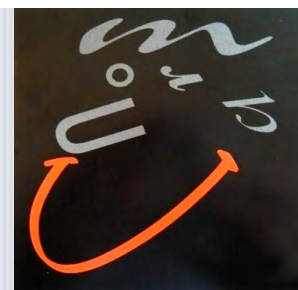


The Humour Studies Digest

Australasian Humour Studies Network ([AHSN](#))

September 2018



The 25th AHSN Conference

The 25th Conference of the Australasian Humour Studies Network will take place from 6-8 February 2019 at RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.

Theme: "Humour in all its forms: on screen, on the page, on stage, on air, online ..."

Update from the Conference Organisers:

Call for papers has now closed

Thank you to everyone who has submitted an abstract. We will shortly be undertaking the peer review process and will be in touch with everyone by mid-October.

Registration Now Open

Registration for the conference is now open via the following link (also from the main AHSN webpage):

https://sydney.onestopsecure.com/onestopweb/V96/booking?U_DS_ACTION_DATA=bFEhCUhFXXdOUiYBNkJDASgjQndAWEMbWkQ1WwE1J0J9N1BV

Fees are as follows:

- \$250 full
- \$200 concession for students / unwaged

Postgraduate scholarships

Congratulations to the five postgraduate students who have received a scholarship to the conference:

- Cale Bain, University of Technology Sydney, will present a paper entitled "The Professional Identity of the Comedy News Journalist" and will also run an improvisation workshop entitled "Finding the funny".
- Joseph Fettling, University of Melbourne, will present a paper entitled "Comic Therapy: How the Dual Approach to Humour in M*A*S*H (1972-1983) Helps us Manage Fear".

THIS EDITION

The 25th AHSN Conference –

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- Charmaine Peters, La Trobe University, will present a paper entitled "After Television: Women Working the Web Series".
- Caroline Rosenberg, Deakin University, will present a paper entitled "Humour in workplace leadership: through a cultural lens".
- Lara Weinglass, University of Queensland, will present a paper entitled "Humour in Australian Blue-collar Workplace".

We look forward to welcoming all the winners to Melbourne in February and to hearing their papers. Congratulations again!

Conference Information

On the Events page of the AHSN website, you will also find some transport, accommodation and tourist information for Melbourne: <http://whatson.sydney.edu.au/events/published/the-25th-ahsn-conference-call-for-papers>

The conference organisers are still hard at work (as you can see from the accompanying pictures!) planning the conference. Please block-out your diaries for the full three days!



That's not Justine!



That's better!



Now where's Sharon gone?

Draft Program Outline

Program Outline – draft only for guidance

Wed 6th Feb: 9.00am – 12.30pm informal workshops for postgraduates / Early Career Researchers with several established humour researchers and a book publisher. Followed by lunch, first plenary address, presentations and welcome drinks/nibbles from 6-7.30pm (exact times TBC).

Thurs 7th Feb: 9.00am start with second plenary address, presentations and conference dinner in the evening.

Fri 8th Feb: 9.00am start with third plenary address, presentations, and comedy debate to conclude conference followed by optional evening activity.

Confirmed plenary speaker: Dr Jessica Milner Davis FRSN, University of Sydney, on “What Is Humour Studies? 25 Years of Interdisciplinarity and the AHSN”.

Details of additional plenary speakers will be advised as soon as available.

Enquiries

All conference enquiries should be forwarded to: ahsnconference@gmail.com

We look forward to seeing you in Melbourne next year to help us celebrate 25 brilliant years of Australasian humour studies!

Conference Organising Committee

Dr Kerry Mullan,
School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University

Assoc. Prof. Craig Batty,
School of Media and Communication, RMIT University

Dr Sharon Andrews,
School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University

Ms Justine Sless,
La Trobe University

Guidelines for AHSN2019 Presenters

Topics and Subject Matter: Papers at AHSN conferences typically come from a very wide range of disciplines and should have a firm basis in Humour and/or Comedy Studies to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in the review process.

Abstracts: Abstracts are limited to 500 words only including references (if required). Please do not use foot- or end-notes, and retain a dated copy for your own records.

Length of Presentation: Papers are allocated 20 minutes for presentation and 10 minutes for discussion; pre-organised panels of 3 presentations are allocated 90 minutes; and practical workshops of 60 minutes are welcome. Please time your presentation and allow time for questions. Questions from AHSN delegates will come from a variety of disciplines and may give you valuable new perspectives on your project.

We look forward to seeing you in Melbourne next February!

Information on Travel, Accommodation and Melbourne generally

Venue

AHSN 2019 will be held at RMIT University's city campus in Melbourne's CBD.

Level 7 conference and seminar rooms (Green Brain), Building 16, 336–348 Swanston Street (near corner of La Trobe Street), Melbourne (entry on Swanston Street)

The venue is in the free tram zone. The following link opens a PDF of the Campus Map:

https://www.rmit.edu.au/content/dam/rmit/documents/maps/pdf-maps/city-campus/2015-City-Campus_FINAL-WEB_2.pdf

University website and campus maps: <https://www.rmit.edu.au/>; <https://www.rmit.edu.au/maps>

Closest public transport

Tram:

1. RMIT University tram stop 7 (outside RMIT Building 80 on Swanston Street - see campus map link above). This stop is one stop outside of the free tram zone – see below under Transport in Melbourne.
2. Tram stop 6 on the corner of Swanston and La Trobe Streets (opposite Melbourne Central train station and the State Library of Victoria). This stop is in the free tram zone – see below under Transport in Melbourne.

Train :

Melbourne Central train station. See <https://www.rmit.edu.au/about/our-locations-and-facilities/locations/melbourne-city-campus/transport>

For more details, the following link opens a PDF detailing public transport options:

<https://static.ptv.vic.gov.au/PDFs/Campus-brochures/1487915942/Public-transport-to-and-from-RMIT-City.pdf>

Very useful city map with public transport routes. The following link opens a PDF document:

<https://whatson.melbourne.vic.gov.au/Documents/Maps/transportguide.pdf>

Getting to Melbourne from the airport

Airport shuttle buses: SkyBus is the main airport shuttle to and from Melbourne Airport and the city (<https://www.skybus.com.au/timetables/>).

A taxi to the city should cost between A\$55 and \$65, including the compulsory airport fee payable by departing taxis and CityLink tollway charges.

Transport in Melbourne

Free tram zone. The following link opens a PDF document:

https://static.ptv.vic.gov.au/siteassets/PDFs/Maps/Network-maps/PTV_FreeTramZone_Map.pdf

For all other travel, you will need a Myki card (these can be used in all trams, trains and buses).

<https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/tickets/myki>

The following link opens a PDF document:

<https://static.ptv.vic.gov.au/PTV/PTV%20docs/Ticketing/1517439989/Your-go-to-guide-for-myki-2018.pdf>

You can buy your myki and top it up at:

- around 800 shops including all 7-Elevens
- myki machines at most train stations and some tram stops
- PTV Hubs in Melbourne
- on the bus (\$20 max)

International and interstate visitors coming to Victoria can buy a myki Explorer pack. The myki Explorer pack combines a ready-to-use myki card, visitor information and special offers all in one. It's a great option for visitors who choose to explore Melbourne and regional Victoria by public transport! You can buy a myki Explorer from:

- Melbourne Visitor Centre in Federation Square
- SkyBus terminals at Melbourne Airport and Southern Cross Station
- PTV Hubs in Melbourne
- the concierge desk at many hotels and accommodation providers

For routes and timetables, see <https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/getting-around/visiting-melbourne/>

For train travel in regional Victoria, see <https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/tickets/>

Parking

Locations and fees: <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/parking-and-transport/parking/parking-locations-fees/Pages/parking-locations-and-fees.aspx>

Finding a car park: <https://www.wilsonparking.com.au/find-a-park/VIC/Melbourne%20CBD>

AHSN Research Student Profile: Lara Weinglass

Lara Weinglass is a confirmed PhD candidate in Linguistics in the School of Languages and Cultures at The University of Queensland in Brisbane.

Lara has had a long-term interest in languages, completing an undergraduate degree with majors in Russian language and culture, and a Master of Arts (Advanced) in linguistics. She has many years' teaching experience in linguistics courses at an undergraduate and postgraduate level. In addition to her PhD studies, she is currently learning Chinese (or at least she's attempting to!). Her introduction to Humour Studies came about during research assistant work she had undertaken prior



to starting her PhD, which involved many hours of collection, transcription and analysis of conversational data. The excerpts of data when examined in closer detail were often sequences where participants were laughing or joking around in some way. During this time she also learnt of the Language in the Workplace project (Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand) and became interested in gathering Australian workplace data, as very little linguistic work had been done in this area in Australia.

The working title for Lara's PhD thesis is *Humour and laughter in Australian workplace interactions*, combining both her interests in workplace communication and humour studies. Perhaps unlike many other members of the AHSN, Lara is focussing on un-scripted, conversational humour—the wide range of humour found in everyday conversations such as puns, wordplay, self-deprecation, banter and teasing. Given that the notion of *not taking yourself too seriously* is thought to be a key aspect of Australian culture, perhaps Australians display this lack of seriousness through humour even when they're at work?

In her PhD project, Lara is investigating how conversational humour is used at work—under which circumstances does it arise, and how is it used to build and maintain relationships between co-workers? The data are analysed using methods from Interactional Pragmatics, Corpus Linguistics and Conversation Analysis. To perform this type of analysis, some of the data will be transcribed in very close detail, (e.g. to show where there are pauses, where speakers overlap, and even down to breaths and individual beats of laughter) to show the finer nuances of the conversation that participants orient to.

Lara is currently finalising data collection for her project. The data consists of audio and video recordings of naturally occurring interactions between co-workers, recorded at work while participants are performing their day-to-day duties, and during shared breaks. Participants come from various blue-collar backgrounds (e.g. farmers, landscapers and plasterers) and over 100 hours of recordings have already been collected. Lara has started on the arduous task of transcribing her recordings (which, not-so-secretly, she loves doing!) and a preliminary analysis suggests she will have many interesting examples to share with you at the next AHSN Conference!

Lara enjoys being involved in academic life both inside and outside of UQ—she is currently serving as Post-graduate Student Representative for the School of Languages and Cultures and recently she was runner-up in the Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty heat of the Three Minute Thesis competition. She is the current Secretary for the Brisbane Transcript Analysis Group, a cross-institutional and interdisciplinary group focussed on research in Conversation Analysis and related methodologies. Lara is a keen baker, and when not at uni, she can be found in her kitchen, perfecting her brownie recipe.

Contact Lara at: l.weinglass@uq.edu.au

Editors: Serious congratulations. Lara! And can you please share your brownie recipe in the next issue?

AHSN Research Student Profile: Cale Bain

I've lived a double life for many years: one, as a journalist and the other, a comedian. When I was coming up as a reporter and magazine editor in my hometown Toronto, Canada, I didn't imagine I'd merge my working life with my high school hobby of improvised comedy theatre, or improv. Not even a few years ago did it seem like a likelihood, even while both of those worlds were surrounding me more and I was taking them much more seriously, more professionally. I was producing news radio at the ABC and doing journalism research at the University of Technology Sydney, where I was also teaching post-graduate students in journalism and journalism research. At the same time, I was touring around Australia, producing, directing and teaching improv to festivals around the country.

Then I was compelled by my highers-up at the university to go after a PhD. Something that's of interest to me, that I could offer a unique perspective on.

This was around I first started playing with how to merge these two worlds. I'd created an improv show where I would interview jourmos, from both traditional news and from comedy news shows (yes, those people like the ones that write for the Chaser or The Weekly or Shaun Micallef's Mad As Hell are jourmos). We'd chat about current events and my ensemble would improvise scenes on our news musings. It was silly, informative, engaging and fun.

It had all the elements of comedy and news that I enjoy in both genres. Compelling different takes on common narratives of democratic importance and/or public interest, ways of making dull news stories engaging (you get an immediate sense of this in live theatre), stupid absurdity and genuine lessons. The audience could learn something because they were often news stories they hadn't heard before or they were different angles they hadn't considered.

That was how I came about conceiving of my research. My research would ask if and how audiences actually learned anything when news was delivered through comedy in Australia, it would ask what different narratives comedy news was putting news stories in from traditional news media and it would ask what were the professional practices that went into creating comedy news. A three-pronged approach looking at audiences, content and producers.

At the first AHSN Colloquium which I presented, in Adelaide 2015, my paper was about how Australian comedy news audiences in fact learned from comedy news. My surveys had shown that comedy news audiences learned nuances of stories with which they were already familiar and also learned new news stories. This was confirming American research on the same, though my research had a new angle. Comedy news audiences had more trust for comedy news reporters and as a consequence tended to believe comedy news more than traditional news, this despite the fact that comedy news is usually in part fiction in order to create a punchline as well as the fact that the reporting the comedy news does is regularly off the back of genuine traditional news reporting.

The next year, in Sydney, 2016, I presented a paper suggesting what different discourses comedy news approached common news items with than traditional news. Overall, my findings were that comedy news had an opportunity to explore to greater depth news items than traditional evening television news could. Coding the content would show that comedy news would present stories (particularly those on the new agenda of politics) from the point of view of hypocrisies and in clear terms of human impact. Stories from traditional news media were in general more empirical and fact based, while comedy news stories were judgmentally humanistic, people focused and occasionally action oriented. This is most easily recognized in business stories. Imagine the business part of an evening news report, terms of cost of commodities and levels on consumer confidences represented by the number of purchases of goods, new homes, cars, etc. A comedy news story would point out who the parties with vested interested were and who was set to lose or gain from the fluctuations in those numbers, and position why that might be a good or bad, right or wrong thing.



Having already presented on audiences and content, this upcoming AHSN colloquium in Melbourne, 2019, I'll be presenting on the third prong, the professional practice of comedy news reporters. Using a foundation of professional culture research in journalism practice, I interviewed a batch of Australia's most prominent comedy news reporters. I inquired about their professional identities, their conceptions of news narratives and tried to understand what gave someone a nose for comedy news. I ended up coming up with comedy news values, a system of understanding what provides the opportunities for an incident to become strong comedy news, just as news values have done for news hacks since the 1940s.

I'm now the Artistic Director of one of Australia's largest comedy theatre companies and still using my investigative skills for my own and other research.

Improv and journalism have both afforded me some amazing opportunities, the chance to meet multitudes of hugely interesting people, the chance to chat with, learn about, learn from and play with those people. I've had to be a quick study on current affairs and a quick mind in scenes. I've played on tiny pub stages, reported in community news rags, directed one of the largest improv shows in the world and produced news for a national broadcaster. Being able to verify that the two of them together make a difference to how people see the world around them has been a pleasure. I'm excited to be able to share with the Melbourne AHSN Colloquium the end of my research. Thanks for the honor.

Editors: Cale's juggling act is to be admired! Let's hope he has no more broken toes (3 to date and counting....)

AHSN member, Dr Mahmud Farjami, scholar and practitioner of Persian satire, is a BBC TV star!

AHSN members will remember Mahmud from his paper at the 2013 University of Newcastle AHSN Conference. In the photos he is shown during a break along with his friends from the local hospital clown program, and also in his latest achievement, a new program on BBC Persian Service, where he plays a member of the Press.

This was a stand-up comedy based on satirizing mainstream media, including the BBC itself, and even included an appearance by "Her Majesty the Queen". The performance, originally designed to be around 20 mins, became a 90 minute full show and was broadcast in March 2018, shortly after the Persian New Year.

You can watch part of the show at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=falSaFiuhdU> Although the dialogue is mostly in Persian, at Minute 42 "Her Majesty" (played by another leading Persian-speaking reporter) is interviewed by Mahmud the Reporter.

Editors - Congratulations, Dr Farjami!



Is there a Doctor in the house?



There is now. Dr Farjami on stage.

Current Events at The Centre for Comedy Studies Research, Brunel University London

Dear Colleagues,

As the beginning of the new academic year approaches we thought it would be useful to send details of our events for 2018-19. We are pleased to announce that this year's seminar series is entitled 'Beyond a Joke': Comedy and Critical Thought'. The seminar series is a collaboration with the Department of Education at Brunel University London. It will examine the complex and dynamic relationship between comedy, critical thought, education practice and research practice and includes a number of exciting speakers.

Our first panel seminar - which coincides with the **Centre for Comedy Studies Research (CCSR) 5th anniversary** - is:

Comedy and Research: An Oxymoron or Natural Bedfellows?

Wednesday 10th October 2018, 4.00pm-6.00pm

Cavendish Room, Hamilton Centre, Brunel University London, Uxbridge, UB8 3PH

What are the roles of comedy in shaping and contributing to research methodologies and research dissemination and impact strategies? Does comedy make research inclusive/exclusive? Does comedy facilitate community engagement with academic research and its impact? How successful can researchers be with comedy and what are the limits of comedy in research? What skills do comedians bring into research? These questions, and more, will be explored by a panel of experts at the Comedy and Research: An Oxymoron or Natural Bedfellows? panel seminar.

Speakers include:

Alison Browne: is a Lecturer in Geography at the University of Manchester. Alison's research focuses on the social, material and governance dynamics of everyday life related to water, energy and food in the UK, Australia and China. Her research into the significance of humour in academic research was published in 2016 as 'Can people talk together about their practices? Focus groups, humour and the sensitive dynamics of everyday life' in *Area*.

Steve Cross: is an international stand-up comedian and an award-winning public engagement and communication consultant, trainer and strategist. Steve is a Wellcome Trust Engagement Fellow, Honorary Fellow of the British Science Association and advises on public engagement projects across Europe. Steve was the Head of Public Engagement at University College London (UCL) where he founded Bright Club.

Kate Fox: is a stand-up poet, comedian, writer and practice-based researcher. Kate has published a number of papers and book chapters on comedy and performance. In her 2016 article entitled 'Confetti and red squirrels: A stand-up autoethnography as an archive of detritus' in *Comedy Studies*, Kate uses creative audience response methods, involving comedy, to create new insights into performance research.

Max Kinnings: is a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Brunel University London, where he teaches screenwriting and comedy writing. Max is a novelist and screenwriter. Max is the author of four novels (*Hitman*, *The Fixer*, *Baptism* and *Sacrifice*) and a number of screenplays in various stages of development. A ten-year collaboration and friendship with actor/comedian, Rik Mayall, involved Max becoming the ghost-writer on Rik's

best-selling 2005 spoof autobiography *Bigger Than Hitler Better Than Christ*.

Chaired by **Sharon Lockyer**, Director of the Centre for Comedy Studies Research (CCSR) and Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Communications, Brunel University London.

Please email Comedy.Studies@brunel.ac.uk to reserve your place.

Everyone very welcome. We look forward to you joining us for a lively discussion and for celebrating our 5th anniversary!

Best wishes,

Sharon

Dr Sharon Lockyer
Director, Centre for Comedy Studies Research (CCSR)
Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Communications
Department of Social Sciences, Media and Communications
College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences
Brunel University, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 3PH UK
Email: Sharon.Lockyer@brunel.ac.uk
Twitter: @Comedy_Studies

Future 'Beyond a Joke': Comedy and Critical Thought' events include:

Comedy and Knowledge in Post-Truth Times (in collaboration with Big Difference Company) - to be held at the Leicester Comedy Festival 2019 in February 2019

Comedy and the Classroom: You Must Be Joking? - to be held at Brunel University London in April 2019

Report on Recent Humour Studies Roundtable in St Petersburg, Russia

After the recent ISHS Conference in Tallinn, Estonia, a Round Table on "SOCIAL STUDIES OF HUMOR AND LAUGHTER: main directions, perspectives, terminology and methodology" took place on 2 July 2018, hosted by Sociological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Research Center for Cultural Exclusion and Frontier Zones, and Gelological Studies Laboratory, Saint Petersburg, Russia.

The Round Table gathered about 15 participants from USA, Singapore, and Russia. It included 7 presentations from the fields of philosophy, psychology, linguistics, folklore, theatre, and clowning. Such interdisciplinary and small format allowed to have long and fruitful discussions.

The topics presented and discussed were: Studying Humor Like a Folklorist, Comedy and the Unfunny in Iran Theatre, Satirical news discourse and public pedagogy: Stephen Colbert's "Truthiness", Parody and Order, "Inhuman" laughter, Hospital Clowning: an Overlap of Two Motives, and Presentation on Laughter.

NOTE: The organisers plan to hold another larger event, the 5th International Gelological Congress on "LAUGHTER and COMMUNICATION", in St Petersburg, next May – see separate story in this issue of the AHSN Digest. Participants from Australia and New Zealand are especially welcomed and assistance with travel and visa arrangements will be offered. Please note, plans need to be set well in advance and there will be charges for visas, reflecting current practices in travel to Russia.

The 5th International Gelological Congress

«LAUGHTER and COMMUNICATION»

29 May – 1 June 2019

ANNOUNCEMENT AND FIRST CALL FOR PAPERS

Sociological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences
Research Center for Cultural Exclusion and Frontier Zones
Laboratory of Gelological Studies
(Saint Petersburg, Russia)

Institute of Philosophy, Saint Petersburg State University
Russian Philosophy and Culture Department
(Saint Petersburg, Russia)

Pirogov Russian National Research Medical University
Mental Health Research Center
(Moscow, Russia)

Non-profit charitable organization «Odessa Humanitarian Tradition»
(Odessa, Ukraine)

Agency «Mice and Travel»
(Saint Petersburg, Russia)

St. Petersburg State Clown–Mim–Theatre “Mimigrants”
(Saint Petersburg, Russia)



ANNOUNCEMENT

During the congress it is planned to focus on communicative potential of humor and laughter, but also communicative ambivalence of laughter as a phenomenon, building and destroying communication. We will talk not only about interpersonal communication, but also about intercultural, transcultural, cross-cultural communication, sociology of laughter, the fear of laughter, tomfoolery, laughing aggression, communicative aspects, and social genesis of laughter. It is suggested to attract participants from sociology, social philosophy, psychology, sociolinguistics, folkloristics, literary criticism and others.

Suggested topics:

- Social aspects of laughter
- Laughter in interpersonal communication
- Laughter in intercultural communication
- Humor and the problem of understanding
- Archetypal of humoristic elements
- Trickster as a universal cultural function
- Laughter and (pseudo)aggression
- Boundaries – communication - laughter
- The fear of laughter (gelotophobia) as a communicatory and philosophical problem
- Katagelasticism (the tendency of laughing at others): building or destroying communication?
- Gelotophilia (the joy of being laughed at), tomfoolery – adaptation, compensation or addiction?
- Politics and humor, communicatory aspects
- Social and cultural practices of humor and laughter application in different cultural-historical periods
- Spiritual aspects of humor and laughter. Humor and transcendent

Official languages of the congress

- Russian
- English

Translation is planned to be organized.

Time-limit

Oral presentation – up to 25 min

Discussion - up to 10 min

Within the congress are also planned

- Round table discussions
- Work-shops
- Seminars
- Social program
- Special section "Humor and Threat: The intersection of laughter and fear" (chair – Alexandra Arkhipova)

Organizing committee:

Dr. Laineste L. (Estonian Literary Museum, Centre of Excellence for Estonian Studies (CEES), Estonia)

Dr. Platt T. (University of Wolverhampton, United Kingdom)

Prof. Brodsky A. (St Petersburg State University, Research Center for Cultural Exclusion and Frontier Zones, Russia)

Prof. Golovin V. (Institute of Russian Literature (the Pushkin House), Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia)

Dr. Enikolopov S. (Mental Health Research Center, Russia)

Dr. Ivanova A. (Pirogov Russian National Research Medical University, Mental Health Research Center, Russia) – **co-chair**

Prof. Kozintsev A. (Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (the Kunstkamera), Russia)

Dr. Levchenko V. (Odessa I.I. Mechnikov National University, Ukraine)

Prof. Malinov A. (St Petersburg State University, Research Center for Cultural Exclusion and Frontier Zones, Russia)

Dr. Nikolaeva Zh. (St Petersburg State University, Research Center for Cultural Exclusion and Frontier Zones, Russia)

Plush-Nezhinsky A. (*St. Petersburg State Clown-Mim-Theatre "Mimigrants"*)

Dr. Radeev A. (St Petersburg State University, Russia)

Dr. Troitckii S. (St Petersburg State University, Research Center for Cultural Exclusion and Frontier Zones, Russia) – **chair**

APPLICATION:

To participate in the conference, please send to the organizing committee:

- registration information (name, surname, affiliation, position, e-mail, contact telephone number) and title of the paper **before 1 October 2018**

- abstract (up to 1000 characters) **before 25 February 2019**

Please send the application with all the materials to: sergtroy@yandex.ru

The organizing committee will notify about an abstract's inclusion in the program before **1 April 2019**

Kalamazoo International Congress on Medieval Studies, 9-11 May, 2019.

Session on: Sacred Comedy in Medieval Culture: A Roundtable Discussion

Organisers: Maggie Solberg (Bowdoin College) and Sarah Brazil (University of Geneva)

In 1955, the drama critic F.M Salter made the point, 'In the Middle Ages, God himself had a sense of humor' (*Medieval Drama in Chester*, 103-4). Salter, however, was a critical rarity, with both contemporaries and subsequent generations refusing the position that religious figures might have some dramatic, iconographical, or literary connection to humor and/or comedy. The difficulties critics have faced in trying to theorize and categorize the comic (as opposed to the tragic) points to the fact that this is an area of medieval scholarship that is still in need of attention. This roundtable aims to bring scholars together who are interested in how we might understand the humor of the past, to find and trace laughter and funniness in medieval texts and artifacts, and to strategize what to do when we no longer have access to the joke. This roundtable is looking for new ways to approach these questions. We're looking for alternatives to Bakhtin's model of carnival and suppression. We're looking beyond Kolve's limitations on religious laughter—the assumption that the audience never laughs at Mary, Jesus, or God the Father. We're looking beyond Chambers's (and everyone's) association of paganism with fun and Christianity with seriousness. We are interested in a broad range of material and approaches, although we are narrowing our temporal focus to the late-medieval period. While drama is a key interest, it is not an exclusive one. We encourage submissions for this roundtable from any researcher working on humor/comedy from all aspects of medieval studies and languages.

Please send any queries to [<sarah.brazil@unige.ch>](mailto:sarah.brazil@unige.ch)

Note: the Call for Papers closed on 8 September 2018.

About the Congress

The 54th International Congress on Medieval Studies takes place on the campus of Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, USA, May 9 to 12, 2019. The session proposal deadline was **June 1**.

The congress features more than 550 sessions of papers, panel discussions, roundtables, workshops, demonstrations, performances, and poster sessions. There are also some 100 business meetings and receptions sponsored by learned societies, associations and institutions. The exhibits hall boasts nearly 70 exhibitors, including publishers, used book dealers and purveyors of medieval sundries. The congress lasts three and a half days, extending from Thursday morning, with sessions beginning at 10 a.m., until Sunday at noon.

More information at: <https://wmich.edu/medievalcongress>

Special Issue of European Journal of Humour Research (EJHR)

Call for Papers - "The Contingent Dynamics of Political Humor"

Political humor has long been implicated in both the juridical settings of government and its policymaking and the everyday lived possibilities constrained by social institutions and expectations. This is perhaps especially true today. In contemporary societies around the world, political humor abounds in a great diversity of media. Politicians and parties use humor to advance their interests and agendas. Individuals and social movements use humor to express their needs and causes.

For our purposes, 'political humor' involves substantial political action conducted through amusing means, rather than the use of political subjects for amusement. It is political communication that partakes in humor, proffering cognitive and affective pleasures typically resulting in laughter in order to better inform and solicit sympathetic political participation in a particular ideological or distributional agenda in lieu of the agenda of rivals. As such, the rich and growing scholarship on political humor tends to diverge along two lines: the conservative ways in which humor relies upon and redoubles existing shared expectations at the expense of errant targets, or the radical ways in which it can achieve cognitive shifts and thereby liberate human energies. Assessing the social functions and practical impact of political humor is complicated by the ways in which it turns on the nature of the political status quo including especially the distribution of authority and membership. In a democratic polity, 'conservative' humor (together with apolitical merely entertaining humor) literally presumes or shores up existing hegemonic democratic institutions, values, and participation. Whereas on one side reactionary humor undermines democracy in favor of some nostalgic and less inclusive form and on the other liberal humor presses for further inclusion. Conversely, in an authoritarian political system conservative humor defends the sanctity of established and exclusionary hierarchies against transgressors, who in turn lob radical jokes that they hope will produce laughter that shakes those hierarchies to their core. As a communicative strategy of political action, the prospects of political humor are further complicated by variations in audience reception. Jokes cast into the (increasingly global) public sphere are rarely uniformly received and are typically vulnerable to unintended consequences. Moreover, even those who appear to share in a laugh may be laughing at different dimensions of the joke. Political humor, then, may well work with some audiences, amusing yet angering them to seek the prospective pleasures of having the last laugh, or it may prove cathartic and consoling thereby dissipating activist enthusiasm. The humor may prove divisive, prompting defensive or aggressive reactions by targets and their allies, or perhaps more benignly, counter-joke cycles. On the whole there are good reasons to prefer trading punch-lines to trading punches. However, political humor that mocks targets may also rally the enactment of humiliating violence against those targets. The wide dispersal of political humor may politicize and mobilize viewers into action. Alternately, it may have the unintended effect of trivializing issues, undermining the media, fostering cynicism and even nihilism, discrediting political institutions, office-holders and politicians, and lowering political trust more generally.

This CFP for a special issue of EJHR seeks original interdisciplinary scholarly work that allows for both the repressive and irrepressible dynamics of humor by locating the actual practices and instances of political humor succeeding, falling flat, or backfiring within their relevant historical, institutional and cultural contexts. Though the campaign and election of President Trump in the US has provoked fresh reflections on political humor this CFP welcomes papers that also address modern and contemporary non-US and non-Western examples. It also welcomes the views of political humor practitioners either in the form of a reflective essay or interview.

All authors should strive to address two sorts of questions:

First, can we count on humor, comedy, satire and so on to serve salutary and saving roles for democracy and democratization, and if so, under what conditions? Does political humor always level the pretensions of overreaching democratic politicians in favor of the public? Might it instead be adopted by the powerful to pre-emptively goad divisions in their favor within the electorate? When is it an effective foreign relations strategy for advancing democratic regimes? Contextual considerations include but are not limited to: who is venturing the political humor, within what type of polity, in what sorts of venues, and in the presence of whom? Similarly, the public receptivity to and impacts of humorous provocation may well vary with culturally constructed conceptions of honor and face.

Second, do one's political commitments place limits on what sorts of humorous pleasure can be sought, and at the expense of whom? Given the variable and contextual dynamics of the efficacy of political humor what if any ethical duties or social responsibilities might be placed on democratically-minded practitioners of political humor? Similarly, are ordinary citizens in democratic or democratizing polities under any civic obligations to try to appreciate humor, even when doing so may amount to self-deprecation?

For a fuller version of the CFP (with citations), please visit:

<https://mla.hcommons.org/deposits/download/hc:20916/CONTENT/the-contingent-dynamics-of-political-humor.docx/>

Submissions:

Please submit your proposals of no more than 500 words by Dec 1, 2018 to <massihzekavat@gmail.com>. Authors will receive notification of their proposals' acceptance by Jan 1, 2019 and will be invited to submit their full papers not later than Jun 1, 2019. The issue will be published in 2020.

Guest Editors:

Professor Sammy Basu, Willamette University
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