



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL STUDIES

*Te Kura Mahinga Tangata*

*Sociology and Social Policy*

# **SOSC 413**

***Special Topic: Fun and Games:  
Sociology of Play and Humour***

## **Course Outline**

**CRN 7148: 30 Points: Tri 1&2, 2012**

*Trimester Dates: 5 March – 17 November 2012*

*Teaching Dates: 5 March – 19 October 2012*

*Mid-trimester Break Trimester One: 6 - 22 April 2012*

*Mid-trimester Break Trimester Two: 27 August – 9 September 2012*

**COURSE COORDINATOR: DR MIKE LLOYD**

*Room 1015, Murphy Building*

*Tel: (04) 463 5678*

*Email: [mike.lloyd@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:mike.lloyd@vuw.ac.nz)*

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**LECTURES : WED 2 – 4PM : MY402**

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**COURSE COORDINATOR**

Mike Lloyd  
Level 10, Murphy building, MY 1015  
Tel: 04 463 5678  
E-mail: [mike.lloyd@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:mike.lloyd@vuw.ac.nz)

**OFFICE HOURS**

To be announced

**CLASS TIME**

Wednesday 2 – 4pm in MY402

**COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Additional information related to SOSC 413 will be communicated via Blackboard or e-mail.

**COURSE PRESCRIPTION**

An examination of humour and play, and connections with modern sports, that aims both to survey broad theoretical approaches and to examine empirical research. Covers scholarship from a variety of disciplines but focuses on the basic parameters of a sociology of humour and play.

**COURSE CONTENT**

Simple reflection shows that people like to laugh and play. Humour can appear spontaneously just about anywhere, but there are also formally organised breaks from serious activity in the form of 'play'. Given the pervasiveness of humour it is surprising that sociology has not had more to say about humour and play. Very simply, this course aims to consider what has been said, how it relates to approaches from other disciplines, and what could be developed in the future. The course is very much open to the interests of the students taking it, and the approach will be exploratory and flexible, rather than proscriptive.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

At the end of the course students should be able to:

- begin sociological exploration of the many ways in which humans laugh and play
- move beyond rigid distinctions between theory and method to consider the specific details of studies of play and laughter.

## SOSC 413 COURSE PROGRAMME

March 7                      Introductory session

March 14 – April 4              Progression through readings

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*Mid trimester break April 6 – 22*

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May 2 – June 6                  Progression through readings (plus a fieldtrip)

*June 8                          Assignment One due*

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*Mid Year break June 9 - July 15*

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July 18 – Oct 18                  Class sessions

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*Mid trimester break April 27 – Sept 9*

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*October 19                      Assignment Two due*

### HUMOUR JOURNAL

As a means of opening our eyes to the culture of humour that surrounds us, all class participants are asked to keep a humour journal. This will not be part of the course assessment but should prove to be very useful in developing an understanding of humour. Each week, write down at least one humorous event (or attempt at a humorous event) to which you were witness or in which you participated, or make some comments on humorous movies, internet clips, radio shows, etc that you have watched or listened to. When recounting a joke's telling, or when writing an account of a humorous event (or an attempted humorous event), try to remember and record as much of the context of the event as possible: who said what to whom, where, and when; what happened prior to and after the telling; who laughed; who didn't; what kind of laughter did the event elicit; and anything else that strikes you as important to the telling/event. Humour journals will become part of discussion in class sessions and may even flow into assignment work. Bear in mind that you cannot interview people about what they are doing without ethical consent, so this 'research' should be observational in nature.

## ASSESSMENT

The course is totally internally assessed via two written assignments. Expectations for assignments will be discussed in class time and there will be ongoing discussion of student progress throughout the course. All assignments relate to all learning objectives.

### **Assignment One: Essay**

**Due date:** 4 pm, Friday June 8

**Recommended length:** 4,000 words

**Grade weight:** 40%

Choose from **one** of the following topics:

1. 'Humour does not *give* offense; its recipients *take* offense' (Christie Davies, 2008: 6). Discuss.
2. 'It is easy to praise humour for bringing people together in moments of pure, creative enjoyment. But it is not those sorts of moments that constitute the social core of humour, but, instead, it is the darker, less easily admired practice of ridicule'. (Michael Billig, 2005: 2). Discuss.
3. 'My hypothesis is that a joke is seen and allowed when it offers a symbolic pattern of a social pattern occurring at the same time'. (Mary Douglas, 1968: 366). Discuss.
4. Your own essay topic (in consultation with the course coordinator).

### **Assignment Two: Project Work**

**Due date:** 4pm, Friday, October 19

**Recommended length:** 6,000 words

**Grade weight:** 60%

A project/essay on a topic of your own choice. Any topic relevant to the sociology of play and humour. This should be discussed with the course coordinator before proceeding.

## MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

To meet mandatory course requirements students must:

- Submit both assessment items by the due date and time.

## RESOURCES

There is a book of readings for the course (contents below). Selected readings will be used as the basis of discussion for the first trimester class sessions.

All undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer from 13 February to 16 March 2012, while postgraduate textbooks and student notes will be available from the top floor of vicbooks in the Student Union Building, Kelburn Campus. After week two of the trimester all undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from vicbooks on Level 4 of the Student Union Building.

Customers can order textbooks and student notes online at [www.vicbooks.co.nz](http://www.vicbooks.co.nz) or can email an order or enquiry to [enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz](mailto:enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz). Books can be couriered to customers or they can be picked up from nominated collection points at each campus. Customers will be contacted when they are available.

Opening hours are 8.00 am – 6.00 pm, Monday – Friday during term time (closing at 5.00 pm in the holidays). Phone: 463 5515.

## READINGS

Martin, R. (2007) 'Introduction to the Psychology of Humor' in *The Psychology of Humor*, R. Martin, Burlington: Elsevier Academic Press, pp. 1-30.

Berger, P.L. (1997) 'The Comic Intrusion' in *Redeeming Laughter*, P.L. Berger, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 3-14.

Kuipers, G. (2008) 'The Sociology of Humor' in *The Primer of Humor Research*, V. Ruskin (Ed.), Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 361-398.

Fine, G.A. and Martin, D.D. (1995) 'Humor in Ethnographic Writing', in *Representation in Ethnography*, J. Van Maanen (Ed.), London: Sage, pp. 165-197.

Morreall, J. (2009) 'Laughing at the Wrong Time', in *Comic Relief*, J. Morreall, Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 90-110.

Billig, M. (2005) 'Embarrassment, Humour and the Social Order' in *Laughter and Ridicule*, M. Billig, London: Sage, pp. 200-243.

Medhurst, A. (2007) 'Introduction' in *A National Joke*, A. Medhurst, London: Routledge, pp. 1-25.

Davies, C. (2011) 'Mind Over Matter', in *Jokes and Targets*, C. Davies, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 20-68.

- Oring, E. (2008), 'Humor in Anthropology and Folklore', in *The Primer of Humor Research*, V. Raskin (Ed.), Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 183-210
- Kothoff, H. (2006) 'Gender and Humor' in *Journal of Pragmatics*, Volume 38, pp. 4-25.
- Chambers, P. (2005) 'Comedies of Sexual Morality and Female Singlehood' in *Beyond a Joke*, S. Lockyer and M. Pickering (Eds.), Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 162-179.
- Milner Davis, J. (2009), "Aussie' Humour and Laughter' in *Serious Frolic*, F. de Groen and P. Kirkpatrick (Eds.), St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, pp. 31-47.
- Lloyd, M. (2011) 'When Jemaine Met Keitha', in *Continuum*, Volume 25 (3), pp. 415-426
- Lloyd, M. (2011) 'Like Tiddlywinks for Grown-ups', in *Sites*, Volume 8 (2), pp. 1-20.

## **WEBSITES, JOURNALS AND KEY BOOKS**

There are many websites providing humorous material, but in terms of academic discussion students should be aware of the following:

The website of the International Society for Humor Studies (ISHS)

<http://www.hnu.edu/ishs/>

The website of the Australasian Humour Studies

Network:<http://www.usyd.edu.au/humourstudies/>

ISHS organises the key international journal for work on humour: *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research* which is available electronically (2001 onwards) and hard copy (2006 onwards) from the VUW library.

The *Journal of Comedy Studies* was established in 2010 but is not available from the VUW library. Some issues are available online but essential articles may have to be interloaned. Website is:

<http://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-Issue,id=1775/>

### **KEY BOOKS (ALL HELD IN THE VUW LIBRARY):**

- Berger, P.L. 1997. *Redeeming Laughter*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Billig, M. 2005. *Laughter and Ridicule*. London: Sage.
- Critchley, S. 2002. *On Humour*. London: Routledge.
- Davies, C. 1998. *Jokes and their relation to society*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Davies, C. 2002. *The mirth of nations*. New Brunswick: Transaction.
- Davies, C. 2011. *Jokes and Targets*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- De Groen, Fran, and Peter Kirkpatrick, eds. 2009. *Serious Frolic*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press.
- Goffman, E. 1961. *Encounters*. Harmondsworth: Penguin. (especially part 1: Fun in Games)
- Goldstein, D.M. 2003. *Laughter out of place*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kuipers, G. 2006. *Good Humor, Bad Taste*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Legman, G. 1968. *Rationale of the Dirty Joke: An analysis of sexual humour*. (2 vols) New York: Grove Press.
- Lockyer, Sharon, and Michael Pickering, eds. 2005. *Beyond a Joke*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pelligrini, A.(Ed.) 2011. *The Oxford Handbook of the Development of Play*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Medhurst, A.(2007. *A National Joke*, A. Medhurst, London: Routledge.
- Morreall, J. 2009. *Comic Relief*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Mulkay, M. 1988. *On Humour*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Nilsen, A.P. & Nilsen, D. 2000. *Encyclopedia of 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Humor*. Westport: Oryx.
- Norrick, N.R. & Chiaro, D. 2009. *Humor in Interaction*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Oring, E. 2003. *Engaging Humor*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Raskin, V. (Ed.) 2008. *The Primer of Humor Research*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

## ASSIGNMENT BOX

**Assignments must be placed in the assignment box on level 9, Murphy building by 4pm on the due date.** They MUST NOT be placed in individual staff pigeon-holes, or under staff office doors, or handed to lecturers or tutors. This is to ensure that all work is properly recorded when submitted, and to avoid problems which have arisen in the past, when work has "gone missing". At **4pm** the box will be emptied, date-stamp work and record its receipt, before handing it to the appropriate markers.

*Students Must Keep A Photocopy Of Every Written Assignment.*

Unless students have followed this procedure, the Programme will accept no responsibility for pieces of written work claimed to have been handed in.

## IDENTIFYING YOUR ESSAY OR ASSIGNMENT – FRONT SHEET

Please include the School's **Assignment Cover Sheet** (a sample of which can be found at the end of this Outline) as a front cover sheet when submitting your assignments. This ensures that you have provided essential information. You may wish to have a front page of your own on your assignment, but the cover sheet must be the School's Assignment Cover Sheet. Further copies can be found at the School's Administration office on level 9 of Murphy building, and also on the School's assignment box (level 9 Murphy, beside the lifts).

## LATE PENALTIES

Late submissions for student assignments in all Sociology and Social Policy undergraduate courses are subject to a penalty. The exact deduction will be calculated on the basis of one half mark per day late for each 10 marks, i.e.

Mark out of maximum of day it is	Then deduct the following marks for each late
10	½
20	1
30	1½
40	2

Where the due date is a Friday, any written work not handed in by 4 p.m. will be liable to a two-day penalty. To be effective, this policy will be consistently applied in all courses.



## GRADES

The Sociology and Social Policy Programme has decided to give letter grades for all internally assessed work instead of giving numerical marks. The following table sets out the range of marks within which each letter grade is assigned. Your final grade and marks for the course will be an aggregate of the grades you achieve during the course.

PASS: A+	85% or over	FAIL: D	40%-49%
A	80% – 84%	E	Below 40%
A-	75% – 79%		
B+	70% – 74%		
B	65% – 69%		
B-	60% – 64%		
C+	55% – 59%		
C	50% – 54%		

## WHERE TO FIND MORE DETAILED INFORMATION

Find key dates, explanations of grades and other useful information at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study). Find out how academic progress is monitored and how enrolment can be restricted at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress). Most statutes and policies are available at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy), except qualification statutes, which are available via the *Calendar* webpage at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar.aspx) (See Section C).

Other useful information for students may be found at the website of the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic), at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about\\_victoria/avcacademic](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcacademic).

### Additional Support Services

Student Learning and Support also run study skills workshops specific to Maori and Pasifika students which students could be referred to for help:

#### *Information for Maori Students:*

[http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/slss/infofor/maoristudents.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/slss/infofor/maoristudents.aspx) or <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/tpa/>

#### *Information for Pasifika students:*

[http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/slss/infofor/pasifikastudents.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/slss/infofor/pasifikastudents.aspx) or <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/tpa/>

## OTHER SCHOOL CONTACTS

Head of School: Dr Allison Kirkman, MY1013  
Tel: 463 5676 E-m: [allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz)

International Student Liaison: Dr Hal Levine MY1023  
Tel: 463 6132 E-m: [hal.levine@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:hal.levine@vuw.ac.nz)

Maori and Pacific Student Liaison: Dr Trevor Bradley, MY1101  
Tel: 463 5432 E-m: [trevor.bradley@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:trevor.bradley@vuw.ac.nz)

Students with Disabilities Liaison: Dr Russil Durrant, MY1120  
Tel: 463 9980 E-m: [russil.durrant@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:russil.durrant@vuw.ac.nz)

School Manager: Carol Hogan, MY918  
Tel: 463 6546 E-m: [carol.hogan@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:carol.hogan@vuw.ac.nz)

School Administrators: Monica Lichti, Alison Melling, Helen Beaglehole  
MY921, Tel: 463 5317; 463 5258; 463 5677  
E-m: [sacs@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:sacs@vuw.ac.nz)

Office use only

Date Received:

(Date Stamp)

# School of Social and Cultural Studies

Te Kura Mahinga Tangata

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

CRIMINOLOGY

SOCIOLOGY and SOCIAL POLICY

## Assignment Cover Sheet

*(please write legibly)*

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Last name)* *(First name)*

Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Course (eg ANTH101): \_\_\_\_\_

Tutorial Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Tutorial Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Tutor (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Certification of Authenticity*

*I certify that this paper submitted for assessment is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_