

10th International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter: Theory, Research and Applications

University of Zurich, Boldern – Männedorf

Switzerland

The 10th International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter was held in Männedorf, Switzerland, in the Boldern Conference Centre in conjunction with the University of Zurich, from July 5 – 10, 2010 (see: <http://www.humoursummerschool.org/10/>).

The Summer School was organized by Tracey Platt M.Sc. and Professor Willibald Ruch from the University of Zurich. The course was intended to be of benefit to both research students and more experienced researchers considering conducting research in the field of humour and laughter.

The teaching faculty comprised eleven speakers, allowing greater diversity in the topics covered. Lectures were given by: Professor Iren Bischofberger (Kalaidos University of Applied Sciences), Professor Pierre Bühler (University of Zurich), Professor Christie Davies (University of Reading), Dr. Liisi Laineste (Estonian Literary Museum, Centre of Cultural History), Professor Paul Lewis (Boston College), Professor Rod Martin (University of Western Ontario), Dr. Beatrice Priego-Valverde (University of Provence), Dr. Graeme Ritchie (University of Aberdeen), Professor Willibald Ruch (University of Zurich), Professor Daniel Weiss, (University of Zurich), and Professor Werner Wirth (University of Zurich).

The programme aimed to provide an overview of the interdisciplinary nature of humour research, by considering theory and empirical evidence, addressing special research issues, discussing methodology and evaluation of research findings to date, and also to consider some of the applications of humour and laughter.

There were **Meet the Lecturer** sessions, where participants could sign up for a one-to-one discussion with a lecturer of his/her choice; two consecutive time-slots were made available daily.

Representative sessions addressed topics such as:

- An overview of humour research
- What is humor? Reversal Theory as an integrating framework
- Smiling and laughter: Typology, structure and dynamics
- Tact and humor in the digital age- Part One: The Danish cartoon controversy
- Humour in Eastern Europe
- Is laughter the best medicine? Humor and physical health
- Incongruity and its resolution
- Humor in health care: Core concepts and future perspectives
- Tact and humor in the digital age- Part two: Jeff Dunham's "Achmed"
- Some characteristics of verbal humor
- Humor and mental health

- Dispositions towards ridicule and being laughed at: Current research on gelotophobia, gelotophilia and katagelasticism.
- Humor and fear: The strange case of Edgar Allen Poe
- Disaster jokes in an electronic age and laughter: Typology, structure and dynamics
- Populist strategies of verbal humor utilized by socialist and post-socialist European politicians
- Humour and religion: A fruitful relationship
- Humour and advertising: Effects and conditions
- Jokes, humour and social class
- Humor as an enhancer of satisfaction with life
- Humour and aggression in popular humour and in literature
- Sex and the witty: Humor and gender.

Also workshops on the topics of:

- Inventing hoaxes and fake-news Satires
- Assessment of smiling and laughter: FACS
- Build your own jokes
- Is humor always healthy? Research on humor styles

The Summer School was attended by 39 participants. The student body consisted of undergraduates, postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers, and university faculty members, as well as professionals (teacher, consultant, clinical psychologist, health professional, professional clowns working in the area of therapeutic laughter). These participants came from Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Macedonia, Malta, Romania, Russia, Switzerland, and the USA. Academic disciplines represented included Psychology, Anthropology, Communications and IT, Italian Studies, Linguistics, Sociology, and Educational Science, Political Science and there were practitioners using humour in a variety of settings, including nursing, and management training and as well as performance artists. The variety of participants' experiences was reflected in the debate engendered by many of the sessions.

The Summer School Symposium took place on Thursday and it featured presentations of the participants' planned or finished research, or ideas on how to implement and use humour in applied settings. The Symposium comprised the following short talks and posters:

Short Talks

- Boutonnet, J. *Discursive im/politeness research and humour: Theories of identity and the concept of face*
- Boronenko, A. *The clownery of the early prose of Samuel Beckett (on the material of the novel "Dream of Fair to Middling Women")*
- Erikstad, I. *Young people's use of digital humour in their everyday life*
- Führ, M. *Gelotophobia in childhood*
- Gronold, D. *Humour and communities*
- Hoicka, E. *Preschoolers' joke creation in an experimental setting*

- Kicherer, S. *Introduction sketching a cultural-anthropological approach to humour research*
- Meany, M. *Testing an inversion of Bergson's 'new law' of humour*
- Mireault, G. *Infant clowns: Understanding the absurd from 3-6 months*
- Neagu, M. *Glocalised English signs – a resource of unintentional humour and even more*
- Nuutinen, P. *Using, losing and generating power in humorous school situations*
- Rebane, M. *Towards modelling the transmission of political jokes under totalitarian and authoritarian regimes*
- Strazda, L. *Shortest joke in the world*
- Thielemann, N. *Arguing by anecdote – jocular accounts in conversations between Russian interlocutors*
- Watters, C. *Positioning satirical play: Italian comedians and cross-media performance*

Posters

- Aboudan, R. *How prevalent is gelotophobia in the United Arab Emirates?*
- Auerbach, S., Flisch, R., Harzer, C., & Ruch, W. *“Jeer Pressure” exists in Canada: Does it in Switzerland?*
- Hamilton, T. *Humorous structures of English narratives, 1200-1600*
- Harzer, C., Proyer, R.T., & Ruch, W. *Big Five Personality characteristics of gelotophobes, gelotophiles, and katagelasticians*
- Jennifer Hofmann, J., Beermann, U., & Ruch, W. *Laughing at oneself: A FACS study*
- Müller, L., & Ruch, W. *A study of character strengths, sense of humour and styles of everyday humorous conduct*
- Piirimägi, I. *Aspects of female humour – self image and functions*
- Platt, T., Aboudan, R., & Ruch, W. *Is shame the dominant emotion of gelotophobia in responses to mean-spirited ridicule and playful in United Arab Emirates?*
- Stoffel, F., Weber, A., Beermann, U., & Ruch, W. *Laughter during embarrassment: A validation study of current humor scales*
- Stolz, H., Rusch, S., & Ruch, W. *A training program for the sense of humour: First empirical evaluation*
- Tschupp, S., Flisch, R., Proyer, R.T., & Ruch, W. *The laughter of a psychopath: On the relationship among psychopathy, gelotophobia, gelotophilia and katagelasticism*
- Weber, M., & Ruch, W. *The significance of humour as character strengths in adolescent romantic relationships*

The participants made time for social events. The social program included an Alpine experience with an Alphorn demonstration on the Monday evening. A local Swiss wine and cheese tasting reception on Tuesday evening, a guided tour to Zurich city and a meal on a boat trip down Zurich Lake on Wednesday, and finally, on Friday evening the Jubilee 10th anniversary closing dinner was held in the historic guild of Zunfthaus zur Haue which offered a local speciality menu and a surprise presentation made to the organiser of all the summer schools, Professor Willibald Ruch. Swimming in the lake

was also a popular end of day pass-time, as well as group walks into the surrounding countryside.

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We would like to thank Sarah Auerbach, Claudia Harzer, Beatrice Höhn, Liliane Müller, Marco Weber and Monika Vetch for assisting during the week and in the preparations and for the award committee for presentations.

The *International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter* was organized for the first time by Willibald Ruch in 2001 (Queen's University of Belfast). Two contenders voiced an interest to hold the eleventh humour summer school. Both Denmark and Estonia offered equally strong bids, and which will hold the school in 2011 and 2012 is yet to be decided. Details will be announced at the summer school website (<http://www.humoursummerschool.org/>).

This summer school is endorsed by the International Society for Humor Studies (ISHS).

Tracey Platt

Willibald Ruch