

# RS 2HR3: Humour & Religion

McMaster University, Spring/Summer 2017, Term 2 (June 19–Aug 4)  
\*draft

## **Instructor**

John VanMaaren  
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## **Time and Location**

Tues & Thurs, 1:30–4:30  
Location: BSB B135

## **Catalogue Description**

Starting with Freud's theoretical accounts, this course explores the ways in which scholars have analyzed the relationship between religion and humour.

## **Course Goals**

1. To explore how religion and humour inform the human experience
2. To examine various theories regarding the origins and application of humour
3. To evaluate how adequately these theories apply to the study of humour and religion
4. To consider the place of humour in various religious traditions

## **Learning Objectives**

1. To cultivate a critical approach to cultural perspectives on humour and on religion
2. To learn how to apply theoretical models to cultural phenomena involving humour and religion

## **Required Texts**

Geybels, Hans, and Walter Van Herck. *Humour and Religion: Challenges and Ambiguities*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2011. (available in campus book store and as ebook [\$17.45 via google play])

Clasquin, Michel. “Real Buddhas Don’t Laugh: Attitudes towards Humour and Laughter in Ancient India and China.” *Social Identities* 7.1 (2001): 97–116. (PDF available through library)

## **Course Requirements**

1. 10% five online quizzes on the required reading
2. 40% group project (15% proposal; 25% final project)
3. 10% project presentation (PechaKucha) or peer-review
4. 25% participation & in-class activities
5. 15% final take-home assignment

## Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
6/20	Introduction; Humour in sacred texts		
6/22	Theories of humour	HRCR CH 1: The Redemptive Power of Humour in Religion (11-21) HRCR CH 2: Humour as Practical Wisdom (22-33)	
6/27	Humour, religion, and the formation of human communities	HRCR CH 12: Humour, Religion and Vulnerability (191-203) HRCR CH 13: Laughing at God: The Pictorial History of Boundaries Not to Be Crossed (204-217)	
6/29	Humour and religious competition	HRCR CH 5: Humour and Religion in the Greco-Roman World (66-84)	
7/4	Religious Satire	HRCR CH 15: Humour, Religion and Politics in Greek Cartoons: Symbiosis or Conflict? (248-268)	Group Proposal due
7/6	Humour and Buddhism	Michel Clasquin: "Real Buddhas Don't Laugh" (97-116)	
7/11	Humour and Hinduism	HRCR CH 3: Humour and Hinduism (35-53)	
7/13	Film: OMG - Oh My God!		
7/18	Humour and Islam	HRCR CH 11: The Muslim sense of Humour (169-190)	
7/20	Humour and Christianity	HRCR CH 9: Laughing against All the Odds: Some Observations on Humour, Laughter and Religion in Byzantium (141-155)	
7/25	Film: Life of Brian		Group Project Due
7/27	Humour and Judaism	HRCR CH 7: Laughing in and at the Mirror (108-122)	
8/1	Presentations		
8/3	Presentations		Take-home assignment due Aug. 7.

## **Department, Faculty and University Policy Statements**

### *Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities*

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca). For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

### *Academic Integrity*

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### *Note on Changes to the Course*

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check her/his McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

### *McMaster Student Absence Form*

The McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF) (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>) is a self-reporting tool for Undergraduate Students to report MEDICAL absences that last up to 5 days and provides the ability to request accommodation for any missed academic work (that is less than 30% of the course grade). Please note, this tool cannot be used during any final examination period. You may submit a maximum of ONE Academic Work Missed request

per term. It is YOUR responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation. If you are absent for more than 5 days, exceed one request per term, are absent for a reason other than medical, or have missed work worth 30% or more of the final grade, you MUST visit your Faculty Office. You may be required to provide supporting documentation. This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence.

#### *Faculty of Social Sciences Email Policy*

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

#### *Department of Religious Studies*

Staff in the office of the Department of Religious Studies will not date-stamp or receive papers and other assignments.

#### *Avenue to Learn*

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor.

#### *Turnitin.com*

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their research paper electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com policy, please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).