

Farce and Faith in Recent Southern Fiction

Intd. 100
Fall Semester, 2003
9:00-9:50, MWF
HR 004B

Joseph L. Price
Platner #112
MW: 10:00-12:00
Tu: 1:30-2:30

Description

Connections between religion and humor extend far beyond jokes about the character of ministers and the effectiveness of religious rituals. Like religion, humor often seeks to restore relationships and bring about health, as indicated in the adage "Laughter is medicine for the soul." And like religion, humor can provide a prophetic critique of the way things are, as in satire and sarcasm.

Exploring the occurrence and convergence of humor and faith in recent Southern literature, this course examines how several authors employ comic techniques to raise big questions about life, such as: What is true belief? Are there true beliefs? Is violence a manifestation of evil? How can love overcome separation and alienation? Can death itself have a comic side? Among the authors whose works will be read are Flannery O'Connor, Ferrol Sams, Sheri Reynolds, Rebecca Wells, Olive Ann Burns, and Harry Crews.

Purpose and Goals

The course intends to accomplish several purposes. Firstly, it will introduce you to collegiate discourse by having you read, read, read, and write, write, write. Secondly, the course will provide you with a sustained opportunity to experience the kind of understanding and insight that can be acquired through the process of writing. To accomplish this purpose you will write a variety of compositions ranging from informal remarks and reflective responses to book reviews and short research essays. Finally, the course will facilitate the development of "clarity and grace" in your writing by having you work consistently on the process of re-writing. (This phrase is taken from the subtitle of Joseph M. Williams's excellent tutorial on writing, Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace.)

Texts

An Approved Hardback Dictionary
Frederick Crews, *The Random House Handbook*, 5th ed.
Ferrol Sams, *The Whisper of the River*
Rebecca Wells, *Little Altars Everywhere*
Flannery O'Connor, *Wise Blood*
Sheri Reynolds, *The Rapture of Canaan*
Olive Ann Burns, *Cold Sassy Tree*
Harry Crews, *Body*

Requirements

Attendance: Since we will regularly discuss the readings in class and since we will spend time daily in the processes of composition and revision, your attendance and participation will be crucial to the success of the seminar. An excessive number of absences (more than three) or patterns of tardiness will result in the lowering of your grade and perhaps failure of the course.

Readings: In order to participate effectively in class and in order to understand fully the writing assignments, you must complete all readings on schedule. For each class session during which the readings will be discussed, you will be required to prepare and submit two provocative discussion questions based on the reading for the day.

Papers: Because one of the primary objectives of the course is to improve your writing by re-writing, you must type all of your out-of-class writing assignments on a word processor in order to facilitate revisions in your texts. When you submit typed assignments, you must keep one copy for yourself and turn in a duplicate. All submitted papers must have a cover page and must be stapled. Writing assignments not completed on schedule, including those assigned for in-class work, will be given (at most) half credit.

Exam: There will be a mid-term essay exam.

Portfolio: Because the process of revision is one of the keys to writing, you will need to keep a portfolio of your essays, turning in a complete set for your final exam. This portfolio, which should include revisions of your earlier work, will be due at the final class session.

Grading	Daily writing assignments & participation	15%
	Mid-term exam	15%
	Essays	60%
	Portfolio	10%

Special Accommodations

Any student who, because of a disabling condition, may require some special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make the necessary accommodations. Students should present appropriate verification from Learning Support Services Office. No requirement exists that accommodations be made prior to completion of this approved College process.

DAILY SCHEDULE

	Read	Reflect
Sept. 5	Gannon, "Southern Horoscope"	ESSAY (3 pages) Due
Sept. 8	Sams, <i>Whisper of the River</i>	Funny things, first things
Sept. 10	Sams, <i>Whisper of the River</i>	Funny things, familiar things
Sept. 12	Sams, <i>Whisper of the River</i>	Funny things, family things
Sept. 15	Sams, <i>Whisper of the River</i>	Funny things, painful things
Sept. 17	Sams, <i>Whisper of the River</i>	Funny things and friends
Sept. 19	Sams, <i>Whisper of the River</i>	Funny things, final things
Sept. 22	Hearing Ferrol Sams	ESSAY (3 pages) Due
Sept. 24	Wells, <i>Little Altars Everywhere</i>	The Perils of Popularity
Sept. 26	Wells, <i>Little Altars Everywhere</i>	Faking Faith
Sept. 29	Wells, <i>Little Altars Everywhere</i>	Witnessing Laughter
Oct. 1	Wells, <i>Little Altars Everywhere</i>	Baptizing Wit
Oct. 3	Wells, <i>Little Altars Everywhere</i>	ESSAY (3 pages) Due
Oct. 6	Williams, "Personal Testimony"	Ghost-writing
Oct. 8	Williams, "Personal Testimony"	ESSAY (2 pages) Due
Oct. 10	O'Connor, "A Temple of the Holy Ghost"	Humor and Blasphemy
Oct. 13	O'Connor, "A Temple of the Holy Ghost"	Cheating Humor
Oct. 15	Mid-Term Exam	
Oct. 17	Mid-Semester Break, No Class	
Oct. 20	O'Connor, <i>Wise Blood</i>	Humor and Heresy
Oct. 22	O'Connor, <i>Wise Blood</i>	Gorillas in the Midst
Oct. 24	O'Connor, <i>Wise Blood</i>	Seeing through Blindness
Oct. 27	Transfusing "Wise Blood"	Seeing through Blindness
Oct. 29	Transfusing "Wise Blood"	ESSAY (3 pages) Due

Oct. 31	Reynolds, <i>The Rapture of Canaan</i>	Humor and Separation
Nov. 3	Reynolds, <i>The Rapture of Canaan</i>	Humor and Severity
Nov. 5	Reynolds, <i>The Rapture of Canaan</i>	Reversing Expectations
Nov. 7	Reynolds, <i>The Rapture of Canaan</i>	Laughing at Believing
Nov. 10	Reynolds, <i>The Rapture of Canaan</i>	ESSAY (3 pages) Due
Nov. 12	Burns, <i>Cold Sassy Tree</i>	Family as Funny
Nov. 14	Burns, <i>Cold Sassy Tree</i>	Laughing at L/love
Nov. 17	Burns, <i>Cold Sassy Tree</i>	Laughing at Marriage
Nov. 19	Burns, <i>Cold Sassy Tree</i>	Laughing at Death
Nov. 21	Burns, <i>Cold Sassy Tree</i>	Laughing at FUNerals
Nov. 24	Burns, <i>Cold Sassy Tree</i>	ESSAY (3 pages) Due
Nov. 26	Crews, <i>Body</i>	Carnal Humor
Dec. 1	Crews, <i>Body</i>	Laughing and sweating
Dec. 3	Crews, <i>Body</i>	Laughing and suffering
Dec. 5	Crews, <i>Body</i>	The Hurt of Laughter
Dec. 12, noon		Portfolio Due