In the first unit of the course, we will discuss historical and contemporary theories of humor. In the second unit, we will discuss the aesthetic dimensions of humor and make contact with some of the aesthetics literature. In the third unit, we will discuss various ethical dimensions of humor, including “when it is wrong to laugh” and what makes some jokes racist, sexist, homophobic, or otherwise ethically problematic.

Requirements for the course are as follows: (1) attendance at and participation in weekly seminar meetings, and (2) a final paper of 6,000–8,000 words, due 5/1. You must get your paper topic approved by us no later than 4/1.

You will need to purchase Comic Relief by John Morreall and Inside Jokes by Adams, Dennett, and Hurley. All other readings will be made available on Sakai.

1 Theories of Humor

- 1/9: Course Introduction, no reading
- 1/16: Hobbes, excerpts from Leviathan and Human Nature; Hutcheson, excerpts from Reflections Upon Laughter; Spencer, excerpts from The Physiology of Laughter

1/30: Morreall, *Comic Relief* Chapters 1–3


2/13: *Inside Jokes* Chapters 6–8

2 Aesthetics of Humor

2/20: NO CLASS


3/6: Hartz and Hunt, “The Beauty and the Beast” Section IV; *Comic Relief* Chapter 4; Carroll, “Horror and Humor”

3/13: NO CLASS — SPRING BREAK


4/3: Jacobson, “In Praise of Immoral Art”

3 Ethics of Humor


4/24: Catchup