

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 1028G (003)

The Storyteller's Art II | Introduction to Narrative: Funny Stuff-Comedy and the Comedic Form in Literature (and Elsewhere)

Winter 2025

Instructor: Professor Brian Diemert

Course Description

This half-course looks at comedy as a literary genre. Often perceived as an inferior mode of writing (as it is in Aristotle's Poetics), comedy has a rich history that covers everything from slapstick to the sophisticated musings of Noel Coward. We will look at comedy and comedic work in several forms (literary and cinematic) and consider the nature of comedy: what is funny? and does comedy have to be funny? what satisfies? what does comedy offer the contemporary audience? Students will be expected to read a number of texts (novels, stories, plays, and some theoretical material) and to view prescribed films (not screened in class) in order to discover the varied richness of comedic forms such as parody, farce, satire, and romance.

Objectives:

- Throughout the course, successful students will develop their ability to read and think critically.
- Through tests and assignments, students will improve their writing skills.
- Students will develop their knowledge of comic forms and conventions.
- Students will apply this knowledge in their written work.
- Students will encounter a range of texts from "classic" to contemporary that will allow them to gain some measure of the background for future literature courses.

Course Materials

Possible texts (subject to availability):

Shaw, *Arms and the Man*
Atkinson, *Emotionally Weird*
Von Arnim, *The Enchanted April*
Loos, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*
Hornby, *High Fidelity*
Dr. Strangelove, or How... (dir. Kubrick)
Lady Bird (dir. Gerwig)
Duck Soup (dir. McCarey)
Shakespeare, *Taming of the Shrew*
10 Things I Hate About You (dir. Junger)
material by Aristotle, Meredith, and others.

Methods of Evaluation

In addition to a final examination in April (35%), there will be two essays (10% and 25%) due during the term. As well there will be a mid-term test (20%), and a tutorial grade (10%)

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

Additional Information

The standard late penalty after the due date for assignments is two marks per academic day (usually Monday-Friday). I am available through email: bdiemert@uwo.ca, but may not reply immediately, especially after hours and on weekends. The use of laptops and other note-taking devices is permitted, but recordings are prohibited unless accommodation is required.

Statements

Academic Consideration

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a **substantial but temporary** impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of the student's Faculty of Registration.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant.

Requests without supporting documentation are **limited to one per term per course**.

Instructors may designate one assignment or assessment as exempt from this allowance. In this course, requests for academic consideration pertaining to the term test **must** be accompanied by supporting documentation.

Assignments with flexible deadlines and any term work that does not count towards the course grade are **not** eligible for additional consideration.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner.

Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term **always** require formal supporting documentation.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course

drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support & Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

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.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

Instructors must indicate whether the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools/software/apps is acceptable, permitted in specific situations, or unacceptable in their course.

Academic Integrity Tutorial

All students are required to enroll in and complete the Centre for Teaching and Learning's Academic Integrity Tutorial. To access the tutorial, please use the link provided in the Resource tab in the course OWL Brightspace site. Once the tutorial has been completed, you will receive a downloadable certificate. You must upload the certificate and submit it through the course Assignments tab in order to complete this assignment. The tutorial must be completed by Friday in the second week of term. This tutorial is mandatory in order for you to complete and pass the course. If you have completed the tutorial already for another course, you may upload the same certificate for this course; you do not need to repeat the tutorial.

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage 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.

Plagiarism Checking

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>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.