

EGMT 1510 Engaging Aesthetics
Punching Up: US Satire

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Land Acknowledgment

This class at the University of Virginia respectfully acknowledges the custodians of the land we are on today, the Monacan Nation, and pay our respect to their elders past, present and emerging. To learn more about UVA's past and present connections to the Monacan Nation, I recommend [this website](#) from the Office for Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights. To learn more about the Monacan people, [read their history](#).

“Engaging Aesthetics” description

This course, one of four “Engagements” courses you’ll take as a first-year student, focuses on aesthetics—that is, various kinds of transformative encounters with art, literature, performance, and environment. Sensibilities that we absorb from our social world, our surroundings, and our experiences guide our views of particular forms of expression and style over time, motivating how we engage with and interpret our world. All of us—as makers of all kinds—design and curate our daily lives and reinterpret our worlds. These aesthetic interventions can reveal vital ways of thinking about our present, our past, and about whom we might become in the future. A course in “Engaging Aesthetics” is intended to help you:

- describe, analyze, and create;
- think critically about the nature of art and artistry;
- become aware of how aesthetic experience underlies social life and can frame our politics;
- reflect on the historical, geographical, and cultural differences that shape aesthetic expressions and hierarchies;
- and respond to and take stock of the moral and ethical capacities of the arts, both in everyday life and at moments of social, political, and environmental crisis.

“Punching Up: US Satire” description

Satire makes the powerful feel weak and the weak feel powerful. It ridicules hypocrisy and points out what we dare not say or think. By showing us how foolish and absurd power can be, satire suggests that our world can be otherwise. US satire skewers distinctions of race, gender, and class as self-contradictory, yet undeniably real. Satire can be poignant, too. As we all know, laughter sometimes ends in tears.

In this course, we study American satirists working from the nineteenth century to the present. Students will learn about these texts and their contexts, focusing on how form and content conspire to produce satire. Viktor Shklovsky famously argues that great art

“defamiliarizes” us with the world. Perhaps no mode is more committed to defamiliarization than satire.

Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain what satire is and is not.
- Describe and analyze how satirical form and content interrelate.
- Reflect on the historical, geographical, and cultural differences that shape our responses to satirical aesthetics.
- Take stock of the moral and ethical capacities of satire at moments of social, political, and environmental crisis.
- Express original ideas in discussion, writing, and presentations, both individually and in collaboration with peers.

Syllabus

The official course syllabus is the version of this document currently available online. I will announce any significant changes in class and via email.

Calendar

All readings and assignments are online.

Date	Mtg #	Reading due	Assignment due
Oct 16	1	-	-
Oct 18	2	<i>The Sellout</i> ¹ Optional: “The Return of the King”	Advocating for art
Oct 23	3	PODCASTING LIBRARY TRIP <i>Black No More</i> ²	Satirical headlines
Oct 25	4	“Harrison Bergeron” ³ <i>Idiocracy</i> ⁴	-
Oct 30	5	Selected <i>Devil’s Dictionary</i> definitions ⁵ “What is satire?” ⁶	Podcast 1
Nov 1	6	<i>Gentlemen Prefer Blondes</i> ⁷	-

¹ Paul Beatty, *The Sellout*, First edition (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 3–24.

² George S. Schuyler, *Black No More: Being an Account of the Strange and Wonderful Workings of Science in the Land of the Free, A.D. 1933-1940* (College Park, Md: McGrath Pub. Co, 1969).

³ Kurt Vonnegut, “Harrison Bergeron,” in *Novels & Stories 1950-1962*, ed. Sidney Offit, The Library of America 226 (New York: Library of America : Distributed to the trade in the United States by Penguin Group (USA) Inc, 2012), 763–70.

⁴ *Idiocracy* (United States: Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, 2006).

⁵ Ambrose Bierce, *The Unabridged Devil’s Dictionary*, ed. David E. Schultz and S. T. Joshi (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000).

⁶ Jonathan Greenberg, *The Cambridge Introduction to Satire*, Cambridge Introductions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 3–26.

⁷ Anita Loos, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes: The Illuminating Diary of a Professional Lady* (London: Brentano’s, Ltd, 1926), 1–60.

Nov 6	7	“Xingu” ⁸ Selected Dorothy Parker poems ⁹	Dictionary entries
Nov 8	8	<i>Severance</i> ¹⁰	-
Nov 13	9	“The War Prayer” ¹¹ 2006 White House Correspondents’ Dinner ¹²	Podcast 2
Nov 15	10	<i>Network</i> ¹³ Optional: <i>Amusing Ourselves to Death</i>	-
Nov 20	11	ZOOM CLASS <i>Babbitt</i> ¹⁴ “Homer’s Enemy” ¹⁵	Final project prospectus
Nov 27	12	<i>Little Inferno</i> ¹⁶	-
Nov 29	13	“A Good Man is Hard to Find” ¹⁷	-
Dec 4	14	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final project • Engagements Experience • Self-Assessment

Commonplace Book

You will produce evidence of your reading in a course [commonplace book on Canvas](#). For each reading, you will write three or so sentences describing one significant aspect of your encounter with the text. Your commonplace book entries are *informal* writing, but they evince good reading.

Through this practice, we will develop a course culture of reading and annotation. We will hold each other mutually accountable for good reading through peer review of our commonplaces.

Engagements Experience (EE)

As a student at the University of Virginia, you are part of an exciting and robust intellectual community. The goal of the Engagement Experience (EE) is to make you feel welcomed into this community, where you’ll discover new ideas and meet fascinating people.

⁸ Edith Wharton, *Collected Stories, 1911-1937*, Library of America 122 (New York: Library of America, 2001), 1–25.

⁹ Dorothy Parker, *Complete Poems*, Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics (New York: Penguin Books, 1999).

¹⁰ Ling Ma, *Severance*, First edition (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018), 3–26, 58–72.

¹¹ Mark Twain, *Europe and Elsewhere* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1923), 394–98.

¹² Stephen Colbert, “2006 White House Correspondents’ Dinner,” C-SPAN, April 29, 2006, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?192243-1/2006-white-house-correspondents-dinner>.

¹³ *Network* (Santa Monica, CA: Warner Home Video, 2000).

¹⁴ Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street & Babbitt*, The Library of America 59 (New York: Library of America, 1992), 487–521.

¹⁵ *The Simpsons: The Complete Eighth Season* (Beverly Hills, Calif: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2006).

¹⁶ Kyle Gabler, Allan Blomquist, and Kyle Gray, “Little Inferno” (Tomorrow Corporation, 2012), <https://tomorrowcorporation.com/littleinferno>.

¹⁷ Flannery O’Connor, *Collected Works*, The Library of America 39 (New York, NY: Library of America : Distributed to the trade in the U.S. and Canada by Viking Press, 1988).

The EE is part of the Engagements program, existing alongside the Engagement course you are currently taking.

The EE is required for all contracts. Failure to complete the EE automatically reduces your final grade in the course by one letter (e.g., from an A to a B). There are three components:

- 1) Attend the Fall '23 Majors' Fair as your Engagement Experience (more below)
- 2) Complete an Academic Advising Activity
- 3) Complete an Engaging Grounds experience (more information below)

Component 1: Engagements Experience event

Majors Fair

Tuesday, October 10th, 1-4 pm @ Newcomb Ballroom

Stop by Newcomb Hall Ballroom to connect with more than 50 majors and academic programs! Get your questions answered, and have a walk around to explore your options, all in one place! Email Katie Densberger at kad7k@virginia.edu with questions.

Even if you think you know what you want to major in, we encourage you to visit the Majors Fair with an open mind.

Note that you will have completed this activity at the end of Q1 just prior to the start of your Q2 Engagement class, but it counts for Q2.

Component 2: Academic Advising Activity

The EE will help keep you on track with your general education requirements by asking you to complete one academic advising activity during each quarter. These activities will help prepare you for coursework in the following semester.

Component 2: Meet with your academic advisor

In advance of registering for classes for the Spring 2024 semester, you must attend your scheduled faculty advising meeting. If you have not received a message from your advisor about scheduling these meetings by October 24th, reach out to them to schedule something.

Component 3: Engaging Grounds

Each quarter you will participate in one *Engaging Grounds* experience. This quarter, your Engaging Grounds required activity is our visit to the Robertson Media Center to learn about podcasting.

Submitting the EE

Attest that you have completed all elements of the Engagements Experience by writing “On my honor, I have completed all components of the EE” under the Canvas assignment titled “Engagements Experience” by the posted deadline.

Grading

This class uses [contract grading](#). Contract grading aspires to be more transparent and equitable than traditional grading. It should motivate you to focus on the course material instead of worrying about whether you have a 92.4% or a 92.6%.

The main difference between contract grading and conventional grading is that the difference between an A and a B is determined by *quantity*. Higher amounts of effort yield higher grades.

Here is how the contract works: You will tell me what grade you intend to earn. Then, you will sign a contract stating that you will satisfactorily complete a specific amount of work that will earn you that grade. You can contract for an A, B, or C. Earning an A requires the most work; a C requires the least. If you do not satisfactorily complete enough work to fulfill the terms of your contract, you may still receive a D or an F. See the course contract for complete details.

Email

I reply to email within two business days. Do not expect replies over the weekend.

Office Hours

I host my office hours by appointment to meet with all my students, not just those who happen to be available during preset office hours. Speak to me before or after class, or email me to set up a time. We can meet in person or remotely as is mutually convenient.

Health

If you are ill and may be infectious, please do not come to class. If you are feeling well enough to come to class, please wear a mask. Students who miss class due to illness will receive excused absences and alternative assignments. Ideally, you should notify me of your illness before the class you miss. However, if you are unable to notify me until after class, please do so *as soon as possible*.

“Artificial Intelligence”

Put simply, large language models (LLMs)—including OpenAI’s ChatGPT, Google’s Bard, and others—use text from the internet to predict which word will most likely come next given the prior sequence of words in the prompt. LLMs do not “know” things about the world. Rather, they make predictions about how words *might* go together based on their training data.

Because a great deal of the text used to train ChatGPT and other LLMs came from Reddit conversations, **I consider any interaction with an LLM to be about as trustworthy as a random Reddit thread.** Sometimes Reddit posts are excellent; mostly they are terrible. You would not and should not cite Reddit as an authoritative academic source. You should use LLMs in the same way and with the same degree of skepticism.

If you do use LLMs, all submitted writing must be your own original work. Do not copy-paste. You are required to acknowledge your use of LLMs through citation.

How do you cite an interaction with an LLM? If you use ChatGPT, I encourage you to keep all of your conversations with it pertaining to a given essay or topic in the same “Chat.” Then, when you submit your work, you can cite a single link to your interactions with the LLM about this assignment. To do so, select the share chat icon (a box with an arrow pointing up and out), copy the URL, and cite that URL in your submission.

Notice of Non-Discrimination

The University of Virginia does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, marital status, military status (which includes active duty service members, reserve service members, and dependents), national or ethnic origin, political affiliation, pregnancy (including childbirth and related conditions), race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, veteran status, and family medical or genetic information, in its programs and activities as required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Governor's Executive Order Number One (2018), and other applicable statutes and University policies. UVA prohibits sexual and gender-based harassment, including sexual assault, and other forms of interpersonal violence.

Students of all immigration statuses are welcomed and valued in this classroom, including undocumented students, students from mixed-status families, and students with Temporary Protected Status. As an educator, I aim to create a learning environment that respects and affirms the diversity of students' experiences and perspectives. If your status is impacting your success in the course, please come see me to discuss things I can do to accommodate you (assignments, attendance, etc.). I pledge to keep your status confidential unless required by judicial warrant.

Reporting Discriminatory Conduct

Per UVA policy [HRM-040](#), I am a Responsible Employee. If you mention prohibited conduct to me, I am required to report it. Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to, sexual and gender-based harassment and violence, bias and discrimination/harassment, hazing, interference with speech rights, threats or acts of violence.

If you experience or observe prohibited conduct, report it using UVA's [Just Report It](#).

Accommodations

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the University of Virginia offers an array of individualized accommodations and services to qualified students with disabilities. Accommodations are determined using an interactive process between the student and Student Disability Access Center staff. Contact the [Student Disability Access Center](#) with questions.

Religious Accommodation

Students who wish to request academic accommodation for a religious observance should submit their request to me by email as far in advance as possible. If you have questions or concerns about your request, you can contact the University's Office for Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights at UVAEOCR@virginia.edu or 434-924-3200. Accommodations do not relieve you of the responsibility for completion of any part of the coursework you miss as the result of a religious observance. More information about religious accommodations is available [here](#), and frequently asked questions are [here](#).

Campus Resources

- In the event of a crisis, you can reach out to the [Dean on Call](#).

- If you are struggling with mental health, UVA [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) can help.
- Charlottesville's [Sexual Assault Resource Agency](#) responds to sexual and/or gender-based violence: 434-977-7273
- [The UVA Writing Center](#) will advise you on any stage of writing.
- If you are struggling to manage money, a [Peer Financial Counselor](#) can help.
- UVA helps [students experiencing food insecurity](#) get free nutritious food.
- Students who wish to improve their English may be interested in the [Sundberg International Center's programming](#).