

**Carleton University
Fall 2017
Department of English**

**English 3003B: Literatures in Translation
Renaissance Laughter: Masterpieces of Sixteenth-Century
Italian Comedy
Prerequisites: third-year standing or permission of the department**

**Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:30-1:00
Location: Southam Hall, Rm. 515 – *Please confirm location on Carleton Central***

**Instructor: D.A. Beecher
E-mail: donald_beecher@carleton.ca
Office: 1908 Dunton Tower
Office hours: Mondays: 1:30-2:30**

Renaissance laughter, for our purposes, has to do with what made theatre-goers laugh in the sixteenth century. The playwrights of the age were out to find out and to furnish their audiences with lots to respond to. When we measure our capacities to laugh against our own cultural triggers, we discover that we share a lot in common with that former age: we laugh (or feel the equivalent of laughter and pleasure) when lovers steal their happiness from old fogies trying to stand in their way, and when extraordinary things happen to ordinary people just by chance, or when they've been tricked. We laugh too when folly and vanity, pedantry and greed are exposed and their practitioners are made to face our ridicule. There, are, in fact, many kinds of laughter, and since we don't trigger this curious response just by desiring it, culture and our own emotions conspire to set it all going. Those comic plays in the erudite tradition were written by some of Italy's greatest writers: Machiavelli, Ariosto, Aretino, Bruno, Caro, and Bibbiena. They had amazing wits and great careers. The number of plays written grew throughout the century and they were, in turn, translated into Spanish, French, and English as well. They began as imitations of the ancient comedy of Plautus and Terence, but very soon took on overtones of contemporary city life written in the vernaculars of the day. Italians clearly loved trickery and practical jokes, wit and ingenuity, as well as sexual innuendo and intrigue. But the plays could also deal with happiness recovered after loss, with families reunited, or with miraculous escapes following tragic errors. Hardly should these plays be read as sources; they were written for their own times and their own audiences, following conventions in vogue. But the fact remains that these comedies travelled in keeping with the spirit of cultural exchange that defined the Renaissance era. They were particularly valuable to the emergence of the French and Spanish theatres, but their materials had some sway over the English theatre, too, in the age preceding Shakespeare. This course will seek to combine the "science" of laughter with a cultural age in order to explore this theatre both for itself and as a study in the psychology of humour.

If we read through these plays, say one each week, we will be able to take in a substantial sampling of their ranges and colours, and of their diverse themes and emerging exploitations of the conventions and character types of the learned theatre of Italy in different cultural centres.

And the more I can induce you to keep up with these joyful readings, the more you will be equipped to discuss them among yourselves, as well as to make sense of my commentaries from “the pulpit.” I can’t urge you enough to make this a weekly habit in order to get the most from the course. Of course, as the term marches on, students will become more anxious about the work they have to prepare. And while I just can’t bring myself to mollycoddle adults in these matters, the entire course is designed to suggest questions, topics, critical problems and perspectives, related literatures, and the many approaches that are legitimate and fruitful areas for further research for writing papers and acquitting yourself with glory in the final exam. I encourage you to be thinking about matters of importance to you as you explore these texts: matters of their genesis in ancient traditions, their performance venues, their plotting of crises and comic resolutions, their sense of the human condition from the ultimate stance of prosperity and regeneration, their confluences of such modes as romance, satire, the carnivalesque, or the tragi-comic. There are so many great things to do, and I’m always keen to talk with you about your emerging ideas and critical orientations. Don’t complain; be proactive!

The course assignment is one term paper, up to 13 pages long, and at least 9, which tackles a significant question pertaining to these imaginative creations: where they come from, how they are conceived, how they work as literary objects, what they say, and how they generate both meaning and purpose. These matters all pertain to literary-philosophical questions, in the long run, because nothing from the world of the imagination passes through our interpretive faculties without implicit operations of evaluation and judgement, and the more we bring these procedures and assumptions under open investigation, the more valid and valuable the enquiry. That is just another way of saying, good papers tackle important and well-defined questions, approach them through informed critical methods, organize them in logical and problem-solving sequences, and deliver real conclusions at the end which bring problems to resolution, arguments to fulfilment, and wisdom to new plateaus. Alternatively, you may wish to consider the offer of writing two shorter papers, spreading your interests over two distinct problems, creating a portfolio basket with two eggs. These should be conceived to accommodate a 5-7 page range for each: less ambitious, perhaps, but still concerned with finding serious issues pursued with sound methodical and bibliographical support.

The use of secondary critical sources is not ultra-obligatory, but highly recommended. Supporting your voice with the wisdom and insight of others, or debating their points, or letting them help you focus and define your problem is the way most serious scholarship is conducted, and it is never too early to get in some practice. We are now well beyond the formulaic in terms of quotations per page or numbers of secondary authors to consult. Read to inform, use as benefits your purposes, and beware not to get hi-jacked by their thinking. Always keep your argument as your own and show me your mind at work, not theirs, because not all of them out there get A’s from me, but all of you can, with good points, sound methods, effective writing, and significant conclusions. That pudding always has its proof; there are no rights or wrongs, but there are better and worse arguments and more and less credible conclusions, believe me! In a larger sense, writing about literature is about reading accurately, reflecting critically, and writing cogently—operations not unlike those called for by all enquiries into the nature of things social or creative across the gamut of university disciplines. Keep back-up copies of your work in the event a paper gets lost, and always hand in paper copies; never submit them to me as e-mail attachments. These will count for 60% of your final grade.

The other 40% will be based on a final exam, a fun 3 hour one, in which I intend to give you the chance to fire up all your informed enthusiasm for things Italian, comic, and theatrical. The questions will pertain to the plays, of course, but more particularly to their implicit problems, and their respective implications for the study of (Renaissance) literature. They will give you a chance to think about point of view, comic plot design, thumbnail characterizations and caricatures, about style and the perils of translation, Renaissance humour, trickery, social issues then and now, and the way in which plays as social representations generate their meanings and diverse interpretations. I'll be grading the exams, but you'll be having all the fun in writing them, because by then you'll have plenty to say about comedy and how to read it for pleasure and profit. Why we spend time in fictional worlds is why we're here. And remember to have some fun along the way. Learning is a serious enterprise, but do it for personal development and to satisfy curiosity, not just for the grades. Hopefully, your talents will bubble to the surface and give you plenary rewards. But they are always relative to who you are and what university constraints allow you to do.

The textbook to be ordered for the course through the Carleton Bookstore is entitled *Renaissance Comedy: The Italian Masters*, Volumes I and II, published by The University of Toronto Press, 2008. The volumes are good value, if I say so myself, but a bit pricey, with apologies. There really aren't any other options out there to fit our needs. But check on line with ABE and Amazon. I saw sets there recently for less than half the price, postage included. Or if you want a real souvenir, you can get them hardbound and really splurge!!

The reading schedule will go like this:

Sept. 6 Introduction to the course
Sept. 11 The Pretenders
Sept. 13 The Pretenders
Sept. 18 The Cortegiana
Sept. 20 The Cortegiana
Sept. 25 The Ragged Brothers
Sept. 27 The Ragged Brothers
Oct. 2 The Sister
Oct. 4 The Sister
Oct. 9 No class, Thanksgiving
Oct. 11 A lecture on comedy
Oct. 16 The Calandria
Oct. 18 The Calandria
Oct. 23 Fall break
Oct. 25 Fall break
Oct. 30 The Mandragola
Nov. 1 The Mandragola
Nov. 6 The Moschetta
Nov. 8 The Moschetta
Nov. 13 The Horned Owl

Nov. 15	The Horned Owl
Nov. 20	The Candlebearer
Nov. 22	The Candlebearer
Nov. 27	Alessandro
Nov. 29	Alessandro
Dec. 4	The Future of a Genre
Dec. 6	All about the Exam

The university guidelines follow concerning accommodation and student services. Also note the policy on plagiarism. It doesn't make sense, anyway, for a serious student, either to misrepresent the work of others intentionally, or to avoid meeting the writing process on your own. This is a precious opportunity to practice honing your brain and your life skills with thoughtful feedback. The grade results are hollow, anyway, and will likely be bankrupted by the exam grade. At this point, plagiarism is not about insulting scholars by ripping them off—they will endure. But it is about cheating yourself in the talent pool of life. That's nuts!

Copies of written work submitted

Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*"

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course. For more information please go to: <http://www2.carleton.ca/studentaffairs/academic-integrity>

GRADING SYSTEM

Letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100 (12) B = 73-76 (8) C - = 60-62 (4)

A = 85-89 (11) B- = 70-72 (7) D+ = 57-59 (3)

A- = 80-84 (10) C+ = 67-69 (6) D = 53-56 (2)

B+ = 77-79 (9) C = 63-66 (5) D - = 50-52 (1)

F Failure. Assigned 0.0 grade points

ABS Absent from final examination, equivalent to F

DEF Official deferral (see "Petitions to Defer")

FND Failure with no deferred exam allowed -- assigned only when the student has failed the course on the basis of inadequate term work as specified in the course outline.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

The last date to withdraw from **FALL TERM** courses is **DEC. 8, 2017**. The last day to withdraw from **FALL/WINTER (Full Term)** and **WINTER** term courses is **APRIL 11, 2017**.

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). **Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.** After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website (www.carleton.ca/pmc) for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*).

ADDRESSES: (Area Code 613)

English Department 520-2310

Registrar's Office 520-3500 300 Tory

Academic Advising Centre 520-7850 302 Tory

Paul Menton Centre 520-6608/TTY 520-3937 501 Uni-Centre
Writing Tutorial Service 520-2600 Ext. 1125 4th Floor Library
Learning Support Service 520-2600 Ext 1125 4th Floor Library

PS All honeymoons must be approved by class members by secret ballot, and applications must contain allusions to at least three plays.