

## English 389R/Theater Studies 389R

### Comedy and Theories of Comedy

Fall 2010  
Oxford College

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#### **Objectives:** To

1. gain an understanding and appreciation of the role of comedy in the imagination and in society
2. explore the place of comedy in literary studies and classic comic genres.
2. develop an understanding of historic comic theories
3. improve the ability to discuss and write about comedy, particularly the comedy of theater.

Notes: This course satisfies the "Continuing WR" writing requirement. It is an advanced writing and discussion class, not a lecture class.

#### **Methods:**

- Introductions to the works and the development of significant questions about comedy
- Extensive class discussion of texts and films
- Brief, factual quizzes
- A class blog
- Communication on the Learnlink Conference: "Lemons 389R"
- Two written analyses of a work on the syllabus and one longer analysis of several works
- Final essay exam
- Individual student-teacher conferences

**Texts:** (You must have your own copies of the texts, in the editions noted below, and bring them to class when they are discussed.)

Candide and Related Texts, Voltaire. Hackett Publishing, 2000 ISBN 0-87220-546-0

Eight Great Comedies, ed. Sylvan Barnet A Mentor Book ISBN I think it is: 452-01170-0

Lysistrata, Aristophanes. Dover Thrift Edition ISBN 0486282252

Four Great Restoration Comedies, by Wycherley and others. Dover Thrift ISBN 0-486-44570-4

The Goat or Who is Sylvia, Edward Albee. Dramatists Play Service, Inc. ISBN 0-8222-1976-X

The Misanthrope, Moliere. Broadway Play Publishing, Inc. ISBN 0-88145-205-x

#### **Requirements:**

1. The course involves active class participation, so I expect you to be in class every day, on time. Each absence results in one point off the final grade per absence. However, you may miss two classes without penalty. These cuts should be used for illnesses or whatever is important to you. Participation in class depends on your own personal style, but it should include: proposing interpretations, responding to the instructor's and other students' comments or questions, active listening, and participating in the blog.
2. The final exam, covering readings, films, and our discussions of them, will be an in-class essay, graded for writing ability and content.

3. Quizzes are brief and objective, and since quizzes are directly related to the material to be discussed that day, missed quizzes 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 two cuts is not a grade penalty. Quizzes are normally given at the very beginning of class.

4. Three papers: Two short, informal reflection papers on works from the syllabus. A final, eight-page paper will be a comparative analysis of comic works on the syllabus that you find interesting, supported by theoretical analysis. Papers must be turned in on time (hard copy, no emails) for full credit.

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. Check with me before you choose a topic.

6. The Blog counts as part of the participation grade. Go to Blackboard on your desktop or: classes.emory.edu. Open Eng 389R Comedy and go to Tools, then to Blog Tool. You will see announcements and a way to post or make comments on other posts. In this blog, we'll discuss comedy in a "journal" for the whole class. Enter as many posts/comments as you wish but at least three entries of one/two paragraphs (8-10 sentences) and six comments on entries others have made. Post your first entry and two comments on someone else's posts before Sept 14<sup>h</sup>. (Post well before the deadline so you and others will have time to comment on them.) Second and third deadlines will be announced. You can write whatever you like. Comment on 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. (I am not much concerned about grammar or organization here.)

### Grading Policy:

Papers-45% Quizzes-10% Final Exam-20% Participation/Presentation-25%  
( Keep track of your own grades. I do not do averages until after the final exam.)

### Schedule of Assignments

Aug	26	Introduction to the course
Aug	31	Lysistrata Plato/Aristotle (in <a href="#">Eight Great</a> )
Sept	2	Langer (in <a href="#">Eight Great</a> )
Sept	7	The Clouds (in <a href="#">Eight Great</a> )
Sept	9	Mandragola (in <a href="#">Eight Great</a> )
Sept	21	Master Peter Patelan (handout); Heywood & L.G. (in <a href="#">Eight Great</a> )
Sept	23	<u>Paper #1 Due</u> . Twelfth Night (Act I); (in <a href="#">Eight Great</a> )
Sept	28	Twelfth Night (Acts II-IV)
Sept	28	TBA
Oct	3	The Misanthrope (in <a href="#">Eight Great</a> )
Oct	5	Goldsmith "A Comparison of Laughing and Sentimental Comedy" (handout)
Oct	12	Restoration Comedy (in <a href="#">Eight Great</a> )
Oct	17	Restoration Comedy (in <a href="#">Eight Great</a> )
Oct	19	Candide
Oct	24	Candide
Oct	26	<u>Paper #2 Due</u> . Frye (in <a href="#">Eight Great</a> )
Nov	2	18 <sup>th</sup> Century Drama
Nov	7	Chesterton; The Importance of Being Ernest (both in <a href="#">Eight Great</a> )
Nov	9	Dobree (in <a href="#">Eight Great</a> )
Nov	14	The Conversion of the Jews (handout)
Nov	16	Chaplin and Keaton
Nov	21	Christopher Fry, handout
Nov	28	Cartoons; Woody Allen
Nov	30	Group/Individual Presentations
Dec	5	Group/Individual Presentations
Dec	7	The Goat or Who is Sylvia?
Dec	12	<u>Paper #3 Due</u> . Review for Final