

11th International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter: Theory, Research and Applications Estonian Literary Museum

The 11th International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter was held in Tartu, Estonia in collaboration with the Estonian Literary Museum, from August 15 – 20, 2011 (see: <http://www.humoursummerschool.org/11/>).

The Summer School was organized by Dr. Liisi Laineste from the Estonian Literary Museum, Professor Willibald Ruch from the University of Zurich and supported by the serving ISS advisory board. The course was intended to provide a basic introduction to humour studies as well as give a more detailed insight into the research of humour and laughter.

The teaching faculty comprised thirteen speakers. This allowed a greater diversity in the topics covered. Lectures were given by: Dr. Dorota Brzozowska (Polish Philology Department, Opole University, Poland), Dr. Wladislaw Chlopicki (Institute of English Philology, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland), Professor Christie Davies (Department of Sociology, University of Reading, England), Professor Holger Kersten ((Amerikanistik, Universitet Magdeburg, Germany), Professor Arvo Krikmann (Department of Folkloristics, Estonian Literary Museum, Estonia), Professor Alexander Kozintsev (Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, St. Petersburg, Russia), Professor Seppo Knuuttila (Department of Folkloristics, University of Joensuu, Finland), Dr. Sharon Lockyer (School of Social Sciences, Brunel University, London, UK), Professor John Morreall (Religious Studies, College of William and Mary, USA), Dr. Anu Realo (Department of Psychology, University of Tartu, Estonia), Dr. Graeme Ritchie (Department of Computing Science, University of Aberdeen, Scotland), Professor Willibald Ruch (Department of Psychology, University of Zurich, Switzerland), and MA Clare Watters (Italian Studies, University of Birmingham, UK).

The programme aimed to provide a thorough overview of the interdisciplinary nature of humour research as it described theory and empirical evidence, addressed special research issues and applications of the theories, and gave a special consideration to discussing methodology and evaluation of research findings during the daily **methodology sessions**.

The delegates also benefitted from the **Meet the Lecturer** sessions, where participants could sign up for a one-to-one discussion with a lecturer of his/her choice on two consecutive time-slots daily.

Sessions addressed the following topics:

- An overview of humour research
- National humor - A critical perspective
- What is humour? Etymology and taxonomic studies
- Political jokes (anekdoti) and the fall of the Soviet Empire
- Contemporary television comedy and social class
- Professional humour – Comedians and their part in humour studies

Approaches to analysing contemporary stand-up comedy
Incongruity and its resolution
Funny business: The benefits of humor at work
Positive psychology and humour: A good match?
Can laughter make us happier?
Humor as a neutralizing metarelation
Correlation and significance: The basic concepts
Nasty humour as great literature
Humor as play, laughter as play signal
Assessment of the sense of humour: Another appraisal of the state of the art
Hypothesis testing and refutation in the study of jokes: Some methodological questions
Cognitive construals in Jokes - Visual logical mechanisms
Relationships of punchlineless (and in general older) "Schwanks" and contemporary punchlined jokes ("Witzes")
Is seriousness the opposite of laughter?
Jokes about animals. A cross-cultural study
The ethics of humor
Mark Twain and the complexities of American humor
Jokes about particular sets of women: Mothers in law (wife's mother), blondes, Jewish women, female car drivers and lesbians
What is funny to whom and why? New findings in humour appreciation and personality

There were also workshops on topics of:

Build your own jokes
How to measure smiling and laughter: Learning the basics of the Facial Action Coding System – FACS

The Summer School was attended by 28 participants. The student body consisted of undergraduates, postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers, and university faculty members, as well as professionals. The participants came from Austria, Australia, Belgium, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Malaysia, Norway, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, and USA. Academic disciplines represented included Psychology, Anthropology, Italian Studies, Linguistics, Sociology, Folkloristics, American Studies, Communication Studies. The variety of participants' experiences was reflected in the debate engendered by many of the sessions.

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

Oral presentations

- Brink, Dennis Mayhoff (Department of Art and Cultural Studies, University of

- Copenhagen, Denmark) *Mapping the history of religious satire in Europe*
- Demski, Dagnoslaw (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Poland) Instrumental othering or primary devices in visual ethnic caricature
 - Goeth, Maria (Department of Musicology, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany) Humour in Music
 - Hunt, Kara (University of California, USA) *Food for Thought or Food for the Sharks? A reevaluation of the bad joke*
 - Ilchanka, Anastasiya (Department of Folkloristics, Herzen State Pedagogical University / University of Tartu) *“Bears Bumped off the Bee-keeper”: Moscow Mayor’s Dismissal Joke Cycle*
 - Käsper, Marge (Department of Germanic, Romance and Slavonic languages, University of Tartu, Estonia) *Reducing the seriousness of utterance: an effect of an elegance of style?*
 - O'Connor, Alison (Faculty of Social Sciences and International Studies, University of New South Wales, Australia) *Positioning political comedy in theories of deliberative democracy and the public sphere*
 - Platt, Tracey (Department of Psychology, University of Zürich, Switzerland) *Differences of Duchenne smiles for those with fear of being laughed at*
 - Raja Mohd Khalid, Raja Kamariah (Institute of Gerontology, Putra University Malaysi No 1, Malaysia) *The Development of Humor and Its Implication to Culture*
 - Rebane, M. (Department of Sociology, University of Tartu) *How were political jokes transmitted in Soviet Estonia? A case study.*
 - Schwind, Kai Hanno (Institute of Media and Communications, University of Oslo, Norway) *Office humour – a comparative study of the TV sitcom The Office*
 - Voolaid, Piret (Department of Folkloristics, Estonian Literary Museum, Estonia) *On the Relations between Joking Questions and Paremiology – Proverbs in the Service of Humour Creation*

Scientific posters

- Mayerhofer, Bastian (Department of Experimental Psycholinguistics, Georg August University of Göttingen, Germany) *Cognitive processes during belief revision in garden-path jokes: An ERP study*
- Nuutinen, Pirjo (University of Eastern Finland, Finland) *Humor and power in Finnish school education*
- Piirimägi, Ilona (Department of Folkloristics, Estonian Literary Museum, Estonia) *Stand-up comedy as an identity creation and maintenance mechanism for immigrants in Estonia*
- Raja Mohd Khalid, Raja Kamariah (Institute of Gerontology, Putra University Malaysi No 1, Malaysia) *The meaning and experience on the use of humor among elderly Malays in Putrajaya, Malaysia*

The participants made time for social events. The social program included an opening reception on Monday evening, which included open lectures from Professor Peeter Tulviste (Department of Psychology, University of Tartu) and Professor Willibald Ruch (Department of Psychology, University of Zürich) as well as a performance by a folk

group Liinatsuraq. A stand-up comedy night was on Tuesday evening with local stand-up artists as well as Summer School participants on the stage. On Wednesday, the participants went to a guided tour in Tartu and to a beer-tasting event in the German Culture Institute. On Friday evening the closing dinner was held in the Botanical gardens.

The summer school was supported by Estonian Literary Museum, Estonian Cultural Endowment, Tartu Cultural Endowment, German Embassy, Tartu City Council, A Le Coq, Du Nord, and SEB bank. Also Mouton de Gruyter sponsored prizes for the best presentation awards, which were won by Maria Goeth, Bastian Mayerhofer, Tracey Platt, and Piret Voolaid.

We would like to thank Ilona Piirimägi, Martin Rebane, Maris Kuperjanov, Salle Kajak, Eva-Kait Kärblane and Jaan Tamm 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). So far, two contenders have voiced an interest in holding the twelfth humour Summer School, in Iceland and in Finland, but the decision about where the Summer School will be held in 2012 is yet to be decided. Details will be announced at the Summer School website (<http://www.humoursummerschool.org/>).

The International Summer School for Humour Studies is endorsed by the International Society for Humor Studies (ISHS).

Liisi Laineste

Willibald Ruch

22. August 2011