### Comedy, Jokes, and Satire in the German-Speaking World

### Mark W. Roche

#### GE 40649 (Spring 2011)

### **Course Description**

This course will explore the comic vision in the German-speaking world, by considering comedy, jokes, and satire. Comedy is an often overlooked genre in Germany, but a number of fascinating works invite our reading and exploration. We will discuss comedies by Lessing, Büchner, Hofmannsthal, and Brecht. As part of our exploration of the comic vision, we will consider jokes, including their thematic and structural diversity as well as their relation to broader aspects of German culture, including German history and regional particularities. Students will explore Freud's classic essay on jokes. Beyond considering Schiller's famous theoretical statements on satire, we will look at satiric works by Heinrich Heine and Kurt Tucholsky; in addition we will note the strong German tradition of satire in painting and photomontage. We will also consider one or more comic or satiric films. As part of the course we will explore the conditions under which the comic tends to surface and flourish, including broader questions such as religious sensibility and political climate.

### **Learning Goals**

1) Students will be able to discuss intelligently basic elements of comic theory and selected German comedies.

2) Students will be able to discuss intelligently basic elements of the theory of satire and selected German satires.

3) Students will be able to discuss intelligently basic elements of the theory of jokes and various kinds of German-specific jokes; they will also develop a capacity to tell, understand, and discuss jokes in German.

4) Students will understand the relation of comedy, jokes, and satire to one another, and will recognize the way in which the comic and satiric can be realized in a variety of forms, including also the visual arts.

5) Students will become familiar with some outstanding literary and cultural works from the German tradition and will be able to recognize their place in German cultural history.

6) Students will advance their skills in interpreting cultural documents, e.g., in asking pertinent and interesting questions of works, in arguing for and against various interpretations, and in evaluating the tenability of various kinds of arguments.

7) Students will advance their skills in the mastery of the German language, both spoken and

written, and their writing skills, in English and in German, insofar as they accompany the organization and communication of their thoughts;

### Student Contributions to Learning and Assessment Guidelines

# 1) Class Contribution: 30%;

Students will be expected to contribute regularly to discussions and to adopt various facilitative roles during the semester. Class contribution is not equivalent with the quantity of class participation; instead both quantity and quality will be considered. Because student learning is aided by active student participation in the classroom, students will want to prepare well and contribute regularly and meaningfully to group discussions.

For every class, students will prepare three statements or questions: these could be questions to elicit discussion (that is, open-ended, questions that encourage perception and analysis, not questions that lead to a one-word response or a simplistic right or wrong answer), genuine questions concerning understanding, or statements that explore the following: an insight that you have into the work, an idea that you find compelling or less compelling, an aspect of the work that struck you as unusually significant, etc. I may also offer you some pre-reading questions. If so, one of your three contributions could be a brief response to such a question. Your comments should be typed or written out legibly; students whose written work is not easy to decipher will need to transition to typed work. On an occasional basis I will collect them for feedback. In addition, you should keep all of them in a notebook of one kind or another, which can be submitted in its totality. This will ensure that you receive full credit for your preparatory work, though the main purpose of this preparatory work is to enhance the discussion. Occasional collection of the notes will ensure interim feedback on your German. Students will be also be asked to give at least one very brief presentation and to participate fully in the collection and dissemination of jokes.

After the review of the syllabus, the language for all class discussions will be German.

# 2) Three Short Papers (3-5 pages): 30%;

Students will write three short papers of 3-5 pages in German. These should be double-spaced and typed, with a font of 12. The topics are open to the students but should explore some facet of the works we are discussing. They could also involve preparatory work for a longer paper. Any short papers not on the material we are reading will need to be approved in advance. The papers will be given letter grades, and one of the papers must be rewritten and resubmitted within one week after the original has been graded. The grade will be adjusted based on the revision. A revision of a second paper is optional. At least one of the papers will be graded based on a single submission.

### 3) One Long Paper (10-15 pages): 30%;

Students will write one longer paper, which may be in German or English. Papers should be 10-15 pages in length, double-spaced, and typed. This longer written assignment will allow students to engage some aspect of the course in greater depth and with a certain level of independence. If the student chooses to write in German, up to two of the shorter papers may be in English; the one that is to be resubmitted must be in German.

In selecting a topic for a longer paper, students are encouraged to visit me in the office hours or after class and to think out loud about interests and options. In principle two options exist: an exploration of some facet of one or more of the works we will have been discussing or the exploration of one or more works or themes that fall within the realm of the course topic but which have not been discussed in class.

In terms of comedy, the following works could interest students: Lessing's *Die Juden*; Lessings *Nathan der Weise*; Tieck's *Der gestiefelte Kater*; Kleist's *Der zerbrochene Krug*; Kleist's *Amphitryon*; Grillparzer's *Weh dem, der lügt!*, Raimund's *Der Alpenkönig und der Menschenfeind*; Nestroy's *Der Zerrissene*; Nestroy's *Einen Jux will er sich machen*; Schnitzler's *Anatol*; and Dürrenmatt's *Die Physiker*. Also comic prose would be an option, such as Thomas Mann's *Felix Krull*. Germany's most popular contemporary comic artist is likely Loriot.

In terms of satire, authors worth considering include Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, Wilhelm Busch, Heinrich Mann, Kurt Tucholsky, Carl Zuckmayer, and Dürs Grünbein. Students interested in earlier German literature might be drawn to Sebastian Brant. Satire is also very much present in art, and so options exist here as well beyond the works we will discuss. The most important satiric painter in contemporary Germany was Sigmar Polke, who died in 2010.

Theory of comedy and/or satire would also be reasonable topics, perhaps as related to various works.

A paper exploring jokes would also be possible. It could involve theory and/or some aspect of jokes, such as political dimensions, regional variations, professional spheres (for example, Beamtenwitze), or individual characters (for example, Graf Bobby), etc.

Finally, a work on a film satire or comedy would be possible.

Secondary literature is not obligatory for the paper, but some secondary literature or a small amount of additional primary literature is recommended, if students are focusing their paper on material already explored in class.

#### 4) Final Examination: 10%

The final examination, which will be partly in German and partly in English, is expected to include both brief responses and a longer essay. The exam will invite students to exhibit the ways in which they have met the learning goals noted above.

## **Logistical Information**

Class: Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:00 to 4:15; 202 O'Shaughnessy Hall

Office: 349 Decio Hall

**Office Hours**: Mondays and Wednesdays from 1:30 to 2:30 and Fridays from 9:30 to 10:30 as well as by appointment. Impromptu meetings can also often be arranged before or after class.

Phone: (574) 302-1813 (office and cell); (269) 683-8857 (home)

E-mail: mroche@nd.edu; Web: http://mroche.nd.edu/

### **Essential Reading**

Lessing, G. E. Minna von Barnhelm. Berlin: Cornelsen, 1983.

Büchner, Georg. Leonce und Lena. Stuttgart: Klett, 1986.

Hofmannsthal, Hugo von. Der Schwierige. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000.

Brecht, Bertolt. *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti*. (Suhrkamp BasisBibliothek). Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2008.

Heine, Heinrich. *Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen*. (Suhrkamp BasisBibliothek). Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2010.

Freud, Sigmund. Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten. Frankfurt: Fischer, 1992.

### **Calendar of Classes and Readings**

January 19, 2011	Orientation
January 24, 2011	Hösle, via electronic reserve (28 pages)
January 26, 2011	Lessing, 12-28 (16 pages)
January 31, 2011	Lessing, 28-45 (17 pages)
February 2, 2011	Lessing, 46-63 (17 pages)
February 7, 2011	Lessing, 63-84 (21 pages)
February 9, 2011	Büchner, I, 3-18 (15 pages)

February 14, 2011	Büchner, II, 19-27 (8 pages)
February 16, 2011	Büchner, III, 28-37 (9 pages)

The February 16 class will need to be rescheduled, unfortunately. We will work to find a time, perhaps an extended session on another day, perhaps a Friday afternoon class, perhaps a Tuesday or Thursday morning at 8:00, perhaps a discussion and dinner at my home.

February 21, 2011	Hofmannsthal, Act I, 6-67 (61 pages)
	Paper no. 1 is due today.
February 23, 2011	Hofmannsthal, Act II, 68-115 (47 pages) and "Preuße und Osterreicher: Ein Schema," to be supplied by instructor (2 pages)
February 28, 2011	Hofmannsthal, Act III, 116-158 (42 pages)
March 2, 2011	Brecht, 7-40 (33 pages)
March 7, 2011	Brecht, 40-77 (37 pages)
March 9, 2011	Brecht, 77-114 (37 pages)
March 14, 2011	Spring Break (no class)
March 16, 2011	Spring Break (no class)
March 21, 2011	Schiller, "Satyrische Dichtung" and Tucholsky, "Was darf die Satire?" via e-reserve (18 pages)
	Paper no. 2 is due today.
March 23, 2011	Heine, "Bei des Nachtwächters Ankunft zu Paris" and "Zur Beruhigung," to be supplied by instructor (4 pages) and Heine, 9-26 (17)
March 28, 2011	Heine, 26-48 (22 pages)
March 30, 2011	Heine, 48-68 (20 pages)
April 4, 2011	Heine, 68-98 (20 pages)
April 6, 2011	Satire in the Visual Arts: Images from Otto Dix, John Heartfield, George Grosz, and/or Andreas Paul Weber (to be sent from the instructor or

viewed on-line) along with two short satiric poems by Tucholsky, "Das
Mitglied" and "Worauf man in Europa stolz ist," via e-reserve (2 pages)

- April 11, 2011 Continuation of the Visual Arts
- April 13, 2011
  Comic or Satiric Film (probably Wolfgang Staudte's film version of Heinrich Mann's satiric novel *Der Untertan* (1951); other options include Helmut Käutner's film version of Carl Zuckmayer's satiric play *Der Hauptmann von Köpenick* (1956); Kurt Hoffmann's film version of Thomas Mann's comic novel *Die Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull* (1957); and Fatih Akin's contemporary comedy *Im Juli* (2000)). By reducing the visual arts sessions to one, we could also explore two films.

#### Paper no. 3 is due today.

- April 18, 2011 Freud, 25-44 (19 pages)
- April 20, 2011 Freud, 44-66 (22 pages)

Topics for longer papers should be approved by this date at the latest.

- April 25, 2011 Easter Monday (no class)
- April 27, 2011 Freud, 67-85 (18 pages)
- May 2, 2011 Freud, 85-103 (18 pages)
- May 4, 2011 Freud, 172-193 (21 pages)

#### Long papers are due at midnight on the final day of reading period.

We may decide to spend more time with one work or another. Should this occur, we will cut elsewhere. However, we shall do our best to keep to the schedule.

#### **Policy on Attendance**

Two unexcused absences will be integrated into the class contribution grade. A third unexcused absence will lead to the reduction of the final grade by one partial unit, for example, from a B to a B-. A fourth unexcused absence will lead to the reduction of the final grade by two partial units, for example, from a B to a C+. Five unexcused absences will lead to failure of the course. Excused absences, with documentation from a rector or the Office of Undergraduate Studies, will not affect your grade.

In the unlikely event that a student misses a scheduled oral examination without having a legitimate excuse, a make-up examination will be arranged, but the student's grade will be dropped by one partial unit.

## **E-Reserve and Reserve**

The following materials have been placed on electronic reserve in the Library. Additional materials may be added later.

Hösle, Vittorio. Woody Allen. Versuch über das Komische. Münich: Beck, 2001: 16-45.

- Hegel, G. W. F. *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*. Ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978. 15.527-532. [Discussion of comedy.] = Werke
- Schiller, Friedrich. Excerpt from "Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung." *Theoretische Schriften*. Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2008: 732-48. [Discussion of satire]
- Tucholsky, Kurt. "Was darf die Satire?" Gesammelte Werke. Ed. Mary Gerold-Tucholsky and Fritz J. Raddatz. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1960. 1.362-64. = GW

Tucholsky, Kurt. "Das Mitglied." GW 2.457-58.

Tucholsky, Kurt. "Worauf man in Europa stolz ist." GW 3.1095-96.

Hegel, G. W. F. Werke. 14.120-126. [Discussion of satire.]

Hegel is not obligatory reading and is quite complex, but his insights are deep, and I may give you a brief passage or two in class, which you could consult afterwards on line.

In terms of orientation to the authors, three options exist. The best simple introductions to topics and writers will be found in the first floor reference area of the library, in the PT section. There you will find, for example, the *Daten deutscher Dichtung*, the *Encyclopedia of German Literature*, the *Oxford Companion to German Literature*, the *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*, and other such works, which have entries on topics, authors, and works. Second, a meaningful avenue for further reading might well involve more primary reading than secondary reading, that is, additional works by the authors we are reading instead of secondary works about them. Still, secondary works can be useful for an initial orientation and are essential for more advanced scholarly work.

I have placed on reserve one or two general works for each of the major authors we are exploring. These will serve the purpose of offering you some more detailed orientation than would be the case with reference works.

Lessing

Barner, Wilfried, et al. *Lessing: Epoche-Werk-Wirkung*. 5th ed. Munich: Beck, 1987. Büchner

Benn, Maurice B. *The Drama of Revolt. A Critical Study of Georg Büchner*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976.

Hauser, Ronald. Georg Büchner. New York: Twayne, 1974.

Hofmannsthal

Koch, Hans-Albrecht. Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Münich: DTV, 2004.

Mayer, Mathias. Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993.

Brecht

Gray, Roland. Brecht the Dramatist. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976.

Esslin, Martin. Brecht: A Choice of Evils. 3rd ed. London: Methuen, 1980.

Willett, John. The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht. 3rd ed. London: Methuen, 1967.

Heine

Brummack, Jürgen, ed. Heinrich Heine. Epoche-Werk-Wirkung. Munich: Beck, 1980.

Sammons, Jeffry L. Heinrich Heine: A Modern Biography. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979.

In terms of theories of comedy and satire, an abundance of material exists. Because I do not want to take any discussion time by lecturing on my own ideas, I have placed on reserve my own book on tragedy and comedy *<Tragedy and Comedy: A Systematic Study and a Critique of Hegel.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998>, which contains ample references to the secondary literature.

With the same purpose in mind, I have placed on reserve another of my books *<Dynamic Stillness: Philosophical Conceptions of Ruhe in Schiller, Hölderlin, Büchner, and Heine.* Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1987>, as the fourth chapter deals to some degree with Heine's satiric persona.

Finally, while many of you will want to discover the most contemporary jokes via one of many relevant Websites in Germany (simply go to google.de and search for "Witz"). I have also placed on reserve some books that offer jokes in German, partly historical in origin, partly geographical, and partly more broadly conceived.

Budisch, Carl. Der Witz der Ostfriesen. Münich: Desch, 1972.

- Herzog, Rudolph. *Heil Hitler, das Schwein ist tot! Lachen unter Hitler–Komik und Humor im Dritten Reich.* Frankfurt: Eichborn, 2006. [still on order]
- Gamm, Hans-Jochen. Der Flüsterwitz im Dritten Reich. Mündliche Dokumente zur Lage der Deutschen während des Nationalsozialismus. Münich: List, 1990.
- Raeithel, Gert. *Die Deutschen und ihr Humor. Von Till Eulenspiegel bis Harald Schmidt.* Münich: DTV, 2005.
- Schiewe, Andrea and Jürgen Schiewe. *Witzkultur in der DDR. Ein Beitrag zur Sprachkritik.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2000.
- Vox Populi. [John Alexander Meier]. *Geflüstertes. Die Hitlerei im Volksmund.* Heidelberg: Freiheit, 1946.
- Franke, Ingolf. Das große DDR-Witz.de Buch. WEVOS, 2002.
- Gauger, Hans-Martin. Das ist bei uns nicht Ouzo. Sprachwitze. Münich: Beck, 2006.

Schöffler, Herbert. Kleine Geographie des Deutschen Witzes. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1955.

Wiener, Ralph. *Hinter vorgehaltener Hand. Der politische Witz in Deutschland*. Leipzig: Militzke, 2003.

Additional materials may be added in the course of the semester.

#### **Brief Presentations**

Students will be asked to give very brief presentations, which will involve collecting five to ten interesting points of information or sentences about at least one of the topics below:

Hösle Lessing (See 5-11 of Lessing) Siebenjähriger Krieg (See 85-86 of Lessing) Büchner Hofmannsthal Brecht Schiller Tucholsky Heine Style in *Das Wintermärchen* (See 109-110 of Heine) Dix Grosz Heartfield Weber Relevant Topics Relating to the Film(s) Freud

### **Criteria for Grading Oral Performance**

### Criteria for a Grade of B

The student ...

- prepares well for each class by completing all assignments; rereading or reviewing, when appropriate; making appropriate notes; and discussing the works outside the class with students from the class;
- makes contributions that show thorough familiarity with the assigned reading and thoughtful reflection on the material;
- asks good, searching questions that spark discussion;
- listens well and participates in the give-and-take of discussion, for example, by asking clarifying questions of other students, offering evidence to support positions, or proposing alternative perspectives;
- is willing to engage an issue from multiple points of view;
- is able to make connections across the works of the semester;
- can recognize strengths and weaknesses in an argument;
- demonstrates the capacity to think on his or her feet;
- is willing to think through an idea even when it is in the end abandoned;
- is willing to recognize, investigate, and, where appropriate, question his or her own assumptions and accepted ideas and develop alternative positions;
- shows the humility to withdraw an idea from discussion in the face of decisive counterarguments;
- exhibits the confidence to retain a position when counter-arguments fail;
- is able to express his or her thoughts with only occasional grammatical errors.

### Criteria for a Grade of A

The student does all of the above and ...

- finds and develops meaningful threads, so that the discussion, instead of being haphazard, reaches previously unexplored heights;
- exhibits intellectual hospitality, effectively encouraging the participation of others and successfully drawing good ideas out of others;
- gives unusually deep and rich responses to interpretive and searching questions;

consistently links the discussion to earlier works and themes;

helps guide the discussion through occasional summaries and substantial, thoughtful queries that

build on earlier comments;

asks fascinating and unexpected questions;

exhibits substantial curiosity and creativity and a love of the life of the mind;

brings forth deep insights without dominating the discussion;

exhibits a searching mind, the mind of a developing intellectual;

speaks with very few grammatical errors or shows remarkable improvement in his or her felicity with the language in the course of the semester.

# Criteria for a Grade of C

The student ...

comes prepared to class;

occasionally contributes isolated, but thoughtful comments to the discussion; makes comments that are backed with evidence; discerns the difference between more relevant and less relevant comments; understands his or her own assumptions and is willing to question them; exhibits respect for others and treats all persons with dignity; is able to make him or herself understood, although grammatical errors and vocabulary gaps are frequent; exhibits very modest progress in the capacity for expression across the semester.

# Criteria for a Grade of D

The student ...

comes to class, but rarely contributes to the discussion;

makes comments that are without evidence;

makes irrelevant comments and has difficulties contributing to the flow of the conversation; has little, if any, awareness of his or her biases, prejudices, and assumptions; has difficulties making coherent statements in German.

# Criteria for a Grade of F

The student ...

does not speak at all or makes comments that exhibit a lack of preparation; disturbs, rather than enhances, the conversation with irrelevant patter; has no awareness of his or her biases, prejudices, and assumptions; exhibits little or no respect for the class; makes constant mistakes in speech and shows little effort to improve.

# **Criteria for Grading Papers**

# Criteria for a Grade of B

# Clarity

The paper presents a clear, complex, and challenging thesis.

# Independence

The paper does not simply restate the obvious or repeat what others have said, but builds on what is known to exhibit the student's own thinking about the topic. The writer avoids simply repeating plot structures or paraphrasing the ideas of others. The student says something new and interesting.

# Structure

The essay is structured logically and coherently. The overall outline or organization makes sense, and the paragraphs flow appropriately, one to the other. In the case of a longer paper, the introduction is inviting, and the conclusion is powerful.

# Evidence

Appropriate evidence is given for the paper's claims, for example, evidence from the work being interpreted, historical information, or a chain of abstract arguments.

# Style

In English, the language is well-chosen, the essay reads smoothly, and the writer avoids grammatical errors. The essay has very few, if any, awkward or wordy stylistic constructions.

In German, the language does not exhibit an inordinate number of mistakes, and as the semester advances, fewer mistakes occur.

Bibliographical and other information is presented in an appropriate style.

# Criteria for a Grade of A

The paper integrates the expectations of a B grade, but is in addition unusually thoughtful, deep, creative, and far-reaching in its analysis and evidence. Multiple points of view are engaged, and the limits of one's own interpretation are acknowledged, either through the avoidance of overreaching or through the refutation of alternative arguments. The essay integrates a variety of connected themes and exhibits a curious mind at work. In English, the language is elegant. In German, the language exhibits a developing capacity for smooth writing, and mistakes are relatively modest in number.

# Criteria for a Grade of C

The thesis of the paper is clear, and the paper takes a stand on a complex issue. The writer goes beyond mere paraphrase. The writer exhibits competence in exploring the subject and integrates some alternative perspectives. Most of the essay is well-organized, and the logic is for the most part clear and coherent. Some evidence is given for the points made in the essay.

In English, the language is understandable and free of extraneous material. The paper is without basic grammatical errors.

In German, errors are for the most part restricted to more complex areas of advanced writing as opposed to the most basic issues that should be part of the student's repertoire at the 4000-level.

### Criteria for a Grade of D

The thesis of the paper is missing, unclear, or overly simple. The writer tends toward paraphrase. The paper includes some arguments, but counter-arguments are not considered in any serious way or are misconstrued. The essay's structure is not readily apparent. Ideas are present but are not developed with details or examples. Paragraphs are poorly constructed and contain little supporting detail. Problems in grammar, spelling, or punctuation interfere with the writer's capacity to communicate.

## Criteria for a Grade of F

The assignment is not completed or is completed in a format that is clearly substandard. The essay exhibits little, if any, preparatory reflection or study. It contains no serious ideas and lacks an argument as well as supporting evidence. The essay is difficult to read or comprehend. No meaningful structure is discernible. Sentences are poorly written and riddled with grammatical mistakes.

### Guides to Writing in German

Farrell, R. B. Dictionary of German Synonyms. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Reiner, Ludwig. Stilfibel: Der sichere Weg zum guten Deutsch. Munich: DTV, 2007.

Schneider, Wolf. *Deutsch für junge Profis: Wie man gut und lebendig schreibt.* 2nd ed. Berlin: Rowohlt, 2010.

Also useful are two volumes of Duden, volume 2 (*Das Stilwörterbuch*) and volume 4 (*Die Grammatik*).

### **Guides to Writing in English**

Achtert, Walter S., and Joseph Gibaldi. The MLA Style Manual. New York: MLA, 1985.

Cook, Claire. Line by Line: How to Edit Your Own Writing. New York: MLA, 1985.

Ross-Larson, Bruce. *Edit Yourself: A Manual for Everyone Who Works with Words*. New York: Norton, 1982.

Strunk, William, Jr. and E. B. White. The Elements of Style. 4th ed. New York: Longman, 2000.

## Academic Code of Honor

This course will be conducted in accordance with the Academic Code of Honor of the University of Notre Dame, which stipulates: "As a member of the Notre Dame community, I will not participate in or tolerate academic dishonesty." The code is available at <<u>http://www.nd.edu/~hnrcode/</u>>. Information on citing sources is available at <<u>http://www.nd.edu/~writing/resources/AvoidingPlagarism.html</u>>.

Students are encouraged to discuss readings and films with one another outside of the classroom and should feel free to discuss assignments with one another, but the source of all ideas must be revealed fully and honestly. Whenever information or insights are obtained from secondary works, students should cite their sources.

Students are encouraged to prepare for class discussions and examinations by discussing the class content with one another outside the classroom.