

UHON 301-013 MW 2:30-3:45  
UNM Honors College Room 1004

Dr. Obenauf  
Fall Term 2023

## THIS CLASS IS A JOKE: SATIRE AND SOCIETY

### SYLLABUS

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Office hours: Honors Room 1071  
Mondays and Wednesdays 12:30-1:00  
Wednesdays 4:00-4:30 and by appointment

Because it is written to delight and outrage such a targeted audience, satire is highly reflective of the society for which it was originally written. In this course, we will consider satire both as a literary mode and as a genre in which authors attempt to imitate and outdo their predecessors as they explain and critique their societies. We will see how literary techniques and traditions that emerged in ancient Rome evolved to criticize church corruption at the end of the Middle Ages and spurred the Reformation, and then became a favorite genre of the Enlightenment. As a low-pressure pretext for reading some of the “greatest hits” of the Western canon with implications for the present, you’ll get to read such touchstones as Thomas More’s Utopia, Jonathan Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels, and Voltaire’s Candide. We will compare the satiric commentary on Jazz Age America in Anita Loos’s Gentlemen Prefer Blondes and F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby and the worlds of Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World and George Orwell’s 1984. Other authors may include Mark Twain, Dorothy Parker, Langston Hughes, Kingsley Amis, John Kennedy Toole, and Kurt Vonnegut, or others recommended by the class.

It may be worth mentioning from the start that it takes considerable standing and safety to criticize the powerful by mocking them, and until recently this has meant that much satire has been so veiled as to be unrecognizable as satire, or too subtle to be accessible as such to later generations. For example, we will see in Chaucer’s “Parliament of Fowls” a satire so veiled that recent scholars fail to pick up on its commentary on the volatile figure Richard II. The reading list for our class reflects this practical constraint on the available materials—while nevertheless presenting students with works by authors whose experiences were entirely unlike their own. We will read highly canonical works for the first part of the class; for the final month, students will get to set the readings from the last century, as it has become safer for increasingly diverse voices to speak truth to power.

Consistent attendance and active participation are expected. Students will keep a reading journal, which will form the basis for a series of short reaction papers. There will be one shorter analytical paper and a longer creative final project in which you will try your hand at writing satire of your own. Depending on enrollment, each student may be expected either to lead class discussion for a day or to offer a series of three-minute “leads” to stimulate our discussion throughout the semester.

A good time will be had by all.

## HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS CLASS

You will be staring at a lot of screens this fall. It is my sincere hope that you use this course as an **analog oasis**. I hope you will make a point of writing in your journal in longhand before each reading and that you will savor our readings in their printed versions. Now more than ever, you have an opportunity not only to practice focusing on a single task for extended periods of times—but to use this unplugged time as an escape from some of the other pressures of the present. If you don't already own a decent dictionary, you should consider buying one. A print dictionary will allow you to look up unfamiliar words without getting sucked into your phone.

## ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Richard Obenauf earned his BA at the University of New Mexico and his MA and PhD in Medieval and Renaissance English Language and Literature at Loyola University Chicago. A scholar of censorship, tolerance, and intolerance, he is interested in satire as a mode of criticism that uses biting humor to push back—sometimes dangerously—against expected norms and changing conventions.

## YOUR GRADE

There are many ways to assess student learning. In this class, the main form of assessment will be the feedback on your work. The comments you get on your papers are for your benefit. You should read my notes and ask questions so that you can follow up on each piece of advice as you work on each subsequent essay.

In addition to the handwritten and typed notes, I will assign letter grades to your formal writing (i.e., the Shorter Analytical Paper and your Final Project) and grade the reaction papers on a pass/fail basis. These grades are a necessary evil: the grade you earn on each assignment is far less important than the feedback you receive and the progress you make over the course of the semester. You should not fixate on the grades. Just keep doing your best and strive to do even better next time.

- 30% Participation, including leading discussion
- 70% Written work
  - 20% Informal reaction papers (pass/fail)
  - 20% Shorter Analytical Paper
  - 30% Creative Final Project

Your semester grade will follow the Honors College's unique grading system according to these criteria:

A semester grade of A+, A, or A- will be recorded on your university transcript as an A. An "A" signifies exemplary work that fully meets Honors expectations and will compute into your academic GPA.

A semester grade of B+ through C+ will be recorded on your university transcript as “CR.” A grade of Credit in this course signals that you participated meaningfully in class discussion and that you made an earnest attempt to meet the basic norms of scholarly writing even if your work did not consistently meet Honors-level expectations for writing and rigor. You will receive credit towards graduation for your satisfactory work in this class, but your grade will not factor into your academic GPA.

A semester grade of C or below will be recorded on your university transcript as “NC.” A grade of No Credit signals a failure to meet basic conventions of scholarly work, such as respect for deadlines, formatting, grammar, accuracy in citations and bibliographies, and/or significant problems in attendance and participation. **Even if your points add up to a passing grade, it is not possible to pass this course if your final project is incoherent or lacks appropriate citations or an accurate bibliography.** Thus, a grade of NC indicates unacceptable work and is not computed into your GPA or counted towards graduation.

I believe that every student enrolled in this seminar is capable of earning an A for the semester in “This Class is a Joke.” Since I do not grade on a curve, nothing would delight me more than to turn in all As in December.

## CLASS PARTICIPATION

Attendance: We all benefit from hearing your perspectives in class discussion. Officially, I may lower your participation grade for each unexcused absence. Your consistent attendance and contribution to class discussion are crucial to the success of this small seminar. And although I expect you to be ready to begin on time, it’s better to be late than not to come at all. Consistent tardiness will affect your participation grade in proportion to the consistency of your disruption. Please keep in touch with me if you must miss class. If you are experiencing physical or academic barriers, or concerns related to mental health, physical health and/or COVID-19, please consult with me after class, via email, or during office hours. I want to help you succeed in this class, and I will do everything within my power to shepherd you through to December. We will work together on a case-by-case basis as issues arise.

Book policy: Bring the book we’re reading to every class session. We will need to cite evidence for every claim we make. To practice quoting the text extensively during class discussion in preparation for your papers, we will all (literally) need to be on the same page. I have prepared a photocopied coursepack of shorter readings and ordered the most inexpensive editions I could find of longer books to make sure that you can afford the materials for this class, and you are expected to use these physical printed materials, in the exact editions I have requested. Our classroom is both a NO-B.S. ZONE and a safe space to try out new ideas; the best ideas are anchored in concrete evidence; without your book, you cannot cite evidence for your claims, and therefore you cannot participate meaningfully in discussion. Since you may be dismissed from class and marked “absent” for the day if you do not have your book

with you, if you realize you've forgotten your book, you should tell your instructor immediately and ask permission to share with a classmate or to use an electronic version for that day only.

Participation and preparation: Honors seminars are neither lectures nor bull sessions; active attendance is a part of participation, and so your presence alone does not guarantee participation points. You are encouraged to contribute when you have something thoughtful to say...which means coming to class thoroughly prepared to discuss the day's readings with an open mind. The best way to prepare is to read the course materials attentively, looking up unfamiliar words and concepts, and generally considering the major issues of the works before we begin our discussions.

Electronics use: The emphasis in a seminar is on conversation. In order to be fully engaged in our discussions, you should put away your electronic devices when you are in class so that you can devote your total attention to what your classmates are saying and to what you can contribute. I again ask that you use PRINT editions of the texts we will be discussing so that you can leave your phones, computers, tablets, e-readers, and other distractions in your bags. Pen and paper should do fine for your note taking in Honors. If you must use electronics during class, you will need to resist the temptation to check social media or work on other projects.

Leading class discussion: Depending on course enrollment, you will be expected to lead class discussion in one of two ways. If enrollment drops to approximately one dozen students in the course, you will be charged with leading class discussion for at least 30 minutes (and likely the entire class session after my opening remarks) at some point during the semester. You should email me several days ahead of time with your tentative questions and plan of attack so that I can offer additional questions and offer some hints for the text you will be teaching.

Leads: In order to minimize duplication, if enrollment is near capacity, you will instead be assigned to prepare a series of BRIEF (three-minute) "leads" on a rotating basis to stimulate our discussion throughout the semester. I will post these on the website and announce them in class ahead of time. **You should begin with a concise original summary of your assigned section. Beyond that, your job is to tie the passage you've been assigned to the themes of the course.** For example, you might open with a question the passage raised for you and some tentative solutions your pages seemed to point to. While you might mention other relevant material from elsewhere in the reading, you should try to limit your comments to your passage so as to avoid overlap with other students who are taking the lead on other parts of the text. **You must have some sort of argument for your lead: you can't just say that you found something "interesting"**—though you could certainly use that as a springboard. You must explain why it seems surprising at first, and what your observation suggests about our course themes. You are obviously free to agree or disagree with our texts.

Reading journal: In addition to your normal class notes, you will need a separate notebook—a **reading journal**—to use for reflection throughout the semester. For each reading, I will announce some reflection questions for you to consider in your private

reading journal. I recommend tackling the questions before attacking the reading so that you can see how your ideas compare with those of the text. This will take approximately **one to two hours per text** and it is a significant part of this course. You will draw on your personal responses in your short reflection papers, and your observations about the readings will help you prepare for class discussion. **This reading journal is strictly confidential—you will never, ever be required to share its contents with me or with any of your classmates. You are expected to keep up with it.**

Following up by email: Although Honors expects all students to contribute to our daily seminar discussion, you may not be able to express every idea that you would like to explore in our limited time. I encourage you to email me with your observations, questions, or even links to relevant articles. Past students have found it helpful to articulate an idea by explaining it in an email to me, and this is one way for introverted students to show that they are truly engaged in the course.

## WRITTEN WORK

I take it as a given that you will use the MLA template I have provided on the course website so that you can focus your energy on your writing and argumentation and I can focus my energy on responding to your writing and argumentation. I have also provided a Guide to Writing and Reasoning Like a Scholar in the coursepack for this class to help you produce the sort of writing we are looking for in Honors, regardless of what writing classes you may (or may not) have had in high school or college.

For this class you will need to install **Microsoft Word** to your computer (and **NOT** just use the online version, or Google Docs, or Pages, etc.). You can get it for free as a UNM student through your webmail page. Look for the matrix of nine dots in the upper left corner (technically known as the “waffle iron”), and click it to reveal a list of various webapps. You don't want those webapps, but above that list is a link with an arrow that says “Office.” Click that and you'll go to office.com but logged in with your UNM credentials. At the top right of that page there's a big button that says “Install Office.” Click the button and follow the instructions. Once you have Word on your computer, you'll be ready to download my MLA template from the course website that will enable you to produce properly formatted MLA documents.

**Since you will not be permitted to rewrite any of your papers in this class, I urge you to do a good job the first time and request guidance and extensions if necessary.** That said, you have the tools to get full credit for all of your work. I would much rather spend my time commenting on your ideas and argumentation than on your formatting and grammar. You don't need me to tell you things you already know—if you rush through your drafts and skip the revision process, my feedback will be less helpful to you than if I am able to respond to your strongest effort. To help nudge you towards using the course materials sooner rather than later, this semester **there will be a penalty of one letter grade for each significant formatting or proofreading issue.** I look forward to seeing what you come up with!

To reiterate, I have provided you with a thorough guide to writing and reasoning like a scholar in your coursepack, which will help you teach yourself how to meet the expectations of the formal analytical writing in this class, including the analytical portions of your term paper. You must proofread your work carefully before you turn it in. There will be numerous other handouts and tools provided to you this semester to help you succeed in this class. You should use these tools to hold yourself accountable and to help yourself develop writing and critical thinking skills that will serve you for the rest of your life. Please ask for help if you are struggling to meet these expectations, as there is no extra credit in “This Class is a Joke.”

**You are expected to follow the latest MLA style guide and to document your sources meticulously. This is Honors!** For example, all work should be exactly double-spaced in a 12-pt. Times New Roman typeface, rendered with 1” margins, and therefore 24 lines of text per page; the page number and your name must appear in the upper right corner of each and every page. **Please print all documents single sided.** You must neatly staple or paperclip your pages together: loose or crimped pages will not be accepted. **I will not grade any paper that fails to meet the minimum expectations for length, formatting, proofreading, or rigor of citations and bibliographies. A template is available on my website, <http://www.richardobenauf.com>.** For additional examples, consult your MLA Handbook and see <http://style.mla.org>.

As you write, you should consult references like The Elements of Style, a good dictionary, your MLA Handbook, and Dr. Obenauf’s Guide to Writing and Reasoning Like a Scholar. I expect your very best. As a rule of thumb,

**A papers** open with an introduction that gives sufficient context without overwhelming the reader with irrelevant information and offer a concrete thesis statement at the end of the introduction. The body of an A paper is meticulously organized and well polished, taking a serious tone as it persuasively guides the reader through rigorously cited evidence and careful original analysis. Its conclusion takes the analysis a step further and considers the broader implications of the project’s analysis, avoiding recapping or simply summarizing what has already been said. The bibliography is accurate. In short, an A paper follows the conventions of style and formatting described in the MLA Handbook and in Dr. Obenauf’s Guide to Writing and Reasoning Like a Scholar.

**B papers** make an earnest attempt at all of the traits of an A paper, but do not fully meet these expectations.

**C papers** struggle to meet these basic expectations but show a sincere attempt at intellectual honesty and rigor.

**D papers** make reasonable use of evidence but are too incoherent to build a persuasive argument.

**F papers** are intellectually dishonest or otherwise fail to meet the most basic expectations of college writing as described in Dr. Obenauf’s Guide to Writing

and Reasoning Like a Scholar. Coherent papers may be returned with an F if they do not conform to the norms of formatting, if they do not present sufficient evidence to build a persuasive argument, or if they do not respond to the paper prompt as assigned. Papers below the minimum length requirement cannot answer the assignment as described and so they will be returned with an F.

**All work must be submitted by the beginning of class on the day it is due. I am reasonable about extensions, but you must talk to me—or e-mail me—ahead of time if you think you will need an exception. Otherwise, late work will be penalized one letter grade for each day it is late.**

There are three kinds of papers you will submit in “This Class is a Joke”:

- Your **six short response papers** are an exercise in being both deep and brief.

They are meant to help you practice summarizing course content into your own words while making connections from the past to the present. They will be **no less than one full page but no more than two full pages of text, double spaced, plus an accurate Work (or Works) Cited page.**

These short reflection essays should expand on topics you first explored in your private reading journal, but there is no assigned topic beyond finding a connection to the assigned reading. You should use these to show a personal link to the course materials as well as a targeted if preliminary scholarly analysis of the work, which you should do **without consulting any outside sources, summaries, or commentaries, or using AI tools such as ChatGPT.**

**They are due on the first day we discuss a text; you must write on 6 out of the 16 or so works we are reading in order to get credit for this requirement.** I will aim to announce the questions for reflection in your private journal ahead of time so that you have more than one day to answer the questions on your own, read the text carefully, and still have time to write and revise your brief response before we discuss the text in class. I recommend that you write as many early in the semester as possible so that you aren’t scrambling to meet the minimum later on when your other classes also become more demanding.

For each assigned text, you should 1) respond to my reflection questions in your private journal, 2) read the work carefully and analytically, and then 3) bring these two aspects together by writing your two-page reflection paper that concisely yet elegantly marries your personal experience to our course reading.

Although these essays should be personal and reflective in nature, you must argue them with concrete evidence. Part of the challenge is to strike a balance of personal and analytical commentary, writing neither an entirely personal essay nor an entirely analytical paper. A personal anecdote drawn from your life would make a suitable opening; you should then comment on how the reading deals with a similar issue, **using rigorously-cited quotations from the text;** to

conclude, you could return to your opening comments or even quote or paraphrase your initial response in your reading journal that provoked you to write on the particular topic.

Besides obliging you to read the text in full before class, these papers serve three main functions. First, your opening and closing frame gives you a chance to explore and demonstrate your response to the text from a personal perspective so that we can focus on its historical perspective during class time. Second, the paragraph or two of analysis at the heart of the essay will give you an opportunity to build a brief argument using the techniques I describe in the third step of writing in my Guide to Writing and Reasoning Like a Scholar (pp. 13-15). Third, you will become much more comfortable using MLA formatting and producing correct bibliographical references. The skills you cultivate through the second and third of these functions will help you write your formal analytical papers in this class.

In order to avoid the pitfalls of arguing too broadly (such as by attempting to make sweeping suggestions about “society” or “human nature”), you should argue with concrete examples, which can include personal anecdotes and quotes from your journal. Anecdotes from your own experience can make a useful point of comparison for understanding how other people in other times and places dealt with similar situations.

I will comment on these lightly and grade them on a pass/fail basis. Essays that are incoherent or that have clearly not been proofread will not receive credit. A pattern of especially good or especially sloppy work will affect your grade. You must submit all ten of them in order to receive credit for this part of your grade, and you will not be permitted to make up essays later in the semester. **I will not generally accept late response papers.** If you know you will be absent on the day one is due, you must submit it the class before or arrange ahead of time to submit it by email.

- **For the Shorter Analytical Paper**, you will break down some of the satiric techniques in recent satire from our culture or another that you know well, such as a novel, play, musical, movie, or TV show, and explain how it fits into one of the major classical schools of satire. Using no sources besides the course readings and your chosen subject (e.g., Last Week Tonight, Silicon Valley, etc.), compare and contrast the jokes and approach in your work at hand with the jokes and approach in Horatian, Juvenalian, or Menippean satire.

You will need to cite concrete evidence to develop an argument about how the satire works in the two different societies and what you can surmise about the expectations the first audiences had for each work. You should strive to show how the literary techniques echo through time rather than merely latching onto thematic harmonies in the satiric butts that may appear independently in both works.



**Assume your reader has no knowledge of any of the materials you discuss**—you will need to give an overview not only of the source you are discussing but also of the main school of satire you argue with which it is aligned, quoting plenty of examples from each as you develop your argument. This means giving a concise summary of the modern work as well as a clear description of the classical work, all in your own words and without relying on any other summaries or descriptions. The ultimate goal is to produce original analysis. By your conclusion, you should have staked out the extent to which the modern satire fits the ancient model in an attempt to uncover what the parallels and divergences might suggest about differences between the two cultures. That is the argument you will be developing.

- For your **Creative Final Project (10-15 pages)**, you will write a satire of your own, and then analyze it. Obviously, you should try to make it funny, but neither your comedic skills nor your politics or outlook are not being judged. The point is to try your hand at imitating (or even outdoing) those who came before you and then review that attempt using the analytic skills you've honed in the course. To that end, by the twelfth week of the semester, you will submit a proposal showing what you aim to criticize through your satire and staking out your approach. Though I would recommend a short story, perhaps in the form of a series of journal entries or letters, you are free to propose another format. You have a considerable amount of leeway with this project; based on what you intend to critique through your satire, your project could be set in the present or in the past, in our society or in a world of your own invention. This creative component of your paper will probably fill 6-8 pages, but I invite you to write more. You should use our course readings as inspiration for your story, and in the second part of your project you will then explain your satire and show how you made your choices as the author of the piece. In your 4-6-page (minimum) analytical narrative you will justify each decision about your characters, setting, satiric targets, etc. This analytical section must include rigorous documentation of every source that inspired any aspect of your story, quoting from the texts to explain not only how they led you to make certain decisions but also what those decisions suggest about our society. In this section you may wish to discuss what worked well, and what didn't seem to work well, and why. Think of this as a director's commentary on a film; you can reveal jokes that you ultimately decided were too cringey to leave in—or defend jokes that perhaps crossed a line, as satire often demands. What did you learn about satire from writing some of your own?

### A NOTE ON CITING SOURCES ACCURATELY

Through these assignments, you will get lots of practice citing your sources. Your Works Cited page is perhaps the most important element of college writing because it shows your reader how to check the citations in your paper. You should plan ahead to create the bibliographic entries based on the sources you cite, and then painstakingly double- and triple-check them for accuracy. For reasons I explain in greater detail in

my Guide to Writing and Reasoning Like a Scholar in your coursepack, it is very important that your Works Cited pages be accurate.

Bibliographies allow your reader to confirm that what you have said is true; inaccurate entries cast doubt on the entirety of your argument, and so they are anything but busy-work. You must devote as much attention to detail at the end of your project as at the beginning. A meticulous bibliography is part of a gestalt of rigor and intellectual honesty expected in Honors that signals your devotion to truthfulness and openness in your work.

**Any student who lists an edition other than the exact version cited in that student's paper will receive no higher than a D on the assignment. I am sorry that it has come to this. Too many past students have committed academic dishonesty by failing to represent their sources accurately. I do not think it is unreasonable to expect Honors students to cite their work accurately. You will not be permitted to revise or resubmit your project because accurate bibliographies are not difficult to produce and I wish to discourage you from taking hazardous shortcuts. DO NOT CHEAT BY USING AN ONLINE CITATION GENERATOR. YOUR ENTRIES WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE WRONG. IT IS NOT WORTH THE RISK!!** Instead, you should refer to my sample MLA template, your MLA Handbook, and other reputable guides and produce the entries yourself. If you have any doubts, you should ask your professor for guidance.

### WHAT SORT OF HELP IS OK?

You may seek help with all stages of the writing process, but you must be the sole author of all work you submit in this course. Submitting material as your own work that has been generated on a website, in a publication, by an artificial intelligence algorithm, by another person, or by breaking the rules of an assignment constitutes academic dishonesty. It is a student code of conduct violation that can lead to a disciplinary procedure. It should go without saying that learning the course material depends on completing and submitting your own work.

Off-campus paper writing services, problem-checkers and services, websites, and AIs can produce incorrect or misleading results. Indeed, consulting outside sources is likely to derail your thought process, as is the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT. Instead, I urge you to enlist your friends and family to help you proofread your papers—and to read your own prose out loud. Also, the Center for Academic Program Support (CAPS), located both on campus and at <http://caps.unm.edu>, offers resources to help you improve your writing, including one-on-one tutoring, walk-in writing labs, and on-line writing assistance. You are encouraged to visit CAPS for help with all stages of the writing process.

## HOW WE WILL HANDLE PROVOCATIVE AND OFFENSIVE MATERIAL

Satirists often intend to offend their first audiences; even works that were considered mild when written can inspire outrage and disgust in later generations. Considering concepts in their historical contexts should not be construed as endorsement of those memes. Indeed, we will be reading, discussing, and writing about ideas that will make you uncomfortable. You will not agree with everything we read in this course, and instances in which you disagree with a perspective often lead to valuable insights. (Why isn't that joke funny?) I encourage you to grapple with the seeming contradictions and internal inconsistencies within works and among various texts as a way to discover the forces that motivated people who held views different from your own. Our aim is not to litigate the truth or morality of the texts on our syllabus; our goal is to understand these works on their own terms for what they suggest about how other people lived and what they thought.

The syllabus for this course is packed with works chosen for their literary, philosophical, political, historical, and aesthetic significance. No historical artifact or document can capture the entire essence of the lived experience of a particular time or place; we will read these works for what they reveal about the broad expectations of their first audiences. But rather than judging the past by our standards, our time is best spent uncovering what old books suggest by thinking as historians, literary scholars, and anthropologists. For example, we will trace the classical, medieval, and early modern roots evolution of racism, sexism, xenophobia, and other kinds of bigotry that manifested as ridicule in literature and coercion in practice.

To that end, as a general rule we will not be censoring our works. We acknowledge that when we analyze primary literary works within their historical contexts, the words and concepts belong to the author rather than to the scholar who is quoting part of a text that is germane to the topic at hand. In your papers, you should reproduce quotations precisely, though you may paraphrase words and passages in your subsequent discussion to avoid using epithets in your own prose. In our seminar sessions, at times your instructor may take the reins and read certain passages out loud so that no student is forced to read them in class, though, again, we recognize that the words and ideas belong to the author and not to the person reciting them.

Per Section 2220 of UNM's Student Handbook, [The Pathfinder](#),

As an institution that exists for the express purposes of education, research, and public service, the University is dependent upon the unfettered flow of ideas, not only in the classroom and the laboratory, but also in all University activities. As such, protecting freedom of expression is of central importance to the University. The exchange of diverse viewpoints may expose people to ideas some find offensive, even abhorrent. The way that ideas are expressed may cause discomfort to those who disagree with them. The appropriate response to such speech is speech expressing opposing ideas and continued dialogue, not curtailment of speech.

The University also recognizes that the exercise of free expression must be balanced with the rights of others to learn, work, and conduct business. Speech activity that unduly interferes with the rights of others or the ability of the University to carry out its mission is not protected by the First Amendment and violates this policy.

While I would never pressure any student to say something simply because it's what you think I would want to hear, I encourage you to speak up when you have something relevant to say. Respectful debate and free inquiry are cornerstones of Honors seminars, so long as our discourse is germane to the seminar and the topic at hand. You do not have the right to derail class discussion.

Finally, at times this semester we may be discussing passages that could be disturbing, even traumatizing, to some students. If you ever feel the need to step out during one of these discussions, either for a short time or for the rest of the class session, you may always do so without penalty. You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss and should make arrangements to review notes with one or your classmates or to see me during office hours.

### STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Once students successfully complete "This Class is a Joke" they will be able to:

1. Analyze, critically interpret, and evaluate primary works of literature that reflect the moral, social, philosophical, economic, and religious issues in satire from ancient Rome, the Reformation and Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, including works by Horace, Juvenal, and Petronius; Thomas More and Erasmus; Jonathan Swift and Voltaire; Mark Twain, Aldous Huxley, and George Orwell; and others, all within their interdisciplinary cultural and historical contexts.
2. Construct persuasive arguments and increase writing proficiency through creative writing and analytical essays characterized by original and insightful theses, supported by logically integrated and sound subordinate ideas, appropriate and pertinent evidence, and good sentence structure, diction, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
3. Compare modes of thought and expression across a range of historical periods and/or structures (such as political, geographic, social, cultural, philosophical, and intellectual); for example, the role of satire and the danger of criticism in the Protestant Reformation as opposed to 19<sup>th</sup> century America.
4. Demonstrate knowledge that integrates ideas and methods from different disciplines; for example, how to evaluate literary, philosophical, and historical works as manifestations of changing attitudes towards social changes as well as resistance against changing attitudes in different societies.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Each student is expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in academic and professional matters. UNM reserves the right to take disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, against any student who is found guilty of academic dishonesty or otherwise fails to meet the standards. Per UNM policy, any student judged to have engaged in academic dishonesty in course work may receive a reduced or failing grade for the work in question and/or for the course. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, dishonesty in quizzes, tests, or assignments; claiming credit for work not done or done by others, including the use of AI such as ChatGPT; hindering the academic work of other students; misrepresenting academic or professional qualifications within or without UNM; and nondisclosure or misrepresentation in filling out applications or other records.

**Plagiarism is a grave offense that will result in a grade of “F” for the assignment and that could lead to dismissal from the Honors College or expulsion from the university. Any student who submits a paper substantially written by someone else—including by ChatGPT or other generative AI models—will receive a grade of “Incomplete” which will convert to an “F” when the offender is unable to complete the requirements of the course.** Unintentional plagiarism (forgetting to put exact language into quotation marks or forgetting to cite a source in a paper that is otherwise original, for example) will result in a grade no higher than a D for the paper. For additional information on plagiarism and other university policies, please consult UNM’s Student Handbook, The Pathfinder, at <http://pathfinder.unm.edu/>.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

UNM is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for students with documented disabilities. As your instructor, it is my objective to facilitate an inclusive classroom setting, in which students have full access and opportunity to participate. To engage in a confidential conversation about the process for requesting reasonable accommodations for this class and/or program, please contact Accessibility Resource Center at [arcsrvs@unm.edu](mailto:arcsrvs@unm.edu) or by phone at 505-277-3506. It is imperative that you take the initiative to bring such needs to the instructor’s attention, as I am not legally permitted to inquire. Students who may require assistance in emergency evacuations should contact the instructor as to the most appropriate procedures to follow. If you are experiencing physical or academic barriers, or concerns related to mental health, physical health and/or COVID-19, please consult with me after class, via email/phone or during office hours.

## CREDIT HOUR STATEMENT

This is a three credit-hour course. Class meets for two 75-minute sessions of direct instruction for fifteen weeks during the Fall 2023 semester. According to federal guidelines, students are expected to complete a minimum of six hours of out-of-class

work (including homework, study, assignment completion, and class preparation) each week. Honors courses generally demand more than six hours per week outside of class. You should budget at least ten hours a week for your reading and writing in this course.

### **ELECTRONIC BACKUPS**

You are required to keep electronic backups of all work you produce for this class that you can immediately provide upon my request. Additionally, I may retain scanned copies of the work you submit in this class to help me tailor my feedback to you and for other educational purposes.

### **LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Founded in 1889, the University of New Mexico sits on the traditional homelands of the Pueblo of Sandia. The original peoples of New Mexico Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache since time immemorial, have deep connections to the land and have made significant contributions to the broader community statewide. We honor the land itself and those who remain stewards of this land throughout the generations and also acknowledge our committed relationship to Indigenous peoples. We gratefully recognize our history.

### **CITIZENSHIP AND/OR IMMIGRATION STATUS**

All students are welcome in this class regardless of citizenship, residency, or immigration status. I will respect your privacy if you choose to disclose your status. I support your right to an education free from fear of deportation. I pledge that I will not disclose the immigration status of any student who shares this information with me unless required by a judicial warrant, and I will work with students who require immigration-related accommodations. As for all students in the class, family emergency-related absences are normally excused with reasonable notice to the professor, as noted in the attendance guidelines above. UNM as an institution has made a core commitment to the success of all our students, including members of our undocumented community. The Administration's welcome is found on the website: <http://undocumented.unm.edu/>.

### **CONNECTING TO CAMPUS AND FINDING SUPPORT**

Students who ask for help are successful students. UNM has many resources and centers to help you thrive, including [opportunities to get involved](#), [mental health resources](#), [academic support including tutoring](#), [resource centers](#) for people like you, free food at [Lobo Food Pantry](#), and [jobs on campus](#). Your advisor, staff at the [resource centers](#) and [Dean of Students](#), and I can help you find the right opportunities for you.

## TITLE IX STATEMENT

Title IX prohibitions on sex discrimination include various forms of sexual misconduct, such as sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, and stalking. Current UNM policy designates instructors as required reporters, which means that if instructors are notified (outside of classroom activities) about any Title IX violations, they must report this information to the Title IX coordinator. However, the American Association of University Professors' (AAUP) "Statement on Professional Ethics" requires that Professors protect students' academic freedom and "respect[s] the confidential nature of the relationship between professor and student." Therefore, as a Professor I have pledged to honor student confidentiality and will strive to respect your wishes regarding reporting; I will only report with your consent. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted and would like to receive support and academic advocacy, there are numerous confidential routes available to you. For example, you can contact the Women's Resource Center, the LGBTQ Resource Center, Student Health and Counseling (SHAC), or LoboRESPECT. LoboRESPECT can be contacted on their 24-hour crisis line, (505) 277-2911 and online at [loborespect@unm.edu](mailto:loborespect@unm.edu). You can receive non-confidential support and learn more about Title IX through the Title IX Coordinator at (505) 277-5251 and <http://oeo.unm.edu/title-ix/>. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UNM Police Department at (505) 277-2241.

## UNM EMAIL CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE

Students often use email to inquire about protected and sensitive matters, including grades and class progress, and faculty often use email to individually report such protected and sensitive matters. Unless students opt out, in writing, to the Honors College, the Honors College and Honors Faculty will assume that all email sent individually to students via their official UNM email addresses (generally their @unm.edu address) is private and confidential and that the student assumes all risk of inappropriate interception of email transmissions. If students opt out of this policy, they are agreeing to receive such information only in person (and they may be required to show identification before information is shared with them) or through regular mail to the student's official address on file with UNM.

## COVID-19 HEALTH AND AWARENESS

UNM is a mask friendly, but not a mask required, community. If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, please do not come to class. If you do need to stay home, please communicate with me at [obenauf@unm.edu](mailto:obenauf@unm.edu); I can work with you to provide alternatives for course participation and completion. Let me, an advisor, or another UNM staff member know that you need support so that we can connect you to the right resources. Please be aware that UNM will publish information on websites and email about any changes to our public health status and community response. If you are having active respiratory symptoms (e.g., fever, cough, sore throat, etc.) AND need

testing for COVID-19, OR if you recently tested positive and may need oral treatment, call [Student Health and Counseling](#) (SHAC) at (505) 277-3136.

## READING LIST

I have prepared a **coursepack** of readings, available for a nominal fee at the UNM Copy Center in Dane Smith Hall. You will also need to purchase the books **in the specific editions on file at the UNM Bookstore**:

- Erasmus, In Praise of Folly (Dover Thrift Editions)
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (Scribner)
- Aldous Huxley, Brave New World (Harper Perennial)
- Samuel Johnson, Rasselas (Dover Publications)
- Anita Loos, Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (Penguin)
- The MLA Handbook (9<sup>th</sup> edition, 2021)
- Thomas More, Utopia (Dover Thrift Editions)
- George Orwell, 1984 (Signet Classics)
- Jonathan Swift, Gulliver's Travels (Dover Thrift Editions)
- Mark Twain, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (Dover Thrift Editions)
- Voltaire, Candide (Dover Thrift Editions)

Other course materials may be distributed throughout the semester, either by email or on the class website. Students are responsible for obtaining these texts and bringing them to class: again, you should come to class prepared to discuss the readings **in their entirety** on the day they appear on the electronic timeline on the course website.

You are required to submit a short reflection paper (described above) for at least six of the selections of your choosing, due at the beginning of class on the **first day** of scheduled discussion for each work.

This syllabus is subject to change, as I may announce changes in readings and adjust deadlines, ahead of time, in class, by email, or on the course website. We are sure to fall behind and likely to drop some of these readings.



## TENTATIVE PROPOSED TIMELINE

Monday, August 21	Introduction
Wednesday, August 23	Jonathan Swift's 1729 parody of political scientists and pamphleteers, "A Modest Proposal" (in coursepack)
Monday, August 28	Selections from Horace (in coursepack)
Wednesday, August 30	Selections from Horace and Juvenal (in coursepack)
Monday, September 4	<b>NO CLASS: LABOR DAY</b>
Wednesday, September 6	Selections from Juvenal (continued)
Monday, September 11	"Dinner with Trimalchio" from <u>The Satyricon</u> by Petronius (translated by Oscar Wilde in coursepack)
Wednesday, September 13	"A True Story" by Lucian (in coursepack)
Monday, September 18	Geoffrey Chaucer's veiled satire on Richard II in "The Parliament of Fowls" (ca. 1380) (in coursepack); The "General Prologue" to <u>The Canterbury Tales</u> (ca. 1387-1400) (all in coursepack); <b>the Shorter Analytical Paper is due today!</b>
Wednesday, September 20	The anonymous late medieval morality play <u>Mankind</u> (ca. 1471) in my own translation (in coursepack)
Monday, September 25	Erasmus, <u>The Praise of Folly</u> (1511)
Wednesday, September 27	Erasmus, <u>The Praise of Folly</u> (continued) and other selections TBA
Monday, October 2	Thomas More, <u>Utopia</u> (1516)
Wednesday, October 4	Thomas More, <u>Utopia</u> (continued)

Monday, October 9	Jonathan Swift, <u>Gulliver's Travels</u> (1726)
Wednesday, October 11	Jonathan Swift, <u>Gulliver's Travels</u> (continued); <b>at least three of your short reaction papers are due before Fall Break (i.e., today!)</b>
Monday, October 16	Samuel Johnson, <u>Rasselas</u> (1759), even though it is not technically satire
Wednesday, October 18	Samuel Johnson, <u>Rasselas</u> (continued)
Monday, October 23	Voltaire, <u>Candide</u> (1759)
Wednesday, October 25	Voltaire, <u>Candide</u> (continued)
Monday, October 30	Mark Twain, <u>A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court</u> (1889)
Wednesday, November 1	Mark Twain, <u>A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court</u> (continued)
Monday, November 6	Anita Loos, <u>Gentlemen Prefer Blondes</u> (1925)
Wednesday, November 8	Anita Loos, <u>Gentlemen Prefer Blondes</u> (continued)
Monday, November 13	F. Scott Fitzgerald, <u>The Great Gatsby</u> (1925); <b>the proposal for the final project is due today</b>
Wednesday, November 15	F. Scott Fitzgerald, <u>The Great Gatsby</u> (continued)
Monday, November 20	Aldous Huxley, <u>Brave New World</u> (1932)
Wednesday, November 22	Aldous Huxley, <u>Brave New World</u> (continued)
Monday, November 27	George Orwell, <u>Nineteen Eighty-Four</u> (1949)
Wednesday, November 29	George Orwell, <u>Nineteen Eighty-Four</u> (continued)

Monday,  
December 4

TBD by the class, with suggestions for works by Dorothy Parker, Langston Hughes, Kingsley Amis, John Kennedy Toole, and Kurt Vonnegut, or others recommended by the students

Wednesday,  
December 6

Course summary, presentations of final projects, and closing remarks. **The rest of your short reaction papers—and your term paper—are due at the start of class!**