

Department of English and Writing Studies

**Writing 2213F - 650 Online LOL- Humor Writing  
Fall 2013**

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Office Hours: Thursdays 1 to 3 pm and by  
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## Course Description and Objectives

LOL: Humour Writing is designed to help you write for greater impact while introducing you to different aspects of the genre, using a blend of online lecture and *workshop*. You will have the opportunity to write something funny for most Units, get feedback from me and fellow students, read and critique a variety of humorous stories and watch and critique humorous videos. You should also develop skills in the ability to communicate information, arguments, and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences while appreciating and writing a range of humour styles for different audiences. Early in the course you will be assigned to small groups that may take turns leading online discussion as well as provide you with peers who can give you feedback on your draft assignments. You will examine your own work and that of others to better understand what makes us laugh and why.

### Required Texts

All readings will be found online or provided to you via the OWL/Sakai site for the course.

### RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

*Writing Humor: Creativity and the Comic Mind*, by Mary Ann Rishel, Wayne State University Press, 2002.

### Assignments/Assignment Format

|    |  |            |              |
|----|--|------------|--------------|
| 1. | Humour Analysis                          | 10%        | Due Sept. 27 |
| 2. | Personal Experience story                | 20%        | Due Oct. 11  |
| 3. | Parody or Satire                         | 20%        | Due Nov. 8   |
| 4. | Online Discussion/Exercises/Workshopping | 10%        | TBA          |
| 5. | <b>Humour Journal</b>                    | <b>20%</b> | Due Nov. 22  |
| 6. | Final Exam                               | 20%        | TBA          |

*Note: All assignments will be submitted electronically via the Sakai site. You will keep a Humour Journal throughout the course to be submitted near the end of term as part of the final grade. You will be expected to make 10 entries in the journal throughout the course following guidelines provided near the beginning of the course. You will have a chance to post some of journal entries to the class for feedback and **have the option** of submitting it to me once during the course by Oct. 30 so that I can monitor progress and provide informal feedback. Journals are to be submitted in the same way as other assignments.*

\*Workshops will be done electronically in small groups to which you will be assigned. Prior to any unit in this syllabus that mentions workshopping, you should provide copies of your draft work for your group members so they have time to provide you feedback before you email your final version to me.

## **Submitting Assignments**

I don't like to penalize late assignments; however, since one of the purposes of this course is to familiarize you with the writing profession, you need to know that deadlines are crucial. For this reason, all assignments will be due on the date specified unless you negotiate an extension at least 48 hours in advance. Following any other policy would be an injustice to you as a future writer. Assignments should be submitted electronically via Sakai. **Late assignments will be penalized at 3% per day, including weekends.**

## **Attendance policies**

Obviously we do not meet formally as a "class" in a Distance Studies course. Therefore "attendance" and participation on the Discussion Board are intertwined. Distance Studies classes are generally self-paced, so you must attend class (defined as logging into our Sakai section) and participate by introducing yourself, and posting questions and thoughts each week based on the given week's set discussion topic) **at least two times weekly**. This means at least two separate posts per week (a week is defined as running from Monday to Sunday), at least one of which must be a "new" post. Extended absences, defined as a failure to post into the Sakai classroom for more than five consecutive days, must be coordinated with the instructor.

Postings on the Discussion Board must have the following characteristics:

- Must contribute something meaningful to the Board;
- Must support your opinion with sufficient reasons or evidence;
- Must display good grammar and organization.

Postings should not:

- Contain disrespectful or insulting language;
- Be excessively long or excessively short;
- Be unrelated to the week's topic;
- Say things that do not contribute anything, e.g. "I agree with you" or "nice comment".

I will track your postings to the discussion Board, and it will be part of your 10% Online Discussion/ Exercises/Workshopping mark indicated above. Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements may result in your final grade in the course being reduced by 10%. Although this is an online course, you are expected to check into the Sakai site on a regular basis, to participate in online discussions and to interact online with your fellow classmates by workshopping your drafts as much as online allows you.

**Note:** a class meeting missed in order to write a test, exam, or other form of 'make-up class' in another course **will** count as non-attendance, and **will** attract penalties as defined above if applicable. Instructors at the University of Western Ontario ***shall not require*** a student to write

a make-up test or similar at times which conflict with that student's other scheduled class times. If you are asked or 'required' to do this, you should immediately contact an academic counsellor in your Dean's office. If you elect to miss a class in order to write such a test, that is **your** choice; your absence will not be excused.

See also: '**Medical Accommodation Policy**' below.

### **Scholastic Offences, including Plagiarism**

The University Senate requires the following statements, and Web site references, to appear on course outlines:

"Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>.

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy as above).

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 for such checking 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 The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>)."

### **Prerequisites**

The University Senate requires the following statement to appear on course outlines:

"Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

*The prerequisite for registration in this course is a) a final grade of 65 or more in one of Writing 2101, 2121, 2111, or 2131, or b) a final grade of 70 or more in Writing 1000F/G, or c) Special Permission of the Program.*

### **Medical Accommodation Policy**

For UWO Policy on Accommodation For Medical Illness, see:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medical.pdf>

(downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC): <https://studentservices.uwo.ca> under the Medical Documentation heading)

Students seeking academic accommodation **on medical or other grounds** for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments **worth 10% or more of their final grade** must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation on medical grounds cannot be granted by the instructor or the Program in Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication, and the Program requires students in these circumstances to follow the same procedure when seeking academic accommodation on non-medical (i.e. non-medical compassionate or other) grounds.

Students seeking academic accommodation **on medical grounds** for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments **worth less than 10% of their final grade** must also apply

to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Where in these circumstances the accommodation is being sought on **non-medical grounds**, students should consult in the first instance with their instructor, who may elect to make a decision on the request directly, or refer the student to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive medical documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds, or for other reasons (e.g. to explain an absence from class which may result in a grade penalty under an 'Attendance' policy in the course). **All** medical documentation **must** be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.

**Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:**

**<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.**

**Special Requests: Special Examinations, Incomplete Standing, Aegrotat Standing**

Please refer to the “Information for All Students in a Writing Course” for more detailed information. Briefly, remember that your instructor does not have the discretion to initiate, consider, or grant (or not) such requests; you must go directly to the Dean’s office of your home faculty.

**NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER DECEMBER 6, 2013. OUTSTANDING WORK AS OF THIS DATE WILL RECEIVE A GRADE OF ZERO.**

**Class Meeting Schedule**

| Date   | Meeting focus   | Readings  |
|--------|---|---|
| Week 1 | <p><b>Introduction to the Course/Beginning as a Humour Writer</b></p> <p>What makes us laugh and why. Introduction to readings, different forms of humour, how to analyze humour, funny words and phrases. Reading and discussion of “<b>Disgruntled Former Lexicographer,</b>” (posted on Sakai) <a href="http://marnanel.livejournal.com/1009235.html">http://marnanel.livejournal.com/1009235.html</a></p> | <p>Read for next week “<b>Approximately Seven Pillars of Humorous Fiction</b>” (will be posted online)</p>  |
| Week 2 | <p><b>Funny in the Past... Funny Now? / Wordplay, puns, funny language</b></p> <p>A look at humour from ancient times through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (which some of you might also consider as ancient ;-). In-class exercise and discussion.</p>  | <p><i>Assignment (10%): Write a short essay (500 words max.) analyzing either “Trade” by Simon Rich, OR “The Last You’ll Hear From Me” by David Sedaris. Due: Sept 27</i></p> <p>Read “Thank You for Stopping” at <a href="http://cupkids.blogspot.ca/2006/01/thank-you-for-stopping-by-jack-handev.html">http://cupkids.blogspot.ca/2006/01/thank-you-for-stopping-by-jack-handev.html</a></p> |
| Week 3 | <p><b>Writing from Personal Experience/The Art of Parody</b></p> <p>Mining your personal life for comedy gems. Writing styles that can be imitated twisted and massaged for effect.</p>   | <p><i>Assignment (20%): Write a short piece based on a personal experience. Due Oct 11</i></p> <p>Watch the Axis of Awesome video on How to Write a Love Song at <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2cfxv8Pq-Q">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2cfxv8Pq-Q</a></p> <p>Submit two or three jokes to Sakai Forum before next week and explain why they’re funny.</p>                        |
| Week 4 | <p><b>Parody (continued)/A man walks into a bar... Writing Jokes</b></p> <p>Why do some jokes make you laugh and others don’t. Workshop your personal experience drafts.</p>  | <p>Read for next week “A Guide to Summer Sun Protection” (online)</p> <p>Watch a satirical TV show (SNL, Jon Stewart etc.) before next week</p>   |
| Week 5 | <p><b>Satire: Cruel But Fair?/Writing Workshop</b></p> <p>Poking fun at institutions that need deflating. How to find humour in the tragic.</p>   | <p>Read “Eight Rules for Writing Fiction” at <a href="http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/shouts/2013/06/eight-rules-for-writing-fiction.html">http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/shouts/2013/06/eight-rules-for-writing-fiction.html</a></p>  |

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| Week 6  | <p><b>The Boundaries of Humour: Are there any?</b></p> <p>Be prepared to discuss what kind of humour you consider offensive. Discussion of sick jokes as well as the difference, if any, between men's and women's humour.</p> <p><b>Workshop your journals with group members receive feedback. If you want informal feedback from me about your journals so far, please email them to me by Oct. 30.</b></p> | <p><i>Assignment: (20%) Write EITHER a parody or a piece that satirizes a current event, person, or trend. Due Nov. 8</i></p> <p>Read "Adopt a Cat" by Rebecca Turkewitz at <a href="http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/shouts/2013/04/adopt-a-cat.html">http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/shouts/2013/04/adopt-a-cat.html</a></p> <p>Read "The Whore of Mensa" (posted on Sakai)</p> |
| Week 7  | <p><b>Fictional Humour/Journal Workshop</b></p> <p>Letting your imagination soar and getting rid of any literary boundaries</p> <p>Workshopping your satire or parody draft</p>  | <p>Read "Double Diamond/Highest Difficulty" (posted on Sakai)</p>  |
| Week 8  | <p><b>Found Humour/Writing From Existing Materials</b></p> <p>Using your senses to find what's funny in the world. Working with existing print and other materials to create original work that not only reads funny but looks funny.</p>  | <p>Post on the Forum three examples of found humour before the next week.</p>  |
| Week 9  | <p><b>Group Humour Writing</b></p> <p>What's it like to write as a team. Although there is no group assignment, you will examine how to generate comedy in a group format.</p>   | <p>Watch an episode of Jon Stewart or Colbert Report or Saturday Night Live News Update before next week.</p>  |
| Week 10 | <p><b>Journalistic Humour/Possible Guest Speaker</b></p> <p>What's funny about the news and/or history. Hearing other perspectives on humour from a possible online guest speaker.</p> <p>A look at the ideas, comments, jottings of your journals which will be handed in on Nov. 22 for final marking.</p>   | <p>Read "My Living Will" (Online)</p>  |
| Week 11 | <p><b>Writing to Perform/Short Films.</b></p> <p>Writing material to be heard/seen by an audience. Watching some short films to be followed by analysis/critique in the Forum section</p>  | <p>Watch the following video from Mr. Show, which is a performance that comments on performance.</p> <p><a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-ZNX1jqbOk">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-ZNX1jqbOk</a></p>  |

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| Week<br>12 | <b>Theories of Humour in 21<sup>st</sup> Century/ Markets for Humour</b><br><br>How has humour changed... and where is it headed? Looking at where you can sell your work and sharing excerpts from your journals. |
| Week<br>13 | <b>Wrap Up</b><br><br>Final discussions about humour and getting ready for the exam.   |