

English 151
Palmer 211
Spring 2011

Prof. Seth Rudy
Palmer 310
Office Hours: T/R 2:00-3:30
W 3:00-4:00, and by appt.
Email: rudys@rhodes.edu
(T) 843-3135

Critical Reading and Writing: Reflections on Satire

In October 2009, *Atlantic* columnist Christopher Hitchens wrote, “the smug satire of liberal humorists debases our comedy—and our national conversation.” At the same time, however, popular opinion has named Jon Stewart one of America’s most trusted newscasters. This class will focus on the features and functions of satire in the past and present as we use the linked practices of reading, writing, and discussion to develop your critical thinking and compositional skills. Satire, Jonathan Swift observed, is a mirror in which one sees everyone’s face reflected but one’s own. We will look at satire itself and generate our own conversations about its place and purpose in cultural discourse.

Course Goals:

- To develop skills in written expression
- To develop critical reading and thinking skills

These will be achieved via:

- The exploration and refinement of ideas through discussion and revision
- The development of sensitivity to tone, diction, and syntax
- The selection, analysis, and deployment of evidence
- The demonstration of critical self-assessment and constructive criticism of others
- The planning and execution of rational, coherent, and well-supported arguments in prose

Assignments

Your final grade is based on the following:

Essays: 70%

This course calls for four formal essays; guidelines will be provided in advance of each.

Essay 1: 10% (800-1000 words)
Essay 2: 15% (1200-1500 words)
Essay 3: 20% (1600-2000 words)
Essay 4: 25% (2200-2500 words)

Each essay is different in nature and builds upon the communicative and rhetorical skills developed by its predecessors. Prompts and more detailed guidelines will be distributed in advance of each assignment. All of these papers are intended to provide an opportunity for

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further concentrated critical consideration of issues that have come up during discussions in class and in the course materials. The final paper is a research paper that explicitly calls for the use of multiple secondary sources. Using these sources will strengthen your skills as a researcher and improve your ability to perform the crucial work of engaging with and evaluating existing critical arguments and debates about your text(s) and area(s) of inquiry. In addition to the other merits of your arguments and executions, grammar and stylistics will constitute a significant part of your grade on all four papers. The word-count floors and ceilings are hard boundaries; make sure you land within them!

First drafts should always be submitted electronically; final drafts should be submitted electronically and on paper. All drafts should be submitted in double-spaced, twelve-point Times New Roman with 1" margins and the appropriate information in the header (name, paper title, course, date). Whenever possible, save your files as .doc (Microsoft Word) documents and in the following format: lastname-paper#-draft.doc (or lastname-paper#-final.doc). For example: Rudy-paper1-draft.doc.

Late essays will be subject to a grade reduction of 1/3 of a letter grade per day; **papers more than four days late will automatically receive a failing grade**. If, for example, an assignment is due Tuesday at 9:30AM, then as of 9:31AM that day, it is one day late and you have until Wednesday at 9:30AM to hand it in. At 9:31AM Wednesday, it is two days late, and so on.

Assignments: 15%

You will complete multiple homework assignments in addition to the formal essays. These will include reading responses, outlines, position papers, revisions, and annotated bibliographies. The purpose of these assignments is to establish the conceptual and technical frameworks upon which each paper will be built; each speaks to your ability to generate and express your ideas, opinions, and arguments in the most effective fashion. Writing is both a developmental and recursive process that begins long before you sit down to compose the introduction and lasts well beyond the point at which you complete the first draft. There's very little that more preparation and another pass might not have improved!

While these assignments will not each receive a letter grade, they will collectively constitute a written record of your continuing involvement in our discussion of satire as well in your own growth as a writer. Failure to complete any of them will adversely affect your final grade.

Class Participation: 15%

This portion of your grade depends on your engagement with and contributions to our in-class work (discussions, workshops, etc.). Your active participation is crucial to the development of both your critical thinking and compositional skills as well as those of your peers. Scholarship

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and intellectual engagement of all kinds and in all disciplines requires some measure of collaboration and feedback. You should always come to class prepared to speak to a specific passage or moment in the text drawn from your reading/viewing and may be asked to do so at any time during our discussion. You can advance arguments, ask questions, introduce new topics, or make connections to ongoing and prior conversations by pointing the class to those passages and moments; this will allow our discussions the freedom to develop as they may while keeping our critical approach grounded in the piece under investigation. Speak early, speak often, and (when it's printed) always bring the text!

Meeting with the Professor

At some point during the course of researching and/or writing the research essay, each student will be required to meet with me in office hours (or by appointment) to discuss the project. These brief meetings will give you an opportunity to ask questions, check your progress, and solidify your approach and execution; they will also give me the opportunity to work with each of you individually. Failure to meet this requirement will result in a two-letter reduction of your participation grade.

You are of course also encouraged to make use of my office hours or make an appointment to speak with me at *any* point during the semester to ask questions about or discuss any aspect of the class. Email is the best way to reach me at all other times.

Attendance

Attendance will be taken in each class. You can miss two classes during the semester without penalty and without explanation. **Each unexcused absence after that will result in a final grade reduction of one-third of a letter grade and possibly failure of the course.** Repeated tardiness (three late appearances) will count as an unexcused absence.

Intellectual Honesty

Please familiarize yourself with the terms of the Rhodes College Honor Code. All written work must be your own. Intellectual dishonesty of any type or degree will not be tolerated, and consequences for infractions may be severe. If you are ever uncertain whether you are violating the code, please contact me or another faculty member. Rhodes College will have access to turnitin.com this semester and we will utilize it for this class.

Classroom Decorum

Please refrain from eating in class. Beverages are permissible where circumstances allow. Please turn off cellular telephones and other devices.

If you are unable to take notes without a laptop, you may use one in class; however, web browsing and checking email during class is absolutely prohibited.

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Academic Accommodations

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services at x3885 as soon as possible.

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Department of English Expectations and Policies

A college course is more than simply a set of assignments; it is an intellectual process, one which requires active engagement from beginning to end in order to achieve its intended results. With this in mind, the Department of English has formulated a number of expectations and the policies that support them. If you have questions about how these policies relate to the syllabus for a particular course, you should address them to the instructor.

Attendance: The success of a course depends to a significant extent upon the presence of students alert and prepared to address the subject under discussion. Unavoidable absences should be discussed with the instructor, ideally before they occur. Excessive absences will result in a lowering of grade, in some cases to an F.

Deadlines: Writing assignments, test, etc., are carefully scheduled as stages toward the fulfillment of the course's goals and cannot be indefinitely deferred without frustrating those goals. Brief extensions for good reasons may be permissible with the instructor's prior approval; otherwise, late assignments will be penalized and may result in their not being accepted for credit.

Submission of all work: All major assignments are integral to the goals of the course. Failure to complete any major assignment will result in a grade of F for the course.

Intellectual honesty: All work is assumed to be the student's own and produced exclusively for the course in which it is submitted. Papers written for one course, even if revised, are not to be submitted in another without the instructor's prior approval. Borrowing of ideas or language from other sources (including published material, other student papers, the internet or other electronic resources, etc.) must be carefully documented. Students are advised against posting their work on the internet since doing so may lead to suspicion of plagiarism. Students are advised to maintain drafts of their work to verify its originality. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and the student if convicted will receive a grade of F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Council. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not technically plagiarism, will be penalized as the instructor deems appropriate. If you are uncertain about how or whether to document sources, consult your teacher.

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Syllabus

Required Texts

Author	Title	Publisher	ISBN
Gibaldi, Joseph	<i>MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th Edition</i>	MLA	1603290249
O'Conner, Patricia	<i>Woe is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English</i>	Riverhead	978-1594488900

The following short readings/clips will be made available as via postings, handouts, and/or weblinks:

Chen, Adrien. "Jon Stewart vs. Bill O'Reilly, Round 1." [Gawker.com](http://www.gawker.com) 3 February 2010.

The Colbert Report (clips)

The Daily Show (clips)

Hitchens, Christopher. "Cheap Laughs." [The Atlantic](http://www.theatlantic.com) October 2009.

Hogarth, William. *Gin Lane; Beer Street*

Horace, "Satire I"

Juvenal, "Satire I"

Nicholls, James. "Gin Lane Revisited: Intoxication and Society in the Gin Epidemic." [Journal for Cultural Research](http://www.journalforculturalresearch.com) 7.2 (2003): 125-46.

Saturday Night Live (clips)

The Simpsons (clips)

Stelter, Brian. "Jon Stewart's Punching Bag, Fox News." [The New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com) 23 April 2010.

Swift, Jonathan. "A Modest Proposal"

Twain, Mark. "Journalism in Tennessee"

Week 1	W, Jan. 12	Introduction Definitions of satire; satirical definitions
	F, Jan. 14	Christopher Hitchens, "Cheap Laughs" What is an essay? Identifying claims, advancing an argument
Week 2	M, Jan. 17	No Class
	W, Jan. 19	Progression 1: Compare and Contrast Jonathan Swift, "A Modest Proposal" Modes of irony and effectiveness
	F, Jan. 21	<i>The Colbert Report</i> , "The Word: A Modest Porpoisal" Writing the essay proposal

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Week 3	M, Jan. 24	Essay proposal review Writing the thesis statement
	W, Jan. 26	Workshop Paper 1 theses
	F, Jan. 28	Patricia O’Conner, <i>Woe is I</i> : Chapter 12, “Saying is Believing”
Week 4	M, Jan. 31	Workshop Paper 1 – Session A (drafts due Sun., Jan. 30 @ noon)
	W, Feb. 2	Workshop Paper 1 – Session B (drafts due Sun., Jan. 30 @ noon)
	F, Feb. 4	Paper 1 Due
Week 5	M, Feb. 7	Progression Two: “Close” Reading In-Class exercise: William Shakespeare, Sonnet 130
	W, Feb. 9	Twain, “Journalism in Tennessee”; <i>The Daily Show</i> , “The Blogs Must Be Crazy” Close reading and textual analysis: dictionary, imagery, analogy, metaphor
	F, Feb. 11	<i>NYT</i> , “Jon Stewart’s Punching Bag, Fox News”; <i>Gawker.com</i> , “Jon Stewart v. Bill O’Reilly: Round 1” Tone and voice: generic conventions; horizons of expectation; different audiences, different media
Week 6	M, Feb. 14	Reading response peer review Gathering and using textual evidence
	W, Feb. 16	Workshop Paper 2 theses
	F, Feb. 18	Paper 1 Grammar Rodeo
Week 7	M, Feb. 21	Workshop Paper 2 - Session A (drafts due Sun., Feb. 20 @ noon)
	W, Feb. 23	Workshop Paper 2 – Session B (drafts due Sun., Feb. 20 @ noon)
	F, Feb. 25	Paper 2 Due Research paper discussion

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- Week 8 M, Feb. 28 **Progression Three: The Persuasive Essay**
Horace, *Satire I*; Juvenal, *Satire I*
Satirical modes
- W, Mar. 2 Group Discussions: Position Papers
- F, Mar. 4 *SNL*, “VP Debate”; *The Simpsons*, “Treehouse of Horror VII:
Citizen Kang”
Juvenalian and Horatian satire revisited
- Week 9 M, Mar. 7 Classroom debate
Opposition prep, embracing complexity
- W, Mar. 9 Workshop Paper 3 theses
- F, Mar. 11 Paper 2 Grammar Rodeo
- Week 10 M, Mar. 21 **Workshop Paper 3 - Session A** (drafts due Sun, Mar. 11 @ noon)
- W, Mar. 23 **Workshop Paper 3 - Session B** (drafts due Sun, Mar. 11 @ noon)
- F, Mar. 25 **Paper 3 Due**
Research topic assessment
- Week 11 M, Mar. 28 **Progression Four: The Research Paper**
Research skills and library orientation session at Barrett Library
- W, Mar. 30 Quotation and paraphrase, plagiarism and citation
- F, Apr. 1 Sample research paper review
- Week 12 M, Apr. 4 William Hogarth, *Gin Lane*; *Beer Street*
- W, Apr. 6 Nicholls, “Gin Lane Revisited”
Reading academic prose; reverse engineering the outline
- F, Apr. 8 Annotated bibliography/research update reports
- Week 13 M, Apr. 11 Paper 4 proposal and outline peer review
- W, Apr. 13 In-class writing: Au contraire!

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	F, Apr. 15	Writing introductions and conclusions
Week 14	M, Apr. 18	Paper 4 introduction and thesis peer review
	W, Apr. 20	Paper 3 Grammar Rodeo
	F, Apr. 22	No Class
Week 15	M, Apr. 25	Workshop Paper 4 (drafts due M, Apr. 25 @ 1:00PM)
	W, Apr. 27	Open Workshop Paper 4 and final review
	F, Apr. 29	Last Class – Paper 4 Due