

Make 'Em Laugh:

A Celebration of Funny Ladies from Gilda Radner to Ali Wong

From *I Love Lucy* to Ali Wong and Sarah Silverman, this course will examine the often unruly and always hilarious ladies of comedy. We will talk about humor as both culturally and historically located, inflected by ideas about race, class, gender, and sexuality. Potential screenings will include (but are not limited to) *Love, Gilda*; *Baby Cobra*; *Nanette*; *Veep*; *Mean Girls*; and more.

 CAT 87 Policies

Required Technology:

- Notebook & Pen (please note that I do not allow digital technology in the classroom)
- Access to Netflix
- Course reserves access

Assignments:

In order to pass this course, you must show up prepared to actively engage in productive conversations with your classmates. This means completing the assigned work, submitting your questions, and being present. Please note that missing more than 2 classes will result in a NP in this class, as will failing to complete any of the required assignments (i.e. questions and final reflection).

Weekly Questions (20%)

Each week by 11:59pm on Sunday, you will post TWO questions to Canvas, rooted in the reading and/or screening for the week. I will use these questions (and you can too!) to guide our weekly conversations. One of the questions will automatically drop.

Weekly Participation (60%)

This class is all about conversation! Your active and ongoing participation is key to a successful seminar. During our first class, we will define what that looks like together!

Final Reflection (10%): Write a 400-500 word reflection focusing on one theme that we've discussed this term, in relation to gender and comedy. What have you learned? What struck you? What did you find most interesting? Weird? Funny? And, why?

Due: Monday of Week 10 by 11:59pm on Canvas

Course Calendar

Week 1: Intro to Comedy & Funny Women

Introductions and Discussion

Recommended reading: "[Why women aren't funny](#)" (Inspiration for this class. Be warned: this article will make you angry, most likely) & [CNN Doc: The History of Comedy](#)

Week 2: Hilarious Herstories

Watch: *Love, Gilda* (course reserves)

Read: "Introduction," *Hysterical!* (course reserves)

Recommended: [Review of Love, Gilda from Vogue](#) & *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (Pilot)

Week 3: Unruly Women, Part I

Watch: *Roseanne* (Pilot)

Read: "[Introduction](#)" pgs 1-12 from *Unruly Woman* (Kathleen Karlyn) (Course reserves)

Week 4: Likable/Unlikable White Women

Watch: *Veep* (Pilot) & *30 Rock* (Pilot)

Read: "[Of Nasty, Unlikable Women](#)"

Week 5: Unruly Women, Part II

Watch: Ali Wong's *Baby Cobra* (Netflix)

Read: "[Too Pregnant](#)" (up to pg. 120) from *Too Fat, Too Slutty, Too Loud* & "[Our modern obsession with pregnancy](#)"

Recommended: Linda Mizejewski, "Bedwetting, Body Comedy, and a 'Mouth Full of Blood Laughs'" (Course Reserves) & "[Why Ali Wong's Baby Cobra was so explosive](#)" & Amy Schumer's *Growing* (Netflix)

Week 6: Mental Health & Comedy

Watch: *Nanette* (2018) (Netflix) & Asha Ward, "[Hibachi After a Funeral](#)"

Warning that Nanette contains discussion of sexual violence, homophobia, and hate and violence broadly.

Read: "[Nanette is a radical, Transformative work of comedy](#)"

Recommended: "[Can Nanette bring queer storytelling the attention its due?](#)"

Week 7: Sexuality, Gender & Humor

Watch: *Gender Agenda* (Netflix)

Recommended: Susan Sontag, [Notes On Camp](#) & *Relatable* (Ellen's recent comedy special) (Netflix) & pgs 190-200 from "Pretty Funny Butch as the Girl Next Door" (on reserves)

Week 8: Health & Comedy

Listen: [Tig Notaro @ Lardo 2013](#)

Read: "[Tig Notaro Topless, Boyish Girl Interrupted](#)"

Recommended: *Tig* (Documentary on Netflix)

Week 9: Memorial Day (No Class)

Week 10: Wrapping it up & Mean, Unlikable Girls

Watch: *Mean Girls, The Musical*

Final Reflection Due by 11:59 pm!