

HOLY NAMES UNIVERSITY
PSYC 20/PSYC 197 – INTRODUCTORY SEMINAR: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HUMOR
SPRING SEMESTER 2015

Instructor:

Martin Lampert, Ph.D.

Instructor's Office:

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Class Meetings:

652 Heafey, Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:00–12:30 p.m.

Instructor's Office Hours:

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 4:30–5:30 p.m.

Required Text

Martin, R. (2007). *The Psychology of Humor*. San Diego, CA: Elsevier/Academic Press (available via Blackboard).

Overview and Objectives

For PSYC 20 students, HNU's Introductory Psychology Seminar serves as the continuation of our major's first year experience program and is intended to compliment a recently completed introductory psychology survey course. For PSYC 197 students, the seminar provides an opportunity to study a special topic within psychology and to provide mentorship to first and second year students. In this seminar, all students reconsider the subdisciplines of psychology through the lense of a single area of psychological research; learn how to review and evaluate psychological findings effectively for papers, presentations, and research projects; and reflect on how they can use psychological research to better understand themselves and other people. Specifically, by the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- recognize how the different subdisciplines of Psychology can each contribute to our overall understanding of a single human experience;
- understand how psychology can inform other academic disciplines;
- appreciate better the behavioral styles of other individuals as well as your own;
- gather efficiently and effectively information necessary to address a research question;
- read, summarize, and critically evaluate a journal article and similar written materials;
- organize a short report that integrates information from the scientific literature, empirical observations, and other sources of information; and
- present information in different formats (i.e., as a written report, in a panel discussion, as part of a poster presentation) using American Psychological Association standards.

As part of this seminar, students also engage in community based learning experiences, including work for an international society and outside activities on the HNU campus and for community groups in the Oakland area.

Content, Design, and Assignments

The topic of the Introductory Seminar is the Psychology of Humor. For the first three weeks of the term, we will explore how psychologists historically have conceptualized the nature and functions of humor and have explained humor-related experiences in terms of (1) social context, (2) underlying cognitive-perceptual processes, (3) emotional responses, such as mirth, and (4) outward vocal-behavioral expressions, such as laughter. In subsequent weeks, we will look at the contributions of humor research within the subdisciplines of cognitive, social, personality, biological, developmental, and clinical psychology.

On Tuesdays, we will generally have an overview of the weekly topic (see calendar), which will include exercises, designed to help students think critically about the material presented. On Thursdays, the class will have open forums that will center around research articles, writing samples, or collected data that each student will be expected to bring to class.

The seminar also includes community-based learning activities, designed to inform classroom discussions and to let students apply their classroom knowledge to non-classroom settings. These activities will include:

- (1) **Laughter Club:** We will learn about laughter yoga and lead laughter yoga clubs in the community.

During the first weeks of the semester, we will practice simple laughter yoga exercises, building to a full set of exercises that can be shared with other people in group settings. Beginning in January, students will participate in and eventually lead a laughter club at a senior center in the Oakland area. From late March onward, we will also lead laughter clubs for the HNU community. Club meetings will involve roughly sixty minute sessions, scheduled outside of class time, and each PSYC 20/197 student will be expected to participate in a minimum of seven off-campus sessions and nine sessions overall. You will also be expected to keep a journal of your experiences that includes for each laughter yoga session:

- an overview of the exercises performed and your interaction with other club participants;
- a description of the psychological and physical effects (positive or negative) that you experienced and observed among others in the group;
- a consideration of how what you can apply what you learned in class about humor to what you experienced as a laughter club participant.

Prior to your first laughter club meeting, you should obtain a notebook in which you can record and organize your entries of club meetings. By course end, you should have, based on your journaling, a portrait of how laughter yoga experience has influenced your own humor and well-being.

- (2) **Comedy Film Series:** For Spring 2015, Psychology 20/197 students will be in charge of the Social Sciences Film Series. This series will be scheduled sometime between March 17 and April 23. The series will focus on film comedies, written or directed by notable comedians or writers. The class will select four movies from different historical periods. Each student will participate in a panel presentation for one of these films and turn in a written report on their presentation.
- (3) **Survey Research:** Psychology 20/197 students will also have the opportunity to use psychological measures to assess people's humor and their impressions of selected comedians. On February 24, as we begin to look at Personality and Humor Assessment, we will start to collect survey data, and each student will be expected to interview at least 10 people on their perceptions and attitudes of their own humor and the humor of famous funny people.

Several Thursday morning meetings will focus on these activities. Additionally, each student will be expected to work on three projects during the run of the course: (1) a group project on humor creativity, which will involve the design of a webpage, (2) a panel presentation and report on a selected film comedy, and (3) an individual research project that will culminate in poster presentation on the day of our final meeting, May 12.

Special Note on Credit Hours: Federal guidelines require that for each unit of course credit, students must have each week one hour of classroom instruction, or its equivalent, and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class work. As a four unit course, the Seminar requires that students devote an average of eight hours per week to their assigned readings, projects, and review of the course material.

Grading

For this course, every student will be expected to do assigned readings prior to each class meeting and to contribute to classroom discussions and all activities. Students will be evaluated on their classroom participation and on their completion of course assignments. Grading overall will be done on an absolute scale (A = 90%, B = 80%, etc.) with points as follows:

Participation	
Classroom Readings/Discussion	20
Weekly Exercises	20
Film Series Attendance/Participation	6
Mentoring (Upper Division Students Only)	25
Laughter Yoga Club	
Weekly Meetings	25
Journal	20
Humor Survey	
Data Collection	20
Data Summary	10
Webpage Project	
Webpage Design	15
Written Report	30
Film Series Project	
Panel Presentation	15
Written Report	30
Final Poster Project	
Poster Design and Presentation	30
Final Written Report	60

Disability Policy and Support Services

Reasonable and appropriate accommodations for individuals with qualifying disabilities are extended through Pathways to Academic Success (Disability Support Services). Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the Coordinator of Pathways to Academic Success (DSS) at 510-436-1394 or dss@hnu.edu to set up a confidential appointment to discuss accommodation guidelines and available services.

Academic Honesty and Attendance (The Not-So-Funny Stuff)

All students are expected to be familiar with Holy Names University's policies on academic honesty and attendance as outlined in the University catalog. As cheating undermines the learning process, the instructor reserves the right to assign an *F* grade to any student who represents the work or ideas of another person as his/her own. Further, as consistent attendance is essential to mastery of the classroom material, the instructor also reserves the right to assign an *F* grade to students who miss more than 20% of scheduled class time.

PSYCHOLOGY 20—THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HUMOR		
CALENDAR		
Date	Seminar Topic	Readings
January 13	The Psychological Aspects of Humor	Martin, Chapter 1
January 15		Kataria, Training Manual selections
January 20	Psychoanalytic Theories	Martin, Chapter 2
January 22		Freud on <i>Humor</i>
January 27	Arousal and Incongruity Theories	Martin, Chapter 3
January 29		Apter & Desselles article
February 3	The Cognitive Psychology of Humor	Martin, Chapter 4
February 5		Wyer & Collins article
February 10	The Social Psychology of Humor	Reading: <i>Martin, Chapter 5</i>
February 12		Ford & Ferguson article
February 17	Gender, Culture, and Status	Reading: <i>Martin, Chapter 5</i>
February 19	Web Project Due	Lampert & Ervin-Tripp article
February 24	Personality and Humor	Martin, Chapter 7
February 26		
March 3	Personality and Humor (continued)	Martin, Chapter 7
March 5		Fisher & Fisher article
March 10-12	<i>Spring Break</i>	
March 17	Psychobiology of Humor & Laughter	Martin, Chapter 6
March 19		Bachorowski & Owren article
March 24	Developmental Psychology of Humor	Martin, Chapter 8
March 26		
March 31	Performing Humor	Carter handout
April 2	Film Papers Due	
April 7	Humor and Mental Health	Martin, Chapter 9
April 9		Szabo et al. article
April 14	Humor and Physical Health	Martin, Chapter 10
April 16	Data Collection Completed	Berk et al. article
April 21	Humor Applications	Martin, Chapter 11
April 23		
April 28	Student Poster Preparations	
April 30		
May 12	Final: Student Poster Presentations Final Reports and Journals Due	

Note 1: This calendar is flexible and subject to change at any time.

Note 2: Assigned readings should be completed prior to the classroom meeting.

Note 3: Laughter club journals and individual reports are due on the day of the student presentations, May 12.