

## **The Frog Dies Humor and Satire Through History, the Arts and Animation**



***Humor can be dissected, as a frog can, but the thing dies in the process and the innards are discouraging to any but the purely scientific mind.***

E. B. White

This studio/seminar will examine various forms of humor and satire through history, focusing on its use in art. Through a mixture of lectures, class readings, screenings and group critiques of your comedic or satiric animations, theories of how humor functions both personally and culturally will be introduced and explored.

Topics will include theories of humor, Horatian and Juvenalian satire, humor in the Middle Ages, satire and the Enlightenment, the trope of the trickster, and humor and satire in animation and contemporary art. We will kill the frog, but also make some efforts to revive it.\*

Student Learning Objectives: Familiarization with various theories of humor and satire through readings and examples of satire through history and art. Improved ability to discuss humor theories as they are represented in art and in class critiques of student artworks.

Grades will be based on:	Attendance, class participation	15%
	Mini Assignment	5%
	Class presentation of reading	10%
	Student notebook	15%
	Two Animation Assignments- 20 points each	40%
	Final Animation Assignment	20%

\* no actual frogs will die as a result of class activities

### **Weekly Schedule and Readings**

**Week 1 - Introduction**– Introduction: syllabus, assignments

- Introduction to humor and satire theories and lecture on humor and satire in history

Screen: Dust in the Wind, Kirsten Lepore- Hi Stranger, Stanly Kubrick- Dr. Strangelove

Read: Chris Bachelder "The Dead Chipmunk," Nina Rastogi, "5 Leading Theories for Why We Laugh...", Sigmund Freud "Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious- Intro"

**Week 2- Mini Assignment -Make a joke /show sample of previous work**

No class Monday, September 4, Labor Day

**Week 3- Superiority Theory** - lecture Part II humor and satire in contemporary art

Screen: Bob Newhart- Stop It!, Monty Python- At the Last 1948 Show, Bruce Nauman- Clown Torture, Hitoshi Matsumoto- Big Man Japan

Read: Diogenes the Cynic attributed quotes, Ambrose Bierce, "The Devil's Dictionary," Baudelaire & Hobbs excerpts, Julian Gough "Divine Comedy," God and the Scientist joke

**Week 4 – Individual student meetings and work time**

**Week 5- Incongruity Theory, Relief Theory**

Screen: A PowerPoint Lecture, Marv Newland- Bambi verses Godzilla, John Smith- A Girl Chewing Gum, Chris Burden-Commercials, Too Many Cooks, Gillian Wearing- 2 in 1, Tony Tasset- Squib, Ryan Trecartin- I-BE AREA (Pasta and Wendy M-PEGgy), Jim Reardon- Bring Me the Head of Charlie Brown, Unedited Footage of a Bear

Read: Arthur Schopenhauer "The World as Will and Idea," Sam Kriss "Book of Lamentations," Herbert Spencer "The Physiology of Laughter," William Shakespeare "Sonnet 130"

**Week 6- First Project Critiques**

**Week7- Nonsense, Terror, Violation and the Grotesque**

Screen: Kristin Schall is a Horse, Bruce Nauman- Walking in An Exaggerated Manner, Don Hertzfeldt - Rejected Cartoons and The Animation Show, Dario Fo- Grammelot & The Starving Zanni, (also other examples of Grammelot), Prisencolinensinainciusol, Ella Fitzgerald

Read: Lewis Carol "Sense and Nonsense" Symbolic Logic, Aelfic Bata "Colloquies," Donald Barthelme "The Teachings of Don B," Allan Kaprow "The Meaning of Life," Danil Kharms "Today I Wrote Nothing", "a certain Chinese encyclopaedia"

**Week 8 – Individual student meetings and work time**

**Week 9- Satire: Juvenalian and Horatian**

Screen: Stephen Colbert- White House Correspondent's Dinner Address, Richard Pryor- Word Association, Martha Rosler- Semiotics of the Kitchen, Pippilotta Rist- Ever is All Over, Homeopathic AE/Lifestyle Nutritionist, Monty Python- Annoying Peasant, Frederico Solmi, Philomena Cunk

Read: Jonathan Swift "A Modest Proposal," Adrian Piper's "How to Handle Black People," David Levi Strauss "Considering the Alternative: Are "Artists" Really Necessary?" Scarfolk

### **Week 10 – Second Project Critiques**

#### **Week 11- the Trickster**

Screen: Hennessy Youngman- Art Thoughtz, Andy Kaufman- Mighty Mouse, For Profit Online University

Read: Jan Ziolkowski, "Solomon and Marcolf," J. Michael Waller's "Ridicule: An Instrument in the War on Terrorism," Terry Spencer "Stetson Kennedy," John Southworth "Jesters and Fools," Lewis Hyde, "Trickster Makes This World"

### **Week 12 - Individual student meetings and work time**

#### **Week 13- Humor is Human, Mechanical Theory, Deadpan and Kitsch**

No class W November 22 – Thanksgiving

Screen: Frostie, Will Wegman- various short videos, Fischli and Weiss- The Way Things Go, Affect Study, Car Alarm, John Baldessari- Teaching a Plant the Alphabet, Stanya Kahn and Harry Dodge- Winner, Bas Jan Ader- various, Steve McQueen- Deadpan

Read: Thomas Bernhard "My Prizes," Henri Bergson "Laughter...", Langston Hughes, "Some Reservations", Susan Sontag "Notes on Kitsch", Constance McPhee- Infinite Jest, Lawrence Ferlinghetti- "Underwear"

#### **Week 14- Work week and Use of Humor**

Read: Daniel Dennett's "Inside Jokes: Using Humor to Reverse Engineer the Mind," Simon Critchley "On Humor," Ronald de Sousa "When is it Wrong to Laugh?"

### **Week 15- Final Project Critiques**