**Catalog Description**

University Honors Seminar in Writing, ENC 1930 (3 credits)  
*Writing Across the Curriculum (Gordon Rule)*  
Prerequisite: ENC 1101 with a grade of "C" or better  
Description: A seminar in the University Honors Program on topics in writing. This is a General Education course.

**Required Materials**

- Course readings, audio/visual materials, assignments, and other documents will be available on Blackboard, via the World Wide Web, and the FAU Library website.
- Paper and pen for in class writings and activities that may be collected
- Means of taking and saving class notes (paper and pen or laptop, e-reader, etc.)
- Ability to download and listen to podcasts/mp3 files and access online audiovisual materials. (If you are using a computer in a shared or public space, you may need to use headphones or earbuds so as not to distract those around you.)

**Course Description**

Whether writing for the stage or individual performance, in prose or in verse, in comic strips or in song lyrics, writers have long used comedy as a means of social criticism. Many of these writers make arguments about the world around them, and they use comedy as a means to make those arguments more effectively.

In this course, we will examine the arguments these writers make and they ways they use comedy to advice their points of view. We will analyze a variety of print and multimedia genres, including satire, memoir, parody, monologue, essay, stand-up, musical performance, as well as longer works. We will cover a wide range of topics in this course: war and politics, sexism, violence, race relations, LGBT rights, religion and faith, and media criticism, to name a few. Much of the content of this course will involve strong and graphic language. Some of the writers we examine will have opinions you may find offensive or which conflict with your personal values. Your responsibility as a writer and student will be to analyze the rhetoric of these works, pull apart their arguments and see how they are working (or why they aren’t working, as the case may be).

More than analyzing the work of others, this course will also ask you to create your own works. In addition to writing standard argument-based academic essays about humor, you should also expect to write in a variety of other genres, including humor (satire, parody, humorous essay, etc.).

> “Parodies and caricature are the most penetrating of criticisms.”  
> ~Aldous Huxley, *Point Counter Point*
ENC 1930 Course Objectives

At the end of this course you should be able to:

- Produce clear and appropriate writing that performs the specific rhetorical tasks of analytic discourse
- Produce both finished writing and preparatory writing (e.g., multiple drafts of formal writing, journal writing, written responses to other texts, etc.)
- Employ critical thinking based on well-reasoned assumptions
- Read and respond critically to a variety of professional and other student texts in order to position their own ideas and arguments relative to the arguments and strategies of others
- Locate, assess, and apply information through academic research
- Incorporate and cite external sources in one's writing
- Use writing not only to communicate, but also to generate thinking and examine intellectual and/or cultural assumptions that emerge in the readings and in their own writing
- Use an academically acceptable ethos (i.e., the ability of writers to effect credibility in their writing)
- Recognize and practice writing as a recursive process that demands substantial reworking of drafts to revise content, organization, clarity, argument structures, etc. (global revision), as distinct from editing and correction of surface error (local revision)
- Demonstrate enhanced learning through global and local revisions that are based on "learning-centered" grading criteria
- Work effectively with other students in peer-group sessions to critique the substance of each other's work, focusing primarily on issues that would be addressed by global revision
- Demonstrate the abilities to identify, understand, and edit for global organization, style, and the patterns of error recurrent in their own writing. To help you achieve this goal, you will learn a system of error tracking to identify and correct your patterns of error.

“Satire is a lesson. Parody is a game”
~ Vladimir Nabokov, Strong Opinions

Foundations of Written Communication

This course meets the guidelines of the Foundations of Written Communications component of the General Education Curriculum. More information on the general education curriculum can be found at: http://www.fau.edu/deanugstudies/NewGeneralEdCurriculum.php.

Specifically, you will:

- produce clear writing that performs specific rhetorical tasks.
- respond critically to a variety of written materials in order to position their own ideas and arguments relative to the arguments and strategies of others.
- use writing not only to communicate but also to think critically—examining assumptions that underlie the readings and their own writing.
- demonstrate an understanding of the ethical standards that apply to the use of external sources in one's writing.

And you will develop:

- knowledge in several different disciplines.
- the ability to think critically.
- the ability to communicate effectively.
- an appreciation for how knowledge is discovered, challenged, and transformed as it advances.
- an understanding of ethics and ethical behavior.

1 More information on the general education curriculum can be found at: http://www.fau.edu/deanugstudies/NewGeneralEdCurriculum.php
Coursework & Weights

Clear, written descriptions of all major writing assignments and evaluation criteria will be distributed in class. In general, writing will be assessed based on English Department Grading Criteria\(^2\) and the WAC Writing Assessment Rubric.\(^3\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coursework &amp; Weights</th>
<th>Weights</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E1: &quot;What's So Funny?&quot; Essay</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>E2: Rhetorical Analysis Essay</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E3: Argumentative Essay</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E4: Satirical Essay</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prewriting, Short Writing Assignments, Miscellany</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation &amp; Professionalism</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General Guidelines:

- You are required to revise each of the four thesis-driven essay assignments at least once before submission for grading.
- You will receive substantive feedback from both instructor and peers on all major graded writing assignments.
- You must submit an error log (a system of grammatical error tracking that will help you identify and correct your patterns of error) when you submit final drafts of major writing assignments for grading.
- You are required to submit drafts and final versions of major essay assignments in proper MLA formatting, which includes 12 point, Times New Roman font, double spacing, 1 inch margins, proper heading, header with last name and page number, and corrected formatted MLA citations and works cited (if any).
- Instructions for assignment submission (paper vs. electronic submissions, etc.) will be discussed in class.

**Essay 1: "What's So Funny?" Essay**

This assignment asks you to select one theoretical text and one literary text. In your 4-5 page (1200-1500 word) essay, use the theory to argue why the literary text should or should not be considered humorous. In other words, explain how the text succeeds or fails according to the theory.

Theoretical texts:
- Excerpts from Sigmund Freud’s *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*
- Excerpts from Henri Bergson’s *Laughter*
- Excerpts from Simon Critchley’s *On Humor* (Thinking and Action): “Laughing at Your Body-Post-Colonial Theory” and “Is Humor Human?”

Literary texts:
- Mark Twain’s *Advice to Youth*
- Excerpts from Stephen Colbert’s *I am America (And So Can You)!*
- Excerpts from Jon Stewart’s *Naked Pictures of Famous People*
- Margaret Cho, *I’m the One That I Want, or Notorious C.H.O.*

**Essay 2: Rhetorical Analysis Essay**

This assignment asks you to find an essay or book chapter (7,000-10,000 words) written by a comedian, humorist, or satirist, and provide an analysis of the argument. In your 5-6 page (1500-1800 word) essay, you should summarize their argument, identify the parts of the argument (premises, claims, warrants, etc.), and use evidence from the text to show the methods the author used to ‘prove’ the argument. Additionally, you must identify the type(s) of humor used (parody, satire, absurdism, sarcasm, etc.) and examine the ways in which humor contributes to the argument. Questions to consider include: Is humor used to strengthen a strong argument or obscure a weak one? How does the author's tone work with or against the readers' expectations?

**Essay 3: Argumentative Essay**

In *Status Anxiety*, Alain de Botton argues that the chief aim of humorists is not merely to entertain but "to convey with impudence messages that might be dangerous or impossible to state directly." Society 'allows' humorists to say

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\(^3\) WAC Writing Assessment Rubric at [http://www.fau.edu/WAC/docs/AssessmentRubric5-2012.doc](http://www.fau.edu/WAC/docs/AssessmentRubric5-2012.doc)
and do things that others cannot, and for that reason, humorists serve an important function in our culture.4 However, there are also dangers in using humor, particularly in discussions of important social issues, (human rights, government, rape, racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.) In Rabbit Run, John Updike suggests "[t]he difficulty with humorists is that they will mix what they believe with what they don't; whichever seems likelier to win an effect."

~ John Updike, Rabbit Run

This assignment asks you write a 5-6 page (1500-1800 word) argument-based, thesis driven essay that considers the role of humorists (cartoonists, stand-up comics, satirical writers, hosts of television programs, etc.) in our modern society and uses evidence to support your position.

**Essay 4: Satirical Essay**

This assignment asks you to write a 5-6 page (1500-1800 word) satirical essay offering a solution to a social problem, real or imagined, on the model of Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal.” Your essay should pay particular attention to the rhetorical structure of Swift’s essay: setting the scene, offering the proposal including the argument why it is both necessary and beneficial, listing the benefits, conceding any weaknesses, and reiterating the reasons this solution is necessary in the first place. Your essay should employ humor, exaggeration, and satire to make your points.

**Prewriting, Short Writing Assignments, & Miscellany:**

During the semester, you will be asked to complete a number of "smaller" writing assignments and activities, including prewriting assignments, responses, annotations, journaling, peer review, grammar exercises, etc. Prewriting, short writing assignments, and miscellaneous assignments may be in class or take home, group or individual, and graded or ungraded. Additionally, you may be required to take announced or unannounced (pop) quizzes on reading material, concepts, etc. Items that fall into this category will not be accepted late and cannot be made up.5 While you may be provided with feedback and specific evaluations and assessments on some of your work in this category, in general, assignments (in this category) will be graded holistically at the end of the term.

**Participation & Professionalism:**

Professionalism includes your preparedness (of assigned readings, etc.), engagement in class discussion, attendance, punctuality, in-class attention, ability to follow directions, peer review, and both formal and informal group work. This grade will be determined at the discretion of the instructor at the end of the semester.

**Grade Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>B+: 89-87</th>
<th>C+: 79-77</th>
<th>D+: 69-67</th>
<th>F: 59 and below</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A:</td>
<td>100-94</td>
<td>B:  86-84</td>
<td>C:  76-74</td>
<td>D:  66-64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-:</td>
<td>93-90</td>
<td>B-: 83-80</td>
<td>C-: 73-70</td>
<td>D-: 63-60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your semester grades will not be rounded. This means that an 89.999 is a B+.

Because this is a WAC/Gordon Rules course, you must achieve a grade of "C" (not C-minus) or better to receive credit.

**Institutional Policies**

**Students With Disabilities**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students who require special accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)

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5 Accommodations will be made for students who miss coursework due to religious observation, jury duty, participation in authorized FAU athletics events, etc.
Statement of Academic Integrity

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the University mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the University community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see http://www.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/4.001_Code_of_Academic_Integrity.pdf

WAC/Gordon Rule Statement

This course serves as one of two "Gordon Rule" classes that must be taken within the Department of English before you may take two additional required 2000-4000 level writing intensive courses. You must achieve a grade of "C" (not C-minus) or better to receive credit. Furthermore, this class meets the University-wide Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) criteria, which expect you to improve your writing over the course of the term. The University’s WAC program promotes the teaching of writing across all levels and all disciplines. Writing-to-learn activities have proven effective in developing critical thinking skills, learning discipline-specific content, and understanding and building competence in the modes of inquiry and writing for various disciplines and professions.

If this class is selected to participate in the university-wide WAC assessment program, you will be required to access the online assessment server, complete the consent form and survey, and submit electronically a first and final draft of a near-end-of-term paper.

Disruptive Behavior

Disruptive behavior, as defined in the Student Handbook, will not be tolerated, and, if persisted in after admonition by the teacher, will be grounds for removal from the class. Disruptive behavior includes chronic lateness, leaving and re-entering the room while class is in session, and eating in class.

Programmatic Policies

Absences

More than two week’s worth of unexcused absences may result in an F unless you successfully apply for a grade of W. Our collective experience as teachers of writing suggests that students who miss more than two weeks’ worth of class are unable to produce passing work and ultimately fail the class. That fact reflects both the rigorous pace of this course and the fact that what students learn in this class, they learn in the classroom through group work, discussion, and writing activities (work that cannot be made up).

Plagiarism

Students must abide by the University policy on plagiarism. Students who plagiarize work will fail this course and have a notation of academic irregularity placed on their transcripts.

Class Policies

Attendance, Absences, & Tardiness

In this class, there are no “excused” or “unexcused” absences. Just like in the professional world, you have “personal days.” Because this class meets three times a week, you may take up to six personal days during the semester without penalty (two weeks worth of class meetings). You may use your personal days for illness, appointments, prior engagements, work, interviews, etc.

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One absence after your six personal days will result in a 10% deduction from your semester grade. Two absences after your six personal days will result in a 20% deduction from your semester grade. Three absences after your six personal days will result in failure of the course, as per English department policy: "absences in excess of two weeks’ worth of class risks failure."

If you are absent from class

* do not inform the instructor about the details of your absence. (It’s not my business and I don’t want to know.)
* figure out what you missed – this is your responsibility. Check the course website and/or Blackboard. Email one of your classmates to get the notes and/or additional instructions about assignments.
* come to class on the next class day prepared. You must catch up on readings and assignments due and be prepared for class on the day you return.
* do not ask if you can make up an assignment that you missed.
* do not email me and ask what you missed. However, after checking the schedule, looking over the coursework, and contacting a classmate, if you still have questions, please contact me.

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class. Please arrive on time and stay the entire class period. If tardiness or leaving early are frequent or excessive, you may be marked absent.

Assignments, quizzes, and in-class work completed/turned in on the day of an absence cannot be made up. If you know in advance that you will miss class, please make arrangements with the instructor to turn your work in ahead of time.

Students who anticipate the necessity of being absent from class due to the observation of a major religious observance must provide advance written notice of the date(s) to the instructor before the third week of class.

In the case of extended illness or other inability to attend class, please request a medical withdrawal from the course (see Registrar’s website).

**Assignments (Formatting, Submission, Late Work)**

You must work to produce error-free documents. This includes all written work, in-class written or typed work, small assignments, major assignments, etc. During the entire semester, you will be required to use an “error log” to track your patterns of stylistic and grammatical error.

In general, work should be formatted academically and should adhere to the conventions of its genre. When required, please include appropriate and correct MLA citations and documentation.

Instructions for assignment submission will be discussed in class before the due date. Sometimes you will be required to submit paper copies. Other times you will be asked to submit electronic copies to particular locations (to Blackboard, GoogleDocs, email, etc.). You must follow all submission instructions. If an assignment is submitted incorrectly, it will not be graded or will be considered late, as appropriate.

If the instructor requests an electronic copy, please submit as a .doc/x. Unless specifically instructed otherwise, other file formats will not be accepted. If you do not have Microsoft Word, consider downloading the free Apache Open Office suite at http://www.openoffice.org, which functions much the same as MS Word and will allow you to save documents as .doc/x. If you work on a Mac platform, please save/export .pages files as .doc/x.

Larger assignments will be penalized 10% or one full letter grade per day late (this includes non-class days and weekends). An assignment is considered late if it is submitted after the beginning of class on the due date or one minute after the due date/time as indicated for electronic submission.

**Technology**

Detailed information about daily in-class activities, homework, and reading due will be posted on Blackboard. You must also take detailed notes about assignments in class and ask questions about assignments during class time. Forgetting the assignment or not understanding the assignment is not an excuse for late/unsatisfactory work. The schedule will be updated frequently. Please check it often.

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7 Accommodations will be made for students who miss coursework due to religious observation, jury duty, participation in authorized FAU athletics events, etc.
Tentatively, you are encouraged to bring/use your laptop, Kindle, Nook, or iPad to class for classwork, notes, readings, etc. Please limit your use of technology to course related notes, activities, and topics, and do not disrupt the professor or other students. There may be times when students will be asked to ignore the available technology to more fully engage in discussion or listen to lecture/media materials. For this reason, please have pen and paper with you during every class period.

I reserve the right to amend this policy if technology becomes a distraction (i.e., using technology for chatting, Facebook, browsing, etc., unrelated to classwork).

In addition, students must:

- download/annotate/bring course readings with them every class meeting (in print or electronic form)
- interact with the course website at least once per week.
- be willing to write in public online spaces
- have a Google Docs/Drive account (or access to the Google apps account via myFAU)
- be able to view/listen to multimedia
- be aware that you may be asked to register for and use various applications with an identity, including social media, authoring, bookmarking, tagging, and various other types of accounts. We will have a discussion about pseudonyms, dedicated accounts, privacy, and related issues in class. Any class member with concerns should feel free to talk with me about alternatives.

Academic Dishonesty

The Undergraduate Catalog describes academic irregularities, which, on the first occurrence, can result in a grade of “F” for the course and a notation on a student’s record, and, on the second occurrence, can result in expulsion from the University. Among these is plagiarism.

Plagiarism is a form of theft. It means presenting the work of someone else as though it were your own, that is, without properly acknowledging the source. Sources include published material and the unpublished work of other students. If you do not acknowledge the source, you show an intention to deceive. You should never present someone else’s work as your own, whether it’s an entire paper, a single sentence or phrase, or an idea. If you are ever unsure about whether or not the work you are doing is plagiarism or might be considered academic dishonesty, you are strongly encouraged to discuss it with your instructor. If you come to the instructor with questions regarding these matters, you will not be penalized. However, if you are “caught” plagiarizing after you have turned an assignment or draft in, there will be no discussion and no excuses—you will be penalized.

Be advised, your instructor may submit any of your coursework to SafeAssign and/or Turnitin.com plagiarism detection services.

Professionalism

You will have homework—readings, assignments, or both—due almost every class session. Readings must be completed before class time. You must read carefully and thoughtfully. I expect you to come to class with an understanding of the reading material. This will necessitate you looking at examples, considering questions posed in the text, and generally, engaging with the material. If there’s something you don’t understand or aren’t familiar with, you’re expected to look it up. If you still don’t understand, please bring your questions to class.

You must carry yourself professionally at all times; be prepared for class, work with others, communicate professionally, and be attentive in the classroom. This means that you must take notes, ask questions as appropriate, respond to questions, participate in group activities, etc.

Your cell phone must be turned off and placed in your pocket, purse, or bag. You may not do any of the following during class time: send or read text messages, check personal email or Facebook, work on material unrelated to class, chat, browse the web, or listen to mp3 players (no earbuds, etc.). Students who are engaged in non-class related activities, students who are unprepared for class, and students who fall asleep may be given an absence for that class period.
Your continued participation in this class indicates your understanding and acceptance of policies set forth in the syllabus. The syllabus, course work & weights, policies, and the course schedule are subject to change at the instructor’s discretion. All changes will be posted on Blackboard.