

POL300H1S – Topics in Comparative Politics

Humour and Politics

Summer 2017 (July 4-August 10, 2017)
Department of Political Science, University of Toronto

I. CONTACT INFORMATION

Instructor Information	Course Information
Instructor: Erica Petkov Office: TBD Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays after class (4-5pm) Email: erica.rosenfield@alumni.utoronto.ca	Lecture location: SS 562 Lecture times: TR 2-4pm (Tuesdays and Thursdays) Course website: Blackboard



II. COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description/Overview

How do humour and politics intersect? What role does humour play in the political life of democracies, transitioning democracies, and authoritarian states? Can humour impact international relations and public policy? Why is political satire more popular than ever, both in democracies and non-democracies, and what does the resurgence of satire say about our society and about political life more broadly? This course will introduce you to the world of humour and politics, with a focus on two broad themes: **satire and society**, and **humour and international politics**. We will explore the history of satire and subversive humour, and take a “tour around the world” of contemporary satire, looking at how satire functions in various societies and the impact that it has on political life. We will look at how satirists are increasingly influential in the policy process, and how they have become major political actors (whether deliberately or not) in many countries. We will delve into the limits of free speech, international humour scandals, humour and social movements, and the role of humour in political campaigns. We will also look at how humour has been used as a tool to combat oppression, and we will study the effectiveness (and limits) of humour as a tool for achieving political change.

Pre-requisites: 1.0 POL credit

Distribution Requirement Status: This is a Social Science course

Breadth Requirement: Society and Its Institutions

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you should:

- Have a deeper understanding of the ways in which humour and politics intersect, and the history of political satire and its relevance in contemporary society
- Be familiar with a variety of international humour scandals and how they have impacted international relations
- Be able to describe how humour has intersected with social movements to impact political outcomes in a variety of contexts around the world
- Be able to analyze and evaluate how satire and other forms of political comedy are impacting the public policy process
- Be able to explain why satire is undergoing a renaissance around the world
- Be able to critically analyze and comprehend a variety of satirical content, and explain its meaning
- Be able to classify and identify different types of political comedy
- Be familiar with the many similarities and differences between satirical content across the globe
- Be able to differentiate between political satire and other forms of non-satirical comedy
- Have a greater understanding of the role that satire plays in political life in different socio-political contexts (including democracies and authoritarian states)

Course Expectations

As your instructor, I will expect you to:

- Attend all lectures and come to class prepared to engage and participate in a constructive and respectful manner
- Take charge of your own learning
- Complete all tasks and assignments by the posted due date
- Never hesitate to ask for help when a concept is unclear
- Use technology (such as laptops) to help you with note-taking, and not for surfing the web during lectures
- Be punctual to lectures
- Have fun! This is a course about political comedy, after all!

As students, you are entitled to expect that I will:

- Create a respectful, supportive and engaging learning environment
- Be well-prepared for every lecture
- Be available in person and via email to help you throughout the course
- Do all that I can to help you achieve the course objectives
- Provide you with clear instructions regarding course assignments
- Grade your work objectively and fairly
- Provide you with useful and constructive feedback

Course Textbooks

The majority of course content will be available online, through U of T libraries, and through the course's website (Blackboard). The following book is required reading, and will be available for purchase at the U of T bookstore:

**Day, Amber. *Satire and Dissent: Interventions in Contemporary Political Debate*.
Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2011.**

III. COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Critical Reflection Essay x 2 (3-4 pages each)	20% each (40% total)	Due Thursday July 20th, 2017 and Tuesday August 1st, 2017
Research Paper (12-15 pages)	40%	Due Thursday August 10th, 2017
Attendance and participation	20%	

*Please note that more information will be provided about the assignments in lectures and on the course website. Hard copies of all assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class on the posted due date, and e-copies should be submitted to turnitin.com (instructions forthcoming).

Participation marks are awarded for active attention and constructive class interaction, for clear evidence of familiarity with assigned readings, and for focused attention and participation. Your participation grade will be based on reasoned, thoughtful and informed contributions to the course. Small in-class activities (for e.g. “ticket out the door,” reading responses, quizzes) may also count towards your attendance and participation grade.

IV. COURSE POLICIES

Late Assignments

Late assignments are subject to a penalty of **3% per day** (weekends count as one day) unless accompanied by a U of T illness verification form (<http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca/index.php>). Extensions will only be granted in rare circumstances, and must be requested *prior* to the assignment due date. Any assignment more than 2 weeks late will not be accepted.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences (www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm). Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing unauthorized aids.
- Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test.
- Misrepresenting your identity.

In academic work:

- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources (see <http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/>).

On Turnitin.com:

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

If, as a student, you object to using turnitin.com, please see me to establish alternative arrangements for submission of your written assignments.

For more information on Turnitin.com, please contact portal.help@utoronto.ca.

Accommodation

The University of Toronto is committed to creating an accessible learning environment. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, please do not hesitate to contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible (<http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>)

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the University's courses and programs. For more information on services and resources available to instructors and students, please contact Tanya Lewis, Director of Academic Success and Accessibility Services, at (416) 978-6268 or tanya.lewis@utoronto.ca.

Email

Please use your official U of T email accounts (@mail.utoronto.ca) for all course-related correspondence, and put the course code (POL300) in the subject line of each email you send to me. I will do my best to answer your emails as soon as possible, but please allow up to 2 full working days for a response. Whenever possible, please try to come to my office hours in lieu of sending an email, so we can discuss any questions or concerns you have in person.

V. STUDENT SUPPORT

General Advice

Since this is a course about political satire, I strongly encourage you to regularly watch satirical programs while you are taking the course (and afterwards, of course). This might be the most fun you will ever have doing homework! Most television programs put their content online; for instance, you can watch clips from *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* on **YouTube**, and clips from *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah* on **thecomedynetwork.ca**. I also strongly encourage you to look at online satirical publications, including **theonion.com** (American), and **thebeaverton.com** and **syruptrap.ca** (Canadian).

Resources

The University of Toronto offers excellent free writing resources for undergraduate students. I strongly encourage you to avail yourselves of these resources. Here is a link to the multitude of writing resources available to you:

www.writing.utoronto.ca

University of Toronto Libraries provides access to a vast collection of online and print resources to faculty, staff, and students.

Research help is available by phone, e-mail, chat, and in-person. For more information on services and resources available, visit the Library website:

<https://onesearch.library.utoronto.ca/>

VI. COURSE SCHEDULE

*Please note that **readings are subject to change**, at the instructor's discretion.

Class	Date	Topic	Readings
1	Tuesday July 4, 2017	Course introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amber Day, <i>Satire and Dissent</i> (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2011), Introduction, pp. 1-23.
2 (Beginning of Theme 1: Satire and Society)	Thursday July 6, 2017	Satire through the ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ruben Quintero, ed., <i>A Companion to Satire: Ancient and Modern</i> (Malden, MA : Blackwell Publishing, 2007), Introduction, pp. 1-10. [available as an e-resource through U of T libraries] Ralph M. Rosen, "Efficacy and Meaning in Ancient and Modern Political Satire: Aristophanes, Lenny Bruce, and Jon Stewart" (<i>Social Research</i> Vol. 79, No. 1: Spring 2012), pp. 1-32. <p><i>Recommended:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dustin Griffin, <i>Satire: A Critical Reintroduction</i> (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994), Chapter 1 (Theories of Satire in Polemical Context), pp. 6-34.
3	Tuesday July 11, 2017	Satire in democracies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sophia A. McClennen, <i>Colbert's America: Satire and Democracy</i> (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), Chapter 2, pp. 41-68. Dominic Boyer, "Simply the best: Parody and political sincerity in Iceland" (<i>American Ethnologist</i> Vol. 40, No. 2: 2013), pp. 276-287. Noelle J. Molé, "Trusted puppets, tarnished politicians: Humour and cynicism in Berlusconi's Italy" (<i>American Ethnologist</i> Vol. 40, No. 2: 2013), pp. 288-299.

4	Thursday July 13, 2017	Contemporary American/ Canadian satire GUEST SPEAKER(S) FROM THE BEAVERTON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sophia A. McClennen, <i>Colbert's America: Satire and Democracy</i>, Introduction, pp. 1-11. • Amber Day, <i>Satire and Dissent</i>, Chapter 2 (Ironic Authenticity) and Chapter 3 (Truthiness and Consequences in Parodic News), pp. 24-98. <p><i>Recommended:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ian Reilly, “Amusing Ourselves to Death? Social Media, Political Satire, and the 2011 Election” (<i>Canadian Journal of Communication</i> Vol. 36, No. 3: 2011), pp. 503-511. • Rick Mercer, <i>A Nation Worth Ranting About</i> (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2012).
5	Tuesday July 18, 2017	Satire around the world: Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria Bernal, “Please forget democracy and justice: Eritrean politics and the powers of humor,” (<i>American Ethnologist</i> Vol. 40, No. 2: 2013), pp. 300-309. • <u>It's No Joke: Venezuela Cracks Down on Comedians (NPR, May 5 2015)</u> • <u>How millennials like their news: satire shows and new-age protest music (Hindustan Times, May 20, 2016)</u> • <u>Satire is Thriving in Russia, While Many Russians Aren't (Newsweek, May 2, 2016)</u> • <u>Laughing in the face of danger: the state of satire in the Muslim world (The Guardian, January 12, 2015)</u> • <u>Growing Taste for Satirical News in China (Sixth Tone, January 6, 2017)</u> <p><i>Recommended:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geoffrey Baym and Jeffrey P. Jones, “News Parody in Global Perspective: Politics, Power, and Resistance” (<i>Popular Communication</i> Vol. 10: 2012), pp. 2-13.

6	Thursday July 20, 2017	Satire in non-democratic contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leonard Freedman, <i>The Offensive Art</i> (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2009), Part II - A Dangerous Game: Political Satire in Authoritarian Systems, pp. 89-140; 157-166. <p><u>Critical Reflection Essay due at beginning of class.</u></p>
7	Tuesday July 25, 2017	Satire and political participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lindsay H. Hoffman and Dannagal G. Young, "Satire, Punch Lines, and the Nightly News: Untangling Media Effects on Political Participation" (<i>Communication Research Reports</i> Vol. 28, No. 2: April-June 2011), pp. 159-168. Xiaoxia Cao and Paul R. Brewer, "Political Comedy Shows and Public Participation in Politics" (<i>International Journal of Public Opinion Research</i> Vol. 20, No. 1: 2008), pp. 90-99. Michael X. Delli Carpini, "Entertainment Media and the Political Engagement of Citizens," Chapter 1 of <i>Sage Handbook of Political Communication</i> (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2012), pp. 9-21. <p><i>Recommended:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> W. Lance Bennett, Deen G. Freelon, Muzammil M. Hussain and Chris Wells, "Digital Media and Youth Engagement," Chapter 10 of <i>Sage Handbook of Political Communication</i>, pp. 127-140.
8 (Beginning of Theme 2: Humour and international politics)	Thursday July 27, 2017	Humour and public policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erica Petkov, "Political satire and agenda-setting: an exploration of unconventional influences on public policy" (unpublished manuscript) <u>How the 'John Oliver Effect' Is Having a Real-Life Impact</u> (<i>Time</i>, July 10, 2015)

9	Tuesday August 1, 2017	Humour and social movements FILM: <u>No Billionaire Left Behind</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amber Day, <i>Satire and Dissent</i>, Chapter 5 (Irony in Activism) • <u>Why Dictators Don't Like Jokes</u> (<i>Foreign Policy</i>, April 5, 2013). <p><i>Recommended:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angelique Haugerud, <i>No Billionaire Left Behind: Satirical Activism in America</i> (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), Introduction, pp. 1-22. <p><u>Critical Reflection Essay due at beginning of class.</u></p>
10	Thursday August 3, 2017	International humour scandals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giseline Kuipers, "The politics of humour in the public sphere: Cartoons, power and modernity in the first transnational humour scandal" (<i>European Journal of Cultural Studies</i> Vol. 14, No. 1: 2011), pp. 63-80. • <u>Jokes About Erdogan Aren't Funny in Germany</u> (<i>The Atlantic</i>, April 15, 2016) • <u>German prosecutors drop probe into comedian's anti-Erdogan satire</u> (<i>Yahoo News</i>, October 4, 2016).
11	Tuesday August 8, 2017	Political humour and the limits of free speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Danish Cartoon Affair: Free Speech, Racism, Islamism, and Integration</i> (available on Blackboard). Please read sections by University of Toronto professors Randall Hansen (pp. 7-16) and Joseph Carens (pp. 33-42). • <u>The Last Laugh: Why Canadian satire can't measure up to Stewart and Colbert</u> (<i>The Walrus</i>, September 12, 2012). • <u>The Freedom to Mock</u> (<i>PEN Canada</i>, July 10, 2012). <p><i>Recommended:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>1 year after Charlie Hebdo attacks, satirists still taking risks news outlets won't</u> (<i>Salon</i>, January 9, 2016)

12	Thursday August 10, 2017	Course conclusion – the future of humour and politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sophia A. McClennen and Remy Maisel, <i>Is Satire Saving Our Nation?</i> (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) Chapters 1 and 6. • <u>How Comedians Became Public Intellectuals</u> (<i>The Atlantic</i>, May 28, 2015). <p><i>Recommended:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amy Becker and Don Waisanen, “From Funny Features to Entertaining Effects: Connecting Approaches to Communication Research on Political Comedy” (<i>The Review of Communication</i> Vol. 13, no. 3: July 2013), pp. 161-183. <p><u>Research Paper due at beginning of class.</u></p>
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