

English 389R/Theater Studies 389R

**Comedy and Theories of Comedy:
“Stop Laughing, This is Serious!”**

Fall 2014
Oxford College

Clark Lemons: clemons@emory.edu
Office: Few Hall 104; 770-784-8370

Objectives:

1. gain an understanding and appreciation of the role of comedy in human beings, the imagination and in society
2. explore classic comic genres from the beginnings to the present.
2. develop an understanding of important comic theories
3. improve one's ability to discuss and write about comedy, particularly dramatic comedy.
4. answer these questions for yourselves--why is something funny or not funny to me? why do I laugh at something? what is appropriate and inappropriate comedy?

Methods:

- Short lectures on the contexts of works and the development of significant questions about comedy
- Class discussion of texts and films, class and small groups
- Brief, factual quizzes
- Maintaining a class blog
- Two short written analyses of a work on the syllabus and one longer analysis of several works incorporating theory
- Mid term and final essay exams
- Group presentation
- Individual student-teacher conferences

Texts: You must have your own copies of the texts and bring them to class.

Candide, Voltaire.

Eight Great Comedies, ed. Sylvan Barnet. Mentor

Lysistrata, Aristophanes. Dover

Four Great Restoration Comedies, by Wycherley & others. Dover

The Goat or Who is Sylvia, Edward Albee. Dramatists Play Service, Inc

The Misanthrope, Moliere. Broadway Play Publishing or Dover.

Requirements:

1. Be in class every day on time. Each absence results in one point off the final grade. You may miss two classes without penalty (a week of class). Use your

cuts for illnesses, family events, etc. You do not need permission for these cuts. I do not accept excuse notes. If there is major illness or problem, contact the Academic Affairs Office who will contact all your professors. Coming late to class is not a good idea; after three, they will begin to count as half an absence. The difference between being early and being late is so only a few minutes of your time.

2. Participation in class depends on your own personal style, but it should include: active listening, responding to the instructor's and other students' comments by speaking in class, proposing interpretations of your own, and participating in the blog.

2. The midterm and final exams – covering readings, films, and our discussions of them – are in-class essays, graded for writing and content.

3. Quizzes are brief and objective, and since they are directly related to the material to be discussed that day, they cannot be made up (= 0). Quizzes cover the reading assignments and any introductions to them. The lowest two quiz grades will be dropped so that taking your two cuts is not a grade penalty. Quizzes are at the very beginning of class.

4. Papers: Two short (3 pgs) reflection papers on the works we've read and discussed so far in the class. A final paper (8-9 pgs) will be a comparative analysis of comic works on the syllabus that you find interesting and supported by theoretical analysis. Ideally the topic of this paper will be combined with your Presentation.

5. Presentations: one group presentation (2-3 persons) on one work or related works from the syllabus or on something relevant to theories of comedy. It's always good to check with your teacher before you begin a major project like this.

6. The Blog. Open Eng 389R Comedy on your Blackboard. You will see announcements, documents, syllabus, and the Blog. The Blog will have 3 sections that cover a third of the semester each. In these blogs, we'll discuss comedy in a kind of "journal" format for the whole class. Enter as many "entries" and "comments" as you wish but at least three entries of one/two paragraphs (about 5-10 sentences) and six comments on entries others have made for each section. Post well before the deadline so you and others will have time to comment on them. You can write whatever you like--the comedies we read, the editor's comments, theories of comedy. You can write personal responses, talk about contemporary comedy, agree or disagree with each other – be creative.

Grading Policy: Papers-30%, Quizzes-10%, Final Exam-20% , Mid term: 10%, Blog 10%, Participation & Presentation-20%

Schedule of Assignments

Aug	2	Introduction & some cartoons
Sept	4	Lysistrata; Plato/Aristotle (in <u>Eight Great</u>)
Sept	9	Langer (in <u>Eight Great</u>)
Sept	11	The Clouds (in <u>Eight Great</u>)
Sept	16	Mandragola (in <u>Eight Great</u>)
Sept	18	Peter Patelan (handout)
Sept	21	Paper #1 due (Sunday 10 pm)
Sept	23	Twelfth Night (Act I) (in <u>Eight Great</u>)
Sept	25	Peter Patelan (handout); Heywood & L.G. (in <u>Eight Great</u>)
Sept	24	Blog #1 Due (Wednesday 10 pm)
Sept	30	The Misanthrope (separate book)
Oct	2	Goldsmith "A Comparison of Laughing and Sentimental Comedy"
Oct	7	Candide
Oct	9	Candide
Oct	16	Midterm
Oct	19	Blog #2 Due (Sunday 10 pm)
Oct	21	Restoration Comedy (in <u>Eight Great</u>)
Oct	23	Restoration Comedy (in <u>Eight Great</u>)
Oct	28	Restoration Comedy (in <u>Eight Great</u>)
Oct	29	Paper #2 Due (Wednesday 10pm)
Oct	28	Frye (in <u>Eight Great</u>)
Nov	30	18 th Century Drama
Nov	4	Chesterton; and The Importance of Being Ernest (both in <u>Eight Great</u>)
Nov	6	Dobree (in <u>Eight Great</u>)
Nov	11	The Conversion of the Jews (handout)
Nov	13	Chaplin (film)
Nov	23	Blog #3 due (Sunday 10 pm)
Nov	18	Short Stories (handout)
Nov	20	Cartoons & animation
Nov	25	The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?
Nov	30	Final Paper Due (Sunday 10 pm)
Dec	2	Group/Individual Presentations
Dec	4	Presentations
Dec	9	Presentations
Dec	12	Final Exam (9-12 pm)