

PSYO 362:
Psychology of Humour
Course Outline
2020 Winter Term 2

Professor: Dr. Liane Gabora

Location: Online

Day & Time: Mondays and Thursdays, 10:30 – 11:50 PM

Professor Contact Information:

Office: FIPKE 235 (But working remotely in 2020-2021)

Phone: (250) 807-9849 (But working remotely in 2020-2021)

Email: liane.gabora@ubc.ca (you must put PSYO362 in subject line or else I may not respond)

Office hours: Mondays and Thursdays, 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM or by appointment

Teaching Assistant Contact Information:

Name: Kirthana Ganesh

Email: kirthana.ganesh@gmail.com

Office hours: On request

Calendar Description: PSYO 362 Psychology of Humour (3)

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 Description 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 + analysis or presentation of a peer-reviewed article in front of the class, or do a five-minute open mic standup comedy routine at Dakoda's Comedy Club (info at end of syllabus). We will decide together when you get the midterm back if you would like to include either or both of these options.

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 the 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 “PSYO362 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?

Further details on the Humour Diary, including an example, are available on Canvas.

Required Readings

Martin, R. A. & Ford, T. E. (2018). *The psychology of humor: An integrative approach, 2nd Edition*. New York, NY: Elsevier.

Extra Reading #1: Gabora, L. & Kitto, K. (2017). Toward a quantum theory of humor. *Frontiers in Physics* (Section: Interdisciplinary Physics), 4(53). doi: 10.3389/fphy.2016.00053
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fphy.2016.00053/full>

Extra Reading #2: Gabora, L., Thomson, S., & Kitto, K. (2018). A layperson introduction to the quantum approach to humor. Chapter 12 in W. Ruch (Ed.) *Humor: Transdisciplinary approaches* (pp. 317-332). Bogotá Colombia: Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia Press. isbn: 978-958-760-085-8; isbn (digital): 978-958-760-086-5; doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.16925/9789587600865>
<https://people.ok.ubc.ca/lgabora/papers/Gabora-Thomson-Kitto-chapter.pdf>

Topics and Weekly Readings

*** NOTE SLIGHT CHANGE IN ORDER FROM TEXTBOOK ***

1. **Chapter 1. Introduction to the Psychology of Humor (Read by Jan. 8)**
2. **Chapter 2. Classic Theories of Humor (Read by Jan. 13)**
3. **Chapter 3. Contemporary Theories of Humor (Read by Jan. 20)**
4. **Chapter 5. The Cognitive Psychology of Humor (Read by Jan. 27)**
5. **Extra Readings 1 & 2: Quantum Theory of Humor (Read by Feb. 3)**
6. **Chapter 8. The Social Psychology of Humor (Read by Feb. 10)**

Midterm (Feb. 12)

Family Day + Winter Break (Feb. 17 - 21)

7. Chapter 4. Personality Approaches to Sense of Humor (Read by Feb. 24)
8. Chapter 6. The Physiological Psychology of Humor and Laughter (Read by Mar. 2)
9. Chapter 7. The Developmental Psychology of Humor (Read by Mar. 9)
10. Chapter 9. The Clinical Psychology of Humor and Mental Health (Read by Mar. 16)
11. Chapter 10. The Health Psychology of Humor: Humor and Physical Health (Read by Mar. 23)
12. Chapter 11. Applications of Humor in Education and the Workplace / Review (Read by Mar. 30)
13. Loose Ends & Review (Apr. 6 & 8)

Exam Period: April 16-29

Policy Concerning Late Assignments or Missed Exams

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

Policy Concerning Computers

This section blocked out since the class is online this year, but I still recommend you turn social media off during class time. ~~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 in-class 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

The examination period for this term is clearly marked in the schedule at the end of this syllabus. 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 Earlene Roberts, the Diversity Advisor for the Disability Resource Centre located in the University Centre building, **UNC 214**.

Phone: 250.807.9263 • email: earlene.roberts@ubc.ca • web: 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 • web: 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 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**.

Phone: 250.807.9291 • email: equity.ubco@ubc.ca • web: 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 at **UNC 337** for more information or to book an appointment.

Web: 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*

Dakoda's Comedy Club

Address: 1574 Harvey Ave, Kelowna, BC V1Y 6G2

Phone: (250) 860-9500 • Email: dakodasbeer@gmail.com • Web: <http://dakodas.com/>

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING PANDEMIC

During this pandemic, the shift to online learning has greatly altered teaching and studying at UBC, including changes to health and safety considerations. Keep in mind that some UBC courses might cover topics that are censored or considered illegal by non-Canadian governments. This may include, but is not limited to, human rights, representative government, defamation, obscenity, gender or sexuality, and historical or current geopolitical controversies. If you are a student living abroad, you will be subject to the laws of your local jurisdiction, and your local authorities might limit your access to course material or take punitive action against you. UBC is strongly committed to academic freedom, but has no control over foreign authorities (please visit <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,33,86,0> for an articulation of the values of the University conveyed in the Senate Statement on Academic Freedom). Thus, we recognize that students will have legitimate reason to exercise caution in studying certain subjects. If you have

concerns regarding your personal situation, consider postponing taking a course with manifest risks, until you are back on campus or reach out to your academic advisor to find substitute courses. For further information and support, please visit: <http://academic.ubc.ca/support-resources/freedom-expression>

Academic Integrity Pledge in an Online Learning Environment

Upon registering for this class, all students are bound by the [student declaration](#):

I hereby accept and submit myself to the statutes, rules and regulations, and ordinances (including bylaws, codes, and policies) of The University of British Columbia, and of the faculty or faculties in which I am registered, and to any amendments thereto which may be made while I am a student of the University, and I promise to observe the same.

For further information please refer to the calendar statements about [Academic Honesty and Standards](#), specifically:

Academic honesty is essential to the continued functioning of the University of British Columbia as an institution of higher learning and research. All UBC students are expected to behave as honest and responsible members of an academic community. Failure to follow the appropriate policies, principles, rules, and guidelines of the University with respect to academic honesty may result in disciplinary action.

It is the student's obligation to inform himself or herself of the applicable standards for academic honesty. Students must be aware that standards at the University of British Columbia may be different from those in secondary schools or at other institutions. If a student is in any doubt as to the standard of academic honesty in a particular course or assignment, then the student must consult with the instructor as soon as possible, and in no case should a student submit an assignment if the student is not clear on the relevant standard of academic honesty.