



# “THE WORLDS OF COMEDY”: Syllabus



David Misch

## WEEK 1: THE HISTORY OF COMEDY

Introduction

- 1: Trickster
- 2: The Ancient World
- 3: Medieval to music hall
- 4: Early America to vaudeville
- 5: Chaplin
- 6: Keaton

## WEEK 2: STAND-UP & SITCOMS & SKETCH

- 1: History of stand-up
- 2: Jews / Woody Allen
- 3: History of stand-up 2 / Richard Pryor
- 4: History of stand-up 3 / Steve Martin
- 5: Sketch, improv, variety
- 6: Sitcoms

## WEEK 3: HOW COMEDY WORKS

- 1: Philosophy – Kant, Hobbes, Freud, Bergson
- 2: Rules – surprise; timing
- 3: Persona – laughs without jokes; reaction
- 4: Logic; clichés/cues
- 5: Jokes – aggression; patterns; perspective; misdirection; archetypes/stereotypes

## WEEK 4: PAIN & HORROR & WORDS

- 1: Physical humor: laughing at suffering; laughter without humor; the foreign body
- 2: Comedy's relationship to fear; laugh vs. scream
- 3: Language – banter; density; silence; speed; poetic; shock

## WEEK 5: MORALITY

- 1: Women/battle of the sexes
- 2: Satire – Swift to Colbert; taboos; cruelty; distance
- 3: Censorship
- 4: “The Producers”

## WEEK 6: BODY & SOUL

- 1: The anthropology of humor
- 2: The healthy Ha!
- 3: The origins and meaning of laughter
- 4: Comedy and the brain
- 5: Comedy vs. drama / distance
- 6: The theology of Ha!: purpose, faith, freedom, transcendence, death

“Funny: The Book / Everything You’ve Always Wanted To Know About Comedy” (Applause) is available online at Barnes & Noble, Amazon and in fine (and, let’s be honest, some lame) bookstores everywhere.