to book an appointment.

**UNC 337** / Web: [www.students.ok.ubc.ca/health-wellness](http://www.students.ok.ubc.ca/health-wellness)

### **SAFEWALK**

*Don't want to walk alone at night? Not too sure how to get somewhere on campus? Call Safewalk at 250-807-8076.*

*For more information, see: [www.security.ok.ubc.ca](http://www.security.ok.ubc.ca)*

### **Weekly Topics & Readings**

**Preface (Read by Jan. 8)**

**Note: On Jan 8, we will have a guest lecture by David Copp, Comedian & Director of Dakota's Comedy Club!**

**Ch 1: Models and Mechanisms: Funny in Theory (Read by Jan. 15)**

**Ch 2: Laughing Together: Interpersonal Humor (Read by Jan. 22)**

**Cognitive Psychology of Humor – I will post reading on class website (Read by Jan. 29)**

**Gabora & Kitto (2016) paper – I will post reading on class website (Read by Feb. 5)**

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**Family Day & Winter Break (Week of Feb. 12)**

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**Midterm Review & Midterm (Week of Feb. 19)**

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**Ch 3: Funny Folks: Linking Sense of Humor to Personality (Read by Feb. 26)**

**Ch 4: Practical Humor (Read by Mar. 5)**

**Ch 5: Humor and Health (Read by Mar. 12)**

**Ch 6: Humor and Psychological Wellbeing (Read by Mar. 19)**

**Ch 7: Bringing Humor to Everyday Life (Read by Mar. 26)**

**Loose Ends and Review (Week of Apr. 2)**

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**Exam Period: April 10-28**

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