

## 7<sup>th</sup> International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter: Theory, Research and Applications

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The 7<sup>th</sup> International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter was held in Aberdeen, Scotland, hosted by the Department of Computing Science of the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, from July 9 - 14, 2007 (see: <http://www.csd.abdn.ac.uk/iss107/>).

The Summer School was organized by Dr. Graeme Ritchie from the University of Aberdeen and Professor Willibald Ruch from the University of Zurich. The course was intended to be of benefit to both research students and more experienced researchers considering conducting research in the field of humour and laughter.

The teaching faculty comprised nine speakers, allowing greater diversity in the topics covered. Lectures were given by Professor Christie Davies (University of Reading), Dr Christian Hempelmann (Hakia Inc.), Dr Giseline Kuipers (University of Amsterdam), Dr Sharon Lockyer (Brunel University, London) (ISHS Emerging Scholar, 2004), Professor Elliott Oring (California State University, Los Angeles), Dr Graeme Ritchie (University of Aberdeen), Professor Willibald Ruch (University of Zurich), Dr Andrea Samson (University of Fribourg) (ISHS Emerging Scholar, 2006) and Eva Ullmann (German Institute of Humour).

The programme aimed to provide an overview of the interdisciplinary nature of humor research, by considering theory and empirical evidence, addressing special research issues, discussing methodology and evaluation of research findings to date, and also to consider some of the applications of humour and laughter. An essential part of the Summer School were the following workshops: “Analyzing texts with the General Theory of Verbal Humour“, “Ethnic humor and ethnic relations“ and a workshop on “Joy and Humour at work, more than effective“.

There were also several **Meet the Lecturer** sessions, where participants could sign up for a one-to-one discussion with a lecturer of his/her choice.

Representative sessions addressed topics such as:

- An introduction to humour research
- Is incongruity that is resolved humor?
- Humor in folklore and anthropology
- Measuring humour traits and states: What instrument to use when and why?
- Theory of mind, empathy and humor
- Humor and social theory
- Were Soviet political jokes a form of protest?
- Sitcoms, sketch shows and documentaries: analysing television comedy

- The analysis of jokes
- Word play: humorous and non-humorous
- Humor in fMRI studies
- Humor as communication
- Jokes and cartoons, conflict and war
- Are cartoons drawn jokes?
- The analysis of repertoire
- The methodology of testing humour theories
- Is humour theory of any use to anyone?
- The aesthetics of joke performance
- Social differences in sense of humor (and how to study them)
- Humour and laughter: malleable or (genetically) fixed?
- The cultural industry of humor
- Borat, Berlusconi and *Brass Eye*: exploring the limits of humour
- Computational humour and language skills development
- Humor as character strength, orientations to happiness, and life satisfaction

The Summer School was attended by 23 participants, including undergraduates, postgraduates, academics and practitioners. These participants came from England, France, Germany, Italy, Hong Kong, Lebanon, Lithuania, Norway, Romania, Scotland, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, and the USA. Academic disciplines represented included Psychology, Neuroscience, Linguistics, Sociology, Literary Studies and Educational Science, and there were practitioners using humour in a variety of settings, including counselling and stress management. The variety of participants' experiences was reflected in the debate engendered by many of the sessions.

The Symposium part of the Summer School took place on Thursday, featuring presentations of the participants' planned or finished research, or ideas on how to implement and use humour in applied settings. The presentations comprised the following:

*Contemporary political jokes in Lebanon.* Sara Binay.

*Sense of humour in schizophrenic patients.* Irina Falkenberg.

*The aesthetics of humour in nurse- patient interactions – an interpretive approach.*  
Helen Iggulden.

*'Non-Serious' and Political Public Sphere: Opposite to Orwellian 'Newspeak'?*  
Jūratė Kavaliauskaitė.

*The Effective and Responsible Use of Humour in Persuasion.* Jim Lyttle.

*Humor explanations investigated by means of the LIWC.* Yonni Meyer.

*Jacques Chirac as presented by Le Canard enchaîné-- derision and irreverence as mechanisms of social correction.* Ana Pedrazzini

*Using Cartoons as a Learning Strategy.* Teresa Plana Vidal.

*Irony in films.* Eliana Terminiello.

*Humorous names, Verbal Weapons.* Noleen Turner.

*Exploring incongruity in computer-generated jokes.* Chris Venour.

Bids to host the Summer School and Symposium in future years are currently being accepted and are encouraged. Details are available at the summer school website: <http://www.psychologie.unizh.ch/perspsy/humor/iss.htm>

People interested should contact Willibald Ruch (w.ruch@psychologie.unizh.ch). A panel of previous Summer School conveners form an advisory board and will help with details.

The 2007 Summer School and Symposium was supported by the Department of Computing Science, University of Aberdeen and by hokia Inc. Thanks are due to the support staff at the University for helping to make the event run smoothly.

This Summer School is endorsed by the International Society for Humor Studies (ISHS).

Graeme Ritchie

Willibald Ruch