

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

Dr. Obenauf
Fall Term 2024

THIS CLASS IS A JOKE: SATIRE AND SOCIETY

SYLLABUS

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

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. 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 response 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

What you get out of this class depends on what you put into it.

“This Class is a Joke” is different from other classes you have likely taken in that it is centered on primary historical literary sources. In most cases, I will be interested in how you respond to the ideas and themes in our readings without regard for what anyone else has said about them. I am looking for your most honest responses and interpretations based on the evidence you gather from our sources. Without fear of saying the “wrong” thing, or pressure to say the “right” thing, you will gain confidence in summarizing texts in your own words and generating your own ideas about them based on evidence you cite.

To help you slow down and practice reading, thinking, and writing carefully, most weeks you will need to spend between five and ten hours outside of class preparing for our seminar sessions. I hope you can use that time to “unplug” from many of your favorite distractions and, as much as possible, write in a paper journal, read from print editions of books, and revise your papers in longhand. We won’t use Canvas in this class—you’ll use Microsoft Word to produce MLA-style documents, which you’ll print out and turn in as hard copies. I’ll read your papers with a pencil in my hand and return them with notes you will then review and use as you work on your next paper. When we’re in class together, we will rarely use the projector for videos or PowerPoint; rather, we’ll give each other our full attention by putting away our electronics and listening to what each person is really trying to convey through their words.

Rather than relying on summaries and other peoples’ interpretations—which may be inaccurate or may cloud your analysis of the course readings—you should read slowly and with a dictionary, taking notes and coming to class with questions you were unable to answer on your own. 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. It is normal to be a little confused at times. That is part of the process. There are no shortcuts.

Before each reading, I will give a brief lecture on the upcoming text. You should take notes on this background information so that you can incorporate it into your response papers. Your readers need context which you do not yet possess. Rather than relying on outside sources that may color your reading of the materials, you should rely on the information I give in class. If you must miss class, you should get notes from a classmate on the content that you missed

You are expected to be the sole creator of all work you submit and of every idea you raise during class discussion. You are strictly prohibited from using ChatGPT and other AI resources for any aspect of this course. You will need to resist the temptation in order to master the skills that AI appears to approximate. If you are ever in doubt about whether it is acceptable to use a particular resource for this class, you should ask your instructor. Before you submit each assignment, ask yourself this question: Did I do this work myself, yes or no?

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 response 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 response 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. **I will lower your participation grade for each unexcused absence. After four unexcused absences, therefore, you will no longer be able to earn a passing grade in the class.** 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. Even before class begins, Honors wishes to cultivate a sense of community through chitchat amongst your peers. 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 (no more than one minute, and ideally just two or three sentences) original summary of your assigned section to jog your classmate’s memory of the section. I AM SPECIFICALLY REQUESTING THAT YOU NOT BOG DOWN CLASS TIME WITH LENGTHY SUMMARIES. WE HAVE ALL DONE THE READING. WE DO NOT NEED A PAGE-BY-PAGE ACCOUNT OF WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY READ.** Being able to write a brief summary without relying on ChatGPT, Wikipedia, or any other source is an important skill for you to develop. This will be good practice for you, and it will help the class stay focused on your section. While you might mention other relevant material from elsewhere in the text, you should try to limit your comments to your passage so as to avoid overlapping with other students who are taking the lead on other parts of the book. **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 response 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.richardobenauauf.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 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 response 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.

I have a zero tolerance policy for inaccurate citations. You are expected to quote your sources faithfully and to cite them rigorously. Anything less is a form of academic dishonesty and could lead to dismissal from the class. Working directly with primary sources is at the core of what this class is all about. You are expected to choose appropriate evidence to drive each point you make, and you are equally expected to produce your own in-text citations and your own works cited entries based on the materials you have used. Your sources should, as a rule, be the versions I have assigned for this course.

Inaccurate quotations or citations will be assumed to be produced by a citation generator or by AI and, as evidence of academic dishonesty, will force me to report your paper to the Dean of Students and to recommend that you be dropped from the class. Your learning in this class depends on you producing the work with your name on it and not relying on anyone else to do it for you. This is your only warning: if you submit work with citations that do not match the actual sources you used in your paper, I will take swift action to notify the Dean of Students of your academic dishonesty. Do not cheat by outsourcing the most fundamental part of college writing.

Any student who lists an edition other than the exact version cited in the paper at hand will not receive credit for the assignment, whether it is a short response paper, a shorter analytical paper, or a final project. You will not be permitted to revise or resubmit your essay, and so a brazenly misleading bibliography can prevent you from earning an A for the semester, and it may well prevent you from passing the course.

Fortunately, accurate bibliographies are not difficult to produce. **You should resist the temptation to use an online citation generator, ChatGPT, or any other shortcut. It is not worth the risk!** Instead, you should refer to your MLA Handbook and other reputable guides and produce the entries yourself. If you have any doubts, you should ask your professor for guidance.

That said, honest mistakes are part of the learning process. The zero-tolerance policy applies to citations that clearly do not correspond with the relevant information they purport to document. The MLA Handbook is a required text for this class because it shows you how to make your own citations based on the materials in front of you. (Tip: what MLA calls “location” means the location within the sources, such as a range of page numbers within an anthology; “place of publication” refers to the city or country where the work was published and is not generally needed for editions produced in the last hundred years.)

Before you submit each assignment, ask yourself this question: Did I do this work myself, yes or no?

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 Als 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.

You may wish to reach out to our Honors librarian over at Zimmerman Library, Adrienne Warner by email at adrienne@unm.edu or by scheduling an appointment through her faculty page, <https://uhs.unm.edu/people/directory/w/warner-adrienne.php>

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.

Above all, if you are ever in doubt about whether it is acceptable to use a particular resource for this class, you should ask your instructor.

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 19th, 20th, and 21st 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 19th 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.

RESPONSIBLE LEARNING AND 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.

You are responsible for personally creating each step of every assignment you submit in this class. Taking shortcuts, including consulting summaries of the readings, ChatGPT or other AI models at any stage of the writing or revision process, citation generators, etc. is a form of academic dishonesty which will not be tolerated.

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 with any component written by someone else—including by ChatGPT or other generative AI models—will receive a grade of “F” on the assignment and a grade of “NC” for the semester.

The emphasis in our class on primary sources means that, with a few clearly defined exceptions, you should consult no resources outside of the books we are discussing in the editions I’ve specified in this syllabus. Inaccurate quotations or citations will be assumed to be produced by a citation generator or by AI and, as evidence of academic dishonesty, will result in my swift recommendation to the Dean of Students that you be dropped from the class. There will be no second chances. You may lose your scholarship. So, before you submit each assignment, ask yourself this question: Did I do this work myself, in its entirety, yes or no?

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 (<https://arc.unm.edu/>) at arcsrvs@unm.edu or by phone at 505-277-3506.

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 2024 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.

RESPECTFUL CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

I am committed to building with you a positive classroom environment in which everyone can learn. I reserve the right to intervene and enforce standards of respectful behavior when classroom conduct is inconsistent with University expectations.

Interventions and enforcement may include but are not limited to required meetings to discuss classroom expectations, written notification of expectations, and/or removal from a class meeting. Removal from a class meeting will result in an unexcused absence. Five or more unexcused absences may result in permanent removal and a drop from the course (see attendance policy). The University of New Mexico ensures freedom of academic inquiry, free expression and open debate, and a respectful campus through adherence to the following policies: D75: Classroom Conduct, Student Code of Conduct, University Policy 2240 – Respectful Campus, University Policy 2210 – Campus Violence.

TITLE IX STATEMENT

The University of New Mexico and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and providing an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. The University's programs and activities, including the classroom, should always provide a space of mutual respect, kindness, and support without fear of harassment, violence, or discrimination. Discrimination on the basis of sex includes discrimination on the basis of assigned sex at birth, sex characteristics, pregnancy and pregnancy related conditions, sexual orientation and gender identity.

If you have encountered any form of discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, domestic or dating violence, we encourage you to report this to the University. You can access the confidential resources available on campus at the LoboRESPECT Advocacy Center (<https://loborespect.unm.edu>), the Women's Resource Center (<https://women.unm.edu>), and the LGBTQ Resource Center (<https://lgbtqrc.unm.edu>). **If you speak with an instructor (including a TA or a GA) regarding an incident connected to discrimination on the basis of sex, they must notify UNM's Title IX Coordinator that you shared an experience relating to Title IX, even if you ask the instructor not to disclose it.** The Title IX Coordinator is available to assist you in understanding your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus. For more information on the campus policy regarding sexual misconduct and reporting, please see <https://policy.unm.edu/university-policies/2000/2740.html> and CEEO's website.

If you are pregnant or experiencing a pregnancy-related condition, you may contact UNM's Office of Compliance, Ethics, and Equal Opportunity at ceo@unm.edu. The CEEO staff will provide you with access to available resources and supportive measures and assist you in understanding your rights.

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; 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)
- Samuel Johnson, Rasselas (Dover Publications)
- Anita Loos, Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (Penguin)
- The MLA Handbook (9th edition, 2021)
- Thomas More, Utopia (Dover Thrift Editions)
- Jonathan Swift, Gulliver's Travels (Dover Thrift Editions)
- Mark Twain, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (Dover Thrift)
- 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 response 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 19	Introduction
Wednesday, August 21	Jonathan Swift's 1729 parody of political scientists and pamphleteers, "A Modest Proposal" (in coursepack)
Monday, August 26	Selections from Horace (in coursepack)
Wednesday, August 28	Selections from Horace and Juvenal (in coursepack)
Monday, September 2	NO CLASS: LABOR DAY
Wednesday, September 4	Selections from Juvenal (continued)
Monday, September 9	"Dinner with Trimalchio" from <u>The Satyricon</u> by Petronius (translated by Oscar Wilde in coursepack)
Wednesday, September 11	"A True Story" by Lucian (in coursepack)
Monday, September 16	The anonymous late medieval morality play <u>Mankind</u> (ca. 1471) in my own translation (in coursepack); the Shorter Analytical Paper is due today!
Wednesday, September 18	<u>Mankind</u> (continued)

Monday, September 23	Erasmus, <u>The Praise of Folly</u> (1511)
Wednesday, September 25	Erasmus, <u>The Praise of Folly</u> (continued) and other selections TBA
Monday, September 30	Thomas More, <u>Utopia</u> (1516)
Wednesday, October 2	Thomas More, <u>Utopia</u> (continued)
Monday, October 7	Jonathan Swift, <u>Gulliver's Travels</u> (1726)
Wednesday, October 9	Jonathan Swift, <u>Gulliver's Travels</u> (continued)
Monday, October 14	Samuel Johnson, <u>Rasselas</u> (1759), even though it is not technically satire
Wednesday, October 16	Samuel Johnson, <u>Rasselas</u> (continued)
Monday, October 21	Voltaire, <u>Candide</u> (1759)
Wednesday, October 23	Voltaire, <u>Candide</u> (continued)
Monday, October 28	Mark Twain, <u>A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court</u> (1889)
Wednesday, October 30	Mark Twain, <u>A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court</u> (continued)
Monday, November 4	Anita Loos, <u>Gentlemen Prefer Blondes</u> (1925)
Wednesday, November 6	Anita Loos, <u>Gentlemen Prefer Blondes</u> (continued)
Monday, November 11	F. Scott Fitzgerald, <u>The Great Gatsby</u> (1925); the proposal for the final project is due today

Wednesday, November 13	F. Scott Fitzgerald, <u>The Great Gatsby</u> (continued)
Monday, November 18	We will likely have fallen behind by this point. The remaining selections will be chosen by the class, with suggestions for works by Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, Dorothy Parker, Langston Hughes, Kingsley Amis, John Kennedy Toole, and Kurt Vonnegut, or others recommended by the students
Wednesday, November 20	TBD by the class
Monday, November 25	TBD by the class
Wednesday, November 27	TBD by the class
Monday, December 2	TBD by the class; workshopping of final projects
Wednesday, December 4	Course summary, presentations of final projects, and closing remarks; final project is due today!!