



Australasian Humour Studies Network



AHSN Digest – May 2024

Looking Ahead to February 2025

AHSN2025 Call for Papers

The **31st AHSN Conference** will take place in-person from **19-21 February 2025 at Flinders University, Adelaide** (in the new CBD campus). The Conference will begin early afternoon on Wednesday 19 February, enabling delegates from Aotearoa/New Zealand and Interstate to travel to Adelaide that morning if they wish.

The conference theme will be **‘The Evolutions of Humour’**. Humour is a dynamic set of practices, capable of adapting to shifting cultural norms and new methods of delivery. AHSN2025 invites presentations on the various evolutions of humour. Where has humour come from and where it is going? What aspects of humour remain stable and what have changed forever?

Presentations addressing any aspect of the changing forms of humour are especially welcomed for this conference. As in previous AHSN conferences, however, papers are welcome on any and all aspects of social laughter and humour, and from diverse disciplinary perspectives including not only humour studies as such, but also literary studies, linguistics, cultural studies, politics, psychology, biology and physiology, philosophy, history, comedy studies, law, creative practices, sociology, communication studies and others.

Please note that next year’s AHSN conference will be preceded on the Monday and Tuesday by an **International Round-Table on the Study of Political Cartoons**, hosted by the ARC-funded Cartoon Nation project. Conference attendees are welcome to join and further details on this event will be available at a later date via the Digest and AHSN emails. To receive these, please ensure you are subscribed to the AHSN Digest (free) at: <https://ahsnhumourstudies.org/newsletter/subscribe/>

Important Dates

Abstract submission opens: 29 April 2024

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 31 August 2024

Proposals should be submitted via email to Dr Alex Cothren at: alexander.cothren@flinders.edu.au

Proposal guidelines

Abstracts should be around 250-300 words in length. Please add a presentation title above the abstract. Members of the AHSN Review Panel will check and review all submissions. They may recommend changes and revisions to presenters. All accepted conference abstracts will be published on the AHSN website and in the booklet of abstracts for the AHSN2025 conference. An archive of previous conference proceedings and further guidance about the review procedures and guidelines for proposals can be found on the AHSN website at: <https://ahsnhumourstudies.org/annual-conference/>

Student scholarships

AHSN awards up to five scholarships in the form of conference registration fee-waivers for research students enrolled for study primarily at Australian and Aotearoa/New Zealand universities. These are awarded on the basis of the best and first completed proposals, so please make sure to get your abstracts in early.

Travel and Accommodation

It is recommended that those planning to attend AHSN 2025 do book travel and accommodation as early as possible. The conference is deliberately designed to occur alongside the opening of Adelaide's Fringe Festival, allowing attendees to experience the city at its cultural best. While there will certainly be plenty of accommodation options available, your preferred location may be harder to book than usual, so early bookings are advised.

For those looking to plan their stay, the location of the new Flinders City Campus can be found here: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/hHdooqBnBTcFFGwT9>

More detail on options and activities in and around Adelaide will be posted on the AHSN website shortly. For conference enquiries, please email Alex Cothren at: alexander.cothren@flinders.edu.au

AHSN2025 Committee

Prof. Robert Phiddian, Flinders University (co-convenor)

Dr Alex Cothren, Flinders University (co-convenor)



Message from the AHSN Chair

In addition to another packed issue of the Digest and exciting news about the AHSN 2025 conference, I would like to update you on the recent AHSN Board renewal. In accordance with AHSN procedures, several of the roles on the Board recently came up for renewal and three new positions were created (one of which is still waiting to be filled, the Communications Officer – all EOI's most welcome!).

By way of background, the Board was created in 2019 to work as a kind of Executive Committee for the AHSN, supporting its Chair and the work of the Review Panel, annual Conference Convenors and Committees and an increasing variety of activities and IT services. It has oversight of the AHSN website and associated conference, seminar and IT finances. Over the years, its composition has expanded to reflect an increased diversity and level of activity by the AHSN.

Membership (2024 onwards)

- AHSN Chair
- AHSN Co-ordinator
- Editor, The AHSN Digest
- 2 Ordinary Members (one from Aotearoa/New Zealand and one from Australia)
- Book Review Editor
- Research Co-ordinator
- Social Media Co-ordinator
- Jessters Co-ordinator
- Communications Officer
- Consulting member: Conference Convenor (changes annually)

Each member serves for 5 years (renewable once) and to ensure both continuity and renewal, positions are renewed according to the following timetable:

Group A: 2022-2027; 2027-2032

Co-ordinator, Editor, one Ordinary Member (Aotearoa/New Zealand), Book Review Editor, Research Co-ordinator

Group B: 2024–2029; 2029-2034

Chair, one Ordinary Member (Australia), Social Media Co-ordinator, Jessters Co-ordinator, Communications Officer (TBA)

The renewal process is carried out by the Co-ordinator (Group A) for members of Group B; and by the Chair (Group B) for members of Group A; in consultation firstly with the Board members undergoing renewal, and subsequently with all members of the Board and Review Panel.

We are pleased to advise that Board membership for the period 2024-2027 is now confirmed as follows:

Chair, A./Prof. Kerry Mullan, RMIT University
Dr Jessica Milner Davis FRSN (AHSN Co-ordinator), University of Sydney
Dr Barbara Plester (Member) University of Auckland
Dr Mark Rolfe (Member), University of New South Wales
Dr Lucien Leon (Digest Editor), independent scholar
Dr Beatriz Carbajal Carrera (Book Review Editor), University of Sydney
Dr Ben Nickl (Research Co-ordinator), University of Sydney
Ms Lara Weinglass (Social Media Co-ordinator), University of Queensland
Dr Maren Rawlings (Jessters Co-ordinator), independent scholar
Communications Officer -- TBA
Consulting Member: 2025 Conference Convenor, Prof. Robert Phiddian, Flinders University

I very much look forward to continuing to work with fellow Board and Review Panel members for another term. As always, my thanks go to Jessica Milner Davis, AHSN Coordinator, founder and Co-ordinator Extraordinaire of the network, without whom we would not run as smoothly! And don't forget, we still need a Comms Officer.....please consider putting your hand up (email below). Happy reading and see you in Adelaide next year!

Kerry
Assoc. Prof. Kerry Mullan
School of Global, Urban and Social Studies
RMIT University, Australia
Chair, Australasian Humour Studies Network Board
E: kerry.mullan@rmit.edu.au

All Early-Career Researchers and HDR Students Interested in Academic Publication Skills and Training

Join the AHSN Editorial Teams! 2 positions available!

Would you like to **gain editorial experience**? Are you keen to **learn about the latest publications in our field**? Do you want to **be in the know about humour studies events** and what goes into communicating to colleagues in the field information about the latest research topics?

Expressions of interest are now open for ECRs to join the AHSN Editorial team (AHSN Digest newsletter) and the Book Review team. ECRs and HDR students from all disciplines and cultural and linguistic backgrounds are encouraged to apply. To do so, and depending on your interests, please send an Expression of Interest containing the details below in a Word document either to the Book Review Coordinator, [Dr Beatriz Carbajal](mailto:beatriz.carbajal@sydney.edu.au) (The University of Sydney, email: beatriz.carbajal@sydney.edu.au) or to the Digest Co-Editor, Dr Jessica Milner Davis (The University of Sydney, email: jessica.davis@sydney.edu.au).

2 positions available, ideally for a **minimum of 1 year**, one to experience and contribute to the whole book review process from start to finish; and one for editorial work. The first is for the book review process and the second is for general editorial work for and assistance with *The Digest*.

We currently publish our newsletter, The AHSN Humour Studies Digest approximately monthly, and we commission book reviews for it that are published both on the [AHSN website](#) and in joint publication with the [European Journal of Humour Research](#). These two roles will cover compiling and editing materials for the AHSN newsletter; and, identifying and sourcing suitable book and research materials for review, approaching reviewers, etc.

Please forward your EOI and the Word doc to the appropriate contact above (Dr Carbajal for book reviewing and Dr Milner Davis for editorial):

- a short bio (150 words max)
- why are you interested in joining the editorial team and in which role (100 words max)
- previous experience with the academic publications process or book reviews (if applicable)
- what would you like to get out of this experience
- current email and affiliation (if applicable)

EOI applications close on 14 May 2024. We look forward to hearing from you!

Unveiling the Serious Side of Humour in Online Safety: Insights from the 4th Annual AHSN Research Webinar

In the ever-evolving landscape of digital platforms, the line between humour and harm can often blur, presenting a complex challenge for online safety. This pertinent issue took centre stage at the recent 4th Annual AHSN Research Webinar, featuring Dr Ariadna Matamoros-Fernandez from QUT's Digital Media Research Centre and co-hosted by Dr Benjamin Nickl and Dr Beatriz Carbajal from The University of Sydney.

Under the compelling title, "Taking Humour Seriously for Online Safety", Dr Matamoros-Fernandez shared her research about the intricate dynamics of online humour and its potential to inflict harm. The webinar was not merely an exploration of comedic online content but a critical examination of its implications in the digital realm.

One of the primary hurdles discussed was the inherent difficulty in discerning the intent behind online humour. Dr Matamoros-Fernandez illuminated the multifaceted nature of this challenge, encompassing platform specificity, technological affordances, and the lack of contextual cues. This complexity is further compounded by the ambiguity surrounding what constitutes "illegal" versus "legal but harmful" content and activity.

The landscape of online safety regulations, as highlighted during the webinar, is undergoing significant transformation. Initiatives such as the UK's Online Safety Bill Draft, the EU's Digital Services Act, and Australia's Online Safety Bill are striving to address these pressing concerns. However, the central question persists: How can platforms effectively moderate humour in a manner that is both legitimate and respectful of freedom of expression?

Dr Matamoros-Fernandez shed light on the discrepancy between platform policies and international human rights standards for content moderation. While platforms often assert adherence to these standards, the practical application raises pertinent questions regarding legality, legitimacy, and proportionality in moderation measures.

The webinar culminated in a thought-provoking Q&A session, where attendees grappled with the complexities and implications of regulating online humour—most of all the question of what exactly constitutes harmful humour online. It became evident that achieving a balance between safeguarding users from harm and upholding fundamental rights poses a formidable challenge in the digital age.

As we navigate this intricate terrain, the insights gleaned from Dr Matamoros-Fernandez's research serve as a beacon, guiding policymakers, platform operators, and users alike toward a more nuanced understanding of humour's role in online safety.

In the wake of the 4th Annual AHSN Research Webinar, the imperative to take humour seriously in the digital realm has never been more pressing. By fostering dialogue, collaboration, and critical inquiry, we can strive towards a safer, more inclusive online environment for all.

It's worth noting that all this work is part of Dr Matamoros-Fernandez's current DECRA project 'Taking Humour Seriously for Online Safety'. She has published on this also in the context of humour-based controversies and is currently planning to work with colleagues in Europe to study the issues further: <https://www.qut.edu.au/about/our-people/academic-profiles/ariadna.matamorosfernandez>

You'll find more details about the webinar on the AHSN website along with the others in this series at: <https://ahsnhumourstudies.org/seminars/>
Eventually it will join the others in our events archive (link on the page cited above).

Ben Nickl
The University of Sydney
AHSN Research Co-ordinator

Eds: Many thanks to Ben for initiating the AHSN webinars and to him and Beatriz Carbajal Carrera, also of The University of Sydney and AHSN Book Review Editor, for hosting this, the fourth in the stimulating series. The webinars form part of the AHSN resources online and are free of access.



Dr Ariadna Matamoros-Fernandez, QUT's Digital Media Research Centre

New Issue

The European Journal of Humour Research

Available Online

NB: Includes contributions by several AHSN Members

Link: <https://europeanjournalofhumour.org/ejhr/issue/current>

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Eds: Several of the book reviews above were commissioned in a collaborative arrangement with the *The European Journal of Humour Research* announced by Dr Beatriz Carbajal Carrera, AHSN Book Review Editor, in an earlier issue of the Digest. This brings benefit to both publications and pleasingly wider notice for the work of our AHSN reviewers. For additional AHSN book reviews, please visit the AHSN website at: <https://ahsnhumourstudies.org/book-reviews/>

Humour and the Law Events

Law, Culture and the Humanities (Zoom Series)

On May 22nd (12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. EST), Andrew Bricker and Alberto Godioli will moderate a Zoom session on the special issues on humor and the law they co-edited for *Law, Culture and the Humanities* (Laughter as Critique/The Limits of Laughter) and *HUMOR: IJHR* (The Difficulty of Judging Jests). The speakers will be Elisa Kriza, Jessica Apolloni, and Diana Jorza. For details, please email: info@forhum.org

Workshop “Humor and its Political Affordances Today: From Nostalgia to Cancel Culture”

The workshop is organized by Spiros Chairetis (Marilena Laskaridis Visiting Research Fellow, University of Amsterdam) and Maria Boletsi (Endowed Professor of Modern Greek Studies, University of Amsterdam), and will take place in Amsterdam on May 31st. Full description available at: <https://forhum.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=2311b1781829649ee36f3ab1d&id=12c66f0efc&e=88bf78c382>

The Humour Studies Digest The Australasian Humour Studies Network (AHSN)

‘We put the “U” back into “HUMOUR”!’

Send your Digest Submissions to our veteran Co-Editor Jessica at Jessica.davis@sydney.edu.au

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