

Book of Abstracts

Joint conference
International Society for Humor Studies (ISHS 34)
and
Humor Research Conference (HRC 14)

April 18th - 21st 2024

Hosted by the
Applied Linguistics Lab
Texas A&M University-Commerce



ISHS 2024



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ISHS and HRC

From 1976 to 1988, humor scholars met seven times at international conferences to discuss advances in humor research. Since 1989, the International Society for Humor Studies has been the primary sponsor of these conferences with annual meetings alternating between North America and other regions of the world. A list of the ISHS conference can be found on the ISHS web page. Since 2002, the Society has recognized each year emerging scholars and/or exceptional graduate students in humor studies with a special plenary session featuring their work. ISHS offers three types of awards to graduate students planning to present at our annual conferences. You can find information on these awards in the Conference Awards section of the ISHS page www.humorstudies.org

The Humor Research Conference is an annual online student-organized international multidisciplinary all-plenary event dedicated to the study of humor in all its facets. It is organized by the Applied Linguistics Lab at Texas A&M University-Commerce. All submissions about any topic related to humor studies, including and not limited to literary studies, psychology, folklore, sociology, computer science, and linguistics, are welcome. The conference is held entirely online. The conference web page is www.tamuc.edu/humor

The joint 34th ISHS and 14th annual Humor Research Conference (HRC) 2024 will be live-broadcast on the web from April 18th (pre-conference workshops) to April 21st.

Organization

ISHS-HRC is organized by the Applied Linguistics Laboratory at Texas A&M University-Commerce, Department of Literature and Languages.

Organizing committee (2024)

Student organizers: Haomei Meng Francesca Farris Melissa Davis

Faculty supervisors: Salvatore Attardo Christian "Kiki" Hempelmann Shelby Miller

List of Abstracts

Unmasking the Polite Racist: Humour, Resistance and Black African immigrants in Canada

Eyitayo Aloh

Panel paper

Trent University, Peterborough

"[Laughter has power] in the face of the absurd yet painful distortions produced by racism." - Glenda Capio (2010)

In contemporary Canadian media, there is a tendency towards following a single, stereotypical image of immigrants as "job takers" and "spongers" without necessarily looking at the social realities that precipitated the dislocation and migration of the immigrants. All of these are taking place against the backdrop of Canada's image as a polite and peaceful country with a welcoming hand extended to all immigrants. Using a cultural lens, I intend to examine how immigrants are using the power of humour to resist this narrative and integrate themselves into the social fabric of Canada.

Symposium on Thomas Wilk and Steven Gimbel's, *In on the Joke: The Ethics of Humor and Comedy* (2024)

Lydia Amir (Chair), Stuart Hanscomb, Giorgio Baruchello, Thomas Wilk, & Steven Gimbel Panel

Tufts University, The University of Glasgow, University of Akureyri, Iceland, Widener University, Gettysburg College

Who is morally permitted to tell jokes about Jews? Poles? Women? Only those in the group? Only those who would be punching up? Anyone, since they are just jokes? All of the standard approaches are too broad or too narrow. *In on the Joke* provides a more sophisticated approach according to which each person possesses "joke capital" that can serve as "comic insurance" covering certain jokes in certain contexts. When Bob tells a joke about Jews, we can never know exactly what Bob is intending since we cannot see inside Bob's mind. But we could reasonably infer, if we knew Bob himself was Jewish, if he worked tirelessly for Jewish causes, or was a card-carrying Neo-Nazi. Each would affect his joke capital, and, in certain circumstances, we would have a moral standing to demand to see his ledger to see how much joke capital he had with respect to Jews. The permissibility of that joke depends upon four factors: the joke, the teller of the joke, the audience, and the setting. The view developed in *In on the Joke* is the only view that clearly explains how each of these components work together in an integrated, effective ethic of humor.

And Then There's *Maude*: Comedy and Nuanced Moral Codes

Jack Anderson, Emma Fernandez-Kim, Xin Liu, Sophia Pasquale, & Jennifer Small Panel paper

Boston University

Maude was an American sitcom that ran for six seasons, from 1972 to 1978. *Maude* is considered a groundbreaking Norman Lear comedy, which is a spin-off of Lear's *Good Times*. Throughout the series, *Maude* is characterized as a strong-willed person with equally strongly held beliefs. Over the course of the episodes of *Maude*, it is clear that *Maude* is determined to get her way. We see in multiple instances where she wants something and she does everything in her power to attain it. She also has some traditional values that she follows as well as some more progressive beliefs. Our paper will function as an analysis of both *Maude*'s nuanced moral code and the tactics she uses to enforce these beliefs. Special attention will be given to how her more residual conservative beliefs on gender roles contrast with her more modern feminist beliefs.

A Quantitative Study on the Evolution of Political Correctness and Humor in Malayalam Film: Pre and Post the Malayalam Film Movement

Anupama T.

Paper

English and Foreign Languages University

This study examines the inter-relationship of language and humor by understanding the evolving perspective of the listener. To understand and investigate this idea the research looks into the dynamic shift in Malayalam cinema concerning the language of humor and how it affects the evolving views of Malayalam audiences on inclusion, political correctness, and being a social animal. With a particular divide in 2010 signifying the start of the Malayalam Film Movement, the study's focus is on the years 1996 to 2023. It employs a quantitative technique for analyzing film content. The study evaluates whether changing perspectives on inclusivity and political correctness are fostering the demise of traditional humor or fostering the development and adaptability of Malayalam cinema. Furthermore, insights are collected from YouTube interviews with people working in the film industry actors, directors, writers, and producers, offering a sophisticated perspective on how insiders view the place of political correctness in humor. The results are intended to shed light on the complex interactions that exist between audience expectations, societal ideals, and cinematic language, providing important context for understanding the development of Malayalam film.

From Scrolls to Laughs: The Impact of TikTok on Young Learners' Language and Humour Skills in Just 15 Seconds

Kardelen Aslan & Kadri Nazli

Paper

Dicle University

Humour has been challenging to enhance in the language development. Enhancing young learners' sense of humour could improve their language skills. The study aims to raise awareness among them utilizing 15-second TikTok videos with humorous captions related to the specific series, focusing on authentic language structures and lexis. In this qualitative case study, 3 young learners aged 7 to 10 will participate in 80-minute private, face-to-face English lessons. These lessons facilitate TikTok videos featuring popular scenes from 'Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story', 'The Crown', and 'Game of Thrones' emphasizing the humorous use of popular phrases from them. Participants are to focus on them on TikTok by various users through the humorous side. Analysing the videos with follow-up questions, they are to be in the one-to-one and face-to-face interviews to answer 8 open-ended questions to share their opinions about the humorous side to integrate TikTok videos into the EFL lessons. Their responses will be recorded, transcribed and analysed thematically providing a qualitative and in-depth data. This study aims to address a gap in the literature with a practical example of using TikTok videos to enhance language and humour awareness among learners, a topic primarily on adult learners and educators until now.

Comic Cocktail as Film Review: Crisis of Malayalam Cinema

Athul Augustine

Paper

IISER, Bhopal

While the use of social media platforms has immensely helped key players of the Malayalam film industry in every phase of film production, promotion, circulation, and consumption, the same platforms have lately posed huge existential challenges to the regional filmmaking ecosystem due to the rise of YouTube film reviewers. While there are several factors like multiplex, piracy, illegal downloads, streaming services etc. that could negatively impact the theatrical run of movies, the latest cause of the crisis in the cinema theatre and film industry at large is the rise of negative review videos on YouTube and several social media platforms. The present paper attempts to closely examine this trend of impressionistic film 'review' on Youtube posing existential challenges to the business model of mainstream Malayalam cinema in the state of Kerala. Particularly interesting in this regard is the case of Aswanth Kok, a controversial film 'critic' on YouTube whose comic cocktail-mixture of mimicry, 'figure show' and sometimes vulgar humour- functions to vehemently vituperate the film under discussion.

Following Chaplin in Weimar Germany

Sammy Basu

Panel paper

Willamette University

By the early 1920s, in Britain, France and the United States, Charlie Chaplin (1889-1977) was widely regarded as a comic genius and one of the greatest living film actors by critics and adoring cinema-going masses alike. Not so in Weimar Germany (1919-33), where he was initially ignored then underappreciated and subsequently subjected to a range of views from delight to unlaughter to visceral disgust. Why? To answer this question, this historical research follows and disaggregates the reception of Chaplin by Weimar audiences using primary source documents from the period. In Germany, I will argue, Chaplin's humor figured as a litmus test of the viewer's relationship to their own political identity (*ethnos*) and attendant understanding of the purposes of art. More specifically, the extent of the appreciation of Chaplin was a function of the viewer's preferred normative account of humor, presumptions about the identity of Chaplin, characterization of Chaplin's style of humor, and belief about the impact of his identity on the meaning and purposes of his humor. All of this was long before *The Great Dictator* (1940), Chaplin's satire and caricature of Nazism and Hitler.

Trauma, Dark Humour and Collective Delusion: The case of Post-independence Indian Magical Realism

Srestha Bhattacharya

Panel paper

University of Delhi

Suggesting that humour and magical realism are both built on incongruity, this paper proposes to study the intricate relationship between trauma, literary humour and experimental narrative techniques in the context of post-independence India, with special reference to the Indian Bengali writer Nabarun Bhattacharya's debut novel *Harbart* (1993). Set in a particularly tumultuous period in Indian history, Bhattacharya's novel follows the story of its eponymous protagonist Harbart Sarkar, an otherwise unremarkable man who is endowed with access to the world of the dead. Spurred on by the loss of his nephew to the Naxalite uprising, Harbart starts his "business" of connecting dead souls with their living loved ones. However, through non-linear storytelling and highly experimental language, Bhattacharya's radical aesthetics soon overturn the expectations surrounding the genre of magical realism, as it becomes increasingly difficult to separate the 'magic' from what Carl Jung has dubbed collective delusion. "Greater than all physical dangers", writes Jung, "are the tremendous effects of delusional ideas, which are yet denied all reality by our world-blinded consciousness". Encapsulating this idea, Bhattacharya's subversive black humour gives rise to the magical realist rupture of conventional narrative realism, which in turn foregrounds the inherent absurdity of the power structures embedded in the neoliberal order of the postcolonial nation-state. Following this observation, my paper seeks to suggest how black humour and its intention to destabilize the reader from their complacency forms a fruitful association with magical realism's propensity to question accepted modes of knowledge and understanding, especially in the context of the global South.

Mock-politeness and Mock-impoliteness in Italian Political Discourse: A Case Study on Italian Political Tweets.

Antonio Bianco

Poster

Università di Pavia & University of Bergamo

It has been observed (e.g., Haugh 2011) that humor (Attardo 2020) can fulfill various functions, including face preservation – thus aligning with politeness principles (Brown & Levinson 1987). However, humor may also entail face-threatening acts (FTAs), hinting at impoliteness (Culpeper 2011). Specifically, this study examines the (persuasive) use of mock-politeness (Bousfield 2008) and mock-impoliteness (Culpeper 1996) by Italian politicians C. Calenda, V. Sgarbi, and G. Meloni. These strategies will be annotated and analyzed on 600 tweets published by the three politicians during the 2022 election campaign. Technically, mock-politeness (1) – a distinct phenomenon from irony (Dynel 2016) – is an explicit polite stance masking an impolite utterance inferred by implicature (Haugh 2015). This utterance is humorous to listeners not targeted by the FTA and carries persuasive implications: in (1), indeed, it enables Calenda to ridicule his opponent, fostering voters' appreciation through humor. Conversely, mock-impoliteness (2) is an FTA not considered offensive and what is it implicated bolsters the speaker's positive face. In (2), Sgarbi pretends to discredit his political abilities – presenting himself as anti-pacifist – and his own temperament, thus enhancing his image by displaying a readiness to laugh at himself (self-deprecating humor, Norrick 1993).

Satire as an Epistemic Tool

Chintada Bindu

Poster

University of Delhi Philosophy

Satire could be understood as Humour with a corrective nature. It is a multi-layered form of poor-man's entertainment which could aid in both knowledge production and dissemination. The paper proposes to understand Satire as an indirect form of resistance, implying the moral, social as well as the political influences— which forms a subculture. While many scholars have viewed and studied Satire, it is only in the recent past that Satire is being understood as a tool to create new knowledge and challenge the existing paradigms. The author attempts to study Satire and understand its complex framework, which effectively brings both entertainment as well as the truth to its audience. The intensity of Satire, alongside its literary and logical structure could be understood through its role as a moral torch (by directing the audience towards what is right, while criticizing the vice), as a social commentary of everyday life, and as a language of protest. The paper explores the possibility of Satire being considered a serious epistemic tool, apart from being an enlightening form of entertainment— and above all, if Satire can be viewed as PhilJaviosophy.

All Work and No Play Makes Jacques a Dull Boy: Maintaining an Elite's Distinction Through Student Humor

Christophe Birolini

Panel paper

CERLIS (UMR8070) Université Paris Cité France

In this paper, I examine student humor in a French elite higher education institution, specifically the “*polard*” humor, a kind of anti-schoolwork and anti-academically disposed student humor. I argue that by using this type of humor, students perpetuate symbolic boundaries between themselves as elites and others and socialize one another to an elite distinction. The data was mainly collected during an ethnographic study conducted between 2014 and 2018 of the student community in one of France’s most prestigious elite higher education institutions. At some point of the research, I started following the *polard* humor, trying to understand how students used the term and what this type of humor meant. I came to see this humor as an important way students had of constructing symbolic boundaries within their group and socializing themselves to elite dispositions. The students construct the *polard* as a foil figure of a student who spends all their time doing schoolwork and refrains from participating in extracurricular activities and tease one another in interactions where they attribute the *polard* label to others and must reject the *polard* identity for themselves. I discuss this humor in relation to the elite setting, as it is linked to the social closure of elite higher education institutions and contributes to the production of an elite student community. Lastly, I reflect on the importance of studying elite humor and of ethnographic studies of it to better understand elites.

I Cringe; but do You Cringe? A Study on the Potential Cringiness of Covid-19 Humor

Luca Bischetti

Paper

IUSS Pavia

Humans share laughs at comic language or light situations, but find the fun side of misfortunes or tragedies, often experiencing contrasting reactions. This is the case of several types of dark humor (e.g., 9/11 and Titanic vignettes), but also of cringe humor, which is associated with a reduced appreciation or triggers discomfort in some, especially youngsters (but not in the whole population, such as in aged adults). Despite cringe humor being typical of TV shows, lately, the upsurge (and decline) of Covid-19 humor globally and on social media opened to studies about the mixture of emotions shaping the perception of humor as cringeworthy at the individual and cultural level (e.g., humor associated with toilet-paper shortage at different stages or different age groups). Here, data on Covid-19 humor appreciation from two large samples of individuals living in Italy and the USA (for a total of circa 3000 people), aged 18 to 90, are examined with bottom-up clustering techniques to classify jokes and memes related to the recent Coronavirus pandemic and describe – according to the approach to verbal (and multimodal) humor introduced by the GTVH – similarities and differences between cringe humor related to Covid-19 vs. humor riding toward full appreciation.

Petrarch's Sen. IV, 4: A Revisitation of the *Domi non Sum* Anecdote?

Maria Boghiu

Paper

University of Bucharest

This paper aims at analyzing humor in one of Petrarch's Epistles, Sen. IV, 4, addressed to Pietro da Moglio, a Bolognese Humanist, whose mother-in-law tried to visit Petrarch in 1365, but the poet could not (or would not) attend her. Petrarch's rather clumsy attempt at apologizing to his Bolognese friend for not having received his mother-in-law who wanted to pay him a visit can be connected to some other famous literary episodes concerning 'unwelcome guests', among which the '*domi non sum*' ('I am not home') anecdote told by Cicero (*De Oratore* II, 276) and its Greek counterpart mentioned in the Philogelos collection (anecdote no. 193). One of the questions that I intend to address is whether this letter should actually be read in an ironic-satirical key, or whether our modern stereotypes project a contemporary understanding upon a piece of writing whose original purpose was different. The linguistic analysis of Petrarch's Latin text also approaches the cognitive metaphors therein - understood as conceptual mappings between a source domain and a target domain, as proposed by the Cognitivist school (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) - which will cast some light on the writer's intentions and some of the underlying ideas of the text.

Dad Jokes: A theory

Ian Brodie

Panel paper

Cape Breton University

In the past two decades the identification of a particular behaviour has emerged: the dad joke. It comprises a blanket term for both a conspicuously hackneyed joking performance and the texts that comprise its script. As with most vernacular taxonomy the definitional boundaries are diffuse: its latter sense has been extended to becoming a synonym for any "bad" yet "clean" joke, with intimations of being "timeworn" yet "classic." This paper examines the dad joke along two axes. First is "dad" as a qualifier for "joke": the use of the diminutive for the person in a literal *pater familias* role suggests a relationship as tempered by affection as it is defined by an uneven distribution of power and privilege, a form of heteronormative masculinity understood as counter to the toxic version thereof (see, in complementarity, the emerging positive aesthetic connotation of the "dad bod"). Dadness remains as a palimpsest for benignly exercised privilege irrespective of the actual teller of the joke. The "dad" is aware of that privilege and exercises it by imposing a joke performance frame onto a social situation, without the consent of all assembled. This leads to the second axis: the ethnographic context of dad joke performance, where the social situation into which a joke performance frame is imposed typically comprises the social identities pairing of "dad," "child," and a third person: the child's discomfort at the joke's lameness is witnessed by another. This in turn locates dad joke within the realm of the practical joke, where witnessing emotional discomfiture is an often-desired response.

“Grotesque” meets “Carnavalesque:” How Subversive Humor meets Bakhtin’s Carnavalesque in Luis García Berlanga’s 1953 classic Spanish film Welcome, Mr. Marshall!

Debarati Byabartta

Paper

California State University, Northridge

The Spanish classic film *Welcome, Mr. Marshall!* (1953) stands out as an epitome of subversive humor during the zenith of the Francisco Franco era in Spain through its grotesque-meets-carnavalesque portrayal of an insignificant village, Villar del Río and its even more insignificant inhabitants and their lifestyle. The film is an acrid portrayal of Spain’s non-essential and powerless position on the world map during the mid-twentieth century, along with its internal sociopolitical conflicts and defects that led to an abysmally hollow condition.

Director Luis García Berlanga illustrates the monotony and misery of the villagers’ daily lives with outlandish grotesqueness through vaudevillian and farcical comedy, irony, parody, sarcasm, linguistic jugglery, double entendre, mockery, disparagement, etc., which successfully matches the carnivalesque atmosphere of the film.

This paper analyzes the film as a multilayered, subversive political satire and social criticism that includes high degrees of black comedy to underscore the grave situation of Spanish society, which stood on a flimsy foundation during the fifties. Besides, it examines how power degradation occurs in the film by laughing at truths in a legitimately Bakhtinian Carnavalesque fashion, where an authentic attempt of the director to create socio-political and historical-cultural criticism, awareness, and discourse is perceived.

Leo Lins’ Stand-Up Comedy Routines: Between Censorship and Hate Speech

João Paulo Capelotti

Panel paper

Independent scholar

In 2023, the most commented freedom of speech case in Brazil had to do with humor. Leo Lins, famous for his routines filled with jokes about minorities, was targeted by prosecutors for hate speech. An injunction was granted by the District Court of São Paulo, on the grounds that his way of living was serving as an excuse to commit crimes. The judge forbade him to insert new content in his YouTube channel that could possibly be interpreted as violation to minorities’ rights, as well as removing all the existing jokes of his videos that could also be labeled as such. However, a decision from the Supreme Court restored his YouTube channel and revoked the so-called censorship, acknowledging Lins’ claims. The paper seeks to provide a deeper examination of the case, contextualizing for foreign audiences (i) who is the comedian; (ii) if the content produced by him can or cannot be understood as hate speech; (iii) both the District Court and Supreme Court’s rulings, their consequences, and next steps.

Archie Bunker: An Analysis of a Lovable Bigot

Eugene Chew, Soomin Back, Kai Farr, Mar Huguet, Rachel Kawall, & Marlo Silenti Panel paper

Boston University

Perhaps Norman Lear's best known comedy, *All in the Family*, featured the iconic character of Archie Bunker. While the show was based on the British sitcom *Till Death Do Us Part*, Archie was inspired by Lear's father. Archie represents the quintessential white, male, heterosexual, protestant, blue collar worker. This presentation explores how Lear used comedy to expose racist, homophobic, anti-Semitic, and sexist prejudices.

The Impact of Humor on Strongly Fused Gun-Rights Advocates

Pelin Cunningham-Erdogdu, & William Swann

Poster

University of Texas at Austin

While research suggests that humor can be used as a persuasive tool, the extent to which it can be used to mitigate extreme behaviors fueled by strong alignment, i.e., "fusion" (Swann et al., 2009) with a particular cause has not been explored. 465 participants fused with the constitutional right to keep and bear arms were exposed to a (i) humorous message (ii) serious message or (iii) no message challenging common gun advocacy arguments. Video stimuli were used. Strongly-fused participants dehumanized gun restrictions advocates significantly less if they watched a serious video, rather than a humorous video or no video. While both strongly and weakly-fused participants' endorsement of affective polarization did not differ as a function of condition, weakly-fused participants indicated higher levels of affective polarization than the strongly-fused participants. This research reveals how humor presented via a video format may promote negative behaviors among those it hopes to persuade.

When Public Service Comedy Gets Accused of Racism: Humour Controversies as Boundary Struggles

John Magnus R. Dahl

Panel paper

University of Bergen

In this paper, I will look at three different humour controversies in the Scandinavian countries regarding racism and analyse them both as boundary struggles (Midtbøen et al., 2017) in the public sphere, referring to the contestation about what types of speech acts that are deemed as legitimate or illegitimate as well as to the public sphere's dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, and as attempts of politicisation (Fraser 1989), referring to how concerns that get political attention are not simply given, but subject to interpretive conflicts where issues formerly seen as belonging to the private sphere enter the social and the public sphere, and may become political and thus common concerns. The two concepts – boundary struggles and politicisation - are used in tandem as my material shows that boundary struggles about racist humour – what should be accepted in the public sphere – also is an interpretive conflict about what (discursive) racism ultimately is. Using a combination of simple actor analysis and an analysis of the interpretive repertoires used by the different stakeholders, I suggest that the development of such controversies partly depend on how strategically placed actors use the humour controversies rhetorically, partly on the potential the show that sparked the controversy had for different kinds of interpretation. The cases in question are the sketch “All skit försvinner” (“All shit disappears”) from the Swedish programme Lorry (SVT) in 1989, the Danish Christmas calendar puppet show Yallahrup Færgeby (DR2) from 2007, and the Norwegian sitcom Ali Reza and the Rezas (TV2) from 2009.

Why I Need Political Satire, and not as a “Safety Valve”

Catherine Evans Davies

Paper

The University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa

This exploratory study applies ethnographic methodology to build on recent challenges to the “safety valve” metaphor of the role of political satire that have widened the lens and complexified perspectives: (C. Davies 2007: examining jokes in Communist countries as quiet protest and indication of regime instability), performance studies (Day 2011: exploring the role of performative satire); communication (Young, Holbert, and Jamieson 2014: proposing strategies for the successful use of political parody in generating positive democratic outcomes), and film, media, and health and medical humanities (Declercq 2021: considering political satire as therapy), and DeClercq and El Kahab 2021 (on the surprising role of political satire in authoritarian Egypt). I draw on this scholarly background in crafting an ethnographic approach that starts from autoethnographic data (C. E. Davies 2019). I began with reflections on my reactions to the loss of my essential daily dose of political satire during the absence of the Late Show during the recent writers' strike. That data was supplemented with a collection of comments on the social media platform Threads, as well as on YouTube, concerning the Late Show and the Colbert monologues in particular that reveal explicit mention of the impact of his satire on individual viewers.

Confessions of an Interactional Sociolinguist Who Loves Humor

Catherine Evans Davies

Panel paper

The University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa

Since ethnographic approaches to humor are rare among us, I thought it might be helpful to offer an overview of an academic career that included ethnographic studies of humor as part of my research portfolio. I had a career in an American tier one research institution, as a professor of linguistics in an English Department. My account could be valuable for graduate students, for scholars beginning their careers and thinking about a trajectory, and for established scholars doing mentoring. I define myself as an “interactional sociolinguist” and I have always been interested in face-to-face conversation as the basic way that humans perform their identities and create social life in general. When it came time to do my dissertation, I knew that I wanted to study conversation and I was instinctively drawn to humor in conversation as a key way that people connect with each other face-to-face. I will give brief accounts of the 8 articles that I have published that have “humor” or “joking” in the titles to show the range of disciplinary subfields within sociolinguistics that are engaged as well as the different kinds of data that I have used and the qualitative methodologies that I have employed. I have done a total of 32 conference presentations on the topics of humor or joking, but I will draw on those only to show additional concerns and kinds of data as well as the areas in which I was blocked from publication. These accounts will also show the evolution of my engagement with humor in my academic work.

Less isn't Always More: The Need for Multiple Theories of Humour

Jennalee Donian

Panel paper

Nelson Mandela University

There is ongoing debate among scholars regarding the need for formulating a single, universal theory of humour. Whilst this might provide more validity to the field, given the numerous theories that abound in academic scholarship, a single theory may not be sufficient to fully capture humour's complex and multifaceted nature. The author will offer various reasons for this stance, including the fact that humour is not a monolithic concept, but rather a phenomenon that is innately subjective and culture-and context-bound. Further, because of its diversity, humour intersects with numerous disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, linguistics, sociology, and anthropology, among others. Thus, the author will argue that it is more beneficial to consider multiple theories of humour and their interrelatedness in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of humour.

Humor Theories Through the Lens of Large Language Models

Ryan Rony Dsilva & Julia Taylor Rayz

Paper

Purdue University

This research explores pun classification through the lenses of two humor theories: the computational model of humor [1] and the Benign Violation [2], extending from the N+V Theory [3]. The former requires a pun to exhibit ambiguity and distinctiveness, with a word having two plausible interpretations, each supported by at least one distinct word. The latter theory suggests puns violate one linguistic norm while adhering to another, creating benign violations. Through the utilization of large language models (LLMs), we analyze a labeled dataset of English puns to evaluate the efficacy of these theories in pun classification. To assess each theory, we conduct controlled manipulations on the dataset, involving the removal of one the conditions for a theory and querying the other theory regarding the classification of the modified input. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying pun recognition and the practical applications of humor theory. The subsequent sections will present the results of our experiments, providing an insight into how the manipulation of individual conditions influences the effectiveness of each theory in classifying puns.

Online Humor and the ECtHR: How the Formal Division Between Written and Spoken Speech is Prohibiting Online Humor

Babette De Naeyer

Panel paper

Pompeu Fabra University

In Europe, it is up to the European Court of Human Rights (the Court) to determine the often diffuse line between protected and illegal speech within the limits of Article 10 ECHR. The Court takes different content- and context-related elements into account when assessing Article 10 cases. One of these relevant contextual elements is the oral or written nature of the contested speech. Here, the Court is more tolerant towards off-hand oral remarks, which are considered to be more “lively and spontaneous” and without any “possibility to reformulate, refine or retract them”. Offensive written expressions, on the other hand, are considered to be “the result of a thought process” and thus put under more strict scrutiny. After explaining the origin and rationale of the Court’s different treatment of written and oral expression, this paper will discuss how this division is applied to online speech. Since most online speech is in written form, the Court fails to take into account the “lively and spontaneous” character of the online environment. This formal division has nefast consequences on the Court’s established tolerance for borderline speech, such as inappropriate jokes and satire. The “degree of exaggeration, or even provocation” normally allowed by the Court seems to be put under more strict scrutiny online. This paper aims to accommodate the traditional doctrine to this new online reality.

Humor and Conflict Resolution: A Surprising Duo?

Anita Dorczak

Workshop

Dr. Anita Dorczak's Law & Mediation Workshop

When faced with conflict, your mind doesn't generally turn to humour, right? Dispute resolution has been traditionally reserved for the courts. Yet at the end of the 20th century, there was an emergence of new methods of conflict resolution such as mediation or collaborative law, both of which focus on negotiation out-of-court. This presentation will address conflict styles and the impact of humour styles on negotiation.

In this workshop, there will be serious quizzes about humour, more serious comments about non-adversarial approaches to conflict resolution and a comical video enactment illustrating a humorous confrontation after which the participants will be invited to engage in small group discussions (if technology allows it) to deliberate the advantages and disadvantages of the use of humour. This interactive and research-driven workshop aims to showcase the various ways humor can be utilized and its influence on enhancing negotiation skills.

Relations Between Comic Styles and Defense Mechanisms (Preliminary results)

Robert Durka & Katarina Matejova

Paper

Catholic University in Ruzomberok, Slovakia

The aim of this study was to utilize a hierarchical regression analysis in the prediction of comic styles with defense mechanisms above and beyond the Big Five personality factors, and vice versa. The eight comic styles could be differentiated to lighter styles (fun, wit, benevolent humor, nonsense), and darker styles (irony, sarcasm, satire, cynicism) (Ruch et al., 2018). The defense mechanisms are mature, neurotic, and immature (Andrews, Singh, & Bond, 1993). Altogether 191 Slovak adolescents (mean age: 16,68±1,64 years) filled out 3 scales: Comic Style Markers, Defense Style Questionnaire, and Big Five Inventory 2.

According to the preliminary results, all four lighter comic styles were predicted above and beyond personality factors by mature defense mechanisms, while all four darker comic styles were predicted by immature defense mechanisms. The best predictor of mature defense mechanisms was benevolent humor, while cynicism best explained immature defense mechanisms. Neurotic defense mechanisms were best explained by nonsense, satire, and low cynicism. The results of this study showed that the defense mechanisms could be utilized in the prediction of comic styles (and vice versa) above and beyond Big Five personality factors. Our research is still ongoing.

Humour Support, Unlaughter, and Censorship: How Social Media Algorithms Affect Humour Transmission and Performance

Brittany Dyck

Poster

University of Alberta

The rise of digital media and digital culture have caused significant changes to the transmission and performance of vernacular cultural expression in online spaces. In recent years, social media websites and applications have changed this landscape further, with the implementation of algorithmic feeds designed to moderate, sort, and censor the user generated content shared on these sites. These algorithms have great affect on user behaviour, as they utilize vague and opaque rules while also having the tremendous power of dictating what user-generated content will be seen by other users. This presentation investigates the rather infamous TikTok algorithm in order to reveal some of the ways in which this process affects the transmission of jokes and other humorous content on the app. Specifically, this presentation will show how TikTok's algorithm greatly complicates and obfuscates the relationship between performer and audience that is typically expected in performance spaces, and how the users' reactions and adaptations to the use of algorithms can complicate traditional ethnographic approaches to analyzing performance.

From Notifications to Notoriety: Exploring the Memetic Journey of Duolingo in the Age of Social Media and Corporate Branding

Francesca Farris

Paper

Texas A&M University-Commerce

The game-based language learning application Duolingo, founded in 2012, has expanded greatly in recent years, with over 55 million current users. The app, now a fixture in popular Internet culture, has generated several memes, including the Evil Duolingo Owl meme. This paper delves into the evolution of this meme, tracing its history, and positing that Duolingo is one of the few companies that have not only successfully leveraged a meme for marketing purposes, but have taken near full control of the meme and its evolution, developing a unique company culture and brand identity incorporating the meme. The original meme, featuring Duolingo's green owl mascot brandishing a gun and threatening users into completing their language lessons, emerged in 2017 as a response to the app's frequent reminder notifications and comically aggressive tone. Evolving from simple variations to intertextual mashups and metatextual variants, the meme has become a cultural phenomenon, with Duolingo themselves embracing it in marketing campaigns and social media content. Examining the memetic drift and virality of the phenomenon, this paper highlights Duolingo's adeptness at engaging with its audience through humor and meme culture and offers insights into the dynamics of online humor and corporate branding in the digital age.

Large Language Models and Laughter: Is it Still the Best Medicine?

Eleni Giannitzi, Vladislav Maraev & Christine Howes

Panel paper

University of Gothenburg

In this talk we present our study of laughter in interactions between humans and socially interactive agents (SIAs). Our study involved manipulating negotiative dialogue between individuals and the Furhat robot. Furhat's dialogue was generated by a large language model, and our pilot experiment focused on manipulating the robot's response to the user's laughter through an experimental intervention.

A number of studies have introduced interventions in text-based chat in relation to laughter use. For example, Mills et al. assessed laughter mimicry and the interrelation between laughter and emotional contagion. Maraev et al. inserted spoof contributions such as additional laughs and clarification requests ("lol?", "lol what", "what's funny" etc.) which appeared to come from the dialogue participants in online text-chat. This study extends this real-time intervention technique to interactions with a SIA.

For the pilot experiment the experimenter who observes the interaction modifies the behaviour of the robot in real time, based on their observations of a human user's laughter. Specifically, we investigated participants' perceptions of the robot in response to two distinct intervention types: laughter reciprocation and laughter clarification requests. For the inserted laughter, we used a sound sample representing a slight chuckle. Following the experiment, participants evaluated Furhat's naturalness, understanding, human-likeness, and empathy, and estimated emotional states using the Geneva Wheel of Emotions (GWE). We observed some rather surprising trends, such as a higher rating of naturalness and human-likeness in comparison to the control group in both intervention conditions.

Humor in the Novels of Alain Mabanckou

Rayza Giardini

Panel paper

São Paulo State University and University of Paris Nanterre

The use and choice of humor in literature can be motivated by intending not to appear aggressive. This can help establish an important relationship between the reader and the narrator, thus favoring the progress of the narration and allowing to tackle the most serious problems in a light way through humor. We can find this characteristic in the novels of Alain Mabanckou. They propose a debate with the complex themes linked to French colonialism, highlight the negative effects of this era, as well as the ongoing issues and tensions until today, all in a light manner, without overwhelming the reader. Humor manifests itself through the comments of the narrator-characters as well as in the words of the characters in the narration, even when the stories told are unhappy and unsuccessful. In “Black Bazar” (2009), nonsense arises during the exchanges between the protagonist, “Fessologue” and his neighbor, “Monsieur Hippocrates”. In “Verre Cassé”, for example, the life stories told by the characters in the bar are both unfortunate and picturesque, thus bringing humor to the narration. The narratives offer a multiplicity of points of view by characters. Thus, the irony manifests itself through the comments of the narrator-characters, the words of the characters in the narration and dialogues between them even when the stories told are unhappy and failed. By using humor, the narrator gains the reader’s sympathy, humanizing the character and making the story more authentic. The humor in his novels serves not only to entertain, but to subtly criticize serious subjects.

Intelligence and Humor

Steven Gimbel

Panel paper

Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, PA

Humor theory is generally portrayed as a continuous string of thought from classical forms of superiority and play theories to contemporary relief and incongruity theories. However, there is a major shift that occurred at the turn of the 20th century as a result of the so-called linguistic turn in philosophy. As a result, what may be seen as “the problem of humor” is completely recast. For those before the 20th century, the question was why an application of reason not designed to find truth would seem desirable. But once philosophy embraced the value of linguistic riddles, the early concern vanished and was replaced with more methodological concerns.

The Reasonable Publics of Online Humor

Alberto Godioli & Jennifer Young

Panel paper

University of Groningen

When assessing liability for the effects of a disputed joke, courts usually set out to reconstruct how said joke could be received by a “reasonable” audience. However, “deciding who the ‘right-thinking’ or ‘reasonable’” members of society might be is often “far from obvious” (McDonald 2016: 187); and in particular, the elusive nature and subcultural specificity of online humor makes it all the more difficult to identify who exactly is the reasonable recipient of a given expression.

Our talk will discuss how the reasonable public is construed in legal cases concerning online humor in relation to: 1) Hate speech (from *Féret v. Belgium*, European Court of Human Rights, to *Ward v. Quebec*, Canada Supreme Court); 2) Defamation (*McAlpine v Bercow*, England and Wales High Court); 3) Public unrest (from *Sinkova v. Ukraine*, ECtHR, to *Chambers v DPP*, EWHC); 5) Incitement to violence (*HKSAR v. Chan Johnny Sek Ming*, Hong Kong). Spanning across widely different judicial systems, we will illustrate the recurring challenges faced by courts, as well as highlighting the importance of a more systematic approach to the convention of online humor genres. Insights from recent studies on the production and circulation of humor in the digital age might be particularly helpful in this respect.

How Funny is ChatGPT? A Comparison of Human- and A.I.-produced Jokes

Drew Gorenz & Norbert Schwarz

Paper

University of Southern California

Can a large language model produce humor? Past research has focused on finding examples of these models succeeding or failing at producing humor in the eyes of the authors, without surveying peoples’ actual judgments of its output. These examples, while interesting, do not shed light on exactly how funny ChatGPT is to the general public, nor do they analyze ChatGPT’s humor production abilities in comparison to humans’ abilities. To explore this question, we gave the same comedic prompts to ChatGPT 3.5 and laypeople, and asked them to generate humorous responses (Study 1). We also asked ChatGPT 3.5 to generate humorous satirical headlines and compared them to published examples from professional comedy writers at The Onion (Study 2). Other participants rated the funniness of the human and A.I.-produced responses in each study. ChatGPT 3.5-produced jokes were rated as equally funny or funnier than human-generated responses regardless of the comedic task and the expertise of the human comedy writer.

Interesting Difference: Can Slit-eyes be a Humor?

Li Gu

Panel paper

Southwest University of Political Science and Law (China)

The representation of slit-eyes has become a highly contentious topic among Chinese netizens. Accusations of racism or “Asianfishing” are alleged when they manifest in gestures or facial makeup by racial others, while charges of internalized Orientalism are leveled when they appear in stylized fashion photography or anthropomorphic cartoon character images by Chinese authors. While such criticism can be empathized as expressions of pain and anger, or registers of injuries and damages in a world of persisting divides, unevenness, and exclusion, this paper argues that, it is equally important to carefully and critically examine the potentials and limits of such criticism, if we want to make the contentions more instructive than fueling another movement of political correctness fixated on identity imagined to be fixed. Through an analysis of pertinent discursive constellations, this paper suggests that if such criticism is empowered by an identity-based politics, it is nonetheless impaired by a deterministic articulation of identity-difference that deprives the involved parties of symbolic, performative resiliency and threatens to reproduce the symbolic violence that once characterized colonial epistemology. The potential of humor, understood as an alternative mode of difference-identity articulation, is discussed.

Wordplay and Humor Interculturally. Is it Possible or not?

Marta Hammoor

Poster

Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University / University of Vechta

Why are there different forms of humor? And what are the significant differences? Humor is a culturally determined phenomenon and therefore differs from country to country. As a cultural phenomenon, laughter or humor depends on certain historical, social and personal constellations. Which form of humor prevails in a country or community is closely linked to the respective history and mentality. What do wordplay and a sense of humor have in common? What kind of puns do we often encounter in everyday life - and what do we think of them? Do we like making jokes ourselves, or do we find puns unnecessary and rather embarrassing? There are certainly many jokes where we have laughed and at which we have just turned our eyes upwards. Everyone has a favorite joke that they think is particularly original.

Mein Joghurt ist mir gestern runtergefallen. er war nicht mehr haltbar.

or

Bauchschmerzen ohne B sind auch Schmerzen.

The question is, how can you spread this interculturality? My German friend won't understand a Ukrainian joke with the pun or, conversely, my Italian neighbor will absolutely misunderstand a French joke with the pun ..."

Humour, Conflict and Cultural Reconciliation

Louise Harrington

Panel paper

University of Alberta (Canada)

This paper studies humour as a cultural form of meaning-making in the complex space of ethno-religious-national conflict and its aftermath. In the context of the conflict between Israel and Palestine, and with some reference to the Troubles and its legacy in Northern Ireland, I examine the ways in which humour, as deployed by various writers, filmmakers and artists, disrupts the given geopolitical narratives of a place. The power of humour in literature or on television shows, for example, is variously understood to contribute to peacebuilding and transitional justice by rejecting the status quo, subverting state discourses, or illuminating the absurdities of everyday experiences of violent conflict. However, I argue that humour also raises questions about spaces of privilege, insiders and outsiders, and the dubious goal of cultural reconciliation.

Critical Discourse Analysis of the Highest-rated Iranian Comedy Movie

Mohamamd Ali Heidari-Shahreza

Paper

Azad University

Lizard is a 2004 Iranian comedy (drama) movie, being banned for about two decades. It has remained the highest-rated comedy in the history of Iranian cinema. Lizard is also the first and arguably the most controversial movie within the Islamic Republic of Iran, satirizing the clerics, religion and the wide-ranging social connotations of religious doctrines and governments. The study probes into the Iranian society through the 'discourse access' this comedy movie provides. It is posited that Persian comedy can be an insightful 'point of entry' into the below-the-surface construct of social wrongs (e.g., religious hegemony, inequality, unfreedom). The paper applies a modified version of Fairclough's (2010, 2023) well-established and widely-employed CDA methodology. It unmasks a number of critical themes through a scene by scene CDA of the movie. Among other propositions, the article discusses the notion of 'size-free' society against the backdrop of unfreedom within a 'free-size' (hegemonic) society. 'Religion literacy' within the broader perspective of 'public literacy' is similarly addressed. The findings shed light on how Persian comedy can reliably anticipate, safely address and possibly redress the socio-cultural allergens running deep within the Iranian society. It also highlights how humor can contribute to discourses of social awareness and transformation.

Performing Laughables in TikTok Duets

Susan C. Herring

Plenary paper

Indiana University, Bloomington

Humor is arguably the universal language of the video-sharing platform TikTok, manifest in relatable personal narratives, funny skits, multilayered jokes, and duets that promote creative audience participation. Duets, in which an original video and the video that responds to it appear side-by-side, sometimes take the form of conversational interaction, and in some of these, the duetter produces a laughable (Glenn, 2003) to which the original video laughs in response. This is, however, a clever illusion, since original videos are produced prior to the duet and cannot respond. In this talk, I analyze the pragmatic, linguistic, and interactional strategies employed in producing laughables that foster the illusion of humorous conversational exchanges in TikTok duets. I illustrate the strategies with data from a multilingual corpus of 600 duets with a video of a preverbal baby laughing and pretending to talk on the phone. The strategies include last lines of jokes or personal narratives which precede (and are assumed to motivate) the baby's laughter, as well as anti-laughables which construe the laughter as deviant. Further, the semantically empty babbling of the baby allows duetters to construct varied and often improbable scenarios that cast the baby in adult roles such as real estate agent or mob boss; this incongruity constitutes a further source of humor in the videos. In concluding, I compare the strategies used in the duets, which are performed to entertain an audience of TikTok users, with research on laughables in spontaneous spoken conversation, arguing that the former shed new light on communicators' socio-pragmatic competence, as well as illuminating the creativity of TikTok users in leveraging the affordances of the platform to create new kinds of humorous content.

Trickster Pedagogy: Insights into an Improbable Oxymoron

Jarno Hietalahti

Paper

University of Jyväskylä

In my presentation, I will analyze the possibilities of the so-called trickster pedagogy in the context of university teaching. First, I will show that this term is a humorous oxymoron or paradox. To begin with, universities aim at educating and cultivating students. At the end of their studies, pupils master their subject. Generally put, university pedagogy is developed for this purpose.

However, tricksters do not have goals. They are creatures who react according to the current situation and aim to satisfy their appetite (for chaos, disorder, or such). Of course, in folk lore tricksters are those who teach us a lesson on a meta-level; they remind how limited the world of order and rules is.

Despite the evident mismatch between pedagogy and tricksters, I will argue that tricksters offer an intriguing mindset for university teachers. I will show that trickster pedagogy is a genuine possibility, but it has its costs as it, eventually, questions the very principles of the university system. The most difficult trick is, then, for the teachers, to find a sensible balance between anarchy and education. As a conclusion, I suggest that trickster pedagogy comes close to both critical pedagogy and humanistic pedagogy.

An Analysis of Fandom-Specific Memes in the Supernatural Fandom

Taylor Hill

Paper

Texas A&M University-Commerce

The paper investigates how specific online spaces—fandom groups on Tumblr—participate in and interact with media and how this participation leads to the spread of certain common scripts within the in-group. A case study of a popular fandom group, the Supernatural fandom, on Tumblr was conducted. The scaffolding for the fandom-specific script includes knowledge of the fandom practice of “shipping” (short for “relationshiping”, i.e., the creation of fanworks motivated by the desire to see two characters be together in a romantic sense whether or not they are romantically linked within the canonical media) and its uses within the Supernatural fandom. The paper examines the differences between memes in fandom and memes outside of fandom. The results of the case study showed evidence of fandom-specific memes, i.e., memes that require a secondary script learned through participation in fandom in order to be successfully humorous. For example: the Destiel is Canon meme; a meme within the Supernatural fandom that plays on the fandom-specific script related to “shipping” and its importance in fandom through drawing attention to the fandom’s widespread disappointment in the way the “ship” was handled in the show by mocking the love confession between the two characters.

Sol Alegria (2018): a Brazilian Queer Dystopian Cabaret

Diego Hoefel

Panel paper

Federal University of Ceara (Brazil) / NOVA University of Lisbon (Portugal)

In recent Brazilian cinema, a strain of humor has become increasingly intertwined with elements of science fiction and horror. Films such as "Medusa" (2021), "Bacurau" (2019), and "Ghostkillers Vs. Bloody Mary" (2018) stand out as notable examples of this emerging trend. These movies effectively convey issues related to identity politics, racism, patriarchy, and colonial legacies by weaving them into stories of serial murders, menacing ghosts, and extremist religious groups. "Sol Alegria" (2018) also belongs to this trend, offering a dystopian portrayal of a Brazil under the control of a neo-Pentecostal government. However, it stands apart from this broader collection of works by focusing not on the conflict between oppressors and resistance forces but on the performative depiction of the daily lives of those who refuse to conform to the state’s oppressive regime. The narrative constructs a hypothetical scenario in which queer individuals are forced to live underground to pursue their desires and enjoy life. These individuals constitute a resilient faction, depicted through various comic and performative scenes that collectively create a somewhat dystopian queer cabaret. In this article, I analyze how "Sol Alegria" incorporates elements from the cabaret tradition to craft a discourse opposing the rise of the extreme right in Brazil. I also explore how its unique use of cabaret’s forms and imagery sets it apart from other recent Brazilian films that similarly employ dystopian settings to address societal anxieties through humor. Finally, I look at the specificities and potential contradictions inherent in incorporating a European tradition like cabaret into a film that upholds an openly decolonial discourse.

“Everything’s [Not] Fine”: A Snapshot of How Humor Exposes Structural Sexism in Spain and the US

Erin K. Hogan & Maria Garcia Puente

Paper

University of Maryland Baltimore County

In recent years, Spain has experienced its own #MeToo and #Timesup. In August, the kiss between the president of the Royal Spanish Football Federation, Luis Rubiales, and World Cup champion Jenni Hermoso became a lightning rod for structural sexism in Spain and beyond. It ignited an energetic and verbose debate in the media. As scholars of gender, audiovisual, and cultural studies in Spain, we propose to approach examples of these responses. One, by @LolaLaMonyos22, utilizes a technique of mimicry and the humor of incongruity that Sarah Cooper most recently made famous in her comedy ventriloquizing Donald Trump. Another, from Spain’s SNL (El intermedio), comically likened Rubiales’ behavior to that of an ape, relying on the humor of superiority. This co-authored study draws from the theories on comedy for social justice to address how select humorous videos and editorial cartoons may serve to mobilize and educate viewers (Chatoo & Feldman 2020) about systemic gender inequality, as part of a multi-pronged approach to remedying gender inequality.

Comic Blather: An Interdisciplinary Problem

Nicholas Holm

Paper

Massey University

Multiple scholarly traditions are represented in humour studies. Each tradition is accustomed to approaching humour in its own ways, and through its own set of examples. These differences in favoured examples lead to the neglect of forms of humour that fall between these preferred modes.

Professional comic blather—directionless comic chat performed to entertain a formal audience—is one of those forms. Found across multiple media, comic blather involves the co-construction of comic talk in a performative context. Falling between the humour of vernacular conversation and scripted comedy, comic blather is neither entirely conversational nor entirely textual. It is also a prominent, but unfortunately under-studied form, because it challenges rather than conforms to the methodological priorities of different areas of study.

In this presentation, I will document how comic blather manifests across multiple media forms and outline some of its consistent formal features. However, I will not present this as a complete account, because my analysis will be limited by my own textual disciplinary orientation. Instead, I will present this as an invitation to future collaboration and a way to develop the future of humour studies as a field where disciplines do not just co-exist, but collaborate.

Deepfakes Unveiled: Navigating the Legal Maze Amidst Parody and Satire

Sabine Jacques

Panel paper

University of Liverpool

In recent years, the proliferation of deepfake technology has raised critical concerns about its potential misuse for political commentary and the manipulation of public discourse. In 2019, an AIDS charity created a controversial deepfake featuring Donald Trump proclaiming the end of the AIDS epidemic. This artistic expression aimed to critique the former President's tendency to take credit for achievements not realised. Similarly, in 2020, XR Belgium utilised deepfake videos of the Belgian Prime Minister to shed light on the consequences of political inaction regarding the climate crisis and its link to the rise of global epidemics. As the reuse of official footages in the context of advocacy campaigns becomes more prevalent, legislative bodies worldwide are actively seeking ways to regulate these uses. However, a pressing challenge remains: How can private actors, such as large platforms, and judges, be equipped with the necessary tools to discern intent and identify instances where content manipulation may lead to confusion? This presentation delves into the complexities surrounding the legal framework for deepfakes and explores potential solutions for empowering both platforms and judicial entities to navigate this evolving landscape effectively. Addressing the need for nuanced assessments of intent and context in the age of deepfakes is crucial to strike a balance between the protection of free expression and the prevention of malicious misuse.

A Qualitative Exploration of Humor in Psychotherapy: Clients' Perspective

Prachi Joshi & Meet Shinde

Paper

Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University

Humor is used as an important communication tool in every relationship possible. Its benefits and effectiveness are largely discussed throughout literature from varied disciplines including psychology. While experiences of humor and laughter are subjective and vary, literature shows a stark contrast when it generalizes certain perceptions of humor in Eastern cultures. Preliminary trends indicate that humor is used as a test and a tool in therapeutic setting. This study attempts to explore what according to the an Indian clients' context is perceptions of humor and its impact in therapeutic process. It also attempts to explore if use of humor can be twisted to reduce the power distance instead of widening it further. The sample population for this study is 6-9 educated female individuals, irrespective of their gender, socio-economic status who have been in therapy for a duration of 6 or more months and staying in Mumbai and suburban areas. A semi-structured interview method will be used to elicit moments from the participants and data will be analyzed by using steps given in the grounded theory approach.

Cracking up: Freud, Bergson and a Politics of Laughter

Kevin Klein-Cardeña

Poster

Columbia University Teachers College

What cracks up when we do? From whom or what do we steal a laugh? How does laughter surface as a Robin Hood of pleasure one instant and a bigot's sneer the next? This presentation offers an analytic of laughter's ambivalent relationship to power through an engagement with Bergson's essay on laughter and especially Freud's writing on jokework. The presentation argues that the apparent tension between Bergson's adaptive account of laughter and Freud's subversive account of the same is resolved by attending to the differential relationship of laughter to the in/stability of the social order to which in each case it issues a response. This claim extends Freud's distinction between jokework and the comic to suggest that each has a paradigmatic and opposite relationship to power: jokework contests the legitimacy of the social order which comic laughter consolidates and vice-versa. The presentation recalls a teacher/student relationship dramatizing this tension and considers limitations of a dichotomous approach.

Black Male Vulnerability in Comedic Autobiographies and Autobiographical Comedy

Tuula Kolehmainen

Panel paper

University of Turku, Finland

African American comedian, Jamie Foxx, writes in his 2021 autobiographical work, *Act Like You Got Some Sense: And Other Things My Daughters Taught Me*, that "part of being a man is to show vulnerability." Comedic autobiographies and autobiographical stand-up comedy are unique forums for dealing with themes like gendered vulnerability and power relations, even exposing views that would be unlawful outside of the comedic context. Having an authoritative voice in society, famous stand-up comedians seem to possess an immense amount of power with low degree of responsibility for what they say. At the same time, well-known comedians have a chance to talk about their vulnerabilities, and, thus, to claim their own stories, including their experiences of police brutality, racist stereotyping, childhood experiences, challenges of aging, and shame. This position creates a tension of power and vulnerability, which often leads not to the deconstruction of power structures but the restructuring of power relations. In this presentation, I will explore the ways in which African American stand-up comedians, such as Richard Pryor and Dave Chappelle, connect their experiences of vulnerability to "being a [Black] man." I argue that African American comedians present their experiences of Black male vulnerability as a play between power and vulnerability in which they navigate between a position of power and a state of vulnerability.

Humor in Educational settings: An Exploratory study

Prasoon Kumar & Preeti Vivek Mishra

Poster

University of Delhi

Humor is a multifaceted phenomenon that is very close to human existence. In the discipline of education abroad, there have been numerous studies about perception and impact of humor in educational settings but there is a dearth in Indian context. Very few studies conducted abroad were qualitative. To address these gaps, an objective was formed to study teachers' perceptions about the use and impact of humor in educational settings. Another objective was to study teachers' perceptions about different types of humor used and their appropriateness. Some other objectives were to gauge and assess teachers' understanding of their humor as used by them. Qualitative approach was used in which, interviews with 25 teachers were conducted in Bhagalpur, Bihar. Objective-wise data analysis was done using MAXQDA-2022 software and manually. Teachers reported that appropriate use has a positive impact in educational settings. Four cases of humor were presented, to which teachers gave a variety of responses. They also shared humors as used by them which were gauged in terms of their types and appropriateness and contradictions were found as many of them were inappropriate or half-baked. This indicated teachers' shallow understanding about appropriate use of humor.

Praise and Laughter

Timothy Kwiatek

Paper

Cornell University

When I mock the politician you revile, you laugh extra hard. Someone who doesn't care about politics might laugh less heartily. A defender of that politician might deny that the joke was funny altogether. The defender might do this even if they think the joke was funny. So, what does the first laughter signal? Does it signal how funny the joke was or how much you hate the politician? It does both. Praise can take many forms, from a spoken utterance to a high five to a smile or a look of approval. Sometimes it seems that laughter at a joke is a way of praising the joke. Yet we can laugh at a joke which we think is funny, but morally pernicious. And we could coherently say that a joke is funny but wrong. You might even say it's wrong while you're laughing. Maybe the wrongness is even part of what you think makes it funny. This paper explores the relationship between praise and laughter. A better understanding of praise can help our understanding of laughter, and a better understanding of laughter can help our understanding of praise.

The Humor Kernel

Chris Land

Paper

Independent scholar

The Humor Kernel is the tiny part of a humor event that makes it Humor.

A humor kernel happens whenever humor is experienced and does not happen when humor is not experienced. It occurs inside the mind of the observer. It is often a small part of overall awareness. Small but important, much like the antecedent meanings of 'kernel' in biology and software.

Two observers might both 'get' a joke and recognize it as humor while only one experiences it as humor. The humor kernel is not the explanation of a joke. Rather, it's the explanation for why one person experiences a joke as funny and another does not.

Every humor kernel is asymmetric. It consists of a nonsense element and a sense element. They create humor only when they cognitively superimpose (aka 'clash').

Multiple humor kernels, even a great many, are possible at the same time or in close proximity. Detection of these will vary among different observers.

Does it Reinforce or Ridicule? Predicting Judgments of Endorsement vs. Subversion in Stereotype Humor

Erika Langley & Michelle "Lani" Shiota

Poster

Arizona State University

Stereotype jokes represent a particularly divisive form of humor, often evoking reactions ranging from amusement to discomfort and offense. Despite being widely considered taboo, such jokes are commonplace in various media and social interactions. While previous research has highlighted the importance of joker identity in shaping responses to these jokes, less is understood about how inferences of endorsement vs. subverting stereotypes influences reactions. Moreover, studies comparing subversive and disparagement humor have shown many participants misinterpret jokes intended to be subversive as disparaging, underscoring the need to explore factors driving these subjective judgments.

This study investigates two factors that may interact to predict judgments of endorsement vs. subversion in stereotype humor. Sixteen memes (4 groups) were systematically manipulated based on the explicitness of association between a group and their stereotype, and level of distortion of the stereotype; explicitness (vs. implicitness) meant overtly featuring both group and stereotype within the meme, while distortion (vs. lack of distortion) was achieved through exaggeration or ridiculous extrapolation of the stereotype. Unlike previous studies that made assumptions about how participants will interpret stereotype humor, this project represents the first attempt to empirically examine specific objective factors of stereotype humor and their interactive effects on subjective interpretations.

Satire and Racial Violence in 1850s Mexico

Gabriel Lesser

Panel paper

University of California, Berkeley

In the thirty years after Mexico's independence, Liberal writers and illustrators used humor to reformulate Spain's complex colonial racial hierarchy—the *casta* system—and create a new sense of Mexican national identity that justified their rule. One genre to which many writers turned was the humorous *cuadro de costumbres*, a short sketch of manners that ridiculed lowerclass stock characters. *Cuadros* had a lighthearted and silly tone that made them seem apolitical, but they subtly promoted racist hegemonic policies. My talk focuses on *Los mexicanos pintados por sí mismos* (1854), a popular collection of *cuadros de costumbres*. The funny fictional sketches in the collection depicted a society in which indigeneity disappeared and mestizos were relegated to the lower classes. Humorous fiction provided an effective combination of ambivalence and rhetorical violence through which Liberals could simultaneously celebrate and repress mestizos by depicting them as imagined backbone of modern Mexico's economy and low-class workers with limited social mobility. I argue that creole elite writers used two ludic approaches to ridicule indigenous and mestizo characters. The first concept was dialogical satire, a type of humor in characters mocked themselves through fictional dialogues. The second concept was racialized illiteracies, a satire that underscored limited literacy of the indigenous and mestizo characters. Ultimately, I conclude that nineteenth-century humorous ridicule of poverty, and its racist undertones, became a mainstay of Liberal elite culture in Mexico. In young nations across the continent, Liberal writers used racist humor to oppress groups they sought to exclude from power, a tactic which is still common today. By analyzing how satirical writers produced rhetorical racial violence in early national contexts, I expand research about the connections between humor and racial violence in the Global South.

Freedom of Speech and Entitlement in Stand-Up Comedy

Christian Liliequist

Poster

Umeå University

Stand-up comedians often deal with taboo subjects and say things on stage that usually aren't said in other public spaces. Since the early days of stand-up comedy, when Lenny Bruce was sentenced for joking in an obscene way, freedom of speech has been an important principle for stand-up comedians. The stand-up comedian is often compared to the medieval court jester, who could ridicule those in power positions without getting punished. But "the right to joke about anything" can also be used as an argument for legitimizing jokes that punch down on marginalized groups, by comedians who claim that they rebel against "woke culture" and "political correctness".

Another important principle in stand-up comedy is the principle of "entitlement", which concerns what kind of jokes you are entitled to tell depending on who you are and what you have experienced. A person who belongs to an ethnic minority could, for example, be seen as more entitled to joke about that group than a person who belongs to the ethnic majority. In some cases, the principle of entitlement contravenes the principle of freedom of speech, which can be seen in various humor debates.

Hutcheson's Hobbes

Sheila Lintott

Panel paper

Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA

In his *Reflections Upon Laughter*, Francis Hutcheson argues that Thomas Hobbes is, simply put, *entirely* wrong about laughter. Hutcheson offers a series of counterexamples and they do undermine any claims to a relationship of either necessity or sufficiency between laughter and perceived superiority. In addition, they rightly question the role that comparison plays in laughter. However, I argue that Hutcheson's attacks miss their mark. Several are based on uncharitable and inaccurate interpretation of Hobbes's writing on laughter and another is based on faulty logic. Therefore, Hutcheson only succeeds in taking down a straw Hobbes.

"To Study, or not to Study, that is the Question." Using Humor in the Language Classroom

Anna T. Litovkina

Paper

J. Selye University

The focus of the present paper is on different mechanisms and humor devices used in Anglo-American anti-proverbs (or proverb transformations). At first I review the background of anti-proverb research and terminology. Then I comment briefly upon my experience in teaching courses on Anglo-American Proverbs, American Wit and Humor, Phraseology, as well as Proverbs in an American Cultural Context in various Hungarian, Polish and Slovak universities and colleges. Then I discuss ways in which Anglo-American anti-proverbs can be used in the language classroom. After focusing on some of my books and studies on this topic, I explore the value of incorporating Anglo-American anti-proverbs into language-teaching situations, offering various activities in which anti-proverbs can be incorporated into the language classroom in order to facilitate and promote conversational and writing skills. The Anglo-American anti-proverbs discussed in the present paper were taken primarily from American and British written sources. The texts of anti-proverbs were drawn from hundreds of books and articles on puns, one-liners, toasts, wisecracks, quotations, aphorisms, maxims, quips, epigrams, and graffiti the vast majority of which have been published in two dictionaries of anti-proverbs compiled by Wolfgang Mieder and Anna Tóthné Litovkina: (Mieder - Tóthné Litovkina 1999; T. Litovkina - Mieder 2006)." "T. Litovkina, A., & Mieder, W. (2006). *Old proverbs never die, they just diversify: A collection of anti-proverbs*. Burlington: The University of Vermont – Veszprém: The Pannonian University of Veszprém.

Humor and Incitement to Violence: Assessing “Imminence” in the Digital Age

Laura Little

Panel paper

Temple University

Online expression challenges settled legal doctrines developed to protect in-person freedom of speech. Interesting results can follow when online expression probing the line between acceptable and unlawful prompts the defense “it was just a joke.” One illustrating challenge posed by this dynamic is charting the line between protected advocacy of provocative ideas and unlawful incitement of violence. Since 1969, the United States has used the following test for determining when communication can be punished as incitement to violence: “the advocacy [must be] directed to inciting or producing imminent lawless action and . . . likely to incite or produce such action.” How does one analyze the “imminence” requirement of this test for online speech? “Imminence” has historically required that the lawless action occur soon after the speaker communicates. For in person communication, this timing notion fits easily. But when words are communicated online, is imminence measured from the time the communication is uploaded or the time when it is read by the listener? Words may seem humorous “tongue in cheek” at a time when uttered but not later when they seem serious.

The Wisdom of Humor

Jim Lyttle

Poster

University of Minnesota

Contemporary students are adept at acquiring factual knowledge and understand the mechanics of critical thinking. However, their behavior in areas such as consumption, investment, and even voting often seems quite irrational. What appears to be lacking is a discernible sense of sound judgment and wisdom. Although there exist reasonable definitions of wisdom and a handful of well-documented assessments for it, the challenge lies in effectively imparting wisdom. This process demands significant time and patience from educators, who must possess a degree of wisdom themselves. Additionally, there is a risk of the instruction resembling religious indoctrination or cultural conditioning. In this context, humor emerges as a valuable tool for the dissemination of wisdom and the cultivation of a love for it. Unlike overtly didactic methods, humor operates without demanding agreement or disagreement, allowing the audience to ponder the message at their own pace and without external pressure. Specific strategies for employing humor to convey wisdom and foster a love for wisdom in the educational context are presented here.

How to Assess Humor in Neurodevelopmental Conditions: A Participatory and Individualized Perspective

Mirella Manfredi

Panel paper

University of Zurich & Unidistance Suisse

My research proposal aims to understand how autistic adolescents process humor and whether a humor-based training program can improve well-being in this population. I will run three studies in which behavioral and neurocognitive responses will be analyzed. Study 1 examines which features of humorous information influence the understanding and appreciation of humor in autistic adolescents. Study 2 analyzes and compares neurocognitive processing underlying humor processing and other cognitive functions to clarify the nature of the constructs that have historically been the focus in autism research. Study 3 focuses on a humor training program, not based on correcting deficits but aimed at enhancing and implementing autistic adolescents' way of processing humorous information. In this proposal, I will embrace the neurodiversity paradigm according to which the life of a person with autism can be fulfilling, even if it differs from neurotypical models. Within this perspective, I will apply three methodological approaches. First, I will implement a participatory research method, including the active participation of members of the autistic community in the research team. Second, I will create a humor training that, instead of teaching strategies to normalize humor processing, will use the individual preferences of autistic adolescents to create individualized humor trainings. Third, the heterogeneity of the responses of the autism group will be addressed using a dimensional approach. In this contribution, the consequences and risks of adopting the neurodiversity perspective in the field of humor in autism will be discussed.

Advancements in AI Humor Comprehension and Generation: Implications for the Future of Cartooning

Robert Mankoff

Panel paper

cartoonstock.com

Recent artificial intelligence (AI) developments have led to significant advancements in computational humor. Large language models from Open AI, Google, and Anthropic have demonstrated a growing ability to understand the underlying mechanisms of humor, particularly in the context of single-panel cartoons in The New Yorker Cartoon Caption Contest. This presentation by Bob Mankoff, former cartoon editor of The New Yorker, explores the potential implications of these advancements for the future of cartooning and humor creation. By examining the performance of AI models in tasks such as matching captions to cartoons, identifying winning captions, and explaining the humor behind them, we highlight the progress made in AI's comprehension of humor. While human superiority persists in these areas, the gap is narrowing, with AI exhibiting a notable aptitude for humor explanation. Furthermore, I discuss the collaborative potential of AI in the creative process of cartooning. By leveraging AI's ability to generate cartoon ideas and captions, human cartoonists may find a valuable brainstorming tool to overcome creative blocks and explore novel concepts. The presentation emphasizes the importance of human-AI collaboration, as human cartoonists' emotional depth and real-world experiences remain essential to creating genuinely resonant humor. In conclusion, I argue that while AI is unlikely to replace human cartoonists entirely, its increasing capabilities in humor comprehension and generation will significantly impact the field. The future of cartooning may lie in the synergistic partnership between human creativity and AI-driven innovation.

Nonsensical Worlds and Their Inhabitants: Towards a Literary Analytical Model

Anthony Manu

Paper

Vrije Universiteit Brussel

This paper has two objectives. Firstly, it aims to introduce a model for the analysis of humorous nonsense narratives from the perspective of literary analysis. Secondly, it seeks to add to the existing research on literary nonsense by investigating how nonsensical humour can manifest differently in works from distinct cultural and historical contexts. My model will combine insights from contemporary humour research (e.g. Attardo and Raskin 2001) with insights from cognitive literary science and from the narrative worlds framework (Doležel 1998). I will develop and evaluate it through a comparative analysis of three works from different historical and cultural contexts that can all be categorized as nonsensical: a Victorian-era English poem, a Dutch poem written during the Second World War, and a 3D animation short by a contemporary Peruvian digital artist. The works in question are "Only a Dancing Girl" (1866) by W.S. Gilbert, "The Bluebillgurgle" (1942) by C. Buddingh' and "Temptation Stairway" (2021) by Joel G. Somewhat simplified, my paper ultimately proposes that the imagination shaping humorous nonsensical worlds is marked by inappropriate applications of learned epistemic intuitions. The literary exploration of a certain set of epistemic intuitions in that manner can reflect the Zeitgeist of a work's cultural context.

Nihilism and Humor

John Marmysz

Panel paper

College of Marin, Kentfield, CA

I address a shift that has taken place in attitudes about nihilism over the past few decades. Whereas in previous times nihilism was most commonly treated as a wholly negative phenomenon, in recent times it has undergone a reassessment, with many philosophers, scholars, and the general public increasingly coming to consider it as unthreatening, and even beneficial. This shift makes it easier than ever to understand how humor rather than despair is a possible, appropriate, and desirable response to nihilism. I argue that nihilism is structured in terms of a particular kind of incongruity that I call "nihilistic incongruity." Since nihilistic incongruity has come to be perceived as less of a threat than ever before, and since humor rests on the recognition of non-threatening incongruities, I conclude that it has today become easier and more appropriate than ever to adopt a humorous attitude toward nihilism.

Unlaughing all the Way: Putting the Humor Audience First

Moira Marsh

Panel paper

Indiana University

"Unlaughter" is a term used in humor studies to describe the absence or suppression of laughter in response to something that might be considered humorous. It refers to moments when an audience, instead of laughing, may remain silent, express discomfort, or respond in another way. The concept draws attention to the complexities of humor beyond the straightforward expression of laughter. It acknowledges that humor is not solely defined by laughter but involves a broader spectrum of thoughts and feelings; it also allows for the recognition that an absence of laughter after a joke is not necessarily a sign of failure. Attention to unlaughter forces attention on the social contexts of humorous performance and the essential role of humor audience(s) in the process. Sociologist Michael Billig coined the term in 2005, in a book that threw light on the ridiculing and disciplinary styles of humor. Following Billig, I applied the concept to folkloristic analysis of the Danish Mohammed cartoon controversy in a 2009 paper. Since that time, the concept of unlaughter has won a fairly wide acceptance by scholars in humor studies and several other disciplines. In this paper I will sketch the contours of the influence of this idea in the last fifteen years, and propose some possible future directions.

Script Theory Reformulated: Are Semantic Scripts Still the Most Suitable Mathematical Objects With Which to Model Humor?

Javier Martínez

Poster

UNED

In “A general mechanism of humor: reformulating the semantic overlap” (2023), I introduced a semantic theory of humor which, for the first time since 1985, does not rely primarily on the notion of semantic script—or the similar ones of frame or schema—but on that of constraint, defined as an evoked correspondence between sets of data. Initially developed as a generalization of script theory to encompass non-verbal humor, the new mechanism also provides a more accurate account of the comprehension of verbal humor, and it is thus proposed as a complete theory of humor competence, or the cognitive process by means of which a humor-carrying stimulus is recognized as humorous by a recipient—i.e., the recipient “gets it.” This presentation will visually illustrate how constraints are mathematical objects distinctly different from scripts. Without resorting to mathematical formalisms, a constraint will be shown to be a composite operation on inputs—equivalently, a set of input-output pairs—and the input-output pair to be not equatable with a slot-filler pair residing in a script. Some of the advantages of this model over its predecessors will be highlighted, seeking to foster greater awareness of the new approach within the field of humor research.

Using Rules to Break Rules: Humor and Comedy as playful transgression

Leland Masek & Beer Pieterjan Prakken

Poster

Tampere University

The role of playfulness in humor theory has often been neglected. Although many humor theorists argued that humorous perception of an incongruity needs a ‘sort of playful state’, most works do not employ the rich theoretical tradition of the play discipline. Even philosophers who produced “play theories” of humor (Boyd 2004, Morreall 2009) overlooked this tradition. We provide new perspectives on humor, through game-studies scholar Masek’s (2024) theory of ‘engagement prioritizing’ integrating incongruity and benign violation theory.

In this interdisciplinary approach, we will argue that humor is a form of transgressive play that engages in a violation of norms and rules through obedience to an alternative, non-relevant, convention system. Thus the rules engaged with are incongruous to the serious rules/norms that define the situation. Comedy goes further by engaging with such an extremely wrong set of conventions, that it signals playfulness through the degree of incongruity. As a consequence, the inferrably intentional degree of incongruous transgression seems to draw the fine line between comedic/comic and humorous remarks.

By adding play studies to the mix, we can not only begin to solve theoretical unclarity between humor and comedy, but also defend incongruity theory against the traditional philosophical criticisms.

The Challenge of Fact-Checking “Misleading Satire” via X Community Notes

Ariadna Matamoros-Fernández & Nadia Jude

Panel paper

Queensland University of Technology, Australia

New online safety regulation such as the EU Digital Services Act (DSA) will subject large digital platforms to stricter requirements in the way they moderate both illegal speech and content that is not necessarily illegal but poses “societal risks,” such as disinformation. So far platforms have dealt with ‘legal but harmful content’ such as disinformation through ‘soft moderation’ techniques (e.g., downranking, interstitial warnings) that are largely opaque. But, under the DSA, these ‘soft moderation’ remedies will need to be more transparent. This paper uses X’s Community Notes, a crowdsourced fact-checking system that allows users to add context to tweets, as a case study to critically examine the kind of ‘auditable’ tools the DSA incentivises and platforms have enacted. By specifically examining how Community Notes algorithmically adds ‘helpful’ context to satirical tweets that have been labelled as potentially misleading by X users, the paper argues that infrastructures of datafication that centre a misleading/not misleading binary and overlook the social role of humour in their design are limited as robust solutions for harm mitigation. Commentators have argued that Community Notes can be good at assessing ‘low stakes, sometimes funny or satirical tweets’ with potential to mislead (Mahadevan, 2023, as quoted in Czopek, 2023). In response, we are interested in investigating how Community Notes as a datafied content moderation tool poses opportunities and challenges to assess humour’s potential to mislead and harm.

Components and Efficacy of Laughter Interventions for Workers: A Scoping Review of the Literature

Leonie Matteau, Mahee Gilbert-Ouimet, Isabelle Toupin, Moises Callahuara Medrano, Annie Leblanc, Theo Stephan, Juliette Leblanc-Demers, & Émilie Grenier

Poster

Université du Québec à Rimouski

Background: Globally, fifteen percent of working-age adults suffer from mental health problems and approximately 12 billion workdays are lost annually due to depression and anxiety, resulting in 1 trillion dollars per year in productivity losses. Preventing mental health problems in the workplace is a public health priority. A potential intervention is laughter therapy, which enhances mental health in the general population. Aim: To explore, based on the literature, the methods of laughter therapy used in the workplace and their effectiveness. Design: A scoping review of the literature was conducted. Methods: A search strategy developed with a university librarian was applied to databases. DistillerSR was used to screen, assess eligibility, extract data and critically appraise the articles. To be included, studies had to be performed among workers using an interventional design to assess a laughter intervention such as laughter yoga. Results: The review identified potential success conditions for laughter therapy in the workplace, documenting the components of laughter therapy, the stages of intervention implementation, the factors facilitating or hindering the implementation, and the effectiveness. Conclusion: While the results are encouraging, new research will be required as the available studies are methodologically heterogeneous, have significant limitations, and present mixed results.

Topic Management Through Co-speech Gestures in Chinese Standup Comedy

Haomei Meng

Paper

Texas A&M University-Commerce

This study considers co-speech gestures, and body and head orientations as important devices utilized by comedians either consciously or subconsciously to switch between different roles in their performance to convey or amplify comic messages to the audience. The initial results are, first, that all comedians either used preparatory co-speech gestures when they switched roles or relaxed and dropped their hands to a resting position as they transitioned into their next role. Meanwhile, their body and head orientation also changed during the transition. Second, eight comedians all allocated different spaces to different roles and they changed body and head orientations to accomplish the transition. Three-quarters of comedians stably distribute different roles, while one-quarter constantly adjust the distribution of space. Third, all punch-line co-speech gestures either last or change to a relaxing mode for a significant time without speech or are followed by a series of iconic gestures without speech, and the majority of jab-line co-speech gestures last for a significant time without speech.

This study adopts Kendon's gesture-speech ensemble model, which states that speech and gesture work hand in hand in discourse construction. I examined eight videos from eight Chinese comedians' live performances. They were analyzed and annotated in ELAN and co-speech gestures, head orientation, and body orientation were described in detail. This study points toward the significance of stand-up comedians' co-speech gestures, and body and head orientation usage, and the necessity to conduct further research to analyze more comedians' performances to further test the validity of our initial findings.

Fire Spitting Humor: A Benign Violation Reading of 'Roast' Comedy

Amartya Mitra

Paper

Illinois State University

This paper studies various forms of roast comedy through the framework of Peter McGraw and Caleb Warren's benign violation theory, which argues that any anecdote or social situation that is 'funny' must be at the confluence of a benign and a violated situation. The different varieties of roast comedy, including straightforward insults, solicited roast battles, coordinated events, and spontaneous crowd roasting, are analyzed with one example each to understand how they evoke humor with a balance of benign and malignant elements. By applying McGraw and Warren's theory, I also explore how each form of roast comedy navigates this delicate balance with a careful juggling of alternative norms, audiences' engagement with the violated norm, and psychological distancing. By dissecting each scenario under these criteria, this paper will conclude by highlighting the underlying mechanisms that sanction the audience to find humor in potentially offensive or taboo subjects.

A Relevant Absence in Italian American Humor Studies: The Italian Dialectal Poetry of Thomas Augustine Daly

Anthony Dion Mitzel

Paper

Università di Bologna

This paper considers T.A. Daly's Italian Dialectal poetry collections *Canzoni* (1914) and *McAroni Ballads and Other Verses* (1919) as expressions of Italianate humour with Italian and English linguistic hybridity as a defining aesthetic signifying Italianità or "Italianness". While the uses of "broken English" has traditionally been used to ridicule, deride and "target" (Davies, 2011: 06) immigrants, migrants, and outsiders alike, Daly's use was to render authenticity and as such can also be considered an act of sociolinguistic inquiry. Through the use of creative language in the form of the emergent Italglish "dialect", Daly provides the Italian immigrants of the time a voice through his the use of transliteration.

Furthermore, during the Great Migration out of Italy into the United States, or what is now commonly referred to as the Italian Diaspora, this historic period saw the language and culture of the United States undergo a momentous transformation therefore T.A. Daly's poems thus provide us with historical documentation of both the emergence of language and humor.

Laughing Through Strife: Exploring Humour as a Coping Mechanism for Zimbabwean Migrants in South Africa

Bhekinkosi Jakobe Ncube

Panel paper

University of Johannesburg (South Africa)

This conference paper explores the intricate relationship between humour and conflict within the context of the Global South. As South Africa grapples with socio-political challenges and the resultant xenophobia against fellow black Africans, humour has emerged as a dynamic and multifaceted tool employed by migrant individuals and communities to navigate, resist, and cope with this conflict. Using a Zimbabwean 'street theatre' group, Omkhula's humour performances as a case study, the paper seeks to explore the use of humour during a strife. Omkhula are an open theatre group that migrated from Zimbabwe to South Africa in search of greener pastures. They usually perform in Hillbrow and its environs in the sprawling downtown Johannesburg, South Africa where an estimated population of three million Zimbabwe migrants live. Employing a qualitative approach specifically critical discourse analysis, the paper aims to uncover how humour or laughter becomes a form of cultural expression, resistance, and a means of negotiating power dynamics during times of tension, thereby shedding light on the evolution of humour as a socio-political force. Through examining the role of humour in comedic performances, the paper seeks to explore humour not only as a tool for the powerful to mock minorities and exacerbate a conflict but also as having a bellicose potential in the social and political contexts of marginalised members of society. Furthermore, the research investigates the potential impact of humour on conflict resolution, reconciliation, and the creation of shared narratives. The paper acknowledges that it is nearly impossible to have a general theory on humour/laughter, precisely because people laugh out of a particular social and political context. Therefore, there is need for a holistic appreciation of the role of humour in various social and political contexts.

Mitigating Identity Threat from Disparagement Humor

Andrew R. Olah & Donald A. Saucier

Paper

Kansas State University

Research shows when people encounter humor disparaging their social group, they expect they will be discriminated against for their membership to that group (“social identity threat”), and this anticipation is linked to a number of adverse emotional and cognitive outcomes. For example, women have been shown to experience social exclusion and diminished possible selves after hearing their class’s teaching assistant make sexist jokes. To date, however, no research has explored the variability in people’s responses to disparagement humor against their group. Thus, this research examines how three sets of individual differences may mitigate feelings of social identity threat in response to disparagement humor. Specifically, we predicted people would experience less identity threat after their political group (liberals, conservatives) is mocked to the extent they have lower identification with the targeted group, greater cavalier humor beliefs (i.e., belief that a joke is “just a joke”), lower gelotophobia (i.e., fear of being laughed at), and higher gelotophilia (i.e., joy in being laughed at). Collectively, this research sheds light on why some people experience identity threat in response to disparagement humor while others do not.

Travel and Humor in African Literature

Adwoa Opoku-Agyemang

Paper

Independent Scholar

Separated by half a century and unlike in several regards, Camara Laye’s *Le regard du roi* (1954) and Ike Oguine’s *A Squatter’s Tale* (2000) are African novels brought together by complementary approaches to the cross-cultural travel narrative. Uniting their very different protagonists and narrative styles is an ambivalence toward colonial and postcolonial tropes about home and abroad, which their storylines simultaneously mine and disavow. This paper will tease out the fact that underneath their storytelling, which often appears tuned to other things, is an intent to make the reader laugh. First, I will discuss the tendency of stories about travel, from colonial center to periphery and vice versa, to lead up to some discovery, whether cultural or personal (Boelhower). A lot of travel humor is, thus, prompted by the learning curve leading up to that discovery. The paper will then show how Laye and Oguine push the boundaries of the trope of cultural discovery. In complementary ways, their humor blurs their reader’s reference points, tests clichés about travel and migration and confuses the butt of the joke. Much of the amusement of Laye’s text lies in the protagonist’s disorientation as he wades through an unabashedly strange plot (Beti).

Humor and Cartooning as a Means to Address Social Inequality and Empathic Concern: An Experience with Argentinian Teenage Students

Ana Pedrazzini, Constanza Zinkgräf, Lucía Bugallo; Paola D´Adamo & Mariana Lozada Poster

CONICET-Universidad del Comahue

In this study, we argue that humor and cartooning are effective means to engage teenagers in sensitive topics, as well as to enhance their empathic concern and perspective-taking. Drawing on a broad conception of humor that encompasses both funny and critical manifestations on social and political issues, we analyzed whether and how students manage to create humorous incongruity in cartoons about social inequality and social empathy. Between 2019 and 2022, we conducted five cartoon workshops on these topics in primary and secondary schools in Patagonia, Argentina, in which 101 students (aged 10-20) took part. Among the 81 original graphic productions gathered, the large majority denounced situations of social inequality through realistic representations. Rhetorical figures such as antithesis, exaggeration and paradox were particularly useful to graphically address these topics. Forty-eight cartoons (59%) conveyed humorous incongruity whereas the rest of the productions deployed narrative resources of the cartoon genre, but did not create a humorous incongruity. Only a few combined both a committed and a funny approach to address inequalities. We hypothesize that addressing this sensitive social issue in an emotionally distanced manner may be challenging. This could result in greater difficulties in creating humorous incongruity and depicting non-realistic scenarios.

The Elusive Concept of Humor

Joonas Pennanen & Jarno Hietalahti

Paper

University of Jyväskylä

In our presentation, we will offer a rigorous philosophical analysis of the concept of humor and discuss the problematics of understanding humor in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Despite the evident advantages of such an approach, we will show that it is possible to understand humor in other conceptual frameworks that respect the evolving and dynamic stance of the phenomenon. We suggest that there are at least three alternative and potentially fruitful possibilities to understand humor: (1) as a cluster concept, (2) in terms of interpretive function, and (3), as a dual-character concept.

We will argue that recognizing the different conceptual approaches on humor is significantly beneficial for overcoming certain theoretical tensions that result from the “necessary/sufficient conditions” approach. When humor is approached as an open-ended, evolving phenomenon, it is recommendable to allow certain flexibility on the conceptual level too.

This presentation will be based on our published article, and it celebrates the 10th anniversary of the IAPH as well as the publication series *Philosophy of Humor Handbook*.

Humor and The Racial Order: Minstrelsy, Colonialism, and Legacies of Racial Violence and Slavery

Raúl Pérez & Simon Weaver

Paper

University of La Verne & Brunel University, London

This paper presents a theoretical and analytic framework on the history of racial minstrelsy, in the U.S. and Europe, as a mode of humor directly connected to the racial structure and order of modernity. We examine blackface minstrelsy as one of the most popular forms of racialization during the 19th and early 20th centuries that contributed to the racial formation of blackness, whiteness, white subjectivity, and white dominance. We argue racial minstrelsy is connected to a racial order built on the devaluation and dehumanization of the racialized 'other' as closer to nature, uncivil, ugly, unintelligent, and lazy in comparison to white, modern civility and civil society. We discuss different tropes and racialization mechanisms used in blackface as examples of cultural and symbolic violence that reflected the racial order of colonialism and racial slavery. We connect this early form of racial ridicule with other and later racisms, including anti-Semitic ridicule in Europe and the U.S. during the 20th century, the comic racialization of Latinos in the U.S. and Latin America connected to European and U.S. imperialism, and Islamophobic and anti-Arab ridicule in the post-9/11 era and ongoing crisis in Israel/Palestine.

The End of the Joke: New Modulations of Incongruence in Brazilian Contemporary Graphic Humour – Laerte Coutinho and O Manual do Minotauro

Benjamim Picado

Panel paper

Fluminense Federal University (Brazil)

I evaluate a mutation in the poetics of contemporary Brazilian graphic humour, embodied in the work of cartoonist Laerte Coutinho, especially in her most recent work, *O Manual do Minotauro*. Taking advantage of the daily seriality of its publication, in the cartoon section of Brazilian newspaper, *Folha de São Paulo*, she has been exploring ways of employing the specific conditions of narrative construction in synthetic economies of storytelling (no more than 4 sequential images on each daily strip), dissociating this materiality of presentation from the dictates characterizing canonical structures of the short joke, as well as from the scope of physical and/or semantic incongruity typifying its episodic structure. Laerte expands the plastic and narrative reach of comic incongruity, communicating a sense of humour that triggers complex levels of aesthetic effects and meaning. In their thematic dimension, these new profiles of graphic comedy displace the sense of incongruity from kinds of events in classic humour (such as physical incidents or verbal mistakes), to place everyday life with situations closer to absurdity and nonsense. In its graphic aspect, I value the rhythmic modulations of narrative succession, as an aspect that structures these representations of the ordinary worlds, in the direction of their incongruous resolutions. Finally, I wish to rehearse certain political connotations of these plastic and narrative operations on graphic humour, in the direction of topics that are characteristic of contemporary identities, indicative of a sort of queer sense of humour.

More than Shave and a Haircut? An Adapted Multiple Case Study Exploring the Relevance of Humor in Music Therapy Practice with Older Adults

Posey, C. M., & Reschke-Hernández, A. E.

Poster

University of Kentucky

Humor is a ubiquitous human experience and a skill that is retained as we age. It is also an integral but poorly understood component of therapeutic encounters. Music therapy literature on humor is minimal and does not adequately consider the clinical wisdom of music therapists, an important piece of evidence-based practice. This qualitative thesis aims to address these gaps by exploring the use and function of humor in music therapy with older adults from the perspectives of experienced music therapists. I have three research questions: (1) how do music therapists describe their use of humor with older adults; (2) how do music therapists describe older adults' use of humor in music therapy sessions; and (3) how do music therapists describe the purpose of humor in music therapy? To answer these questions, I plan to conduct an adapted qualitative multiple case study by interviewing music therapists (four) in the United States who are experienced in various clinical settings with older adults. Planned enrollment is 4 music therapists. Interview data will be analyzed using Thematic Analysis, and results are expected by May 2024. Exploring the purpose of humor in music therapy will contribute to further humor study, evidence-based care, and client well-being.

Humorous Political Rhetoric

Beer Prakken

Paper

University of Groningen

In the last decade, humor has undergone a metamorphosis into being a rhetorical weapon for - what appears to be - primarily rightwing populist politicians. Unfortunately, empirical research has not yet fully explored the extent to which politicians use humor, with some notable exceptions. In critical theory and sociology, on the other hand, much has been said about the destructive force of political laughter, albeit without much empirical backing. These theoretical debates on political humor often end in despair with the conclusion that leftist humor will never trump the immense transgressive power of rightwing laughter. In this essay, I will provide empirical work to evaluate these philosophical and critical insights into - what I call - humorous political rhetoric (HPR). To do this, I will analyze the humorous rhetoric of former President Donald Trump and progressive U.S. congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. By using examples from these two major political figures, I will show how humorous political rhetoric works both as a means of persuasion and as an end to promote the values of informality, anti-political correctness, and comic innocence. Besides that, I will show that HPR primarily functions as an aggressive, deceptive, and unconstructive means of deliberation.

Using Humour in Teaching English as a Foreign Language with Literary Texts and Educational Drama

Andrea Puskás

Paper

J. Selye University

The paper focuses on the potential for using humour in teaching English as a foreign language in order to improve creativity through the use of literature and literary texts and drama techniques. Several concrete ideas and practical solutions will be presented to demonstrate how humour can be applied in EFL classes by using literary texts written by authors from American and British literature. The particular activities will be combined with drama techniques and the tools of educational drama, such as hot seating, frozen image or improvisation. The main aims of using humour within EFL classes is to increase learner engagement, to create a more relaxed and learner-centred environment, to decrease learner anxiety and to make learning foreign languages more enjoyable and effective. Using humour in the EFL classroom helps not only to improve learner interaction but also the interaction and the relationship between teacher and learner.

Who has the last Laugh? - Analysis of the Critical and Resistance Role of Political Humour in India

Smrithika Rongali

Panel paper

Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts, Pune (India)

Dominant forms of humor in the contemporary period are integral to the ideological hegemony of fascist rhetoric. It is often used in oppressive and violent ways against minorities. In the words of Nicholas Holm (2018), humor is "an anarchic attack on one thing or another." From possessing entertainment value to being a force of critique and resistance, political humor has numerous functions and responsibilities. Prominent scholars such as Sørensen (2008) explore comedy's functions in nonviolent resistance, including "enhancing outreach and mobilization" and "fostering a culture of resistance," among others. With the rise of fascism and right-wing nationalism in India (Jal, 2015; Chakrabartty, 2020), this paper sets out to examine the emancipatory potential of political humour within the larger socio-political realities. Employing qualitative content and discourse analysis, I aim to analyse the stand-up performances of comedians such as Varun Grover, Kunal Kamra, Munawar Faruqui, etc., post the 2014 general elections in India. Along with a focus on issues of freedom of speech and expression, the role of both the performances and the audience will be examined as integral parts. By delving into the complex interplay between comedy and political discourse, this research paper seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of political comedy's role in influencing public perceptions, the necessity to consciously occupy the domain of comedy to address issues of representation and expression, while using it as a force of critique and dissent in contemporary India.

Sensitivity to Negative Forms of Humor in Autism

Andrea Samson

Panel paper

Unidistance Suisse & University of Fribourg

This talk aims to challenge Hans Asperger's early observation of aggressive styles of humor in autistic individuals. I will focus on the perception and preferences of more hostile forms of humor in autistic individuals, as well as the fear of being laughed at (gelotophobia). A series of studies will be presented that assessed self-reported aggressive humor styles, the appreciation of more negative types of humor including physiological correlates of the humor response, as well as self- and parent-reported levels of gelotophobia in autism compared to neurotypical individuals as well as compared to other neurodevelopmental conditions. Implications of these research insights will be discussed.

***Porta dos Fundos, Sinta-se em Casa* and the paths of Brazilian audiovisual humour**

Rafael Sbeghen Hoff & Guilherme Fumeo Almeida

Panel paper

UFRGS (Brazil) / UFF (Brazil)

Launched in 2012, the humorous audiovisual collective *Porta dos Fundos* has politics as one of the main themes of its sketches: its agents, organizations, institutions and mediatized events are taken as a source of inspiration. The sketches from the program *Sinta-se em Casa* (2020), in turn, were scripted and performed by Marcelo Adnet at his home, during social isolation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, presenting a strong criticism of Bolsonaro's government policy through the imitation, exaggeration, distortion and recording of an absurd and, therefore, laughable reality. It is possible to highlight movements of ambiguity and multiplicity in the political criticism constructed by the two objects, which dialogue with decades of history of the consolidation of Brazilian audiovisual political humour, incorporating and fusing different aesthetic and narrative brands in their ways of taking humour and comedy as a social and political gesture. The political criticism of both is also related to the bibliography on Brazilian sociopolitical construction, both with canonical works and contemporary readings. Considering the aesthetic-narrative specificities and modes of production and display of the sketches of the two objects, this work aims to carry out a dialogue between the complementary study of the humorous political criticism of *Porta dos Fundos* and *Sinta-se em Casa*, also contextualizing this criticism in a historical context of the consolidation of political satire in Brazilian television audiovisual. The theoretical framework discusses the interfaces between public and private in Brazilian and global sociopolitical formation and the relationships between humour, real/reality effect and *mise-en-scène*.

Laughing at What? The Humor in Contemporary Brazilian Comedies

Sheila Schvarzman

Panel paper

UAM (Brazil)

Reflecting on Brazil from 2017 onward, amidst the severe crisis that unfolded in the country, leads to contemplating the cinematic production geared towards the 'market,' closely tied to television as an expression of a political and economic period where efforts were made to construct a more inclusive nation and a cinema targeting the broader audience. While social inclusion occurred through state policies promoting access to consumption, consumption itself became a theme, alongside the changing status of women. These themes coexisted in fiction with the inherent and reiterated naturalization of social stratification, class prejudices, and gender biases present in the majority of these productions, especially in comedies that promoted an exclusionary and prejudiced portrayal of the emerging society. The storylines deviate from reality and are generally non-critical, finding humor in subaltern characters, portraying blacks as ridiculous figures, socially displaced from the parameters of urban middle-class producers. These caricatured stereotypes elicit laughter while reinforcing the naturalization of social and racial stratification, which was threatened by the changes during that period. Subsequent films, particularly those produced by platforms like Netflix, given the interruption of cinema funding in 2018, construct a world where different classes no longer socialize. They are closed within themselves, a circumstantial wokeness that began to populate these images with no real connection to the conflict-ridden country.

Ideology vs. Quasi-ideology: “Rashism” and “Ukrofascism” in World, Ukrainian and Russian Political Cartoons and Memes

Orest Semotiuk

Poster

Institute of Slavic Studies Polish Academy of Sciences

Modern wars differ from the classic ones in that they use not only military equipment and regular troops. Ideology, values, humor, language, and media are becoming weapons in the 21st century. Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which began in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and the occupation of Donbass, has been evaluated as a «hybrid war». After the full-scale invasion of Russia on February 24, 2022 the real dimension of Russo-Ukrainian War has been permanently reflected in the discursive dimension. This another dimension is implemented not only in political and media discourse, but also in humorous discourse represented by political cartoons and memes. We are going to investigate the images of the conflict parties in global and national (Ukrainian and Russian) political humor and the role of national stereotypes in the image-building of Ukrainians and Russians. We pay special attention to 3 questions: 1) to what extension “rashism” and “ukrofascism» are connected with the reality?; 2) how these ideologies are implemented in international and national political humor?; 3) what are the similarities and differences between images of conflict parties in global and national political humor? To answer these questions, we use the computer-based content-analysis and multimodal discourse analysis.

***Lebensphilosophie*: Humor as a Radiography of Life**

Henrieta Șerban

Panel paper

Academy of Romanian Scientists

Could one think of an aspect of life that is not captured by humor? Absurdity, scorn, pretentiousness, disgust, injustice, oppression, cruelty, power, powerlessness, marginality, democracy, justice, human rights, education and the lack of it, friendship, childhood, old age, maturity, sickness, marriage, solitude, paradox, even science and philosophy find a reflection in humor. And this is not intended as an exhaustive account. All jokes, puns and wits are emphasizing a certain aspect of life, a certain aspect of being human (and a social being). The empiric material of study of the philosophy of humor is extremely varied. Philosophy itself is diverse and tends to privilege only one concept, idea, or perspective in every tradition of thought. Although one overall model or theory of humor seems improbable, I propose for discussion the idea whether *Lebensphilosophie* can cover well the problematic of humor. It might investigate humor via meaning, value and purpose of life, accounting for the heterogeneous categories of humor privileging lived experience. It interprets aspects pertaining the examined and unexamined life: the life choices, visions and meanings. Philosophy of life approaching humor might be philosophically fertile but not enough.

“A man catches a goldfish . . .”: The Goldfish Jokes and a Brief Discussion of the Granted Wish Utopia

Henrieta Șerban

Paper

Institute of Philosophy and Psychology “Constantin Rădulescu-Motru” & Institute of Political Science and International Relations “Ion I. C. Brătianu” of the Romanian Academy of Romanian Scientists

“A man catches a goldfish...” Many of these jokes are parables for the popular Yiddish curse and very good piece of advice: “Be careful what you wish for, it might just come true!” Although not all, many jokes in this category have a twist, proving that the individual is never careful enough what (s)he wishes for and always very sure of herself or himself in making the wishful demands. Culture provides the more literate version of the story titled “The Monkey’s Paw” by W. W. Jacobs among numerous other illustrations, all a revealing instrument of the combination of desire, haste and greed specific for mankind. The goldfish jokes illustrate the hidden difficulties hindering the betterment of our world. The sweet and seemingly simple goldfish is the metonym both for the devil hidden in details and for the human limitations of imagination and thought when engaged in the adventures and projects of progress, development and perfection. At this point we are approaching the discussion of utopia (and briefly of its disguises in the myth of the golden age and the myth of the savior) as perennial temptation of human thought. Why is that?

Responding to Humour in Interaction

Amir Sheikhan

Plenary paper

The University of Queensland

Conversational humour, which broadly encompasses (sequences of) utterances that are designed to 'amuse' participants or are treated as 'amusing' by participants across various different kinds of social interaction (Bell, 2015), has been the object of study in pragmatics and other related fields for a number of decades. Scholars have explored various facets of humour, including its social functions, linguistic mechanisms, and psychological impacts. However, a relatively less explored aspect is humour responses – that is, how individuals react to humour in their interactional environments. The two models proposed for how humour is responded to are the humour support model (Hay, 1994a, 1994b, 2001) and the failed humour model (Bell, 2009, 2015; Priego-Valverde, 2009). These models primarily rely on the speaker's intention and the receiver's perception of humour, the notions that are not readily accessible to analysts. While these models offer valuable insights into humour mechanisms, they face challenges in operationalisation within real-time interactions and explaining complex interactional situations. In this talk, taking an interactional pragmatic perspective, I present an alternative framework for studying humour in its interactive context, a model that focuses on the sequential trajectory of humour in interaction. Within this model, humour can be responded to in five distinct sequential environments, and the choice of response to humour is, in part, motivated by the epistemics, i.e. negotiated or claimed knowledge, and affiliation in interaction. I will conclude that a more nuanced theoretical account of humour needs to go beyond the long-established models, and the role of epistemics and affiliation, the observable notions in interaction, need to be more explicitly attended to in the theorisation of humour more broadly.

Comedy Can Be Taught: How I Helped Students Double Their Laughs Per Minute in a 15 Week Course in Stand-Up Comedy

Eric Shouse & Erika Johnson

Paper

East Carolina University

During Steve Harvey's appearance on "Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee," Jerry Seinfeld asked, "Do you think [stand-up comedy] is teachable?" Harvey shook his head and replied, "Nah, man." The comedian continued, "You can go to school, and you can take a lesson on everything: how to bungee jump, how to parachute, how to fly a plane, how to be an engineer..." Jerry interjected, "You can get better at anything you want to get better at, except this." An initial study, which we presented at ISHS in 2023, proved these comedians wrong. In that presentation, we shared the results of a pre- and post-test that my co-author and I conducted in an honors course in stand-up comedy. The 14 students in that course were tasked with presenting a four minute stand-up routine during the first week of class and again during the final week. On average, those students were able to double the amount of laughter they received. I am currently teaching the course for a second time. In this presentation, I will share the results of our attempt to replicate the study, and discuss some of the most easily grasped techniques for writing and performing humor taught in the class.

An Embarrassment of Riches: Laughter and Humor Theories May Be Too Much of a Good Thing

John Charles Simon

Panel paper

Independent Scholar

Virtually every modern scholar interested in the subjects of humor and laughter has commented on the number, diversity, importance, and qualified efficacy of theories proposed to explain these enigmatic behaviors. Depending on one's propensity to lump or split, one could find anywhere from four to over forty different options from which to choose. One might reasonably ask if ANY substantial advancement can be made absent some process for paring down these conceptual models—something practiced in virtually all other areas of scientific inquiry. The author will offer various reasons progress in our field may have been stifled and explore ways we might address this deficit moving forward.

An Interdisciplinary Account of Satire

Stephen Skalicky

Paper

Victoria University of Wellington

Satirical language and media have been studied by a wide range of academic disciplines, including literary studies, media and cultural studies, mass communications, and various linguistic approaches (corpus, psycholinguistic, and computational). As one might expect, there is typically little cross-disciplinary collaboration or engagement with satire when it comes to definitions, typical research questions, and methods of analysis. In this presentation, I review the ways these different disciplines have approached the study of satire, not as a means to argue for or against any one approach, but instead to highlight the ways in which these approaches complement each other and contribute to a greater understanding into the nature of satire. In doing so, I review how satire has been successfully rescued from the confines of a literary genre (Phiddian, 2013; Simpson, 2003), why persuasion and social reform should not be an assumed function of satire (Burgers and Brugman, 2021; Holm, 2023), and what we know about how people process and comprehend satirical discourse (Pfaff and Gibbs, 1994; Skalicky, 2023). My aim is to (1) reinforce the contemporary view of satire as a perceptual process and (2) highlight the ways humor scholars should approach future investigations of satirical language and media.

Life Expectancy as the Basis for Humor Creation

Arie Sover

Paper

The Open University of Israel

In this paper, I suggest a new theoretical approach according to which the basis for the creation of humor lies in our life expectancy. I name it Time Limitation Theory. The time framework constitutes one of the models according to which human beings are supposed to act. The time performance of an activity which is in accordance with this model is perceived as the norm. As our life expectancy is limited, we are interested in the optimal utilization of our time. Therefore, all our activities are time-based. An activity taking more time or less time is seen as unusual. Thus, there is a reasonable time range for each activity we perform. I term this time range the "time range model". The duration of any activity under or above the time range model will be perceived as a deviation and therefore unusual. As we are aware, the unusual is a basic condition for the creation of a humorous situation (although not every unusual situation is necessarily perceived as humorous). In this paper, I will argue that the Time Limitation Theory does not contradict the prevalent theories within the study of humor; rather, it constitutes the infrastructure for these theories.

Don Quixote in İstanbul

Gunes Soysal & Güneş Ekin Aksan

Paper

San Francisco State University

Four decades after its initial release, *The Greatest Hero Ridvan* (1980), drawing inspiration from Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, has experienced a revival on the Turkish humor scene. This comeback underscores the enduring appeal of *Don Quixote's* satirical critique of social inequalities, especially against the backdrop of Turkey's prevailing populist politics. The series leverages *Quixote's* lofty idealism to scrutinize the quick social advancement promised by right-wing populism to the disadvantaged, juxtaposing it with the comedic portrayal of *Sancho Panza's* material desires to challenge the entrenched class barriers impeding true social mobility. This study posits that *The Greatest Hero Ridvan* utilizes grotesque humor to dismantle class hierarchies, shedding light on the grand aspirations and power dynamics experienced by the lower echelons of society. It delves into how the comic adaptation of Cervantes's motifs in the modern Turkish context serves as a vehicle for critiquing and understanding class relations and political rhetoric in Turkey. Through its exploration of humor related to social mobility, the paper connects historical satirical methods with contemporary discussions on social justice, thereby offering insightful commentary on the societal and political landscape of Turkey.

Timeless Reflections: The Evolution of Social Trends between *One Day at a Time* and its Reboot

Bridget Stuger, Madison Apostolis, Liana Drenis, Mahira Duggal, Oliva Reiskin, & Jade Villella
Panel paper

Boston University

We explore and reflect on the evolution of social trends and themes between the original 1975 *One Day at a Time* sitcom and its 2017 reboot. Our presentation will analyze the treatment of social concepts such as mother-daughter relationships, feminism, and LGBTQ+ experiences between the two shows in the cultural context of each time period. We will pair textual analysis of episodes with audience reception and commentary through ratings and reviews. This juxtaposition aims to shed light on Norman Lear's work's cultural significance, impact, and legacy.

Exposure to Workplace Bullying: The Incremental Effect of Gelotophobia Beyond the Big Five

Filip Sulejmanov, Kryštof Petr, Jana Gambová, Tracey Platt, & Martin Seidl

Paper

Palacký University Olomouc

The role of Big Five personality traits in exposure to workplace bullying has been a focus of numerous studies. Yet less is known about the incremental validity of narrower personality constructs. The aim of the present study was to investigate the incremental effect of gelotophobia (the fear of being laughed at) in predicting exposure to workplace bullying beyond the Big Five personality domains. The sample comprised 328 employees (77% females) from different regions of the Czech Republic. Correlational analysis showed that negative emotionality and gelotophobia were related to workplace bullying in theoretically expected ways. Results from a multiple regression indicated that gelotophobia had an incremental effect in predicting exposure to workplace bullying over and above the personality domains. Overall, this study provides new insights and extends previous investigations concerning the role of gelotophobia in workplace bullying. We also discuss the limitations of our study and provide suggestions for future research.

Humor in Japanese Dairy Brunch Conversations

Polly Szatrowski

Paper

University of Minnesota

In this paper, I investigate how triads of Japanese friends create humor while eating a 7 course Dairy Taster Brunch. The analysis focuses on 1) What triggers humor in the talk, 2) What kinds of humor are created in talk about food, and 3) How is humor created, monitored, and accepted/resisted in the interaction.

Characteristics of the humor in my data included exaggeration, deviation/gap, indirectness, strangeness, surprise/unusualness, interesting words/expressions/pronunciation, imagination, association, self-mockery, failure, and personification. In my analysis I focus primarily on how self-mockery is co-constructed in the interaction as shown in example (1). Participant c uses self-mockery when upon hearing that margarine is unhealthy, she indicates that her mother buys it a lot (11c) and that she ended up eating it in the Butter Course (21c) and a who explains why margarine is bad for you and that her mother never buys it laughs in response.

Building on previous research on humor and laughter I investigate how food attitudes are created and reinforced in conversations among peers. In particular, I demonstrate how participants create food attitudes using their language and bodies as humor emerges moment-by-moment in temporally unfolding multi-modal interaction (C. Goodwin & M.H Goodwin 1992, C. Goodwin 2018).

Banal Misogynism in Turkish Media at the Beginning of the Multi-Party Era: The Case of Boşboğaz Humor Gazette (1945)

Fatma Fulya Tepe

Paper

İstanbul Aydın University

This study aims to analyze the cover cartoons of the Boşboğaz [Bigmouth] magazine to reveal how misogynist attitudes were reproduced in Turkish media representations of women at the beginning of the multi-party period. The interpretive content analysis method is applied to front cover cartoons, the analysis is also feminist in the sense that it focuses on misogynistic representations of women. The results reveal that urban women are represented as exploiters of wealthy men, victimizing both the men and their wives in the process. Hence, urban women are depicted as cunning predators. Paraphrasing Michael Billig, who introduced the term “banal nationalism”, it would be appropriate to describe the depictions of women in the Boşboğaz magazine as a case of banal misogyny since they contain illustrations of everyday scenes, captioned in everyday language.

Witscript: The AI Machine That Makes Jokes

Joe Toplyn

Panel Paper

Twenty Lane Media, LLC

This workshop presents and demonstrates Witscript—a novel web app that generates original jokes.

The workshop describes how Witscript, a neural-symbolic hybrid AI system, employs a large language model in connection with joke-writing algorithms crafted by an Emmy-winning comedy writer.

A live demonstration of Witscript follows, with the attendees providing topic sentences for potential jokes. These sentences are then input into Witscript, which generates original joke responses in seconds.

Attendees are encouraged to evaluate the quality of the machine-generated jokes, informally assessing where they fall on a scale of nonsensical, to humanlike, to professional-level.

This demonstration sheds light on the theme of "The AI-Completeness of Humor." Despite lacking artificial general intelligence (AGI), Witscript apparently has the ability to produce jokes at a human level. Thus Witscript challenges the notion that joke generation is AI-complete and raises the possibility that machines can have a sense of humor.

The Curious Case of Hungarian Female Humorists

Zsofia Anna Toth

Paper

University of Szeged

Last year (2023), a surprising public debate broke out in Hungary when a notorious male humorist, Oliver Nacsa, publicly proclaimed that humor is not women's business when asked about a certain female humorist, Edina Pottyondy. Evidently Pottyondy fought back with her trademark acerbic humor while a proliferation of public discussions ensued surrounding the questions of women and humor. As a result, Nacsa publicly excused himself, several female humorists were interviewed and the whole outburst of humor debate slowly died down. That is why I would like to address the curious case of Hungarian female humorists with a focus on a few outstanding current performers such as Edina Pottyondy, Margit Zabolai, Eszter Rasko, Anett Kormos and Fruzsina Acs. It is revealed from the interviews that the male colleagues are supportive of the "newcomers" however there is not much written on women's humor from a theoretical and/or analytical point of view. This is what I would like to do, to have a look at some of the performances of these successful female humorists and to reveal what topics they handle and how, what impact they have and why it still matters what they are doing in our country.

Sense of Humor and Laughter in Individuals with Williams Syndrome

Noemie Treichel

Panel paper

University of Neuchâtel

This talk will focus on humor understanding and appreciation in individuals with Williams syndrome (WS), a rare genetic disorder. Individuals with WS typically have intellectual disabilities, and they present with a particular socio-emotional profile. Indeed, they are typically described as being hypersociable, particularly cheerful, and biased toward positive emotions. In brief, individuals with WS' socio-emotional characteristics seem to make them perfect candidate for appreciating humor, but their cognitive difficulties might affect their understanding of specific humorous content. In this talk, with the goal of highlighting the importance of better understanding this phenomenon, I will present what research reveals on humor processing in individuals with WS and on its potential as tool for emotion regulation, and I will also suggest some lines of thoughts for future research.

“Putler kaput”: Historical Memes About the Russian War in Ukraine

Sergey Troitskiy, Guillem Castañar, Liisi Laineste & Anastasiya Fiadotava

Paper

Estonian Literary Museum

In our paper we analyse historical memes from the war in Ukraine. We identify their recurrent motifs and look at the interrelation between their historical references and their stance. The results show that historical memes can offer a way of legitimising contemporary events, contribute to establishing superiority over the enemies, evaluate current events, and ridicule or praise people involved, while the stance does not strictly limit the range of motifs used in the memes.

A Turn to Humor: The Resumption of Laughter in the Lula/Alckmin Government

Taiane Volcan & Calvin Cousin

Panel paper

Federal University of Pelotas (Brazil) / UFRGS (Brazil)

Subverting a tradition of authoritarian leaders in the global south who view humor as deviant, unpatriotic, and disrespectful (Mpofu, 2021), Brazilian politics has established a new paradigm, positioning humor as a means of connecting with the people, particularly through digital platforms (Volcan, 2014). In this study, we analyze how humor is incorporated into Brazilian political discourse as an instrument for legitimizing political actions and fostering a closer connection between the people and institutional politics. We analyze the social media posts of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (@lulaoficial) and Vice-President Geraldo Alckmin (@geraldoalckmin) on platform X, during the last quarter of 2023. Utilizing content analysis (Bardin, 2007; Krippendorf, 2012), we first identify posts considered memetic (Rogers & Giorgi, 2023) and then analyze the political use of these memes based on the categories "references to pop culture"; "mockery" and "reproduction of other memes". Our objectives include analyzing: 1) The political motivations underlying the use of humor in the communication of the government; 2) The characteristics of these memes on the profiles of both the president and the vice president; and 3) The most frequent themes in these posts. We observe that humor has been incorporated into political discourse through two strategic actions: first, a theme of relief, using humor to provoke laughter (Bergson, 2003), evident since the electoral campaign with the slogan "Brazil happy again" and second the subjugation of the "other", particularly referencing Jair Bolsonaro's government, using humor as a critical tool in politics (Safatle, 2008; Pérez, 2013; Lery, 2018).

Field of Humor: An Anatomy of Jokes in Premodern Japan

He (Selina) Wang

Paper

Columbia University

This paper explores a new way to theorize the impermanence of jokes or humor by paying specific attention to the "field" that the joke is situated in. Instead of trying to replace existing theories, I see my theory as a potential metacommentary or explanation for the multiplicity and abundance of different theoretical frameworks on humor, mapping the different theoretical frameworks as ways to construct or reorganize the field where the actor-audience relationship is established in the original joke-telling or reestablished through actions like reading or viewing a performance. I believe using the idea of "field" is constructive because it allows one to avoid the overreliance on the logical or rational thinking in explaining jokes and provides a theorization for the nonsensical, extra-linguistic, and social dimension of jokes instead of ruling them out from the humor realm. Finally, by analyzing examples like the volume 28 of *Konjaku monogatari shū* (Anthology of Tales from the Past), the oldest extant Japanese collection of short stories that declared themselves as humorous (written during the late Heian period, ca. 1000-1200), this paper shows how literary texts and the process of textualization preserved or manipulated the traces of different fields of the actor-audience relationship in profound ways.

“This is how I Feel Inside”: Performance as Subversion and the Absurdity of Anti-Refugee/Migrant Attitudes in Mo Amer’s Mohammed in Texas

Ibrahim Williams

Paper

University of Mississippi

The notion that beyond making people laugh, comedy has the power to deliver needed socio-economic commentary has grounded much scholarly discourse in the archive of comedy studies. Often, in granting research discoveries the significant status of fact, studies in comedic literary texts fail to center the lived experiences of Arabs, Muslims, refugees, and migrants in America. Consequently, to establish a precedent, I focus on Mo Amer’s counter-normative subversion acts in his Netflix Comedy Special, Mohammed. Crystalizing the problems of misrepresentation and the absurdities layered within it, I examine how Amer uses pointed language and performance techniques to rebel against state and non-state dehumanization of himself and others of his ilk. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin’s carnivalesque, I argue that Mohammed provides a scathing response to the hegemonic chauvinism that otherizes Arabs, Muslims, immigrants, and refugees in America. I conclude that beyond serving as a celebration of post-pandemic social freedom, Amer’s comedic act in Mohammed provides (Americans and) the audience with the necessary tools to upend hegemonic marginalization at the personal and state level.

Playing with Oppression: Latinx Students’ Use of Humor to Navigate Assumed Racism

Jienian Zhang

Panel paper

affiliation missing

This paper demonstrates how a group of Latinx students in a suburban high school use humor as an interactional strategy to negotiate and sometimes resist perceived racial meanings. Using ethnography, I find two distinct types of ambiguity central in such humor: (1) ambiguity in humor and (2) ambiguity in situational cues that prompt humor. The students interpret these often-ambiguous situational cues as relevant to racism and then use humor to play with assumed racism. Furthermore, they use humor in several distinct but not mutually exclusive forms: (1) preemptive testing, (2) constructing insider/outsider status, and (3) self-(re)defining. By integrating role theories in the analysis, I show the theoretical importance of analyzing both the social cues that prompt the humor and the humor itself. I suggest that such humorous interactions ultimately illuminate racial inequalities that usually remain undetected in interactions or in broader social contexts.

Useful Information

For information on the previous and future ISHS conferences, please refer to <https://www.humorstudies.org>.

HRC is held annually, as an online conference, over two days during the period between mid-February and early April.

The conference web page is www.tamuc.edu/humor Submissions are encouraged in any discipline and any aspect of humor studies. Submissions by graduate students and early-career scholars are particularly encouraged.

To subscribe to the mailing list please email HRC@tamuc.edu

Certificates of attendance and/or presentation are available upon request.

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