

3rd International Summer School on

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



**at the University of Edinburgh,
Scotland, UK**

15th – 20th September 2003

Syllabus/Course outline and timetable



School dates and location

The 3rd International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter is to be held in Edinburgh, in the School of Informatics at the University of Edinburgh, from 15th - 20th September 2003. The summer school is jointly organized by Drs. Graeme Ritchie and Willibald Ruch.

Registration is on Monday morning 8.45 – 9:10a.m. at 2 Buccleuch Place (enter via HCRC Main Office, 1st floor). The summer school starts at 9.10a.m. with some general announcements and the first lecture begins at 9:30.

Structure of Course

There will be sessions from Monday morning to Saturday afternoon inclusive, with Wednesday afternoon free for relaxation, sightseeing, etc. On Friday afternoon there will be the Symposium (see separate booklet). For the rest of the time, classes will be presented by a number of lecturers. There will be six lecturers, one of which is the winner of the “emerging scholar award” of the *International Society for Humor Studies (ISHS)*.

Teaching faculty

Dr Lydia Amir (The College of Management)
Professor Christie Davies (University of Reading)
Dr Rüdiger Hasenöhr (University of Hertfordshire)
Dr Graeme Ritchie (University of Edinburgh)
Professor Willibald Ruch (University of Zurich)

Guest Teaching Faculty

Christian “Kiki” Hempelmann
*(Winner of the 2003
“emerging scholar award”)*

The timetable of the course is given at the end of this document. In the mornings there are three hours of lectures in a block with a total of half an hour break. Delegates are expected to be in the classroom by 9.15 to hear the general announcements of the day. Lectures then start at 9:30. In the afternoon there are two lectures of one hour each followed by a one-hour event. The latter will either be a guided discussion on topics emerging from the lectures (or a prepared topic), or a formal occasion to meet the lecturers and discuss topics of your choice. Lecturers will indicate when they are available and there will be a booking sheet for making appointments with a lecturer.

Location of Classes

The sessions will take place in Tutorial Room 6 (Level 1, which is the mezzanine floor) in the Appleton Tower from Tuesday to Friday. On Monday and Saturday, we will be located in the Conference Suite, in the basement of 4 Buccleuch Place. See sketch map of Appleton Tower/Buccleuch Place area in the Summer School folder.

Appleton Tower is on the corner of Crichton Street and Chapel Street. The main entrance is by steps on the north side of the building, opposite the large public car park, which takes you into the main concourse on Level 0/ground floor. There is also a street-level entrance (suitable for wheelchair users) at the back (east side) of the building, from a small university car park

opposite the end of West Nicolson Street. This takes you into the basement; the lift or stair from here will take you to Level 1.

Buccleuch Place is south of Appleton Tower by about 200 metres. If you need to contact Melissa Davies, the secretary for the Summer School, go to 2 Buccleuch Place (on the south side of the street), walk up to the 1st floor and ring the bell for the right hand flat; push the door when the buzzer sounds. The main office is straight ahead, at the end of the corridor. (This is also the entry procedure on Monday morning).

For the Summer School sessions on Saturday or during Monday, go to the door of number 4 Buccleuch Place. Use your swipe card (supplied in the Summer School folder) and pin to enter. The stair to the basement is in the right hand corner of the hall. Follow the signs to the Conference Suite.

Excursion on Wednesday

There are no scheduled classes on Wednesday afternoon. Some suggestions will be supplied for possible trips or activities.

Conference dinner

On Friday evening, there will be an outing to the Doric Tavern, a restaurant in central Edinburgh (<http://www.thedoric.co.uk>). More details will be announced at the Summer School.

Monday

8:45 – 9:10 registration

9:10 announcements

Taxonomic models of humour

Taught by Willibald Ruch, PhD (Monday 9:30 – 10:30)

How can the realm of humour be defined and subdivided into meaningful components? What are the boundaries of our field (that covers all phenomena) and what is its internal structure? A valid map of humour phenomena would serve as a common basis for all researchers and facilitate exchange and accumulation of findings across our field. While we do need such models, currently little activity can be observed to achieve this goal. Nevertheless, several theoretical taxonomic modes exist and were proposed by many, like Browning (1981), Eysenck (1972), Lauer (1972), Schmidt Hidding (1963), or Ziv (1980). However, they mostly have not yet been tested empirically. Where they were tested they sometimes failed. Purely empirical approaches would be promising to, especially when one acknowledges that the field is rather new and underexplored. However, such approaches are rather sparse and not widely known. The present lecture will address the importance of solving this fundamental problem (what is the periodic system of humour?) and discuss individual approaches.

Suggested and further* reading:

- *Craik, K. H., & Ware, A. P. (1998). Humor and personality in everyday life. In W. Ruch (Ed.), *The sense of humor: Explorations of a personality characteristic* (pp. 63-94). New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Ruch, W. (in press). *Humor*. In Peterson, C.P & Seligman, M.E. P. *Values in Action Classification of Strengths*.
- *Ziv, A (Ed.) (1988). *National styles of humor*. Westport: Greenwood.

A short history of humour and laughter (Part-I: antiquity and middle ages, Part-II: Modern and post-modern times)

Taught by Lydia Amir, PhD (Monday 11:00 – 13:00)

The course will present the main phases of the Western attitude towards laughter and humour. We will begin with Ancient Greek religious cults' demented laughter, tragedians' parodic satyr-plays, and philosophers' moral and aesthetic reform of laughter. We will continue with Hellenistic philosophic uses of humour as a device to combat the tragic (Epicureans and Stoics), and to Roman rhetorical uses of laughter (Cicero and Quintilian). Medieval times will be exemplified by the Church's recognition of the need of a popular culture of laughter. The Renaissance's rediscovery of the body will connect laughter with health, and its rediscovery of freedom will link folly to liberty. Modern times will favour humour by emphasizing both the intellectual achievement it involves and its emotional value as a response to the tragic, whilst postmodern writers will make use of laughter, humour, and irony as part of their allegiance to free play.

Suggested and further reading:

- Bakhtin, M. (1968). *Rabelais and his world*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Bremmer, J. & Roodenburg, H. (Eds.) (1997). *A cultural history of humour: From antiquity to the present day*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.
- Minois, G. (2000). *Histoire du rire et de la derision*. Paris: Fayard.
- Morreall, J. (Ed.) (1987). *The philosophy of laughter and humor*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Sanders, B. (1955). *Sudden glory: Laughter as subversive history*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

The dog that did not bark in the night: How to study humour comparatively

Taught by Christie Davies, PhD (Monday 2:00 – 3:00)

The best way to study humour comparatively across cultures, between countries and over time is by using sets of similar jokes with a common theme. Examples would be disaster jokes, political jokes, ethnic jokes about stupidity etc. These have the advantage that they are numerous and lacking in distracting complexities and they have no authors i.e. they are a collective and unmediated product of the culture. The most certain way to make social generalizations about them is to seek out circumstances where there is a large cycle of jokes in one country or social order but where the jokes do not occur in another country or social order. Even though the members of the second group know about the jokes and can understand them, they do not tell them. Why not?

Suggested and further reading:

Davies, Christie (1998). *The dog that didn't bark in the night: A new sociological approach to the cross-cultural study of humor*. In Willibald Ruch (Ed.) *The sense of humor* (pp.293-308). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Davies, Christie (2002). *The mirth of nations*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Explaining ethnic jokes

Taught by Christie Davies, PhD (Monday 3:00 –4:00)

Virtually identical ethnic, regional or national jokes are told in a large number of countries. The most common themes are stupidity and canniness (being crafty, calculating, stingy). Recently these jokes have been used also about categories of women (Blonde and Essex) and occupations. How are we to account for the almost universal popularity of these jokes in advanced, complex societies? On what bases do they get pinned on some groups rather than others?

Suggested and further reading:

Davies, Christie (1990/1997). *Ethnic jokes around the world: A comparative analysis*. Bloomington: Indiana U.P.

Davies, Christie (1998). *Jokes and their relation to society*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

4:30-5:30 “MEET THE LECTURER”

Tuesday

9:15 announcements

The methodology of analysing verbally expressed humour

Taught by Graeme Ritchie, PhD (Tuesday 9:30 – 10:30)

We consider the motivation for studying humour expressed in language, particularly simple jokes, and set down some guidelines for doing this. Among the issues considered are the need for simplification, the role of a linguistic theory, and how linguistic analyses of jokes could contribute to an overall theory of humour.

Suggested and further reading:

Attardo, S. (1994). *Linguistic theories of humor*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Ritchie, G. (2003). *The linguistic analysis of jokes*. London: Routledge.

An introduction to the General Theory of Verbal Humour

Taught by Christian F. Hempelmann, PhD (Tuesday 11:00 – 12:00)

Among the linguistic approaches to humour, the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) has achieved prominence as the most encompassing and formalized approach. In this lecture we will look at its development from Raskin (1985) and Attardo and Raskin (1991), to its empirical testing (Ruch, Attardo, and Raskin (1993), as well as recent approaches to further develop the formalization of the theory (Attardo, Hempelmann, and Di Maio 2003).

Suggested reading:

- Attardo, S., Hempelmann, C. F. & Di Maio, S. (2002). Script oppositions and logical mechanisms: Modeling incongruities and their resolutions. *Humor*, 15, 3-46.
- Attardo, S. & Raskin, V. (1991). Script theory revis(it)ed: joke similarity and joke representation model. *Humor*, 4, 293-347.
- Raskin, V. (1985). *Semantic mechanisms of humor*. Reidel: Dordrecht.
- Ruch, W., Attardo, S. & Raskin, V. (1993). Toward and empirical verification of the General Theory of Verbal Humor. *Humor*, 6, 123-136.

Puns: A linguistic review

Taught by Christian F. Hempelmann, PhD (Tuesday 12:00 – 1:00)

In this lecture we will look at the linguistic properties of one of the most frequent—and frequently detested—types of joke, the pun. While the central mechanism of the underlying false logic, which identifies the meaning of a word with the speech sounds that represent it, will be our main focus, we will also examine the different incarnations of punning in terms of various linguistic parameters, notably the perfect homophonic pun, but also, for example, imperfect puns and spoonerisms.

Suggested and further* reading:

- *Attardo, S. (1994). Chapter 4. *Linguistic theories of humor*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Hempelmann, C. F. (2003). *Paronomasic puns: Target recoverability towards automatic generation*. Ph.D. Dissertation. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University. Soon available at:
<http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~hempelma/puns.pdf>

Humour and western religions: past and present

Taught by Lydia Amir, PhD (Tuesday 2:00 – 3:00)

The course will explore the complex relationship of the religion and laughter in the West. The past attitude of the main Western religions to laughter will be presented, followed by the modern theological and philosophical controversies regarding the role of humour in faith and in religious virtues.

Suggested and further reading:

- Gilhus, I. S. (1997). *Laughing gods, weeping virgins: Laughter in the history of religion*. London: Routledge.
- Hyers, C. M. (1969). *Holy laughter: Essays on religion in the comic perspective*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Hyers, C. M. (1981). *The comic vision and the Christian faith: A celebration of life and laughter*. New York: Pilgrim Press.
- Morreall, J. (1989). The rejection of humor in Western thought. *Philosophy East and West*, 39, 243-266.

Humour in eastern and western religions: A comparison

Taught by Lydia Amir, PhD (Tuesday 3:00 – 4:00)

The prominent role of laughter in Zen Buddhism and Taoism, and the positive attitude towards it in Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism will be presented. The different attitudes to laughter in Western as contrasted with Eastern philosophies and religions will be analyzed. The otherworldliness of Western religions, and the Western dual view of man as an uneasy combination of body and mind, of animal and godlike origins, will be submitted as the main causes for the difference.

Suggested and further reading:

Ames, R. T. (1989) (Ed.). Special Issue: Philosophy and Humor. *Philosophy East and West*, 39.

Harbsmeier, C. (1989). Humor in ancient Chinese philosophy. *Philosophy East and West*, 39, 289-310.

Hyers, C. M. (1991). *The laughing Buddha: Zen and the comic spirit*. Durando, Colorado: Longwood Academic Press.

Liao, C. (2001). *Taiwanese perceptions of humor: A sociolinguistic perspective* (Chap. 5: Confucius' humor, pp. 83-128). Taipei: Crane..

Morreall, J. (1999). *Comedy, tragedy and religion*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Siegel, L. (1987). *Laughing matters: Comic tradition in India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

4:30-5:30 DISCUSSION

Wednesday

9:15 announcements

The humour response: Perception, cognition, emotion?

Taught by Willibald Ruch, PhD (Wednesday 9:30 – 10:30)

In a set of lectures we will examine the relevance of emotion (e.g., mirth, hilarity, amusement), mood, and emotion-based temperaments in theory and research on humour and laughter. The renaissance of humour research fell into the period of the cognitive revolution in psychology leading to a neglect of affect. E.g., subsequent to McGhee's (1972) literature review the term "humor response" (as the response to humour) became popular. It describes the perception that something is "funny". Overt responses, like smiling and laughter are not added to it, as they occur too infrequently, but they may serve as "objective" indicators of perceived funniness. While it is doubtful that the "humor response" construct sufficiently describes the responses to humor, the uses of emotion terms to refer to responses to humor have only been exemplary, and no in detail examination of the nature of humour appreciation has been done. The present lecture will present the different approaches and argue for an integrated yet differentiated view of the responses to humour. Likewise we have to consider affective factors as dispositions to humor. There is both *interindividual* (i.e., between individuals) and *intraindividual* (i.e., across situations) variation in humour behaviour and experience. Some people tend *habitually* to appreciate, initiate, or laugh at humour more often, or more intensively, than others do. And, we are all inclined to appreciate, initiate, or laugh at humour more at given times and less at others. The former refers to enduring dispositions and the latter to mood and other transient states. Various type nouns (e.g., *cynic*, *wit*, *wag*) and trait-describing adjectives (e.g., *humorous*, *witty*, *cynical*) exist to describe a persons sense of humour and phrases like to be *in good humour*, *in the mood for laughing*, *out of humour*, *ill-humoured*, *in a serious mood or frame of mind* etc. refer to such states of enhanced or lowered readiness to respond to humour or act humorously.

Suggested and further reading:

- Ruch, W. (1993). Exhilaration and humor. In M. Lewis & J. M. Haviland (eds.), *The handbook of emotions* (pp. 605-616). New York: Guilford Publications.
- Deckers, L. (1998). *Influence of mood on humor*. In W. Ruch (Ed.), *The sense of humor: Explorations of a personality characteristic* (pp. 309-328). New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Ruch, W. & Köhler, G. (1998). *A temperament approach to humor*. In: W. Ruch (Ed.), *The sense of humor: Explorations of a personality characteristic* (pp. 203-230). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Playing with aggression not aggression: The basis of humour

Taught by Christie Davies, PhD (Wednesday 11:00-12:00)

The aggression theory of humour has often been argued, for example by Thomas Hobbes, Sigmund Freud and Alan Dundes to the point where for many it is an uncritically accepted orthodoxy. Here we will state the opposite case and show why it does not work on the basis of empirical data.

Suggested and further reading:

- Davies, Christie (2002). *The mirth of nations*. New Brunswick NJ: Transaction.
- Oring, Elliott (2003). *Engaging humor*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Disaster jokes in an electronic world

Taught by Christie Davies, PhD (Wednesday 12:00-1:00)

Every time there is a major disaster or the sudden death of a celebrity that is widely reported on television it is (or at least frequently is) followed by a wave of sick jokes.

Why is this the case and why did these jokes not flourish before television came to become a dominant news medium? What is there about television that stimulates the production of these jokes?

Suggested and further reading:

- Narvaez, Peter (2003). *Of corpse, death and humor in popular culture*. Logan: Utah State U.P.
- Oring, Elliott (1992). *Jokes and their relations*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.
- Walter, Tony (1999). *The mourning for Diana*. Oxford: Berg.

AFTERNOON: Private Study or Excursion

Thursday

9:15 announcements

The neurobiology of humour and laughter (Part-I basic mechanisms, Part-II applications)

Taught by Rüdiger U. Hasenöhl, PhD (Thursday 9:30-11:30)

This lecture will provide a journey through the brain introducing key anatomical, neurophysiological and functional concepts. Current ideas about the neural basis of emotion will be summarized emphasising that different brain areas are involved in the control of different emotional states. Some of these fundamental emotional systems will be characterized focusing on the medial strata of the brain, including anterior-cingulate, insular and frontal cortices, which are richly connected to subcortical 'emotion centres' like

amygdala and nucleus accumbens. This neurobiological strand of data will provide the framework for the second lecture, which will shed light on how the brain processes humour and prompts laughter.

Suggested reading:

Berridge, K.C. & Robinson, T.E. (2003). Parsing reward. *Trends in Neuroscience*, 26, 507-513.

LeDoux, J. (1996). *The emotional brain: The mysterious underpinnings of emotional life*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

LeDoux, J.E. (2000). Emotion circuits in the brain. *Annual Review of Neuroscience*, 23, 155-184.

Panksepp, J. (1998). *Affective neuroscience: The foundations of human and animal emotions*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Incongruity-resolution and forced reinterpretation

Taught by Graeme Ritchie, PhD (Thursday 12:00-1:00)

We briefly review a mechanism frequently suggested as essential to humour (incongruity-resolution) and then consider how this notion shows up in short textual jokes. Detailed analysis suggests that there are several different notions of incongruity being used, and no clear definition of resolution. The most commonly proposed variant of incongruity-resolution involves the forced reinterpretation of the initial part of the joke when the punch line is encountered. However, there are other ways in which jokes present information, differing to varying degrees from the basic reinterpretation form. The factors which distinguish a reinterpretation joke from a non-humorous misunderstanding are hard to state accurately.

Suggested reading:

Ritchie, G. (2002). The structure of forced reinterpretation jokes. In Oliviero Stock, Carlo Strapparava & Anton Nijholt (Eds.) *Proceedings of the April Fools' Day Workshop on Computational Humor*. University of Twente: Enschede, NL.

Shultz, T. (1972). The role of incongruity and resolution in children's appreciation of jokes and cartoons: An information-processing analysis. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 13, 456-477.

Humour as a worldview (Part-I: Theory)

Taught by Lydia Amir, PhD (Thursday 2:00 – 3:00, Part-II: Practice: Sat. 3:00-4:00)

In this course we will explore what it means to have a humorous worldview. Drawing on past philosophies that approximate humour as a worldview, like Nietzsche's and Kierkegaard's, as well as on some contemporary philosophical ideas which point to the potential comical aspects of human condition, I will propose the following. Being the only systematic tool for the furthering of a sense of proportion, humour is a powerful aid for bridging the ideal and the real. Moreover, a human being necessarily transcends his condition through reflection and discovers thus his futility, yet is incapable of flying from it (except through suicide), and is therefore doomed to seriously pursuing his life. A sustained amused reaction to this pervasive aspect of the human condition, as well as to the chronic gap between ideal and reality in the human realm would constitute a humorous worldview.

Suggested and further reading:

Amir, L. (forthcoming). *Homo risibilis: Philosophy, humour and the human condition*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Blondel, E. (1987). *Le risible et le derisoire*. Paris: P.U.F.

Critchley, S. (2002). *On humour*. London and New York: Routledge.

Gelven, M. (2000). *Truth and comedic art*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Humour, laughter and wisdom

Taught by Lydia Amir, PhD (Thursday 3:00 – 4:00)

The moral and intellectual advantages of humour as a worldview will be explored, as well as the profound reluctance of most people to acknowledge and embrace the inherent ridicule of the human condition. This view will be compared with the views of other philosophers (past or contemporary) on humour and laughter, and with the views of the participants.

Suggested and further reading:

Amir, L. (2002). Pride, humiliation and humility: Humor as a virtue. *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 1, 12-24.

Guirlinger, L. (1999). De l'ironie a l'humour, un parcours philosophique. Paris: Pleins feux.

Morreall, J. (1983). *Taking laughter seriously*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Plessner, H. (1970). *Laughing and crying: A study of the limits of human behavior*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

4:30-5:30: MEET THE LECTURER

Friday

9:15 announcements

Computational modelling of verbal humour

Taught by Graeme Ritchie, PhD (Friday 9:30-10:30)

We consider the aims and limitations of computer modelling of verbal humour, and review work over the past decade or so. The computer programs surveyed generally create very simple puns of some limited variety, and these systems share some properties. In particular, they have been possible because their chosen joke-types do not require extensive or subtle reasoning or knowledge about the world. We discuss some of the methodological issues in this work, particularly the question of evaluation of results.

Suggested and further reading:

Hulstijn, J. & Nijholt, A. (1996). *Proceedings of the International Workshop on Computational Humor. Twente Workshops on Language Technology 12*. University of Twente, Enschede, NL.

Ritchie, G. (2001). Current directions in computational humour. *Artificial Intelligence Review*, 16, 119-135.

Stock, O., Strapparava, C. & Nijholt, A. (2002). *Proceedings of the International Workshop on Computational Humor (TWLT14)*. University of Twente: Enschede, NL.

Humour, laughter and the brain

Taught by Rüdiger U. Hasenöhl, PhD (Friday 11:00-1:00)

This lecture will focus on the identification and characterization of brain systems/mechanisms, which might be involved in the neural control of humour, the feeling of exhilaration, and the production of laughter. The following two major questions will be addressed: (1) how do humour and laughter 'exist' in the central nervous system, and, (2) can they be 'dissected' into sensory, cognitive, emotional and expressive components? A contemporary and integrated perspective will be offered by referring to results from different research areas including experimental and clinical neuropsychology, functional brain imaging, psychoneuroimmunology and differential psychopharmacology.

Suggested reading:

- Fried, I., Wilson, C.L., MacDonald, K.A., & Behnke, E.J. (1998). Electric current stimulates laughter. *Nature*, 391,650.
- Goel, V. & Dolan, R.J. (2001). The functional anatomy of humor: segregating cognitive and affective components. *Nature Neuroscience*, 4, 237-238.
- Parvizi, J., Anderson, S.W., Martin, C.O., Damasio, H., & Damasio, A.R. (2001). Pathological laughter and crying: A link to the cerebellum. *Brain*, 124, 1708-1719.
- Shammi, P., & Stuss, D.T. (1999). Humour appreciation: a role of the right frontal lobe. *Brain*, 122, 657-666.
- Wild, B., Rodden, F.A., Grodd, W. & Ruch, W. (2003). Neural correlates of laughter and humour. *Brain*, 126, 1-18.

2:00-5:30 SYMPOSIUM (For programme see separate booklet)

Saturday

9:15 announcements

Constructing state and trait questionnaires of humour: The STCI

Taught by Willibald Ruch, PhD (Saturday 9:30 – 10:30)

Most instruments in the field of humour aim at the assessment of sense of humour. Such instruments ideally should be based on a theoretical concept and constructed according to psychometric principles. Their aim is to allow for an objective, reliable and valid assessment of interindividual differences in components of humour. State scales of humour require a different strategy, as they should reflect intraindividual differences. In detail, it should be demonstrated that covariation of items of one mood concept across time should be ascertained (P-, chain P- or differential-R techniques). This section will outline criteria for the evaluation of humour instruments, highlight some common flaws in instruments, and describe the construction principles for state and traits scale in general. The State-Trait-Cheerfulness Inventory—STCI (Ruch, Köhler, & vanThriel, 1996, 1997) will be used as an example highlighting the steps in construction. Participants will also learn how to score the scale and interpret results. This lecture also outlines the relationship to various domains of humour (e.g., smiling, laughter; keeping humour when facing adversity; coping with life stress) and presents validity studies.

Suggested and further reading:

- Ruch, W. & Köhler, G. (1999). The measurement of state and trait cheerfulness. In: I. Mervielde, I. Deary, F. De Fruyt & F. Ostendorf (Eds.), *Personality psychology in Europe* (Vol 7, pp. 67-83). Tilburg: University Press.

Genetics of humour and laughter

Taught by Willibald Ruch, PhD (Saturday 10:30 – 11:30)

Stable interindividual differences in humour and laughter exist — but where do they come from? How does it come that our senses of humour are so different? Is the sense of humour, or components of it, primarily learned, imitated, or innate — a given (you either have it or not and you cant do anything about it)? So far the few published studies on effectiveness of programs show little effects of training on the sense of humour — so it might be of interest to look at genetic influences as well. In this lecture we will look at designs of studies that are sensitive to detect environmental and genetic influences and review the results of the few studies that looked at genetic factors in humour and laughter.

Suggested* and further reading:

Cherkas, L., Hochberg F., MacGregor A.J., Snieder H., & Spector, T.D. (2000). Happy Families: a twin study of humour. *Twin Research*, 3, 17-22.

*Manke, B. (1998). Genetic and environmental contributions to children's interpersonal humor. In W. Ruch (Ed.), *The sense of humor: Explorations of a personality characteristic* (pp. 361-384). New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Wilson, G. D., Rust, J., & Kasriel, J. (1977). Genetic and family origins of humor preferences: A twin study. *Psychological Reports*, 41, 659-660.

What are the components of a joke?

Taught by Graeme Ritchie, PhD (Saturday 12:00-1:00)

It appears that many factors can contribute to the humorous nature of a short text. We review some of these, illustrating that some of them may be optional (although helpful). Many of the components that have been suggested as central to humour appear to be general text-enhancing factors which are used to a similar effect in non-humorous texts. We end with some speculations on what the make-up of a joke might be.

Suggested and further reading:

Ritchie, G. (2003). *The linguistic analysis of jokes*. London: Routledge.

Making the frightful funny: Appalling acts and sentiments in the humorous works of Jaroslav Hasek, Rudyard Kipling, Evelyn Waugh and H.G. Wells.

Taught by Christie Davies, PhD (Saturday 2:00-3:00)

In humorous literature events are described that would shock and appal us if they were serious or real. Furthermore they are treated with levity, disdain and glee. Yet most people enjoy such literature. Humour like aesthetics lives in a world apart, which must be judged by different criteria from serious reality

Suggested and further reading:

Hasek, Jaroslav (1973). *The good soldier Svejk*. London: Heinemann.

Kipling, Rudyard (1897). *Rudyard Kipling's poem loot*. (original published in July 1897, London Times Newspaper, reprinted in Kipling, R. [1914]. *Barrackroom ballads and departmental ditties*. London: Doubleday, Page).

Waugh, E. (1937). *Evelyn decline and fall*. Harmondsworth: Penguin publishers.

Wells, H.G. (1963). *The history of Mr Polly*. London: Pan Publishers Ltd.

Humour as a worldview (Part-II: Practice)

Taught by Lydia Amir, PhD (Saturday 3:00 – 4:00)

See Humour as A Worldview on Thursday afternoon for the abstract and the suggested reading. The practice will include some exercises in which the ridiculous or ludicrous aspects of the human being will be explored. If the participants will not cooperate, the ridicule of the lecturer will be the main topic.

4:30-5:30 DISCUSSION “Where do we go from here?”

END OF ISS03

Timetable

| | Monday <i>(Buccleuch Place)</i> | Tuesday <i>(Appleton Tower)</i> | Wednesday <i>(Appleton Tower)</i> | Thursday <i>(Appleton Tower)</i> | Friday <i>(Appleton Tower)</i> | Saturday <i>(Buccleuch Place)</i> |
|------------------|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| 9.15-9.30 | <i>Announcements: 9:10</i> | <i>announcements</i> | <i>announcements</i> | <i>announcements</i> | <i>announcements</i> | <i>announcements</i> |
| 9.30 | Taxonomic models of humour (WR) | The methodology of analysing verbally expressed humour (GR) | The humour response: Perception, cognition, emotion? (WR) | The neurobiology of humour and laughter-I (RH) | Computational modelling of verbal humour (GR) | Constructing state and trait questionnaires of humour: The STCI (WR) |
| -- | Short history of humour and laughter: Antiquity and middle ages (LA) | An introduction to the GTVH (KH) | Playing with aggression (CD) | The neurobiology of humour and laughter-II (RH) | Humour, laughter and the brain-I (RH) | Genetics of humour and laughter (WR) |
| 1.00 | Short history of humour and laughter: Modern and post-modern times (LA) | Puns: A review (KH) | Disaster jokes in an electronic world (CD) | Incongruity-resolution and forced reinterpretation (GR) | Humour, laughter and the brain-II (RH) | What are the components of a joke? (GR) |
| 1.00-2.00 | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | The dog that did not bark in the night: how to study humour comparatively (CD) | Humour and western religions: Past and present (LA) | Private Study or Excursion | Humour as a worldview (Theory) (LA) | S Y M P O S I U M | Making the frightful funny: appalling acts & sentiments in the works of Hasek, Kipling, Waugh & Wells (CD) |
| -- | Explaining ethnic jokes (CD) | Humour east and west: A comparison (LA) | | Humour, laughter and wisdom (LA) | | Humour as a worldview (Practice) (LA) |
| 5.30 | Meet the lecturer | DISCUSSION | | Meet the lecturer | | DISCUSSION |

Note. Contents and timetable may differ from what is given.