



Australasian Humour Studies Network

THE HUMOUR STUDIES DIGEST



Australasian Humour Studies Network
AHSN Annual Conference

**Australasian Humour Studies Network
28th Conference, Hobart, Tasmania
2 – 4 February 2022**

**“The Politics of Humour and the Humour
of Politics”**



Warm greetings from sunny (and currently Covid-free) Tasmania.

Update from the Convenor, Dr Daryl Peebles

As planning for our February 2022 conference steams ahead, I am thrilled to report that the call for papers has had a splendid response, especially considering the uncertain times in which we are living. Our selection panel reported on the extremely high quality of the submissions received, all of which supports our quest to produce to a most enjoyable and educative conference.

Keynote speakers

I am also delighted to announce that we have selected a third keynote speaker for the conference; namely **Dr Nicholas Holm**. Nicholas is a Senior Lecturer in Media Studies at Massey University, New Zealand. His research explores the political role of popular culture and entertainment media, with a particular focus on humour and comedy. His latest publications include articles on the politics of fun amidst pandemic lockdowns (*Cultural Studies*, 2021) and the political aesthetics of bureaucratic boredom (*New Formations*, 2020). His most recent book is *Humour as Politics* (Palgrave, 2017) and he is currently working on a monograph exploring fun as a social and political category. He is a member of the book review editorial team for *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research* and of the editorial board of *Journal of Comedy Studies*.

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Nicholas joins our previously announced keynote speakers **Emeritus Scientia Professor Conal Condren, UNSW**, and **Dr Naomi Milthorpe, University of Tasmania**. For full details of our eminent speakers and their topics, see separate item.

Reception at Government House

A reminder that among other exciting extracurricular parts of the program, there will be a Government House reception for AHSN delegates by the recently appointed Governor of Tasmania, Her Excellency, the Honourable Barbara Baker, and Emeritus Professor Don Chalmers, on the evening of Wednesday 2 February 2022. Situated on the Queen's Domain with stunning views over the River Derwent, Tasmania's Government House is a splendid example of an early Victorian country house in neo-Gothic style. Its construction was completed in 1857 and it is one of the largest buildings of its type in Australia.

Travel to Tasmania

The quality of the papers now being included in the conference program, and the range and quality of the conference-related events that we are planning for your Tasmanian visit, are not the principal subject of queries I am receiving. The most frequently asked question relates to the Covid pandemic situation and how it may affect travel to Hobart.

Tasmania's border entry conditions currently depend on where each traveller has spent time in the 14 days prior to their day of arrival in Tasmania. The only identified 'hotspots' that currently exist are parts of Victoria and NSW. Travel to Tasmania from these hotspots would not be possible today but, with 16 weeks still to go and the containment efforts being made in those jurisdictions, we are hopeful that no potential delegate will be precluded.

There is considerable support in Tasmania to allow greater freedoms for people who have had a double dose of the Covid-19 vaccination. We are certainly looking forward to welcoming you here, so my best advice is to ensure you are fully vaccinated and to start making your travel and accommodation bookings with a degree of certainty.

You are encouraged to visit the AHSN website Events page and locate the link for registering to attend the Conference. Full details at: <https://ahsnhumourstudies.org/events/>

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any enquiries: daryl.peebles@bigpond.com

Daryl

On behalf of the Conference Organising Committee:

Dr Daryl Peebles, University of Tasmania

Dr Benjamin Nickl, University of Sydney

Dr Mark Rolfe, UNSW

Assoc. Prof. Kerry Mullan, RMIT University

Dr Jessica Milner Davis, University of Sydney

NEWS FLASH!!

FROM THE PREMIER OF TASMANIA, MR PETER GUTWEIN, 12 October 2021:

"With our vaccination program proceeding well, we remain on track to be in a position to open our borders before Christmas, subject to achieving our goal that all eligible Tasmanians have had the opportunity to get vaccinated and importantly, reaching our vaccination targets of 90 per cent of over 16-year-olds fully vaccinated by 1 December, with 12-15 year-olds to also be fully vaccinated around the same time.

Next week, I will also be in a position to release Tasmanian specific modelling around reopening, along with our plan to reopen our borders. My expectation is that those who want to travel to Tasmania will need to be fully vaccinated and provide a negative test in the 72 hours before they arrive, with consideration still being given to whether there is any testing regime upon arrival."

Comment from Daryl: "So, all being well, and with our delegates naturally taking a responsible attitude to vaccines, Covid should not be an impediment to our conference. I will toss in the politically mandated 'thoughts and prayers' for good luck. Please expect more news about other highlights of the program shortly!"

Introducing your Conference Convenor ~ Dr Daryl Peebles

Daryl enjoyed a successful professional career in media and communications with the ABC and then the Tasmanian Government before he embarked on his doctoral journey. His PhD topic was *The Value of Positive Humour in the Workplace* in which he examined the use of humour in 50 Australian workplaces. He was interested in investigating the type of humour that was encouraged (or at least tolerated) and the effects that such humour might have on workplace considerations such as productivity, discretionary effort and job satisfaction.

His segue from professional life into a part-time, mature-aged student was supplemented by lecturing and tutoring roles in the Tasmanian School of Business and Economics at the University of Tasmania.

Throughout, Daryl has also enjoyed a parallel career as an entertainer with a penchant for magic, ventriloquism and above all, comedy.

For 30 years Daryl was one half of the very politically incorrect comedy duo *Novak and Good* (see picture 1) which cropped up in pubs and clubs around Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales (well, as far north as Dubbo!) from 1981 to 2011, and also in Bali for a short stint.

His long association with the University of Tasmania has included writing satirical columns for the student newspaper *Togatus* in the 1980s and being an active member (now life member) of the well-known on-campus theatre group *The Old Nick Company* which has produced the University Revue in the Princes Theatre, Launceston and the Theatre Royal, Hobart annually since 1948. Since 1979, Daryl has been the company's principal script and songwriter. (For a typical Old Nick production, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GAOkvCcV0Y>.)

Recognising the value of humour and laughter in many situations and circumstances, Daryl still works as a stand-up comedian and has just completed a short tour of Tasmania for Mental Health Week . . . in the *Stand-Up for Mental Health Comedy Roadshow*.

In 2017, Daryl collaborated with colleagues from UTAS in two academic papers: [An integrated approach to workplace mental health](#) and a conference paper *Workplace mental health: Co-production of an action plan for Australia*. This work exemplifies his 'serious' side. When he is at his best 'non-serious' self, you may not recognise him but you may see Beryl (as in the picture), a lawn-bowls obsessed, slightly frustrated widow and budding psychic. Daryl claims Beryl as a distant relative (well, it is Tasmania after all).

Visit: <https://ahsnhumourstudies.org/events/> to sign up.



Durwood Novak MBE (socialite and brown-noser) and Wilbur Good (rabbit-trapper extraordinaire) from the Tasmanian comedy duo *Novak 'n' Good* (1981-2011).



Beryl's next public appearance will be in the much-anticipated annual Bawdy Pantomime, *Brian, the bitch and the bathrobe* at the Theatre Royal, Hobart in November this year. (Please note that the 'bitch' reference in this context is OK as it refers to a dog – definitely not Beryl.)



Stand-up at the Jokers Comedy Club, Hobart (yes, there will be a Conference Special for AHSN'ers!)



Daryl Peebles PhD

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Dr Naomi Milthorpe, University of Tasmania, From “Accession” to Black Mischief: The politics of race in Evelyn Waugh’s satire.

In Henri Bergson’s famous formulation, comedy requires a “momentary anaesthesia of the heart.” This momentary anaesthesia implies the return of feeling to the place that was numbed, a return that may in all likelihood include a hurt. This paper attempts to think through the aesthetics and politics of satire, by looking closely at Evelyn Waugh’s 1932 satire of empire, *Black Mischief*. What does it mean to laugh at racist jokes, and does it mean differently now than it did 90 years ago? How does satire work to deform ethical positions through joke-making; what kind of political work is that doing; and who was and is hurt by these deformations?

Naomi Milthorpe is Senior Lecturer and Head of Discipline for English, at the School of Humanities. Her research focuses on modernist, interwar and mid-century British literary culture. She is the author of *Evelyn Waugh’s Satire: Texts and Contexts* (Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2016) and the editor of *The Poetics and Politics of Gardening in Hard Times* (Rowman, 2019). She is currently preparing a scholarly edition of Waugh’s 1932 novel *Black Mischief* for publication as volume 3 in *The Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh* (Oxford University Press).



Conal Condren FAHA FASSA, University of New South Wales, Giving shape ‘to airy nothing. A Local habitation’ and the name of Humour: Academic Myth and the Political Origins of a Concept.

Humour theory’s accepted lineage, construed from discussions of laughter, dates from antiquity. It is, however, only a recent promotional myth helping consolidate a field of study. A concept of humour thus projected as universal has more recent origins. Rather than being expressed in laughter, humour began as palliation for laughter’s dangerous aggression in a violent society.

Conal Condren is an Emeritus Scientia Professor at UNSW, and has held visiting positions and fellowships at the University of Queensland and in the USA, Europe, New Zealand and Cambridge UK. He is a foundation member of the AHSN Review Panel. Predominantly he is an intellectual historian of early-modern Britain, with interests in the philosophy of historical writing. In these contexts, he has published on satire and on studying humour historically, with a book in preparation on the latter topic, as well as one on Shakespeare and the ethics of office. With Aoise Stratford, he has co-written a prize-winning and widely performed black comedy, ‘Will and the Ghost’.



Nicholas Holm, Massey University, New Zealand, Satire and the Dream of Cultural Politics

Increasingly, humour is embraced as a legitimate means by which to conduct politics: most often under the auspices of “satire” However, while satire may sometimes appear as an especially successful instance of humour as a politically meaningful cultural act, there are also reasons for scepticism. With reference to the concept of reification, this presentation explores how satire may constrain, as much as consummate, the possible politics of humour.

Dr Nicholas Holm is a Senior Lecturer in Media Studies at Massey University, New Zealand. His research addresses the politics of popular culture with particular emphasis on humour and satire. He is the author of *Humour as Politics* (2017), and several articles on the politics of humour in contemporary media. He is a member of the editorial board of *Comedy Studies*, the book review team of the *HUMOR Journal*, and a member of the AHSN Review Panel.



Message from the AHSN Chair

As you will see, a lot of conference organising has been going on behind the scenes. I would particularly like to thank Conference Convenor Daryl Peebles, who has been putting together a wonderful program of events, and AHSN Convenor Jessica Milner Davis, whose invaluable advice makes everything easier and more efficient. I would also like to thank Reza Arab and Mark Rolfe for managing the abstract review process. This is one of the most labour-intensive parts of organising any conference - it is also one of the most vital and enjoyable of course! Thanks also go to the members of the [Review Panel](#) who offer their time and valuable expertise to give in-depth feedback and helpful advice on the abstracts they review.

Another important and enjoyable part of the abstract process is selecting five postgraduate scholarship winners each year. This year was particularly challenging - not least because we had 17 applicants, which is an all-time record and a very welcome development! - but particularly because the quality of abstracts was very high across the board. The Conference Organising Committee base their selection on the overall quality of the proposal and the reviewers' comments, and we are delighted to announce the following (in alphabetical order by surname):

Scholarship Winners for 28th AHSN Conference, Hobart, February 2022

Deborah Eddy, Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, for her proposal to read a paper entitled "Is feminist art, ageing and humour a paradox?"

Deborah is a feminist artist and researcher who works in the field of sculpture and performance. She has recently completed a Doctor of Visual Arts. Deborah attended the FAC Residency in Toronto in 2018 and presented at the Lilith Symposium in 2019 and the Activism @ the Margins Conference in February 2020. E: deborah.eddy@griffithuni.edu.au



Til (Matilda) Knowles, School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne, for her proposal to read a paper entitled "'Whatever happened to the larrikin?' Mocking the political correctness debate in contemporary Australian comedy".

Til is a Masters student in English and Theatre Studies at the University of Melbourne, studying the use of cultural norms and the construction of community in Australian comedy podcast *The Little Dum Dum Club*. Her research is interdisciplinary, drawing together comedy studies, podcast studies, audience scholarship and social media. As well as being an aspiring academic, Til is also a comedy critic and occasional pop culture commentator. E: mknowles@student.unimelb.edu.au or Twitter @tilknowles.



Carolyn Krafzik, Department of Languages and Linguistics, La Trobe University, for her proposal to read a paper entitled "Humorous Swearing: Evidence from Australian Gamers". Carolyn is a third-year PhD candidate in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at La Trobe University in Melbourne. Her research focuses on the influence of ethnicity on swearing in English in the Australian context. She is hoping to uncover whether swearing is a relevant part of their national identity for Australians, independent of ethnic background. E: c.krafzik@latrobe.edu.au



Rebecca Persic, School of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry, Curtin University, for her proposal to read a paper entitled "Send in the Clowns: Donald Trump and the Politics of Ridicule".

Rebecca is an emerging writer and PhD student at Curtin University, Western Australia. Her most recent work on neoliberal education policy is published in *Arena*. Rebecca holds degrees in fine arts and cultural theory from Curtin University and has ongoing research interests in the contemporary politics of laughter, ridicule and amusement. E:

rebecca.persic@postgrad.curtin.edu.au



Oxana Vasilyeva, Cultural studies, Griffith University, for her proposal to read a paper entitled “The role of humour in Russian and Serbian independent art”.

Oxana is a PhD candidate at the School of Humanities, Languages and Social Sciences at Griffith University, Australia. Oxana completed a Master of Arts in Studies on Eastern Europe at the University of Bologna. Her MA thesis addressed media freedom and its influence on civil society in Russia. Oxana’s current research examines art and the way artistic initiatives may work for or against political regimes. Oxana is multi-lingual and speaks Russian, Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian and English. E: oxana.vasilyeva@griffithuni.edu.au



A further **three special conference scholarships** have been awarded to students of the University of Tasmania, who are hosting the conference:

Fergus Edwards, School of Humanities, University of Tasmania, reading a paper entitled “The Anatomy of the Gag: Havel, Stoppard and Comedies of Political Censorship”.

Fergus is a PhD candidate in English at UTAS. He holds an MA in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics from Oxford, and an MA in English from the Open University. *Philosophy and Literature* have accepted his paper on Stoppard and Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language. He has run ultramarathons on seven continents. E: fergus.edwards@utas.edu.au



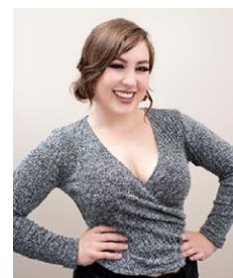
Victoria Haberley, School of Psychological Sciences, University of Tasmania

Victoria is studying Psychology with various arts electives. She is also a comedian of more than 20 years, does stand up and musical comedy, and now feminist and environmental comedy. Her interest is in the psychology of humour and how she can use it as a therapy with music and arts as a counsellor. She also uses humour with her environmental project “the naked nanna” to inspire climate action. Her field of research will be how to use humour to enact social cohesion and change. E: baysidetherapies@mail.com



Nellie Ryan, School of Psychological Sciences, University of Tasmania

Nellie is studying a Bachelor of Psychology (with honours) at UTAS. She is particularly interested in finding out what makes people laugh. For the past three years she has performed stand-up comedy throughout Tasmania to many different demographics. These performances, together with her psychology studies, make the world of humour an all-engrossing passion. Nellie is hoping to find the ‘sweet spot’ between humour and psychology as a basis for her future career. E: nellieryan1@hotmail.com



All scholarship winners will receive a formal certificate at the closing ceremony of the conference (in-person or online) and their names join previous scholarship winners on [our website](#).

Congratulations to our eight winners – we are looking forward to meeting you and to hearing from those of you who are presenting a paper!

In other news

We are pleased to announce that AHSN member Emeritus Professor Peter Marks is joining the Review Panel as a specialist in the area of Literature and Humanities.

Peter is Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Sydney. He is the author of four monographs: *British Filmmakers: Terry Gilliam* (2008); *George Orwell the Essayist* (2011), *Imagining Surveillance: Eutopian and Dystopian Literature and Film* (2015) and *British Literature of the 1990s*:



Endings and Beginnings (2018) as well as numerous other publications. Peter presented a keynote entitled “But some are more equal than others: Interpretations, reinterpretedations and misinterpretedations of Orwell’s *Animal Farm*” at the [21st AHSN conference](#) hosted by Flinders Institute for Research in the Humanities (FIRtH) at the State Library of South Australia, Adelaide in 2015. His full profile can be found [here](#).

Welcome Peter! We look forward to your contributions to the panel.

Kerry Mullan

Chair, AHSN Board

Assoc. Prof. Kerry Mullan

School of Global, Urban and Social Studies

RMIT University

E: kerry.mullan@rmit.edu.au

Research Student Profile

Jennifer Barry, Media and Communications, RMIT University

My name is Jennifer Barry. I live, work, study, and dream on the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung People of the Kulin Nation and offer my respect to their Elders, past and present, and to all First Nations people.

###

As a child, growing up in suburban Sydney, I would read anything at hand. When I was eating cereal, I read the cereal box. After school, when I was making a vegemite sandwich and stirring Milo through a glass of milk, I would read the junk mail catalogues that filled our mailbox before heading off to watch American sitcoms on the television. I read the leaflets inside prescription medicines in the bathroom cabinet (especially as I knew it was off-limits). I read newspapers, magazines, letters to parents from the principal, tuckshop menus, and the ingredients list on pretty much any grocery that passed through our pantry. I swam in a sea of ephemera before I knew how to swim. But I am jumping ahead. Let me introduce myself...



For the past three decades I have worked as a producer, curator, programmer, executive, consultant, facilitator, mentor, and board member for arts organisations in Australia and the U.S., and my passion is contemporary, interdisciplinary arts practice and its intersection with social justice, popular culture, and community engagement more broadly. When theatres are not shut down in Melbourne, I write theatre reviews for ArtsHub Australia, alongside the occasional feature article of relevance to the arts sector. I sit on the Board of Liquid Architecture and undertake consultancy work for a range of not-for-profit arts organisations and government agencies.

I like to read books too and I have a BA Communications (Theatre/Media) from Charles Sturt University in Bathurst, a Masters of Theatre Studies from the University of NSW, and a Graduate Certificate in Creative Writing from Melbourne University. This year, I commenced a Creative Writing PhD at RMIT within the School of Media and Communications and this is where my childhood love of ephemera makes it wondrous return.

The fulcrum activating my PhD research is my emerging creative writing practice which might best be described as the union of a *burlesque sensibility* and quotidian ephemera. I define a burlesque sensibility as a tone, style, manner, or register that blends humour, irony, and mimicry, often in absurd and facetious ways, to critique or ridicule society’s existing values, beliefs, and power structures. I like to co-opt the quotidian ephemera of society, such as government infographics, corporate catalogues, product manuals, instruction leaflets, and the like, to create burlesque ephemera and, sometimes, objets burlesques. The more absurd, the better. Why? Apart from my own fetish for contemporary art, popular culture, and things-kitsch, I like the inherent *accessibility* of ephemera as a channel for social critique. Where ephemera is dominated by the hegemonic voice, we can occupy it, as Guy

Debord and Situationist International urged artists to do in the twentieth century. Or we can bypass it altogether and create our own ephemera (a kind of DIY invasion!). I wonder what twists and turns Fate may have laid before me if I had read a satirical cornflakes box at age 8?

I believe that a burlesque sensibility is inherently in tune with the principles of access and equity, and I believe we can reach more, and new, people through the creation of burlesque ephemera, actively contributing to the live and important conversations of our time. I want to revivify the spirit and energy of the writer as independent agitator that was so richly evident during the Renaissance before burlesque was all tassels and tease - not that I have anything against these! - and I seek to do this through the lens of my creative practice, not as an expert scholar on burlesque literature, but as an artist.

Can the creation of independent and unmediated forms of burlesque ephemera, born of and relevant to today, challenge existing modes of creative writing praxis and social commentary? I don't know. Perhaps this form of artistic expression sits proudly within a lineage of satirical texts, or perhaps I'm nostalgic for simpler times. A pandemic can do that to you...

If you are interested in my work and would like to contact me, please feel free to email me at:
jennifer.barry@student.rmit.edu.au

Book Review - Bridging the Humor Barrier

John Rucynski Jr. and Caleb Prichard, eds. 2020. *Bridging the Humor Barrier: Humor Competency Training in English Language Teaching*. London: Lexington Books. 300 pp. ISBN (Hardcover): 978-1-4985-9200-0 ISBN (eBook): 978-1-4985-9201-7

The introduction to this volume opens with an anecdote from co-editor Caleb Prichard on an instance of failed humour in the language classroom (p. vii), which resonates greatly with me. I have always instinctively used humour when teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language, French as a Foreign Language and Linguistics (see Aarons 2012 and Dubinsky and Holcomb 2011 on how to teach Linguistics through humour). However, I too have often experienced failed humour in my language classrooms – never to the extent of making a student cry, as in Pritchard's example – but often where shocked or blank faces told me something had gone wrong or that it was “too soon” in the semester. A French colleague used to refer to such instances of failed humour as “des grands moments de solitude”, which requires no translation. Like Pritchard, I continue to use humour with my students. Unlike him, however, I have never thought to explicitly teach it. For that reason, I was delighted to discover this book (initially through recent AHSN conference presentations). Not only does it cover three of my areas of interest – L2 (second language) pedagogy, intercultural communication, and humour, it demonstrates how to combine them, based on tried and tested activities and/or empirical research.

The editors list, as part of their introduction to the text, the following aspects of humour competency: recognising, comprehending, appreciating, responding and producing (p. x). They go on to propose several guidelines for L2 humour competency training (pp. xii-xiv), outlining the complexity and the care that needs to be taken when implementing it, as well as offering guidelines for researching such training (p. vx). These guidelines are supplemented by the extremely useful “Recommendations for Humor Competency Training” and “Recommendations for Research” sections at the end of each chapter. The volume contains ten chapters which present a range of L1s (first languages) and L2 English teaching contexts, as well as different aspects of humour competency and types of humour. The book is divided into three parts.

Part 1 is entitled “Humor Competence Development Outside the Class”, which, as is evident, focusses on how learners develop (or not) humour competency naturally in their daily lives. It opens with a chapter by Anne Pomerantz who uses French comedian Gad Elmaleh's experience of taking his French stand-up act to the US to identify four important areas of humour production when performing humour interculturally: (1) creating, establishing, and checking for shared knowledge; (2) playing to and with expectations; (3) attending to the end

game; (4) focussing on delivery. (I would argue these areas cannot be taken for granted intra-culturally either). This chapter contains a rich discussion on intercultural communication and competence, and its similarities with humour competency. Based on interviews with Japanese learners of English living in the UK, Chapter 2 by Jules Winchester focusses on the importance of developing sociopragmatic competence for successful intercultural humour (particularly in the case of divisive humour, which is more likely to cause a face threat), and for knowing whether or not humour is appropriate in a certain context. Maria Ramirez de Arellano (Chapter 3) approaches the topic from her own perspective as a native speaker of Spanish living in Ireland struggling to use humour. As a result of her study with other Spanish speakers, she proposes a theoretical model explaining L2 speakers' use of humour in intercultural interactions and how this affects their process of cross-cultural adaptation.

In Part 2 of the book, "Integrated Humor Instruction", the chapters focus on humour in the English as L2 classroom. In Chapter 4, Mohammad Ali Heidari-Shahreza elaborates on the Humour-Integrated Language Learning (HILL) model he developed in 2019, providing several examples for teaching with and about humour, in order to develop both humour and language competency. He points out the balancing act required to achieve humour competency training while overcoming the realities of the L2 classroom, such as limited time, curriculum, and textbooks. A regular presenter at AHSN conferences, Scott Gardner undertakes a comparative study of examples of interactional humour in 32 junior high school textbooks in Japan, while proposing how to exploit these scripted dialogues as sources of cultural and pragmatic material (Chapter 5). Drawing on Raskin's Semantic Script Theory of Humour and the Superiority Theory, Nadezda Pimenova studies L2 English learners reading then rating jokes from America and elsewhere for funniness as well as ease of comprehension (Chapter 6). Despite the acknowledged limitations of her study (useful in themselves for future research design), Pimenova found that, as we might expect, language proficiency and cultural knowledge play a large part in humour appreciation.

From humour competence development outside the classroom (Part 1), through humour instruction in the classroom (Part 2), the volume moves logically to the final Part 3, "Explicit Humor Competency Training", in which the authors present and evaluate activities they designed and implemented to develop specific aspects of humour. Editors Caleb Prichard and John Rucynski Jr. open this section with Chapter 7, focussing on sarcasm and jocularly, two areas of humour that can often be misunderstood by native speakers, let alone learners – especially if these devices are not used often in their L1. This reinforces the need for explicit training in these areas, given they are used frequently by most English speakers, both in spoken interaction and on social media. In Chapter 8, Richard Hodson reports on lessons learned from three of his previous studies measuring the success of activities he designed to teach his students how to understand, appreciate and produce humour, including rewriting an original joke in English – a simple but effective strategy for conveying the notion for cultural context. The third study reports on students taking a fifteen-week elective in English humour, which, while successful to a degree, highlights the length of time required to attain humour competence in one's L2. Maria Petkova uses diary writing to research and develop humour competence in her L2 learners (Chapter 9). She started by keeping her own humour journal for six months, both as a way of understanding what she was asking her students to do, and of reflecting on the humour she encountered. The students' journals (accompanied by some limited but explicit humour instruction) allowed for similar reflection and learning in classroom discussions, as well as highlighting future humour training needs. The editors conclude the volume, in Chapter 10, with a report of their study training English language learners to recognise online satirical news stories. Not only is satire a form of humour used in many English-speaking cultures, recognising it can also raise political awareness, increase media and digital literacy, and promote critical thinking. This study added an interesting and important qualitative element, where (albeit only five) students were interviewed about various aspects of satirical news, the results of which informed a later study and the humour competency training activities detailed at the end of the chapter.

Overall, this is a very interesting and valuable book which makes a significant contribution to humour studies, language learning, and intercultural communication. Indeed, as several contributors observed, successful intercultural communication and humour competencies have a great deal in common, both revolving around language and culture. My own understanding and appreciation of humour in the various countries referred to was enhanced through the explanations of several amusing jokes and entertaining anecdotes. Humour in intercultural communication is shown to be extremely important, not only to avoid misunderstandings, but to actively enhance intercultural relationships and to foster understanding and trust across cultural divides, something greatly needed

in our current times. Furthermore, many chapters emphasised the complexities and subjectivity involved in both humour and cultural awareness, highlighting the importance of avoiding essentialist notions of culture.

While it did not detract from my overall enjoyment of and regard for the volume, one minor quibble I had was that the editing was not as rigorous as it should have been. Several spelling, grammatical and general editorial errors (e.g., incorrect referencing) crept in throughout the volume, which I found distracting. Nevertheless, this text provides a broad overview of the complexities of humour in its various forms and functions, and serves as a great source of references. Clearly, humour competency training is not for the fainthearted, given its many intricacies, but for those who wish to give it a try, reading this volume is an excellent first step. The contents will surely inspire and help more language teachers to tackle humour competency training and to conduct further research. I look forward to implementing some of the strategies in my own L2 classroom, if only to try and reduce my own “grands moments de solitude”.

Kerry Mullan

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Reviewer Bio note

A/Prof. Kerry Mullan is Chair of the AHSN Board and Convenor of Languages at RMIT University in Melbourne. She teaches French language and culture, and applied linguistics. Her main research interests are intercultural pragmatics and differing interactional styles, particularly those of French and Australian English speakers. She also researches in the areas of discourse analysis, language teaching, and spoken and online conversational humour.

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Book Review - The Social Psychology of Humor

Madelijn Strick and Thomas E. Ford, eds. 2021. *The Social Psychology of Humor: Current Issues in Social Psychology*. London and New York: Routledge. ISBN (Hardcover): 978-0-367-48719-5 ISBN (Paperback): 978-0-367-48718-8 ISBN (eBook): 978-1-003-04244-0.

In the preface of *The Social Psychology of Humor*, the co-editors define the topic as “the use and effects of humor among people in the social environment” (p. xiv). This broad definition is reflected in the organisation of the eleven chapters into four parts, representing four different “levels of analysis” (p. xiv) applicable to the social environment, from individual social processes, through interpersonal relationships and workplace contexts, to intergroup relations. Two broad themes run through most of the book. The first is to establish that humour is indeed an important concept in social psychology; that it does influence attitudes, thoughts and behaviours, and is not “just a joke”. Secondly,

numerous articles make clear that these effects are not always positive; humour can be negative and “dark”, as well as positive and life-enhancing.

Part I, *Individual Social Psychological Processes*, is substantially concerned with humour as a facilitator of attitude change. Whereas humour is generally thought to have a distracting effect, and hence to encourage peripheral route processing and discourage central route processing, Madelijn Strick argues in Chapter 1 that, when humour produces emotional ambivalence, this may lead to heightened elaboration and hence produce attitude change with respect to high-involvement issues. In Chapter 2, Jody Baumgartner provides a comprehensive review of the attitudinal, cognitive, and participatory effects on individuals of viewing political humour. In order to examine relatively recent research on attitude change, Baumgartner differentiates four humour types. According to the writer, *self-deprecating humour* results in a positive shift in politicians’ ratings. The use of *simple political comedy* and *simple satire* tends to have a message-consistent (typically negative) effect on the target, though this is sometimes conditioned by the viewer’s political interest and knowledge, whether the jokes are targeted at members of the viewer’s preferred party, and whether the issue is of central importance to the viewer. *Complex political satire* comprises an explicit as well as an implicit message. While the intention is for listeners to respond to the implicit message, the explicit message is the one most likely to be processed. In the third article of Part I, Boaz Hameiri introduces an approach to attitude change labelled “paradoxical thinking”, whereby individuals are presented with messages that are *consistent* with their strongly held, extreme views, but in an amplified, exaggerated and even absurd manner. This may cause some listeners to reassess their views, leading to identity-threat, unfreezing of held beliefs and attitudes and, finally, openness to alternative viewpoints. Evidence for the effectiveness of the process is presented, and Hameiri integrates this with literature on humour and satire. While different in some ways, Hameiri argues that the similarities between satire and paradoxical thinking point to several research questions whereby each literature may inform the other.

Part II, *Interpersonal Relationships*, is concerned with humour as facilitating social connection versus differentiation. In Chapter 4, John Meyer conceptualises the four key functions of humour on a continuum from high levels of unity to high levels of division. *Identification* engenders unity through the sense that there is shared meaning and common understanding. *Clarification* produces mutual appreciation, but there is also a “sharp edge” produced by the violation of a norm, or the surprise which is generated. *Enforcement* (exemplified by teasing) can either unify or divide, depending largely on the perception of the receivers. *Differentiation*, which often accompanies ridicule, mocking and sarcasm, involves laughing “at” other people; it attempts to demarcate one social group from another. In concluding, Meyer suggests the need, in future research, to examine the ways in which humour is related to play. In his article on humour in long-term relationships, Jeffrey Hall begins by describing the four theoretical perspectives which attempt to explain why humour is an important contributor to relationship satisfaction: theories of natural selection, self-expansion theory, emotion regulation theory, and relational-functional models of humour. A brief account of an earlier meta-analysis by the writer concluded that within-person traits such as humour production and appreciation have limited association with being satisfied with a romantic relationship. He particularly emphasises the importance of relational humour, in which couples share humour and laugh together. He lists the various communicative functions of humour and relates these to the four theoretical viewpoints outlined earlier. Herbert L. Colston argues in Chapter 6 that humour, along with figurative language and its pragmatic effects, are not just “decorative things” (p. 103) that we can enjoy but are necessary to serve crucial social functions that have a neurological (evolutionary) basis. They enable us to get and stay socially connected, to navigate social networks and hierarchies, and to form a sense of self based on socially derived expectations.

Part III, *Group Processes*, focusses on humour in workplaces. It begins, in Chapter 7, with Barbara Plester’s description of her ethnographic approach to the “separate yet overlapping concepts” of humour and fun within organisations. According to Plester, positive workplace humour has a variety of benefits, but humour can also have a “dark side”. While risk and edge are inherent parts of humour, the increasing diversity of workplaces means that what is amusing to one person or group can be quite hurtful to another. As workplaces have become more “risk-averse, careful, and even litigious” (p.116), there has been a tendency for humour to become more politically correct or to disappear altogether from some workplaces. One immediate next step she identifies is the need to examine the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on workplace humour. In Chapter 8, Ann Frymier and Melissa Wanzer argue that to be a competent classroom communicator requires using communication in such a way as to achieve a desired goal (“effectiveness”) in a manner that avoids violating social norms (“appropriateness”). They argue that the three major

theories of humour (based respectively on incongruity, superiority/disparagement, and arousal/relief) are most clearly relevant to what makes humour effective (funny), while the communication approach favoured by the writers is particularly relevant to their understanding of appropriateness. According to their Instructional Humour Processing Theory (IHPT), a humorous message must first be perceived as humour and once perceived as such, be appropriate in the sense that it produces positive affect if it is to enhance learning and retention.

Part IV, labelled *Intergroup Relations*, focusses on aspects of disparagement humour and prejudice. On the basis of Prejudiced Norm Theory (PMT), Thomas Ford and Andrew Olah argue in Chapter 9 that disparagement humour acts as a releaser of prejudice by creating a social norm that communicates permission to behave in a prejudiced manner; it provides an implicit subtext that expressions of prejudice can be treated light-heartedly. While such humour can also be used to subvert prejudice, by exposing its ugliness, this approach can backfire, as people may miss the subversive intent of the joke. For Ford and Olah, future research should more fully consider the social and emotional consequences of disparagement humour on members of a target group. In Chapter 10, Gordon Hodson and Elvira Pruszczyk describe and discuss evidence concerning their Group Dominance Model of Humour Appreciation. The model posits individual differences in the degree to which people look favourably on the hierarchical structuring of society (Social Dominance Orientation, or SDO), which is a strong predictor of prejudice. In this article, they are particularly concerned with showing that Cavalier Humour Beliefs (CHBs; beliefs that “jokes are just harmless jokes”) can operate as legitimising myths to facilitate the release of social dominance motives; specifically, prejudice towards low status outgroups. In Chapter 11, Julie Woodzicka and Robyn Mallett review research that examines the challenges of confronting disparagement humour. To minimise interpersonal costs, confronters often use subtle confrontations, including witty, humorous responses. These tend to be slightly less effective than non-humorous approaches but may produce at least moderate effectiveness without the social costs.

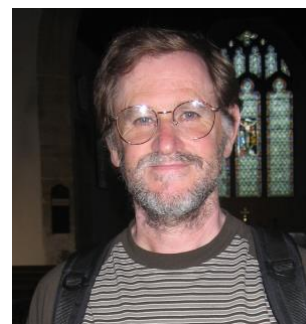
The articles selected for this comprehensive collection aim to include both theory and empirical data, though some emphasise one more than the other, and some include original data. Another differential emphasis concerns the “Next Steps” section, which is, in some instances, a major section, incorporating numerous suggestions for future research, and in others, little more than a summary of the article (as in Chapter 6). I did not find such differences of approach detracted from my overall enjoyment of the book. In short, Strick and Ford have put together a collection of relatively brief, well-referenced articles of high quality from diverse areas of social psychology. As such, this text would make a useful introduction to the field for the educated reader with an interest in humour, or for readers from academic disciplines associated with social psychology. A collection as diverse as this one, with its explicit focus on “next steps”, highlights the many unanswered questions that make humour in social psychology an exciting area for new researchers.

David Rawlings

Reviewer Bionote

Following completion of a DPhil degree at Oxford University (Magdalen College, 1983), David Rawlings was for most of his academic career at the Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences, University of Melbourne, where he is currently an honorary Senior Fellow. The focus of his research is personality psychology, with particular interests in the interface between personality and psychopathology, and connections between personality and such areas as humour, aesthetic preference and creativity, and religious belief and experience. He is a long-standing member of the AHSN Review Panel.

Email: davidrawlings@y7mail.com



New Book on Humour and Covid 19

Shepherd Mpofu (Ed.). 2021. *Digital Humour in the Covid-19 Pandemic: Perspectives from the Global South*. iv, 355pp. 48 b/w illustrations. London: Palgrave Macmillan. eBook ISBN: 978-3-030-79279-4 DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-79279-4 Hardcover ISBN: 978-3-030-79278-7

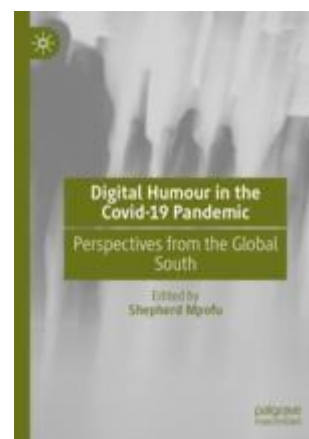
Publisher's description

This is the first volume to explore how digital media were used to engage with the global COVID-19 pandemic using online jokes, videos and memes.

It examines the role of digital humour in challenging power and providing solidarity.

Includes chapters on a wide range of countries across South America, Asia and Africa

Digital humour in the COVID-19 pandemic: Perspectives from the Global South offers a ground-breaking intervention on how digital media were used from below by ordinary citizens to negotiate the global pandemic humorously. This book considers the role played by digital media during the pandemic, and indeed in the socio-political life of the Global South, as indispensable and revolutionary to human communication. In many societies, humour not only signifies laughter and frivolity, but acts as an important echo that accompanies, critiques, questions, disrupts, agitates and comments on societal affairs and the human condition. This book analyses citizens' use of social media and humour to mediate the pandemic in a diverse range of countries, including Brazil, India, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The book will appeal to academics and students of media and communication studies, political studies, rhetoric, and to policy makers.



Author Bionote

Shepherd Mpofu is Associate Professor in Media and Communications at the University of Limpopo, South Africa. He is an African Humanities Programme Fellow. He is co-editor of *Mediating Xenophobia in Africa* (Palgrave, 2020). He regularly publishes in academic journals on themes such as media and identity, media and protests, gender and race.

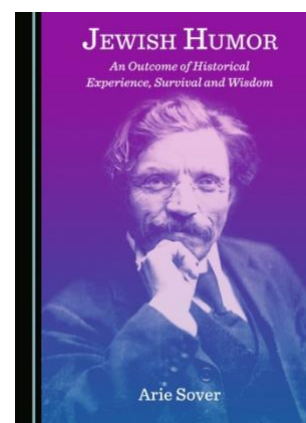
At: <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9783030792787#aboutBook>

New Book on Humour and The Comic

Arie Sover. 2021. *Jewish Humor: An Outcome of Historical Experience, Survival and Wisdom*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 339pp. ISBN (Hardcover): 1-5275-6447-9.

Publisher's Description:

This book details the evolution of Jewish humor, highlighting its long history from the period of the Bible to the present day, and includes a wide spectrum of styles that are expressed in various works and fields, including the Bible, the Talmud, poetry, literature, folklore, jokes, movies, and television series. It focuses upon three socio-



geographic regions where the majority of Jewish people lived during the 18th to 21st centuries and where Jewish humor was created, developed and thrived: Eastern Europe, the United States and Israel. The text is a complicated mosaic based on three central components of Jewish life: historical experience, survival, and wisdom. It shows that one cannot understand Jewish humor without referring to the various factors which led the Jewish people to create their unusual sense of humor.

Author Bionote:

Professor Arie Sover, PhD, is a Lecturer and Researcher in Communication and Humor Studies and works at the Open University of Israel. He focuses on humor research, especially Jewish humor. He has published many articles and five books in this area, including *The Languages of Humor* (2018) and *Laughter: An Interdisciplinary Anthology of Humor Research* (2018). He is the founder and Editor of the Israeli Journal of Humor Research and Humor Mekuvan, and Chair of the Israeli Society for Humor Studies.

Available at: <https://www.cambridgescholars.com/product/978-1-5275-6447-3>

New Special Journal Issue on Humor and Laughter

European Journal of Humor Research, Vol. 9 No. 2 (2021). Special Issue on Laughter and Humour in Communication. Proceedings of the 2020 St Petersburg Gelological Congress. Edited by Sergey Troitskiy, Aleksandr Lavrentev, Alyona Ivanova and Liisi Laineste

<https://www.europeanjournalofhumour.org/ejhr/issue/view/32>

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New Special issue on Humour Research (Bi-lingual publication)

"Humor, creativity and lexical creation." Special issue of *Lexis*, edited by Lucile BORDET and Frédérique BRISSET.

At: <http://journals.openedition.org/lexis/3602>

All articles full-text and freely available

Articles

Fabrice Antoine

Les séries ludiques en argot et en langue familière : saut métaphorique et rebond

Craig Hamilton and Anne-Sophie Foltzer

On Euphemisms, Linguistic Creativity, and Humor

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English Acronyms in Indonesian School Events

Le Pouvoir Du Rire - Rire Du Pouvoir Humour, Discours Et Politique

The Power of Laughter – Laughter Of Power Humour, Discourse and Politics

International conference – Call for Proposals

Organised by The University of Craiova, Romania in collaboration with Inalco and University Lyon 2 in Craiova (in person, pandemic permitting)

19-20 May 2022

The conference will be held in French. Abstracts due 1st December 2021.

Full details (in French) at:

https://www.fabula.org/actualites/le-pouvoir-du-rire-rire-du-pouvoir-humour-discours-et-politique_103873.php

Events for Noting

COLLOQUE: LA PERCEPTION DE LA CHINE DANS LA CARICATURE OCCIDENTALE

L'UNIVERSITÉ DE BRETAGNE OCCIDENTALE (BREST)

LES 30 SEPTEMBRE ET 1ER OCTOBRE 2021

PAR YUE YUE ET JEAN-CLAUDE GARDES

Annoncé par Marie Laureillard, via Le Centre de l'Etude de l'Ecriture et de l'Image: <https://ceei.hypotheses.org/>

Editors' Note: We were alerted to this interesting Colloquium on the perception of China in Western caricature rather too late to give advance notice. However, more information and the whole program (in French) can be found at these links:

https://www.univ-brest.fr/hcti/menu/Actualites/Colloques_et_manifestations_venir/Perception-de-la-Chine-ds-la-caricature-occidentale

https://www.univ-brest.fr/digitalAssets/99/99237_Programme-colloque-Chine.pdf

We particularly draw attention to a video presentation by Alexandre Mitchell, Director of the publishing company Expressum (www.expressum.eu) in Brussels and a Research Associate of the University of Fribourg, who is also a member of the Humours of the Past (HOP) group, convened by former AHSN members, Hannah Burrows and Daniel Derrin (University of Aberdeen). Alexandre spoke on: La réception de l'antiquité gréco-romaine dans la caricature politique chinoise / The reception of ancient Greece and Rome in Chinese political caricature.

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM ON

Laughter at any price: American comedy in the 1990s

Date: Held on Thursday 14th October (in-person, at University of Paris 8)

Program available at:

http://www.humoresques.fr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=837:rire-a-tous-prix-la-comedie-americaine&catid=43&Itemid=66



CALL FOR FEEDBACK FROM COLLEAGUES IN THE NETHERLANDS

Editors' Note: ISHS members recently received this Call from Dick Zijp and Ivo Nieuwenhuis in Amsterdam. We are sharing it with AHSN members with the request that you contact Dick and Ivo directly if you can assist them.

From: Dick Zijp dickzijp@gmail.com

Sent: Friday, October 15, 2021 5:43:32 AM

Cc: Ivo Nieuwenhuis <ivonieuwenhuis@gmail.com>

Subject: Controversial humour research

Dear fellow humour scholars and ISHS members,

Ivo Nieuwenhuis and I [Dick] are preparing a special issue for the *European Journal of Cultural Studies* on the politics of humour (planned for early 2022) and are currently writing our introductory essay. For this article, we would like to ask for your input.

In our introduction, we discuss some recent controversies around humour research in the Netherlands. This Summer, I published an opinion article in a Dutch national newspaper, which led to a lot of pushback. I was attacked by pundits, comedians and Twitter trolls for being humourless and 'cancelling' comedians, even though that was not at all the argument I made. Some Dutch colleagues have similar experiences. No worries, I am doing fine - however, we are curious to hear if some of you have experienced this as well, i.e. being attacked for researching or critically discussing instances of humour and/or speaking out about your research in public debate. Do these incidents only occur in the Netherlands or is it a broader trend?

Feel free to share your experiences with us! We hope to see many of you in Bertinoro next Summer for the long-delayed ISHS Conference hosted by Prof. Delia Chiaro, University of Bologna.

All the best,

Dick & Ivo dickzijp@gmail.comivonieuwenhuis@gmail.com

The Humour Studies Digest

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