Syllabus

WRITING SHORT COMEDY
(UG 1505 - 001 (17172)
Wednesday 2:00-4:45 Spring 2012 INSTRUCTOR - D.B. Gilles
Room 512 Silver
Office Hours 721 Broadway Room 911 By Appointment
Monday 12-4 Wednesday 10:30-1:30 dbg3@nyu.edu

Satire is a lesson, parody is a game.
Vladimir Nabokov

Parodies and caricatures are the most penetrating of criticisms.
Aldous Huxley

This course introduces students to a variety of short humor forms.

WORK BREAKDOWN

WEEK 1
Overview of the course and an exploration into the world of short comedy writing.
Discussion of the first writing assignment.

WEEK 2

WRITING ASSIGNMENT: Write a 750 word essay on something that bothers you.
Think of it as a rant on paper. It should be based on something that really ticks you off
and your take must be humorous. Discussion of next week’s assignment.

WEEK 3

WRITING ASSIGNMENT: Write 3 long or 5 short posts that would appear on The
Borowitz Report. Make them political or poking fun at something going on in the world
of pop culture. Discussion of next week’s assignment.

WEEK 4

WRITING ASSIGNMENT: Write a 10-Minute Play on something Topical or
Controversial in the news. No more than 10 pages long. Discussion of next week’s
assignment.

WEEK 5

WRITING ASSIGNMENT: Write 2 minutes of stand up material and perform it in class.
Discussion of next week’s assignment.
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WEEK 6

WRITING ASSIGNMENT Create a concept for a blog and write the first post. Discussion of the next assignment.

WEEK 7

WRITING ASSIGNMENT New York Times columnists Maureen Dowd and Gail Collins have asked you to write a guest column. It has to be witty, humorous and about a serious topic. Discussion of next week’s assignment.

SPRING BREAK

WEEK 8

WRITING ASSIGNMENT Write a humorous short story or essay for The New Yorker. Examples will be provided. Discussion of next week’s assignment.

WEEK 9

WRITING ASSIGNMENT Write a musical parody of a contemporary singer and his/her song. You will write a Treatment with visual description and you will rewrite the song lyrics. Check out some of Weird Al Yankovic’s work on Youtube. Discussion of next week’s assignment.

WEEK 10

WRITING ASSIGNMENT Write your own obituary. However, you must live to at least the age of 90. I want to see an imaginative, colorful, exciting life. Discussion of next week’s assignment.

WEEK 11

WRITING ASSIGNMENT Create an idea for a webisode and write 3 episodes. These are short. Maybe 2 minutes long. Discussion of next week’s assignment.

WEEK 12

Choose a public figure or topic worthy of a parody book and write a 3-page book proposal. Examples of parody books and book proposals will be provided. Discussion of next week’s assignment.

WEEK 13
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WRITING ASSIGNMENT  You have been given the opportunity to try out as a writer on Late Night With David Letterman. Instead of doing a Top Ten List you’ve been told to do a Top 25 List. To get the job you must get at least 15 laughs. Discussion of next week’s assignment.

WEEK 14

WRITING ASSIGNMENT  You’re being considered to write a weekly humor column for The New York in which you satirize pop culture. The pay is $100,000 a year. Write a 750 word audition piece that shows you’ve got what it takes.

ATTENDANCE & GRADING

Creativity: 60%
Class Participation 25%
Attendance: 15%

Do not miss classes: If there is a class that you know in advance you must miss, let me know early on.

Lateness: If you show up late a half a grade point will be deducted. On the rare occasion where you know you will be late e-mail me and inform me of this. Each absence will reduce your final grade by one step. So, if you would have received an A and I find upon reviewing my attendance records that you’ve been absent twice and late twice, your grade will be lowered to a B.

Remember this: When you miss classes you lose out on the interplay that happens.