

Humour Writing: Jest for Laughs

WRCR6203

Course Outline (online)

Description: Do you think you're the next Dorothy Parker, Steve Martin or David Sedaris? Using a combination of workshops and lectures, this course will help you recognize your inner Tina Fey or Amy Poehler. Exercise your funny bone with weekly writing assignments that we will workshop/share online on OWL. Discover what makes you laugh by encountering prominent humorists, develop your skills as a comedy writer by studying various forms of humour writing including anecdotes and observations, satire, parody and puns, and learn to recognize the level of craft needed for writing humour for the printed page and /or websites. Be prepared to laugh and learn each week with award-winning instructor Mark Kearney.

Course Goals: Discover what makes you laugh by encountering prominent humorists, develop your skills as a comedy writer by studying various forms of humour writing including anecdotes and observations, satire, parody and puns, and learn to recognize the level of craft needed for writing humour for the printed page and/or websites

Course Objectives: At the completion of this course, the students will be able to:

- Identify the different aspects of humour writing through a blend of online lecture and workshop.
- Write different styles of humour while gaining exposure to some published works that may tickle their funny bones.
- Have the opportunity to create something funny every week, get feedback from the class and instructor, and explore and evaluate potential markets for their work.

Texts:

TBA

Evaluation:

Students must complete and submit three of the five writing assignments to receive a completion for this course. A completion report can be printed from myWCS.

Notes on assignments:

- Must present ideas in a clear and humorous way
- Must be in paragraph format
- Must be double-spaced, and typewritten
- Must be written in Word

Policy on Cheating and Academic Misconduct:

Academic honesty is a cornerstone of conduct at Western University. We cannot have freedom of expression without integrity. Students are responsible for understanding the nature of and avoiding the occurrence of plagiarism and other academic offences; please refer to the section on "Scholastic Offences" in the current University Academic Calendar, or on the web at <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca>. Such offences include plagiarism, cheating on an examination, submitting false or fraudulent assignments or credentials, impersonating a candidate, or submitting for credit in any course any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course in this University or elsewhere (without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom the work is submitted). Students enrolled in non-degree courses are expected to abide by the

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University's code of conduct.

Code of Student Conduct:

The purpose of the Code of Student Conduct is to define the general standard of conduct expected of students registered at Western University, provide examples of behaviour that constitutes a breach of this standard of conduct, provide examples of sanctions that may be imposed, and set out the disciplinary procedures that the University will follow. For the complete Code of Student Conduct: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>.

Plagiarism:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between Western University and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

How often will the instructor communicate with me?

The instructor will upload course notes by Monday of each week. The Instructor will communicate regularly through the week via the OWL site's Forums, Messages and Assignments, or via email.

Policy on Late Assignments:

Deadlines have been set for each assignment. Please do your best to get them in on time as much of our online discussion will be based on each other's work. Assignments will typically be kept open for submission two days after the due date. Please contact the Instructor if you need accommodation for an assignment.

When will I receive my grades?

Final grades will be available 2 weeks after the last scheduled day of the course. A grade report can be printed from myWCS.

How do I hand in assignments?

All assignments will be submitted electronically through OWL using the assignment tool. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all assignments forwarded to the instructor arrive before the due date. If you experience difficulty in submitting assignments through OWL, you are responsible for contacting the instructor and arranging an alternate method of delivery (e.g. e-mail attachment) for the assignment.

Course Schedule:

1. Week One: Introduction – What Makes You Laugh

We will discuss word play, funny sounds and names, and why some things make certain people laugh while others don't. Analyzing a piece of humour to see what makes it work (or not). Some online discussion of humour writing in general. If you have a favourite funny piece that makes you laugh out loud, please post in the Forum where you will introduce yourself to the class. It can be your own work or one from a favourite writer.

Assignment: Writing your first humour piece without relying on personal experience (details to be given out online).

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2. Week Two: Observational, Anecdotal Writing

Reviewing the previous week's assignment. A lot of laughs can come from true stories and your own experiences. Some professional humourists make a living just writing about themselves. We'll examine some samples with an eye to finding the common ground and techniques that make most of us laugh. How to keep your eyes open for the quirky, strange, and weird that most people won't notice.

Assignment: Eavesdrop on a conversation to find funny lines. Write about a humorous personal experience or something that takes a humorous look at everyday events.

3. Week Three: The Art of Parody

Discussion of your previous assignment. Notes on parodies, sketches, writing styles to be imitated, twisted, and ridiculed.

Assignment: Writing a parody – song, prose piece, comedy sketch, or some other form of your choice.

4. Week Four: Satire/Journalistic Humour

Discussion of readings and previous assignment. Poking a stick at institutions that need deflating, how satire works, where to find targets. Writing funny non-fiction, journalistic pieces. A discussion of the boundaries of humour.

Assignment: Write a satirical or humorous journalistic piece that pokes fun at someone or something in authority.

5. Other Comedy Forms

Other comic styles such as lists, shaggy dog stories, definitions, fiction, poems, catalogues, greeting cards, and other formats.

Assignment: Try your hand at a writing style you've never tried before. Let your imagination go wild.

6. Humour Round-up

An online discussion of comedy styles and what form suits you best. Devising a personal comedy checklist that will help with future stories. A discussion of markets for your writing and tailoring your work to those publications. What you can do with your humour after this course? Is there money to be made or is that notion just too funny? Exit laughing.