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AUTHOR Sloane, David E. E.
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ABSTRACT

This syllabus describes a three-credit course entitled "American Humor," offered at the University of New Haven (Connecticut). According to the syllabus, "American Humor" will identify traits of American humor as historical phenomena with relations to national character, business attitudes, regionalism, folk humor, and health; historical precedents will be related to modern media, magazines, and television; and Mark Twain and Woody Allen will be studied as major American comic writers. The syllabus lists course prerequisites, gives a course description, specifies dates the course will run and date for registration, explains how to register, provides course details, profiles the instructor, and cites the requirements for completion of the course. It contains a detailed description and explanation of every aspect of the course, from course objectives to readings to the 15 different modules which make up the course. The syllabus explains grading standards, threaded discussion requirements, online office hours, and research paper requirements. A seven-item book list is appended. (NKA)



AMERICAN HUMOR

1.1.1

E 394.01--American Humor
The University of New Haven
Dr. David E. E. Sloane at (203) 777-0667
3 semester credits
Tuition: \$845.00

1.1.2 MODULE 1

Module 1 contains the following:

General Course Information
Course Syllabus
Grading Policy
Book and Resource List
Requirements:

Threaded Discussions
Papers
Final Portfolio

1.1.3 TO DO:

Introduce Yourself (First Day of Course)

Contribute to Threaded Discussion on Levels of Decorum (First Day of Course)
Complete Quiz on Understanding of Course Requirements (By Sunday of First Week of Course)

1.2.1 Prerequisites: Two semesters of Freshman English **-OR-** permission of the instructor; completion of a survey course in English or American literature is recommended.

1.2.2 Course Description: "American Humor" will identify traits of American humor as historical phenomena with relations to national character, business attitudes, regionalism, folk humor, and health. Historical precedents will be related to modern media, magazines, and television. Mark Twain and Woody Allen will be studied as major American comic writers.

1.3.1 Date Course Will Run: August 30th to December 15th, 2000

1.3.2 Date for Registration: Registration will continue until August 30th, 2000

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1.3.3 How to Register: Students who are not matriculated at UNH can use the application/registration form on the UNH website. The form can be printed out and mailed in with a check or faxed in (Fax: 1-203-931-6093) with credit card information. Registration can also be done in person. Call 1-800-342-5864 (x 7319) for further information on registration.

1.4 Course Details

The course fills literature and humanities requirements.
Weekly assignments can be entered and completed at any time within the week.
Instruction is based on-line, in books, and in other media providing online discussion alternatives to classroom instruction. I anticipate that students will spend more hours on this course than an equivalent lecture-based course and will have a more uniform involvement with the material and college-level discussion.

1.5 Instructor: Dr. David E. E. Sloane

Dr. Sloane's credentials: Dr. Sloane is past president of the Mark Twain Circle and the American Humor Studies Association and the Executive Director of the American Humor Studies Association; he is author of *American Humor Magazines and Comic Periodicals* (1987), *The Literary Humor of the Urban Northeast, 1830-1890* (1982), and *New Directions in American Humor* (1998), among other essays, speeches, and reviews on American humor topics, three other books on Mark Twain, and other scholarly activities. In 1989 he was awarded the "Henry Nash Smith Fellowship" by the Center for Mark Twain Studies at Elmira for outstanding contributions to the field of Mark Twain Studies and American Humor in the decade 1979-1989. In 1994 and 1998 he organized international conventions in this field of study, the first resulting in a refereed university press book.

1.6.1 "Consider the Mummy, He Ain't Had No Fun in 4,000 Years"

--motto of Sagebrush Philosophy
(1904-1910), an American humor
regional periodical.

1.6.2 Requirements

1.6.2.1 E-Mail Conference Submissions

Analytic Comment (5-10 sentences) on weekly readings
Two Responses to other submissions
One joke plus comment on it per week
Response to another joke submission

1.6.2.2. Three Papers: Due at the end of module 5, 10, and 14 growing out of conference discussions or on other subjects as relates to the syllabus

1.6.2.3 Final Portfolio: Due May 15.

[Grading](#) | [Book List](#) | [Discussion](#) | [Quiz](#) | [Welcome](#) | [Syllabus](#)
Contact Dr. Sloane at <dees@charger.newhaven.edu>



1.7.1

COURSE SYLLABUS

E 394 Studies in American Humor Spring 2001 Dr. Sloane

1.7.2 COURSE OBJECTIVES: To identify prominent traits of American humor as a historical phenomenon. To relate historical precedent to modern humor in mediums including magazines, radio, and television. To identify elements of folk humor, tall tales, and sub-culture humor. To relate general American characteristics to works by Mark Twain and Woody Allen as representative major American comic writers. To identify the present uses and nature of American humor in popular forums and develop student awareness of how to use humor.

1.7.3 ATTENDANCE: Weekly discussion submission and twice weekly response is required, as is weekly joke/comment and response: two cuts are permitted; three cuts mean automatic dismissal; lateness counts as one-half cut. **Required submissions and responses are the primary means of grading in this course and no lateness or failure to submit is excused except by agreement of the instructor prior to the beginning of the course.** Modules coincide with weeks in a conventional semester and submission of work must take place within that week (no later than Sunday midnight by electronic mail or the previous day if by postmarked regular mail).

1.7.4 READINGS:

DIVERGENT OPTIONS: Because our classroom is the internet, we are not all constrained to read or experience identical texts. I am willing to negotiate divergent syllabi focussing on specific media, using the present syllabus as a template. Also, using the present syllabus as a model, I am prepared to negotiate sub-topical themes around such things as "Northeastern Humor," "Business Humor/ Applied," (for people who wish to use humor as a tool in their workplace) or "Humor and Health (for nurses and health practitioners)." We would still expect to cover the historical aspects of the course, but large blocks of reading and writing could be focussed on your special interest. Five modules have divergent options built in; these may appeal to various students as attractive ways to personalize the standard course. See Below.

1.7.5 Five **DIVERGENT OPTIONS** are offered below. These options will help generate discussion in our discussions as you bring your experience back to our class. Please note in viewing TV/Radio comedy that you need to be familiar with at least one show, so you might plan ahead and tape a few segments or watch or listen to a show regularly. Many historically important shows are available on videotape or disk.

COURSE SYLLABUS BY MODULES

1.8.1 Course Information: **MODULE 1: Introduction (January 25-February 4)**

Course Syllabus and related information

Booklist and Resources: review readings to plan your semester.

TO DO: Personal Introductions of Students and Instructor--enter appropriate thread of the threaded discussion

Course Expectations

TO DO: Discussion of Level of Decorum--enter appropriate thread of the threaded discussion

TO DO: QUIZ

1.8.2.1 **MODULE 2: American Humor as an Historical Phenomenon (February 5 - February 11)**

Defining Humor, American Humor, International Humor

Colonial Humor and Satire through 1820, Northeastern Humor, Yankee & Knickerbocker, Southwestern, Western humor, etc.

TO READ: Bakalar, American Satire: Morton through Irving*. You should also read Benjamin Franklin pieces "Old Mistresses Apologue," "The Witch Trial at Mount Holly," and "The Speech of Miss Polly Baker." If you want to get "The Ephemeræ," that is also good reading.

TO DO: Submit Comment and two responses.

TO DO: Submit Comic item or joke and 1 response

TO DO: QUIZ

1.8.2.2 *The colonial period selections in Bakalar are not the most funny of the writings by these authors (but, at least, they are a fallback). For Morton, Chapter XIV, XV, and XVI of Part III of The New English Canaan (available in most large American Literature survey anthologies are much funnier in their scorn of Capt. Shrimp (Capt. John Smith of the Puritans); if possible get those selections. You could omit Freneau, except for his "Doctor" portrait, particularly if you can find time to read Lord Timothy Dexter, Poor Richard's Almanac, or Sarah Kemble Knight's The Private Journal of a Journey from Boston to New York, also available in many American literature anthologies.

1.8.3 **MODULE 3: Northeastern Humor** from Literary Humor of the Urban Northeast: 1830-1890 Paulding, Cox, Neal, Haliburton and others (**February 12 - February 18**)

Humor as Cultural Reflector

TO READ: all pop-ups, including "The Speech of David Wood," "Paulding's "Jonathan Visits the Celestial Empire," Seba Smith's "Jack Downing," Haliburton's "Sam Slick" writings and William Cox's "Steam." Joseph C. Neal's short sketches are very important: "Orson Dabbs, the Hittite" and "Peter Brush, The Great Used Up," are pop-ups, especially important in opening up the urban Northeast as a region. Bakalar, read Hawthorne, Fern, and Lowell

TO DO: Submit comment for discussion and respond to 2 others

TO DO: Submit Comic item or joke and respond to 1 other

TO DO: Take Quiz

Note: The First 5-page paper is due at the end of Module 5, now would be a good time to pick a topic and discuss it online with the instructor and other students.

1.8.4 MODULE 4: Southwestern Humor: (February 19 - February 25)

TO READ: Selections in The Humor of the Old Southwest, edited by Hennig Cohen and William Dillingham:

Thomas Bangs Thorpe, "The Big Bear of Arkansas"***
J. K. Paulding, "The Lion of the West"
G. W. Harris, "Sut Lovingood's Daddy, Acting Horse"***

"Parson John Bullen's Lizards"
"Blown Up with Soda"
"Sicily Burns's Wedding"
"Rare Ripe Garden Seed"

J. J. Hooper, "The Captain Attends a Camp Meeting"***
W. T. Thompson, "The Coon-Hunt; or, A Fency Country"
A. B. Longstreet, "The Horse Swap"***

"The Fight"

H. C. Lewis, "A Tight Race Considerin'"

"Cupping on the Sternum"

***read carefully for quiz

TO DO: Submit your comment and responses. You may do additional comments on stories in your "joke" assignment as this week is a "reading" week. Show all the reading you can. Extra credit is assigned for those who read all the above and go beyond to bring us further suggestions.

1.8.5

1.8.5.1 MODULE 5: Twain and the Regions, Northeastern & Southwestern Humor; (February 26 - March 3)

TO READ: Pps. 1-109, 156-162 in Mark Twain--Tales, Speeches, Essays, and Sketches

Link Forward to the Artemus Ward Pop-ups in Module 6

TO DO: Submit Discussion comment and two responses

TO DO: Submit joke and response; you may offer something from Twain or another regional writer if you wish.

TO DO: Take Quiz

You should read Artemus Ward's letters on various subjects, especially "The Prince of Wales" and "Interviews the Prince Napoleon". Read further in Cohen and Dillingham. Seek other older anthologies of American humor in your local library and read selections as you find them.

1.8.5.2 DIVERGENT OPTION ONE: Since the internet allows us to diverge, you may choose to read some stories in the Southwestern Tradition, the nineteenth-century feminist tradition, or a number of other "traditions" and become our specialist in an area. First e-mail Dr. Sloane or pose your area on the threaded discussion

1.8.6.0 TO DO: **5-7 Page paper due end of Module 5. You should now take one of the discussions in this course and define the problem in a paragraph of roughly 100-200 words; then, you should fill out a discussion of it in 1,000 to 1,500 words, citing references, sources, and other students as if all are part of a formal scholarly research activity. Papers submitted on paper with self-addressed return stamped envelopes will be marked line by line for matters of style and grammar. On-line papers will be returned with critical commentary, notes, and a grade, but line-by-line grammatical markings may be minimal, depending on time.

1.8.6.1 MODULE 6: Later Nineteenth Century Comedy--Other Readings, (March 4 - March 11)

TO READ Twain: Tales, Speeches, Essays--

"The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg (1899)"

"To The Person Sitting in Darkness (1901)"; on to HUCK
FINN

Artemus Ward and Marietta Holley selections in Pop-ups

Humor as cultural reflector, Part II

You might also read in Mark Twain's Library of Humor, if you can find a reprint in a library, compiled by Twain and W. D. Howells and reprinted in the 1960s and therefore sometimes available. You will find many more humorists there.

TO DO: Submit comment and 2 responses. Submit comic piece or joke and 1 response. Take Quiz

Spring Recess **March 12 - March 18**

1.8.7 MODULE 7: Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (March 19 - March 25)

Finish through Chapter 24.

TO READ: Huck Finn, Chapters 1-24

TO DO: Submit comments and 2 responses. Submit humor item or other material and 1 response. Take Quiz

1.8.8 MODULE 8: Humor and American Ethics (March 26 - March 31)

TO READ: Huck Finn, Chapter 24 to the End

TO DO: Submit your comment to discussion and 2 responses. Submit key joke lines from this or other Twain works and 1 comment. Take Quiz

Note: Next Paper is Nov. 4, plan ahead.

1.8.8.1 DIVERGENT OPTION FOUR: If you would like to substitute A CONNECTICUT YANKEE, INNOCENTS ABROAD, PUDD'NHEAD WILSON--a short book of about 90 pages for those of you pressed for time--you may do so.

1.8.9.1 MODULE 9: Local Humor in the Twentieth Century: (April 2 - April 8)

Regional and Sexual Humor

TO READ: Welsh: Shingling the Fog and Other Plains Lies

Read at least "Rough Weather," "Big Men," and "Strange Critters"

Skim the rest for Regional Humor/ Local Jokes

Randolph: Pissing in the Snow, sexual and vulgar humor

Bakalar, American Satire: read the Twentieth century material from Wharton through Langston Hughes.

Begin reading Schuyler, Black No More

TO DO: Submit Comments and 2 Responses. Submit joke/comic lines and 1 response. Take Quiz

1.8.9.2. DIVERGENT OPTION TWO: You may specialize in a region or an ethnic group of your choosing; no prior permission is needed, just get sufficient material and submit notes and bibliographical reference.

1.8.10.1 MODULE 10: Mad, National Lampoon, Spy: Humor Magazines (April 9 - April 15)

Humor Magazines, New College Humor, City Humor Magazines

TV/Radio Humor and the Movies. (Nov. 8-14, 1999)

Sit-Coms, Comedy Shows, Car Talk

Garrison Keillor and the Prairie Home Companion

TV Humor

TO READ: Bakalar, American Satire, Dorothy Parker, James Thurber, Langston Hughes

TO DO: Find a humor magazine, movie, or TV/radio show that is either periodical or ephemeral (a throw-away one-time event) and bring it to the on-line discussion. You may use a historical example like Mad, Life Puck, Judge, etc.--some are on microfilm in college libraries. You may also go to the newstand and see if there are humor magazines, tabloids, or large humor sections in related magazines. If you do a TV situation comedy, please give us a very brief outline of the plot and full information on date of show, title, if any, and other information.

NOTE: There is no quiz at the end of this module; your grade will be based solely on the quality of your submissions.

1.8.11.2 DIVERGENT OPTION THREE: Please pick one or two shows and try to see re-runs or even tape one to review two or three times and report on its "style", "content," characterization, Reflection of its period and creators' attitudes.

1.8.10.2 **5-7 Page paper due END OF MODULE 10. You should now take one of the discussions in this course and define the problem in a paragraph of roughly 100-200 words; then, you should fill out a discussion of it in 1,000 to 1,500 words, citing references, sources, and other students as if all are part of a formal scholarly research activity. Papers submitted on paper with self-addressed return stamped envelopes will be marked line by line for matters of style and grammar. On-line papers will be returned with critical commentary, notes, and a grade, but line-by-line grammatical markings may be minimal, depending on time.

1.8.11.1 MODULE 11: George Schuyler, Black No More and African-American Humor (April 16 - April 22)

TO READ: George Schuyler, Black No More.

TO DO: Submit comment to discussion and 2 responses.

Submit joke and 1 response (can you find something on another humorist, such as Pryor?). Take Quiz

1.8.12.1 MODULE 12: "Applied Humor" (April 23 - April 29)

Humor in the Workplace

Use by corporations to stimulate creative thinking

Humor applications

As outlet for employee frustrations

Humor and Health

Other Applications

12.2 TO DO: Either from our readings or from another source, submit an example of "applied humor."

Comment on two other applications.

Provide a story or joke that bears on work or health.

Comment on one other submission.

Complete Quiz and Submit

PLAN AHEAD: Module 14 Paper and Final Portfolio

1.8.12.2 DIVERGENT OPTION FOUR: A number of books by Dundes, Boskin, Christie 12.2Davies are loaded with jokes and discussions of them, and more "Joke Books" exist (from the 1500s as "Jest Books" to now)--you are welcome to become an "expert" in one of these and report to us.

1.8.13.1 MODULE 13: Woody Allen and Garrison Keillor: (May 1 - May 6)

Side Effects;-or-
Annie Hall and Manhattan;-or-
Love and Death and The Purple Rose of Cairo; -or-
Lake Wobegon Days

TO READ OR VIEW (one of four options): Allen Side Effects

Manhattan, Annie Hall Love and Death, The
Purple Rose of Cairo Keillor, Lake Wobegon
Days

TO DO: Submit Comments to discussion, respond to 2 others. Submit comic line, respond to 1 other

Note: Your grade for this module is based on your submissions: no quiz.

1.8.13.2 DIVERGENT OPTION FIVE: You may read any of Allen's three collections or substitute a humor book or collection of short stories by another modern contemporary writer such as Garrison Keillor. A number of Allen's movies are also scripted and may be used to fulfill this assignment. You can also urge another humorist on us, but you must make the case.

1.8.14 MODULE 14: Contemporary Humor:(May 7 - May 12)

Richard Pryor, Nightclubs, On-Line
New Directions in American Humor
Take a field trip to your local video store.

TO READ: Bakalar, American Satire, complete your readings:
Vonnegut, Baker, Vidal, Trillin, O'Rourke, Ivins

TO DO: Submit comment and 2 responses to discussion. Submit joke and 1 response. Take Quiz

1.8.14.1 **5-7 Page paper due END OF MODULE 14. You should now take one of the discussions in this course and define the problem in a paragraph of roughly 100-200 words; then, you should fill out a discussion of it in 1,000 to 1,500 words, citing references, sources, and other students as if all are part of a formal scholarly research activity. Papers submitted on paper with self-addressed return stamped envelopes will be marked line by line for matters of style and grammar. On-line papers will be returned with critical commentary, notes, and a grade, but line-by-line grammatical markings may be minimal, depending on time.

1.8.15 MODULE 15: Summary and Conclusions: (May 13 May 16)

American Humor as a field. Your future uses, reading, experiencing, and enjoyment of humor.

TO DO: SUBMIT FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE, May 16, 2001.

[Book List](#) | [Discussion](#) | [Quiz](#) | [Welcome](#) | [Course Overview](#) | [Grading](#)
Contact Dr. Sloane at <dees@charger.newhaven.edu>



1.8.16.1 Grading

A-- Consistently high level of comment and material in Threaded Discussions--all submission requirements met with excellence.
Three papers showing well documented research in critical texts as well as internet resources outside the required readings.
Coherent, logical, grammatical and sophisticated writing style. A portfolio presenting your own personal course notes, submissions to discussions, responses, joke/comment, papers, and other material you have read on the internet or in the library, presented in three-ring binder with appropriate cover pages as defined below.

1.8.16.2

B-- Same as above but with some submissions of less value to others in class, as judged by responses. Generally good papers with less documentation. Coherent and grammatical writing style. Portfolio as above, but with less independent material. Some individual course notes, week by week.

1.8.16.3

C-- Same as above but with varied quality of submissions. Only cursory course notes for some weeks. Acceptable papers.
Some writing deficiencies acceptable. Portfolio documents work in course but not beyond explicit requirements.

1.8.16.4

D-- Same as above but with weak or missing discussion items. Few course notes. Papers showing writing deficiencies but still above post-test level. Portfolio with various deficiencies but showing passable course involvement.

1.8.16.5

F-- Above the "cut" level for submissions. Deficient papers in grammar or documentation. Plagiarism--unacknowledged use of another's work. Failure to complete and submit a satisfactory PORTFOLIO by required date

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1.9 Threaded Discussion Requirements:

1.9.1

1. **Primary weekly comment** 8-10 lines/one-two thoughtful paragraphs (relating to weekly work entered at least once weekly no later than Wednesday evening 10:00pm). Show your involvement with the literature by pointing a key trait or a line or two or an incident that you think is particularly characteristic; add a research point if you wish. Larger involvement which is valuable to others in the course will gain expanded credit in the grading process. The quality of your weekly submissions will be one of the primary methods of grading: print them each week for submission as part of your final portfolio. Submit under your own name thread.

1.9.2

2. **Primary Weekly Response (TWO)** Comment on two other submissions each week. You must respond to at least two "Primary comments" each week. You must respond to every student in the course at least once during the semester: Please do not respond only to the same two or three students. Print your responses for submission with your final portfolio. Submit under the other submission as a response.

1.9.3

3. **Weekly Joke/Anecdote** Submit one joke, funny story, or humorous item weekly with a brief comment on why you noticed it. Print your item for submission with your portfolio. Submit under your own name thread.

1.9.4

4. **Joke Response** Respond to another student's "Weekly Joke" submission, arguing that it is or is not a worthwhile joke or story from the viewpoint of American cultural expression. Print your response for inclusion in your portfolio. Submit under the other person's joke/anecdote as a response.

1.9.5

Varied discussions are offered: please head each of your submissions as either

"Module # ____" and enter under your own name

"Response by _____" enter under other person's comment

"Module # ____ Joke" enter under your own name

"Response by _____" enter under other person's joke

1.9.6

Students who exceed expectations will gain extra credit.

1.10.1 Level of Decorum: Sexual, Racial, and Religious humor is highly charged material. You may NOT bring jokes to our forums that will have the effect of embarrassing, paining, or intimidating other students either through language or content. In questionable cases, you should e-mail the joke to Dr. Sloane with your discussion (for credit as if submitted to the chatroom) and gain his permission to post.

1.10.2 Since groups vary, a brief required discussion of the kind of humor which each course group will accept will be conducted at the start of the course: the limitations requested by any individual in the course will be honored as much as is consistent with covering necessary material. If students wish to exchange jokes outside those limits, an extra e-mail network can be set up to accommodate them, as well. The internet allows us tremendous flexibility in achieving a widely divergent experience, yet of equal value to everyone in the class.

1.10.3.1 "Lord" Timothy Dexter: One of the looniest of the early Federal period writers was Lord Timothy Dexter, who declared himself Lord of Newburyport and the "younited States of A mercary," publishing *A Pickle for the Knowing Ones* in 1802 to flaunt the fact. He made two fortunes, one by shipping bed-warmers to Jamaica (they turned out to be good for refining sugar over a fire) and coal to Newcastle, the leading coal producer in Britain (it arrived during a coaliers strike). With a start like this, how can we go wrong? He built a mansion decorated by 56 larger than life wooden statues (his "museum") including Washington, Liberty, and others. It later burned and none of the work seems to have survived.

1.10.3.2 **POPUP #11032 here.**

1.11 On-line Office Hours by individual e-mail at any time (usual responses occur evenings between 10:45 and 11:30pm except some Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Dr. Sloane can usually be reached by phone Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings between 9:30 am and 11:45am at (203) 777-0667 (You can try anytime after 8:45.)

1.12.1 Papers:

Three Intermediate-length Papers: As the syllabus is laid out, participants can do three papers, depending on length, equalling 15-20 pages, typed double-spaced (250 wds/page= 3750-5000 wds total). E-mailed papers will be commented on generally and must be sent as text rather than as attachments; written papers accompanied with stamped, postage-paid return envelopes will be marked line by line and receive written comments as well. **I strongly encourage students to use the mails for papers as they will get better coaching on an analytic writing style.**

1.12.2 Postage for your self-addressed retrun envelope:

1-3 pages--1 stamp
4-8 pages--2 stamps
9-14 pages--3 stamps
15-19 pages--4 stamps

1.13.1 PORTFOLIO:

Each student will compile and submit a course portfolio to be kept by me (you should make two copies so you can keep one for yourself). In the portfolio (a three-ring binder is ideal for this purpose) you should collect in sections the following:

1.13.2 The syllabus as you negotiated it and completed it. About half way through the course, you should check with the instructor to make sure that both you and the instructor agree on your objectives and the grade they will achieve at various levels of completion. See Cover Letter below. Copies of your weekly discussion submissions, responses, jokes/anecdotes, responses, and other e-mail work that is credit-worthy. Xeroxes of notes taken by you independently. Xeroxed pages of humor materials you think are particularly germane to the course which are not included in regular readings. 15 or more pages of formal papers, typed, double-spaced with source pages, submitted as conventional "course papers." Appropriate college-level writing skills are required. Any other materials that you think will materially affect your grade. (These might include, but are not limited to, reviews of humor books in papers and magazines, articles on humor, independent research which does not fit into an established research category. Any systematic collection of business or office humor put in an analytic context.)

1.13.3 The following two elements will be created last, although placed first and second: A Cover Letter explaining what you accomplished in the course and the grade which your portfolio seems to document (this element will be placed FIRST) A Table of Contents (placed SECOND in the final portfolio).

1.14.1 **TO DO: Personal Introduction.** Please let Dr. Sloane and the other participants know something about you. Dr. Sloane has started off. Go to the menu option for "Discussion" (or something that looks like it) and you will find a thread for introductions and responses. This is your first obligation in the course and should be performed on the first day.

1.15.1 **TO DO: Level of Decorum in American Humor Studies--Discussion.**

Some humor is satiric, and Juvenalian (named after the Roman writer Juvenal) humor is harsh in its attacks on others. Some humor, of the Don Rickles variety, makes fun of others. Sometimes the comic "hit" is clever and arch, but it can also be unpleasant and mean-spirited. Black comedienne Whoopi Goldberg and Ted Danson, best known for his leading role in the sitcom "Cheers," had a close relationship until he showed up at a 1993 "roast" of her at the Friar's Club in "blackface" makeup and made a number of racial jokes that many felt were uncomfortable slurs. They had "planned" it together, possibly, but, nevertheless, their relationship ended shortly afterwards.

1.15.2 I would prefer that we understand most submissions will be on humor which is generally social in nature. Racial and sexual humor (the Randolph and Schuyler books are sexual and racial respectively, giving us lots of opportunity to discuss these issues analytically) might be touched on or occasionally submitted, but I would rather it be limited to one or two thoughtfully presented pieces with which all members of the class are comfortable. We will also have an opportunity to work on this material in Randolph's *Pissing in the Snow* as folk humor. "Gresham's Law" rules in jokes: sexual humor drives out most other kinds of humor in joke sessions. To see controversial material discussed in context, I recommend two current books: Joseph Boskin's *The Humor Prism in 20th-Century America* (Wayne State U P) and *Rebellious Laughter/ People's Humor in American Culture* (Syracuse U P). A source of sexual jokes, among all the other kinds, is *The Friars Club Encyclopedia of Jokes*, compiled by H. A. Cohl.

1.15.3 We will further this dialogue in the "Discussion." You might go there and let us know how much or how little you would like to see us control the environment. By the way, no matter how "open" we choose to be in the nature of humor discussed, the usual rules of civility and analytic discussion which govern college classes prevail: no student may do or say things in class which disrupt the ability of other students to learn in a safe and supportive environment.

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1.8.17 Book List:

Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (U of California P, 1985/ ISBN: 0-520-05520-9))

Woody Allen, *Side Effects* (Ballantine/ISBN 0-3345-34335-2)

Nicholas Bakalar, ed., *American Satire* (Meridian/ISBN: 0-452-01174-4)

David E. E. Sloane, *The Literary Humor of the Urban Northeast, 1830-1890* (Out of Print: We will make arrangements.)

Cohen, Hennig, and William Dillingham, *The Humor of the Old Southwest* (U of Georgia P/ISBN 0-8203-1605-9)

Vance Randolph, *Pissing in the Snow* (U of Illinois P/ISBN 0252-01364-6)

R. Welsch, *Shingling the Fog* (U of Nebraska P; ISBN 0-8032-97009)

Mark Twain, *Tales, Speeches, Essays, and Sketches*, ed. by Tom Quirk (Penguin) ISBN:0-14-043417-8)

George Schuyler, *Black No More* (Northeastern UP/1-55553-063-X)

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Signature: <i>David E. Sloane</i>	Printed Name/Position/Title: <i>David E.E. Sloane, Professor English & Education</i>	
Organization/Address: <i>UNIV. of New Haven 300 Orange Ave. West Haven, CT 06516</i>	Telephone: <i>203-771-0667</i>	FAX:
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