

1st International Summer School on

**Humour and Laughter:
Theory, Research and Applications**

**at Queen's University of Belfast,
Northern Ireland, UK**

25th – 30th June 2001

Syllabus/Course outline and timetable



**1st International Summer School and Colloquium on
Humour and Laughter: Theory, Research and Applications
at Queen's University of Belfast, Northern Ireland**

Syllabus

School dates and location

The summer school will be held between Monday 25th June and Saturday 30th June. It will take place in the Turner room, a multimedia equipped room on the third floor of the David Keir Building (18/30 Malone Road) where the School of Psychology is located.

The summer school is organised by Dr. Willibald Ruch (Senior lecturer at Queen's University Belfast) together with James Campbell (School administrator) and Rhiannon McCready. With assistance from Joanne Wilson and John Dinsmore who also helped with the preparations.

Registration is on Monday morning 8.30 - 9a.m. in the Turner room of the David Keir Building, 18/30 Malone Road. The summer school starts at 9.a.m. The official *opening* of the summer school will be on Monday evening, 25th June, at 7.30 p.m. in the Visitors centre in the Lanyon Building.

The timetable of the course is give at the end of this document.

Teaching Faculty

Dr. Willibald Ruch
Dr. Paul McGhee

Guest Teaching Faculty

Dr. Frank A. Rodden
Dr. Barbara Wild
Dr. Christie Davies

Brief description of the content of units

What is Humour?

Taught by Willibald Ruch, PhD (M 9-11)

In this introduction I will discuss why questions like "What is humour?" and "What is a sense of humour?" are so difficult to answer and I will propose to replace them with the more focused questions of "How did we use humour in the past?" and "How can we use it more fruitfully in the future?" I will cover the etymology of the term "humour," and of related terms and point out that we actually have two terminological systems whose coexistence causes confusion. Each is more prevalent in certain disciplines and in certain countries. Distinguishing between them is important for understanding the literature, both historically and currently. I will give examples where failure to separate them created confusion in understanding the scope of, and testing of, theories.

The results of a pilot study utilising a psycholexical approach will be used to illustrate how we might arrive at a broader definition of/view of the scope of the field, and a circumplex model of humour related phenomena will be put forward. Also, the outcome of an attempt to sample the whole behavioural domain of everyday humorous conduct as comprehensively as possible will be presented. Likewise, some disciplines seem to equate "laughter" and "humour", and the differences between "smiling" and "laughter" are often blurred. This unit will raise awareness of unresolved terminological problems and stimulate discussion along these lines.

Suggested and further reading:

Ruch, W. (1998). The sense of humour: a new look at an old concept. In *The Sense of Humour: Explorations of a personality characteristic*.

Craik, K.H. & Ware, A.T. (1998). Humor and personality in everyday life. In *The sense of humor*.

Universality of Facial Expression

Taught by Willibald Ruch, PhD (M 1-2)

In 1872 Charles Darwin published *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. It should provide further evidence for his theory of evolution. The basic questions he posed were: Are facial expressions innate and universal? Are facial expressions shared with other animals? Cultural relativists (Mead, Birdwhistell, Bateson) say they are learned and can not be understood without knowing the culture. Paul Ekman (1967) studied an isolated tribe (the South Fore culture in Papua New Guinea) and found that there is evidence of universality for 7 facial expressions in recognition and posing studies and suggested that prior observations were misled by not considering "display rules". Further evidence that facial expression is innate come from observation that blind & deaf children (+ thalidomide) laugh/smile, observations of anencephalic new-borns and epileptic new-borns. This leads to the question of what emotions are involved in humour. Should humour researchers adopt the only positive emotions among the 7, "Happiness", or what exactly is the response to humour? (with mirth, amusement, exhilaration having been proposed by various authors)

Suggested and further reading:

Darwin, Ch. (1872). *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. London: Murray [3rd edition by Paul Ekman. Harper & Collins, London.

Ruch, W. (1993). Exhilaration and humor. In M. Lewis & J. M. Haviland (eds.), *The handbook of emotions* (pp. 605-616). New York: Guilford Publications

Evolution of Smiling, Laughter and Humour

Taught by Willibald Ruch & Paul McGhee, PhD (M, 2-3)

Why don't we wrinkle our toes when we are amused? Why do we chop exhalations and produce an inarticulate sound instead? Are humans the only animals that smile and laugh? We know that animals play but do they also have the capacity for humour? This portion of the course will focus on a range of issues related to the development of laughter, smiling and humour across species. Special attention will be given to such questions as what is the function of "laughter" in chimpanzees? When does laughter occur in animal play? How does laughter in chimps differ from human laugh? Did smiling and laughter evolve separately across species? A tape of a talk by the Dutch ethologist Prof. J.A.R.A.M. van Hooff will be used to exemplify his theory about the evolution of smiling and laughter. Criticisms of this approach will be discussed. Possible examples of humour among chimpanzees will be presented.

Suggested and further reading:

- McGhee (1979). *Humor: Its origin and development*. Freeman: San Francisco. (read chapter on the evolution of humour)
- Preuschoft, S. & von Hoof (1997). The social function of "smile" and "laughter". Variations across primate species and societies. In Segerstrale & Molnar (Eds.), *Nonverbal Communication*, 171-189. ("update" of van Hooff's theory taking the social structure of the monkeys into account)
- Van Hooff, J. A. R. A. M. (1972). A comparative approach to the phylogeny of laughter and smiling. In R.A. Hinde (Ed.), *Non-verbal Communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 209-241. (original article where van Hooff presents his idea about the different phylogenetic origin of smiling and laughter)
- Preuschoft, S. (1992). "Laughter" and "smile" in Barbary macaques (*Macaca sylvanus*). *Ethology*, 91, 220-239.
- Thierry, B., Demaria, C., Preuschoft, S., & Desportes, C. (1989). Structural convergence between Silent Bared-Teeth Display and Relaxed Open-Mouth Display in the Tonkean Macaque (*Macaca tonkeana*). *Folia Primatologia*, 52, 178-184.

The Development of Humour in Children

Taught by Paul McGhee, PhD (M 4-6)

This portion of the course will focus on a broad range of issues related to the development of humour in children. Special attention will be given to: a) the origins of humour in infancy, b) developmental changes in children's humour, c) the relationship between play, make-believe and humour, and d) how nurturing a child's emerging sense of humour benefits other areas of children's development.

Suggested and further reading:

- McGhee (1979). *Humor: Its origin and development*. Freeman: San Francisco. (On reserve at QUB Science Library)

Learning the Basics of the Facial Action Coding System--FACS

Taught by Willibald Ruch, PhD, (T, 9-11)

FACS (Ekman & Friesen, 1978) objectively describes and measures facial expressions and movements. Based on an anatomical analysis of facial action, it offers an advanced method for describing facial movements as they relate to emotions. I will give an introduction to facial measurement, which includes FACS, followed by practical training of Action Units (AU) in one session. The AU's we will learn are AU1, AU2, AU4, AU9, AU10.

FACS is an ideal tool for research of the emotional responses to humour since it allows a distinction among different smiles and laughs (only one of which indicates positive affect) and to score basic parameters such as frequency, intensity, duration, or symmetry. It has been successfully applied to study exhilaration/amusement before and it is superior to other methods used in humour research (such as the "mirth-index"). Several AUs are important for the study of humour: AU6 ("Cheek raiser & Lid compressor"), AU12 ("Lip Corner Puller"), AU13 ("Sharp Lip Puller"), AU14 ("Dimpler"), AU20 ("Lip Stretcher"), AU25 ("Lips part"), and AU26 ("Jaw drop"). The objectives relating to these units are to learn those action units that are necessary to describe smiling and laughter, and to differentiate them from other similar expressions using the material provided (FACS manual, VHS Video with Paul Ekman performing the Action Units, illustrative facial photographs; practice material). However, learning the *complete* FACS requires approx. 100 hours.

Remember to bring a small mirror with you!

Suggested and further and further reading:

Ekman, P. & Friesen, W.V. (1978) *The Facial Action Coding System (FACS): A Technique for the Measurement of Facial Action*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Ekman, P. & Rosenberg, E. L. (Eds.) (1997), *What the face reveals. Basic and applied studies of spontaneous expression using the Facial Action Coding System*. Oxford; Oxford University Press. (In particular, the introductory chapter by Erika Rosenberg “The study of spontaneous facial expressions in psychology”; p. 3-17, and the concluding chapter by Ekman “What have we learned by measuring facial behavior”; p. 469-485)

Morphology and Dynamics of Smiling and Laughter: The Expressive Pattern

Taught by Willibald Ruch, PhD, (T 1-3)

The aim of the first part of this unit is to point out that smiles are created differently and have different functions. Failing to distinguish among them leads to failure in both research and application. While the exact number of different types of smile that have to be distinguished is not yet known, their number is well beyond 15. We will discuss the “Duchenne smile”, the only smile indicating enjoyment and the morphological and dynamic marker that allow a distinction between it and other types of smiles, such as phony and masking smiles, as well as smiles involving emotional blends. We will discuss the distinction between *spontaneous* (emotional) and *deliberate* (voluntary, contrived) facial actions and their neural substrates, and discuss the concept of *display rules* in general and in relation to humour.

The expressive pattern of laughter is more complex in that it not only involves the face, but also respiration, phonation (+ resonance) and posture and gesture. The mechanics of laughter will be explained and it will be discussed how a morphology-based typology of laughter akin to the one on smiling might be achieved. The validity of Darwin’s “graduation” hypothesis will be discussed.

Suggested and further reading:

Ekman, P. & Rosenberg, E. L. (Eds.) (1997), *What the face reveals. Basic and applied studies of spontaneous expression using the Facial Action Coding System*. Oxford; Oxford University Press.

This book contains several reprints of original work related to smiling, supplemented by an afterword provided by the authors. There are three copies of the book in the library.

Ruch, W. & Ekman, P. (2001). The expressive pattern of laughter. In A.W. Kaszniak (Ed.), *Emotion, qualia, and consciousness*. Word Scientific Publisher. Tokyo, 426-443.

Humour and Health

Taught by Paul McGhee, PhD (T 4-5, W 9-10)

This section will be taught in the first half of two consecutive days in order to allow for the spreading out of the Humour skills training programme over 5 days. The research relating humour/laughter to health will first be discussed in detail. The current international movement to bring humour (including clowns) into healthcare settings will also be discussed.

Suggested and further and further reading:

McGhee, P. E. (1999) *Humor, Health and the Amuse System*. Kendall/Hunt, Dubuque, Iowa, USA.

Humour Skills Training Programme

Taught by Paul McGhee, PhD (T, Th, F 5-6, W 10-11, S 9-10)

This portion of the course will focus on Dr. McGhee's 8-Step Programme for learning to use humour to cope with life stress. Emphasis will be placed on building the basic foundation skills required to have access to your sense of humour in the midst of stress. This will function as a workshop, and students will be given "Homeplay" each day. That is, suggestions will be made for activities and exercises to be practised before the next class.

Suggested and further and further reading:

McGhee, P. E. (1999) *Humor, Health and the Amuse System*. Kendall/Hunt, Dubuque, Iowa, USA.

Theories of Humour

Taught by Willibald Ruch, PhD (Th 9-11)

This portion of the course will present some models of humour along with the experimental evidence to support their validity. This will include amongst others the classical psychoanalytic, disparagement and incongruity theories. It will be made clear that the theories partly want to explain the same phenomena but also have a different scope. Experimental paradigms for the testing of humour theories will be presented.

Suggested and further and further reading:

Martin, R.A. (1998). Approaches to the sense of humor: A historical review; In *The Sense of Humour: Explorations of a personality characteristic*, pp. 15-60. (Gives an overview of major theories of humour along with experimental evidence)

Keith-Spiegel, Patricia (1972) Early conceptions of humor: Varieties and issues. In: Jeffrey H. Goldstein & Paul E. McGhee (eds.), *The psychology of humor: Theoretical perspectives and empirical issues*. New York: Academic Press. 3-39.

Humour, Laughter and the Brain

Taught by Barbara Wild, MD & Frank A Rodden, MD, PhD (Th 1-3)

This lecture will focus on the relationships between the brain, on the one hand, and the sense of humour, the feeling of exhilaration, and the production of laughter, on the other. First there will be an outline of what is known about how the nervous system works: from the mechanism of neural transmission to basic neuroanatomy to a brief review of theories on how the brain manages to allow humans to think and feel. That this outline of knowledge resembles a small group of islands in a great sea of mystery will not be concealed. From here a phenomenological transition will be made to a discussion of findings in patients with impairments of the sense of humour and a discussion of the origins of pathological laughter.

These findings will then be compared with the most recent studies in healthy subjects in experiments that use new techniques to explore brain functions (fMRI, PET) along with a brief explanation of those techniques.

Suggested and further reading:

Karl Popper & John C. Eccles, *The Self and its Brain*, Chapter E1, "The Cerebral Cortex" pages 227-249, London: Springer, 1977 .

V.S. Ramachandran and Sandra Blakeslee: *Phantoms in the Brain: Probing Mysteries of the Human Mind*. Chapter 7, "The Sound of One Hand Clapping" pp. 127-157 and Chapter 10, "The Woman Who Died Laughing" pp. 199-211, New York: William Morrow, 1998

Antonio Damasio: *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*, Chapter 2 "Emotion and Feeling" pp. 35-81, London: Harcourt, 1999.

Ruch, W. ed. *The Sense of Humor*, Chapter: "'Sense' of humor: Perception, Intelligence or Expertise," by P. Derks, R. Staley and M. Haselton, pp. 143-158 and Chapter: "The Ill Side of Humor" by G. Forabosco, pp. 271-292.

Humour in the Workplace

Taught by Paul McGhee, PhD (Th, F 4-5)

The growing international trend to find ways of making work fun, and the increasing support for bringing your sense of humour to your work, will be discussed in this segment. Special attention will be given to growing levels of job stress and to humour's effectiveness as a tool for coping with stress and change. The impact of humour on morale, productivity, creativity, communication and more will be discussed.

The Comparative Study of Jokes

Taught by Christie Davies, PhD (F, 9-10)

We can only understand the relationship between jokes and the societies and cultures that generate them on a comparative basis. In order to study the jokes that people tell it is necessary also to study the jokes that they could have invented or told in a particular culture but do not even though such jokes are popular elsewhere and they have access to them. These differences between patterns of jokes tell us a great deal about the underlying differences in culture and social structure between the societies being compared. Among the questions to be considered are

- (a) Why do some groups such as the Jews and the Scots produce more jokes than others and in particular large numbers of self-mocking jokes? Why do the Iranians have more jokes than the Japanese?
- (b) Why are there more and better political jokes in undemocratic than in democratic societies?
- (c) Why were there no international sick jokes about disasters in the past, given that they are so popular today?
- (d) Why are the Irish and the Belgians represented as clean in British and French jokes about their being stupid whereas in the corresponding North American jokes in both English and French to be stupid is to be dirty?

Further, what do the answers to these questions tell us about what makes us laugh?

Suggested and further reading:

Christie Davies, *Jokes and their Relation to Society*, Berlin and New York, Mouton de Gruyter 1998.

Davies, C.:

An Explanation of Jewish Jokes about Jewish women, *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 3-4, 1990, pp. 363-378.

Exploring the thesis of the self-deprecating Jewish Sense of Humor, *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 4-2, 1991, pp 189-209. Reprinted in Avner Ziv and Anat Zajdman, *Semites and Stereotypes: Characteristics of Jewish Humor*, Contributions to Ethnic Studies 3, Westport Connecticut, Greenwood, 1993, pp 29-46.

The Protestant Ethic and the Comic Spirit of Capitalism, *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol 43, Issue 3, September 1993, pp 421-442.

The Newfoundland Joke a Canadian phenomenon viewed in a comparative international perspective, *Humor International Journal of Humor Research*, 10-2, 1997 pp 137-64.

The dog that didn't bark in the night: A new sociological approach to the cross cultural study of humor. in *The Sense of Humor*, pp 293-306.

The Sense of Humour: Approaches and Measurement

Taught by Willibald Ruch, PhD, (F 1-3)

The aim of this segment is to highlight the difficulties in defining what a sense of humour is, familiarise with the major approaches, expose the participants to some assessment instruments, and show the relevance of individual differences in humour in a variety of fields.

We need to distinguish between the quotidian term or the expression "sense of humour" and its proposed scientific use. The former was shaped by philosophers and writers and is more prescriptive and not descriptive. It was considered to be a virtue leaving us the burden that it is positively laden (i.e., highly socially desirable) and restricted to the benevolent forms of the comic. The need for a scientific reconstruction of the term is obvious and when doing so we need to keep in mind that as a scientific construct "sense of humour" refers to a personality characteristic aimed at describing habitual individual differences in humour-related behaviour. It is a descriptive *hypothetical construct*, an invention, and not an "existing" entity. A certain conceptualisation of sense of humour may be *useful* or *not useful*, but not *true* or *false* and its usefulness has to be demonstrated. The "sense of humour" refers to a *disposition* for humour-related behaviour not to the behaviour itself. It can not be observed directly but *inferred* via indicators. The necessity to distinguish between *style* (i.e. typical behaviour), *ability* (i.e. maximal behaviour) and *virtue* (i.e., desired behaviour) and how it affects the type of assessment will be pointed out. The issue of how to label humour-related dispositions (humour styles, humorous temperament, sense of humour) will be discussed and identified as a convention that yet needs to be set. Participants are encouraged to self-administer and score several humour instruments. (Humorous Behaviour Q-Sort Desk – HBQD; Situational Humour Response Questionnaire—SHRQ; Coping Humour Scale—CHS; State-Trait-Cheerfulness Inventory—STCI; 3 WD; Cartoon Punch line Production Test--CPPT). The instruments (plus scoring key) will be provided as hard copies and are downloadable from the web-site.

Suggested and further reading:

Theory and research:

Martin, R.A. (1998). Approaches to the sense of humor: A historical review. In *The Sense of Humour: Explorations of a personality characteristic*, pp. 15-60. (Gives an overview of different approaches to the sense of humour; gives an introduction to field and a good overview of studies; supplements the section on the *contemporary* approaches)

Chapters in the section "contemporary approaches" from the book In *The Sense of Humour: Explorations of a personality characteristic*; (Craik et al. On a variety of fundamental issues, Raskin on modes of communication as a basis for sense of humour, Ruch & Hehl on humour appreciation, Derks et al on humour comprehension, Ruch & Köhler on humour and temperament, Kuiper & Martin on humour and positive personality)

Measurement:

Ruch, W. (1998). Tools used for diagnosing humour states and traits. in *The Sense of Humor*, pp. 405-412. (Gives a fairly complete overview of scales available)

Ruch, W. (1996). (Ed.), *Measurement of the sense of humor [double special issue]*. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 9 (1/2). (Double special issue devoted to the measurement of the sense of humour. Review articles on the Svebak's SHS, Martin & Lefcourt's CHS & SHRQ, and first presentation of the HBQD & STCI, supplemented by a psychometric evaluation of the current humour scales, and an introduction to the topic. Order copies from Prof. Don Nilsen, ASU, ISHS-Secretary).

Provisional timetable

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9-10 a.m.	What is humour?	FACS	Humour & health	Theories of humour	Comparative study of jokes (Davies)	Humour skills training programme
10-11 a.m.	What is humour	FACS	Humour skills training programme	Theories of humour	Comparative study of jokes (Davies)	Concluding Discussion
1-2 p.m.	Universality of facial expression	Morphology of Smiling	Excursion to Giants Causeway & Bushmills Distillery	Humour, laughter & the brain (Wild & Rodden)	Sense of humour	11:20-5:00 C O L L O Q U I U M
2-3 p.m.	Evolution of smiling, laughter & humour	Morphology of Laughter		Humour, laughter & the brain (Wild & Rodden)	Sense of humour	
4-5 p.m.	Development of humour in children	Humour & health		Humour in the workplace	Humour in the workplace	
5-6 p.m.	Development of humour in children	Humour skills training programme		Humour skills training programme	Humour skills training programme	