

## Assignment #5 (Due November 17<sup>th</sup> @ 4pm)

### Assignment Text:

The last big assignment is here, and we will defeat it! We have covered a wide range of humorous devices – stand-up, comics, irony, parody, satire, etc. – as they pertain to the modern world. Yet, we have not yet addressed how these structures have changed over time. And, to my knowledge, no such compilation of knowledge yet exists. So – let’s pioneer a compilation!

For this assignment, you will write a **4-7 page research paper** that explores the historical use of one humorous device as it pertains to {language, society, literature, thought}, comparing the historical use of the device previously (via a literature review) to the modern day use of the device (via an experiment). You may choose a humorous device that we have discussed in class, or one that we have not. That being said, the topics are “first come, first serve” – there is a limit of 4 people per humorous device. I will post(on Canvas) a spreadsheet of the topics that we have covered thus far; you are welcome to add your own.

Your paper should have the following structure:

1. An introduction section that proposes a *specific* research question<sup>1</sup> about your humorous device.
2. A background section that outlines the historical perception/treatment of your device, while also demonstrating how your study will contribute to the understanding of the device as a whole.
3. An experiment section that introduces your study’s design (with link(s) to all of the relevant materials) and presents some preliminary results.<sup>2</sup>
4. A conclusion section that interprets your experimental results in relation to the historical perception/treatment of your device.

Some desiderata:

- The paper shouldn’t be a report of facts: “First, X. Then, Y (Citation, Year).” will not cut it. Instead, you, as the {author, researcher}, should still come through. See Pollack’s book for some examples of how to incorporate research and narrative voice in an effective & engaging way.
- I understand that you are not long-standing experts on your topic, nor are you an experimental humanist (yet)! As such, I’m not expecting a complete, ready-to-publish piece of scholarship. However, your essay should still maintain a high degree of professionalism.
- You should incorporate a number of sources (minimally five) surrounding your topic.

If you’re feeling stuck, here are some questions to think about:

- What’s the earliest recorded use of your device?
- Who has used this device, and why? What social implications have become tangled with this device over time?
- Where in the world has this device been used? In what regions/settings might I find it being used?

We will work through this process together, but I want you to *own* your work. You can do it!

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<sup>1</sup> We will cover how to develop an explicit research question in class.

<sup>2</sup> No statistics needed (or useful, probably, given the small sample sizes)! However, do include a link to your study.