



## 26<sup>th</sup> Australasian Humour Studies Network Annual Conference (AHSN2020)

5-7 February 2020  
Griffith University, Brisbane, South Bank Campus

**Theme: Laughter and Belonging**



Conference hashtag: [#AHSN2020](https://twitter.com/AHSN2020)

Venue address: **The Ship Inn**, Corner Stanley & Sidon Streets, Southbank Parklands, Brisbane

Google Maps link: <https://goo.gl/maps/25rFFWonFKAK9i33A>

NB: The entrance to Griffith University's building S07 is on the right-hand side of the Ship Inn restaurant. The function room, where the opening session is held, is right above the restaurant. The entrance is through building S07.

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**Laughter and Belonging**

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## Emergency contacts and useful information

**Emergency** (Police/Ambulance/Fire): **000** or **112** from a mobile.

**Griffith Security:** Security services are available 24-hours on all Griffith University campuses and are handled by the [Campus Support Team](#). If the campus Security Office is unattended, a telephone is available at the front of each office to contact the team or alternatively call **1800 800 707** (free call) anywhere on campus.

**Southbank campus support team:**

Internal phone: 7777

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External phone: (07) 3735 6226

### Wi-Fi

**Griffith ID:** Griffith staff and students should use their staff ID to log in.

**Eduroam:** staff and students of other education institutions should use their institutional credentials to log in via Eduroam. Read the instructions here: <https://www.griffith.edu.au/eduroam>

**Guest WIFI:** Conference delegates without affiliation to educational institutions should use the visitors ID and password. The organising committee will share the details before the conference.

### Tweeting

If you are tweeting about/during the conference, please use conference hashtag: [#AHSN2020](#)

**Organising Committee contact details:**

Email: [ahsn2020conference@gmail.com](mailto:ahsn2020conference@gmail.com)

Phone: Reza 0411572401 OR Zarek: 0405096231

## **Acknowledgement**

Griffith University acknowledges the people who are the traditional custodians of the land, pays respect to the Elders, past and present, and extends that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Griffith's South Bank campus is situated on the land of the Yugarabul, Yuggera, Jagera and Turrbal peoples.

# Welcome

The conference organisers warmly welcome you to the 26th annual conference of the Australasian Humour Studies Network, AHSN2020. This event is proudly hosted by the Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research (GCSCR).

The theme of the conference is 'Laughter and Belonging'. Laughing together can be a powerful force for bonding and bringing people closer to one another, but laughter and humour can also be divisive and exclusionary. This year's theme has attracted presentations on both aspects of laughter and humour, which promises to make this a successful and memorable event.

We would like to thank you all for coming to Brisbane this year to make the conference a success. May you enjoy meeting old friends and colleagues and making some new ones! Our thanks go particularly to everyone who has come from interstate and overseas.

Our special thanks go to Jessica Milner Davis and Kerry Mullan for generously helping the Organising Committee. We also extend our thanks to Kimberley Podger from GCSCR who is behind most of the arrangements for AHSN2020. Also we appreciate the work by the staff of the conference venue, the Ship Inn.

## **AHSN 2020 Organising Committee**

Prof. Cliff Goddard (Convener)

Reza Arab (Chair)

Zarek Hennessy

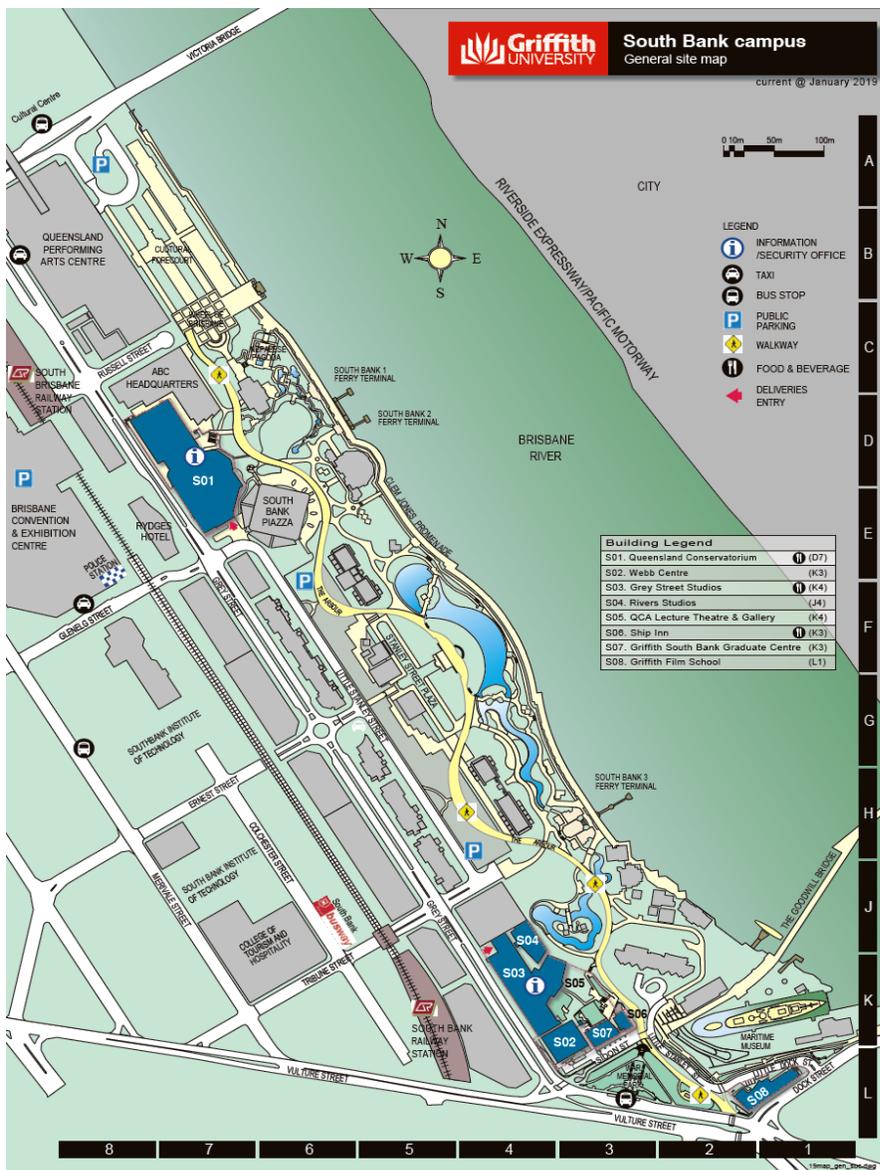
Angelina Hurley

# Maps

The conference sessions will be held in Building S07 and the main public sessions will be organised at S06; i.e. **The Ship Inn**, function room (upstairs) located at Corner Stanley & Sidon Streets Southbank Parklands. Buildings S07 and S06 are adjacent and connected buildings.

Find interactive maps of South bank and the campus here: <https://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/campuses-facilities/south-bank>

Download a PDF version of the campus map here: <https://www162.griffith.edu.au/public/campus-maps/building-locations-map-sbc.pdf>



# 26<sup>TH</sup> CONFERENCE OF THE AUSTRALASIAN HUMOUR STUDIES NETWORK (AHSN2020)

5-7 February 2020 – Griffith University, Southbank Campus, Brisbane

## Conference Program

Wednesday, February 5<sup>th</sup>

10:30 – 12:00	<p>(Building S07; Room 2.17)</p> <p><b>Pre-conference Workshop:</b></p> <p>Balancing the Grounded And the Absurd in Improv - Cale Bain (University Technology Sydney)</p>
12:30	<p>Function Room (2.02)</p> <p>Registration Refreshments available</p>
13:00-13:30	<p>Function Room (2.02)</p> <p><b>Official Opening</b> Welcome to the country by Angelina Hurley</p> <p>Opening remarks by the AHSN2020 convener: Prof. Cliff Goddard</p> <p>Welcome to Griffith University by GCSCR director: Prof. Susan Forde</p>

13:30-14:30	<p>Function Room (2.02)</p> <p>Keynote Speaker: Prof. Meredith Marra (Victoria University of Wellington, NZ)</p> <p><b>I Laugh to Show I Belong: Negotiating Workplace Humour as a Newcomer</b></p> <p>Chair: Cliff Goddard</p>		
14:30-15:00	<p>Veranda (2.02)</p> <p>Afternoon Tea</p>		
15:00-16:30	<p><b>Session 1A (Room 2.16)</b></p> <p><i>Title: Belonging and identity</i></p> <p>Chair: Michael Haugh</p> <p>Valeria Sinkeviciute (University of Queensland): “Should I Bring My Own Snowboard or Will Rentals Be Available?": A Collective Co- construction of Humour, a 'jester' Identity and Exclusion of Non-jokers</p>	<p><b>Session 1B (Room 2.17)</b></p> <p><i>Title: Laughter and trauma</i></p> <p>Chair: Angus McLachlan</p> <p>Angelina Hurley (Griffith University): A Comparative Study of Indigenous Humour Internationally</p>	<p><b>Session 1C (Room 2.18)</b></p> <p><i>Title: Approaches to humour</i></p> <p>Chair: Robert Phiddian</p> <p>Jessica Milner Davis (University of Sydney): Applying Bergson's Theory of the Comic to a Rare Comic Text</p>

<p>15:00-16:30 (Cont'd)</p>	<p>Lara Weinglass (University of Queensland): Using Conversational Humour and Laughter to <i>Belong</i> in an Australian Blue-collar Workplace</p> <p>Barbara Plester (University of Auckland): Belonging in Joke Work: The Protagonists of Workplace Humour</p>	<p>Cale Bain (University Technology Sydney): Using Applied Improv Comedy with Refugee Groups in Indonesia</p> <p>Jessica Stroja (Griffith University): 'The More Horrible the Thing Was, the More They Laughed': Refugees, Laughter and Responses to Trauma</p>	<p>Chrisoula Lionis (University of Manchester): Circles of Laughter: Contemporary Art and the Burdens of Authenticity</p> <p>Matt W Shores (University of Sydney): Everybody's Comfier with a Good Pillow: The Makura of Rakugo</p>
<p>16:30-18:00</p>	<p><b>Function Room and Veranda (2.02)</b></p> <p>Reception</p> <p>Display of members' new books</p> <p>Drinks</p>		

Thursday, February 6<sup>th</sup>

<p>09:00-10:30</p>	<p><b>Session 2A (Function Room 2.02)</b></p> <p><i>Title: Cartooning and satire</i></p> <p>Chair: Carmen Moran</p> <p>Lindsay Foyle (Cartoonist): A National Treasure Vanishing Act</p> <p>Alex Cothren (Flinders University): The ‘Participant Zero’ in Satire</p> <p>Eric Lobbecke (Cartoonist): Can A Trained Hand Be A Disruptive Force Within Political Cartooning? &amp; Can It Become a New Working Model for the Newspaper Artist?</p>	<p><b>Session 2B (Room 1.23)</b></p> <p><i>Title: Psychology and laughter</i></p> <p>Chair: Bruce Findlay</p> <p>Angus McLachlan (Federation University): The Role of Laughter in Establishing Social Solidarity</p> <p>Thorsten Aichele (University of Würzburg): The Joy of Deceiving Others - The Dark Triad as Predictors of Verbal Irony Use</p> <p>Cliff Goddard &amp; David Lambert (Griffith University): Is “Laughter” the Direct Product of Natural Selection?</p>	<p><b>Session 2C (Room 2.10)</b></p> <p><i>Title: Identifying humour</i></p> <p>Chair: Debra Aarons</p> <p>Paul Horan (Documentary maker): The making of <i>Funny As</i> - the History of New Zealand Comedy</p> <p>Amanda Cooper (Western Sydney University): Laughing on the Inside: Exclusionary Humour and Feminist Comic Critique in Jean Rhys’ <i>Voyage in the Dark</i> and <i>Good Morning, Midnight</i></p> <p>Fiona McKeague (Griffith University): Sour Pussies and Period Preachers: Emergent Trends in Humour and Menstruation Taboos</p>
<p>10:30-11:00</p>	<p>Veranda (2.02)</p> <p>Morning Tea</p>		

<p>11:00-12:00</p>	<p>Function Room (2.02)</p> <p>Keynote Speaker: Prof. Robert Phiddian Flinders University</p> <p><b>Satire and the Contempt Anger Disgust (CAD) triad of emotions</b></p> <p>Chair: Kerry Mullan</p>		
<p>12:00-13:00</p>	<p><b>Session 3A (Function Room 2.02)</b></p> <p><i>Title: Studying humour</i></p> <p>Chair: Mark Rolfe</p> <p>Lucien Leon (ANU): The Meme is the New Political Cartoon: Is It Really Though?</p> <p>Bruce Findlay (Swinburne University of Technology): Humour and Aging</p>	<p><b>Session 3B (1.23)</b></p> <p><i>Title: Online humour</i></p> <p>Chair: Cliff Goddard</p> <p>Ludmilla A'Beckett (University of the Free State): Ironic Twists of the Metaphoric Story 'Russia is Rising from Her Knees' in Social Media</p> <p>Kerry Mullan (RMIT): On the Dark Side: Facebook Humour Used for Inclusion and Exclusion</p>	<p><b>Session 3C (2.10)</b></p> <p><i>Title: Discourse and identity</i></p> <p>Chair: Adrian Hale</p> <p>Dorcas Zuvalinyenga (University of Newcastle): The Lion Has Learnt to Tell Its Side of the Story. Reframing Identity, Power and Place Through Humour: The Case of Slang Toponyms</p> <p>Maram Mohammad Qasim (Deakin University): A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Perception of Rhetorical Humour in Islamic Discourse</p>

13:00-14:00	Function Room and Veranda (2.02)  Lunch
14:00-15:00	<b>Function Room (2.02)</b>  Keynote Speaker: Leon Filewood (Stand-up Comedian, writer, and producer)  <b>The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stand-Up Comedian's dilemma: Solidarity in Humour?</b>  Chair: Angelina Hurley
15:00-15:30	Veranda (2.02)  Afternoon Tea
15:30 – 16:30	<b>Function Room (2.02)</b>  Remote Keynote Speaker: Prof. Daniel Kadar (Hungarian Academy of Sciences)  <b>Ritual Activity Types and Humour</b>  Chair: Jessica Milner Davis
18:00 for 18:30 start	Conference Dinner at Mado Turkish Restaurant (Registration essential)

Friday, February 7<sup>th</sup>

09:00 – 10:30	<p><b>Function Room (2.02)</b></p> <p><i>Title: Gods and Monsters in the Media: Humour and Morality in Our Time</i></p> <p>Gods and Monsters in Humour (Part 1)</p> <p>Chair and Discussant: Jessica Milner Davis (University of Sydney)</p> <p>Panellists:</p> <p>Mark Rolfe (UNSW): The Touchstones of Morality in Political Humour in the Trump Era</p> <p>Benjamin Nickl (University of Sydney): Hitler: Monster and Humanity in Media Society</p>	<p><b>(9:30 – 10:00) Session 4 (2.17)</b></p> <p><i>Title: Humour and Offence</i></p> <p>Chair: Peter Kirkpatrick</p> <p>Adrian Hale (<i>Western Sydney University</i>): ‘Do Mormons Think <i>The Book of Mormon</i> is Funny?’</p> <p>Debra Aarons (UNSW): Sacred secretions: Godsboddy and Dogsboddy</p>
10:30 – 11:00	<p><b>Veranda (2.02)</b></p> <p>Morning Tea</p>	

<p>11:00 – 12:30</p>	<p><b>Function Room (2.02)</b></p> <p><i>Title: Gods and Monsters in the Media: Humour and Morality in Our Time</i></p> <p>Part 2: Gods, Monsters and Moralizing in Humour</p> <p>Chair and Discussant: Robert Phiddian (Flinders University)</p> <p>Panellists:</p> <p>Richard Scully (University of New England): The New Victorianism and its Discontents: Editorial Cartooning in the 21st Century</p> <p>Lucien Leon (ANU): Change My Mind: Memes Are the New Political Cartoons</p>	<p><b>Session 5 (2.17)</b></p> <p><i>Title: Humour in Interactions</i></p> <p>Chair: Meredith Marra</p> <p>Michael Haugh (UQ), Danielle Pillet-Shore (University of New Hampshire) &amp; Lara Weinglass (UQ): <i>I Fail at Geography: Jocular Self-deprecation in Initial Interactions</i></p> <p>Scott Gardner (Okayama University): Second Language Pragmatics with Humorous Dialogues: ‘I’d Help You with Your Problem If I Could See It’</p> <p>Ian Walkinshaw &amp; Andy Kirkpatrick (Griffith University): Interactional Functions of Conversational Humour: Contrasting Australian English Speakers with Asian Users of English as a Lingua Franca</p>
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12:30 – 13:30	Function Room and Veranda (2.02)  Lunch		
13:30 – 15:00	<p><b>Session 6A (Room 2.10)</b></p> <p><i>Title: Humour and China</i></p> <p>Chair: Cliff Goddard</p> <p>Ying Cao (Western Sydney University): ‘We Are Real Friends’: Teasing in the Talk of Chinese Female Friends: A Case Study of Chinese Reality TV Show</p> <p>Darren Edward Purcell (University of Oklahoma): American Late-Night Comedians and the Geopolitical Imagination of China</p> <p>Jocelyn Chey (University of Sydney): Overcoming Awkwardness: A Chinese Attempt at Understanding Australian Humour</p>	<p><b>Session 6B (Room 2.17)</b></p> <p><i>Title: Art-forms and humour</i></p> <p>Chair: Carmen Moran</p> <p>Peter Kirkpatrick (University of Sydney): Swilliam of <i>The Bulletin</i>: The Fine, Dying Art of Light Verse</p> <p>John Carmody (University of Sydney): Is There – <i>Can</i> There Be – Humour in an Abstract Art Such as Music?</p> <p>Mark St Leon (Independent scholar): Restoring 'art' to Clowning: The Jandaschewsky Family</p>	<p><b>Session 6C (Function Room 2.02)</b></p> <p><i>Title: Language and humour</i></p> <p>Chair: Kerry Mullan</p> <p>Amir Sheikhan &amp; Michael Haugh (University of Queensland): Absurdity and Jocular Pretence in Persian Television Talkshows</p> <p>Stephen Skalicky (Victoria University of Wellington): Investigating Perceptions of Humour and Novelty in Figurative Language Production</p> <p>Thorsten Aichele (University of Würzburg): The relationship Between Perceived Humour and Perceived Criticism in Verbal Irony</p>

15:00 – 16:00	Function Room (2.02) Awards and Closing Ceremony Afternoon Tea
16:00 – 17:00	(Room 2.17) Meeting for AHSN Board and Review Panel

## **Abstracts and bios**

## Keynote Speakers

### **The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stand-Up Comedian's Dilemma: Solidarity in Humour?**

Leon Filewood, Winner of the 2018 Melbourne International Comedy Festival's "National Deadly Funny Competition", Australia

This talk will explore and discuss the challenges/dilemma an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander comedian faces when writing jokes. Does he or she write jokes for a white audience on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stereotypes? Does he or she confirm or negate those stereotypes? Does he or she write jokes for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to the exclusion and expense of the white audience? How does he or she educate and unite the audience to appreciate each other's humour?" How does he or she foster solidarity through humour?

**Leon Filewood** was born and raised on Waiben (aka Thursday Island), Kaurareg Country, in the Torres Strait. He graduated with a bachelor of Law and Graduate diploma of Legal Practice from the Queensland University of Technology. He spent several years in private practice as a solicitor in criminal and family law before going on to practice in commercial litigation, corporate insolvency and bankruptcy law.

Feeling unfulfilled and isolated from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in private practice as a solicitor, he changed career path and became in-house counsel and divisional manager at a Local Aboriginal Land Council in Western Sydney. There he managed the Land Council's housing, health, education and training services.

Leon eventually moved back to Brisbane and currently works in local government as a Community Development Coordinator where he continues to serve the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

In 2018, Leon won the Melbourne International Comedy Festival's "National Deadly Funny Competition" which is a competition to find Australia's funniest black fellas and help develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander comedy.

Leon has delivered a Tedx Talk, is a writer, producer and motivational speaker. Email: [leonfilewood@gmail.com](mailto:leonfilewood@gmail.com)

## **Ritual Activity Types and Humour**

Daniel Z. Kadar, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and Dalian University of Foreign Languages

A noteworthy characteristic of ritual activity types is that they tolerate more extreme manifestations of humour than do ‘ordinary’ instances of interaction. This is because engaging in ritual is communally-oriented, and rights and obligations in ritual behaviour are different from those of ordinary life. In particular, in rites of aggression, some extreme forms of humour may not only be tolerated but even expected. Interestingly, little research has been done on the pragmatics of humour in such settings, including questions such as whether there are moral constraints on humour in rites of aggression. In this talk, I aim to explore this area.

**Daniel Z. Kadar** is Chair Professor and Director of Research Centre at the Dalian University of Foreign Languages. He is also Research Professor of Pragmatics at the Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He is author/editor of 23 volumes, published by leading academic publishers such as Cambridge University Press. He has also published a large number of studies in international journals. He is Co-Editor of *Contrastive Pragmatics – A Cross-Disciplinary Journal* (Brill Publishers). Email: [daniel.z.kadar@nytud.mta.hu](mailto:daniel.z.kadar@nytud.mta.hu)

## **I Laugh to Show I Belong: Negotiating Workplace Humour as a Newcomer**

Meredith Marra. School of Linguistics & Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

For 20 years the Wellington ‘Language in the Workplace’ team has been investigating the function of humour in workplace talk, from its roles in expressing power and politeness to its place in the enactment of leadership, as well as the use of humour to construct gender, ethnic and professional identities. Almost all of these analyses involve New Zealanders in intact teams. With increasing attention to global migration, our recent work has shifted to consider the working experiences of newcomers. How important is laughter and humour to their everyday workplace communication, and a sense of belonging?

While humour is a ubiquitous feature of interaction in most workplaces, the shared norms and practices that underpin this humour typically remain implicit. For outsiders, especially non-majority group members, it is often an area that is tricky to navigate and arguably presents a challenge to full participation. Making use of naturally occurring workplace talk involving skilled migrants, I will demonstrate successful and unsuccessful attempts at harnessing humour in the negotiation of in-group status. To support the findings I highlight meta comments provided by the New Zealand teammates with whom the migrants interact. The analysis indicates that to construct a convincing workplace identity requires constant communicative work.

**Meredith Marra** is Professor in Linguistics and Head of School (Linguistics and Applied Language Studies) at Victoria University of Wellington. Since 2015 she has been Director of the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project, a long-standing sociolinguistic research project investigating effective workplace communication in a range of contexts. Recent research has focused on the employable identities of skilled migrants, including collaborations with the Settlement Unit of the New Zealand Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment resulting in publicly available tools and resources for employees and their employers.

Meredith has been analysing humour in workplace talk for 20 years, most notably the use of humour to subvert authority, as a leadership strategy and as a means of creating boundaries between in-group and out-group members. Her recent books include *Negotiating Boundaries at Work: Talking and Transitions* (2017, EUP), *Leadership, Discourse, and Ethnicity* (2011, OUP), and *Constructing Identities at Work* (2011, Palgrave Macmillan). Email: [meredith.marra@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:meredith.marra@vuw.ac.nz)

## Satire and the Contempt Anger Disgust (CAD) triad of emotions

Robert Phiddian, Flinders University

Satire has generally been linked to, and often subsumed by, comedy and humour because the classic response to it is laughter. There is, indeed, a lot of overlap between these four words in common usage, for better and worse. This paper focuses on important aspects of the satirical mode that elicit unfunny feelings, precious little reconciliation, and harsh laughter at best. While it is certainly not a good idea to reduce one's sense of satire entirely to ridicule, there is a large tidal difference between satire, which tends to extravagant criticism in the manner of Shakespeare's *Timon*, and comedy, which tends towards the reconciling kindness and wisdom of his *Benedick*: 'for man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion.' A way of framing this tidal difference is to attend to the way satire mobilises the 'moral', 'harsh', or 'negative' emotions, particularly the triad identified in neuroscience as CAD, for contempt, anger, and disgust. This paper addresses philosophical and psychological accounts of these emotions to argue that they are an integral element of satirical affect.

**Robert Phiddian** is Professor of English in the College of Humanities Arts and Social Sciences at Flinders University, South Australia. He is author of *Swift's Parody* (Cambridge UP, 1995) and (with Julian Meyrick and Tully Barnett) *What Matters? Talking Value in Australian Culture* (Monash UP, 2018).

He has edited (with Haydon Manning) *Comic Commentators - Contemporary Political Cartooning in Australia* (APIN, 2008), (with David Lemmings and Heather Kerr) *Passions, Sympathy and Print Culture* (Palgrave, 2016), and (with Jessica Milner Davis) *The Satire of John M. Clarke*, *Comedy Studies* 10.1 (2019). He is author or co-author of nearly 50 academic articles or chapters, and has in press *Satire and the Public Emotions* (Cambridge UP, due late 2019).

He was founding director of the Australasian Consortium of Humanities Research Centres (2011-17) and sat on the board of the international Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes (2014-9).

He has been on the Advisory Board of the Australasian Humour Studies Network since his daughters drew him with dark and plentiful hair. Email: [robert.phiddian@flinders.edu.au](mailto:robert.phiddian@flinders.edu.au)

## Pre-conference Workshop:

### Balancing the Grounded and the Absurd in Improv

Cale Bain, University Technology Sydney

This is a short workshop using improvised comedy to find the vulnerability and truth and openness of a character, beyond just a comedic gag. Much of the global understanding of improv comedy is from popular culture such as *Whose Line Is It Anyways* or *Thank God You're Here* which focuses on the quick, witty absurdities for comedy. In less mainstream arenas like improv festivals, however, performances are increasingly using more grounded, more naturalistic styles to balance out that absurdity and present a style of theatre that has vulnerability and pathos as part of and along side the humour. Improv, by its nature, is going to have humour, it's going to be funny. It is the unexpected to audience and performers both and it is the pure joy of play and discovery that leads to laughter. To add a grounded nature make the experience more complete for audiences, offers a fuller picture of what theatre can offer. This session will workshop how to access both truth and silliness through improv comedy, bridging the gap between the two and bringing truth to comedy to find out what compellingly pulls an audience using vulnerability and emotional stakes.

No experience necessary.

**Cale Bain** is a PhD candidate from UTS, studying the confluence of comedy and news, and the impacts that intersection has on the professional practice and the public sphere. He is also the founding Artistic Director of Improv Theatre Sydney, having originally trained at the Second City Theatre in Toronto and teaches improv comedy at NIDA and around Australia. Cale travels Australia and the world teaching and performing improv and was the improv director for the *Whose Line Is It Anyway Australia*. Email: [cale.bain@uts.edu.au](mailto:cale.bain@uts.edu.au)

## **Special Panel:**

### **Gods and Monsters in the Media: Humour and Morality in Our Time**

Panellists:

Mark Rolfe, University of NSW: The Touchstones of morality in political humour in the Trump era

Benjamin Nickl, University of Sydney: Hitler: Monster and humanity in media society

Prof. Richard Scully, University of New England: The New Victorianism and its discontents:  
Editorial cartooning in the 21st century

Lucien Leon, Australian National University: Change my mind: memes are the new political  
cartoons

Chair and Discussant: Jessica Milner Davis, University of Sydney (Part 1) and Robert Phiddian,  
English, Flinders University (Part 2)

## The Touchstones of Morality in Political Humour in the Trump Era

Mark Rolfe, UNSW

Political humour is an ethical mode of rhetoric that takes a principled view of certain people and/or events and thus cannot be easily dismissed with the throwaway line of “it’s just a joke”. The nature and context of any representative democracy moulds the ethical landscape, especially in America where there is an historic and dominant belief in that nation’s exceptionalism. As a result, Americans populate their politics and political humour with gods and monsters in a way that Australians do not in their own political discourse. Even if US presidents aren’t always depicted ascending to heaven as gods, as Washington and Lincoln have been, a select few are worshipped as ‘great’.

Trump is not one of those few, as far as his comedic opponents are concerned. Since 2015 they have not only cast him as not-Lincoln but have also depicted him as Hitler. In this respect, they have followed an American cultural habit since World War 2 that uses Hitler as an ethical touchstone of an absolute standard of evil. Yet this modern usage is also simply another phase in the deployment of monsters in American political discourse. Therefore, this paper argues from a range of examples such as .... that humour that was critical of Trump fell easily within the confines of a traditional partisan discourse where it was unable to convert opponents, as had been the intention. Equally, Trump supporters have countered it with partisan depictions of him as great, as Superman, as God-Emperor and as God’s chosen.

**Mark Rolfe** is an Honorary Associate in the School of Social Sciences, UNSW, where he used to teach. His research interests are Australian and American politics, rhetoric, propaganda, political satire, and political leadership. His recent publications include ‘Is this a Dagg which I see before me? John Clarke and the politics in his political humour’, in *The Journal of Comedy Studies*, 2019 (10: 1, 21–38); ‘The Populist Elements of Australian Political Satire and the Debt to the Americans and the Augustans’, in *Satire and Politics: The Interplay of Heritage and Practice* (Palgrave 2017); and *The Reinvention of Populist Rhetoric in the Digital Age* (Palgrave 2016). He is a member of the AHSN Review Panel. Email: [m.rolfe@unsw.edu.au](mailto:m.rolfe@unsw.edu.au)

## The New Victorianism and Its Discontents: Editorial Cartooning in the 21st Century

Richard Scully, University of New England

Recent controversies in the world of editorial cartooning seem to point to an historical turning-point in the culture of humour that supports this important art form. Just as was the case in the early 19th century – when the ribald, single-sheet caricature of the Georgian Age began to lose respectability and popularity with the coming generation of ‘Victorians’ – readers and practitioners are today faced with an historical moment when changing tastes no longer support certain of the tried-and-true tropes of cartooning. Among these are the racial and gender stereotypes that have sustained so many punchlines across the whole history of the artform; as evidenced in particular by the Mark Knight/Serena Williams controversy in Australia’s Herald Sun (2018), as well as other key examples. While critics on both sides of successive cartoon debates bemoan the ‘death of humour’, rather what appears to be taking place is a transition in what a society does – or should – consider to be ‘funny’. This is not a straightforward process, but one inherently bound up with debates over freedom of expression, and socio-economic relationships of power. A challenge to the likes of Knight from those less powerful than he (meaning anyone who isn’t a privileged, middle-class, white, heterosexual, middle-aged Anglo-Saxon male) can potentially be characterised as a challenge to the whole system of graphic editorial comment that has sustained his career: the news media of the 20th century that is one of the hard-won gains of modern liberal democracy.

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## **Hitler: Monster and Humanity in Media Society**

Benjamin Nickl, University of Sydney

Hitler comedy or ‘Führer Humor’ in contemporary comedy films, books, and television programs runs the risk of focusing on getting laughs at the expense of reflection. This, at least, seems to be the consensus in Anglophone mainstream media outlets such as *The Atlantic* or *The Guardian*, which claim that Nazi comedies have evolved into a bizarre and thriving genre of their own seventy years after the end of World War II. To laugh at Hitler in *Look Who’s Back* (Netflix, 2015) means to overcome his evil; to ridicule his mannerisms and poke fun at his impotence in *Mein Führer* (X Films, 2007) means to have defanged and declawed him. The problem is that most contemporary Hitler comedies are read as historical commentary. But more than repeating the historical figure of Hitler, the monster and evil incarnate, these comedies provide social commentary on the seductability of society by such monsters. Taika Waititi’s *Jojo Rabbit* (Fox Searchlight, 2019), a Nazi parody distributed by Walt Disney Studios in peacetime in 2019, does not trivialise Hitler’s homicidal fanaticism. Instead, the film puts on trial the remembrance of fascism as serious ritual celebration. It contests the alibi of the bystander who pleads ignorance. What if, as *Look Who’s Back* suggests, Hitler never really went away? What if societies deeply divided by echo-chamber media are reviving the monster of fascisms? What if, as is the case in *Jojo Rabbit*, Hitler is an imaginary friend whose evil voice we need to learn to dismiss? This is the kind of complexity which Hitler comedy brings to the modern entertainment table.

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## Humour and the Moralising Tone in Australian Media

Robert Phiddian, English, Flinders University

Both sides in the culture war Australia that has imported from the US and the UK are sure that humour will support their views and expose those of their opponents as ridiculous or even offensive. Both enlist under their banner the larrikin tradition of making fun of the toffs and the elites. They can't both be right, but maybe they can both be wrong. This paper sets out to compare the approaches to satirical humour and morality employed by Australian artists, cartoonist Bill Leak (1958-2017) and comedian Charlie Pickering (b. 1977).

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## **Change My Mind: Memes Are the New Political Cartoons**

Lucien Leon, Australian National University

Bruce Petty's description of the political cartoon as "an appalling abbreviation" doesn't leave much room to move in describing the graphically and textually reductive nature of its putative satirical heir, the political meme. Typically taking the form of a pithily-annotated, appropriated photographic image, the meme's simple construction and unembellished aesthetic has helped democratise the production and consumption of political satire. An unfortunate side effect of the proliferation of these images in democratic and social discourse is the cultural embedding of a relatively limited graphic vocabulary and frame in which political concepts and events are interrogated and lampooned. The generic presentation of memes affords them an anonymity – and thus a lack of accountability – that is not provided by more illustrative image types. Compounded by the unwillingness of social media platforms to regulate their published content to anything resembling the journalistic standards applied in legacy media, the potential to weaponise memes as vehicles for misinformation, malice and deceit has proved irresistible for various political and activist groups. As the political cartoon tradition transmogrifies from an illustrative, sole author pursuit into a collective-based, appropriated image culture, so the role of the political cartoonist as public intellectual and moral bellwether diminishes. On the other hand, the 'Choppergate' (2015) and 'public library' (2019) events demonstrate the corrective potential of meme culture. Drawing on the various taxonomies for the classification and categorisation of political cartoons (Medhurst and Desousa, 1981; Press, 1981; Manning and Phiddian, 2004), this paper examines the visual and rhetorical strategies applied in political memes to determine the extent to which the two image types align both structurally and teleologically – and whether a revised taxonomy formalising the place of memes in the political cartooning tradition is warranted.

**Lucien Leon** BIndDes (University of Canberra), PhD (ANU) lectures in Animation and video at the Australian National University's School of Art and Design in Canberra. He is especially interested in the impact of the digital media revolution on the political cartooning tradition, and online political satire more broadly. His political animations have been published in a variety of broadcast and online

contexts, though recently his research focus has shifted to traditional outputs. His most recent publications include 'Plus Ça Change: Three Decades of Clarke and Dawe's Political Satire (1987-2017)', in the *Journal of Comedy Studies*, 2019 (10: 1, 71-87); 'Political Cartooning in the New Media Age: Cases from Australia, the USA and the UK', in *Satire and Politics: The Interplay of Heritage and Practice* (ed. Jessica Milner Davis, Palgrave, 2017), 'Walt Handelsman' in *American Political Humor: Masters of Satire and Their Impact on U.S. Policy and Culture* (ed. Jody Baumgartner, ABC-Clio, 2019) and 'The Only Poll that Matters: Cartoons, Memes and Videos in Election 2019', *Morrison's Miracle: Analysing the 2019 Australian Federal Election* (ed. Marian Sawyer, ASSA, in press). Email: [Lucien.Leon@anu.edu.au](mailto:Lucien.Leon@anu.edu.au)

## Conference Presentations

### **Sacred Secretions: Godsboddy and Dogsboddy**

Debra Aarons, University of New South Wales

This presentation is part of an ongoing larger project with researchers at the University of Bologna. We look at the use of disgust as a response to public political behaviour, including that of religious leaders, specifically in the era of rapidly proliferating humorous products. Affective responses take a bodily form: we have a disgust reflex, just as we have a laughter reflex. Increasingly, political actors and commentators in the visual and auditory mode use images of disgust to evoke a range of responses to the overflowing excretions, secretions, seepages and human waste that we all participate in and recognise. Notably, although these images of disgust spread, overwhelm and engulf the targets, they remind us of our own humanity as well. In many cultures, bodily eliminations are generally a source of taboo and can evoke disgust, but also laughter. Affective reactions may be to either physical or moral disgust and these are closely connected. I'll focus on certain cases of blasphemy in which taboo imagery—such as faeces, vomit, urine, blood and skin eruptions—is a crucial element. I'll trace the way in which the character and behaviour of religious figures allied with political power structures is portrayed in terms of the unsightly, malodorous, unpalatable, indigestible and nauseating. I'll provide some examples from video, meme and cartoons that have been considered blasphemous and that might evoke both disgust and laughter. I'll speculate on the potential power of tapping affective responses, in contrast to the more cerebral satire usually employed for political critique.

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## **Ironic Twists of the Metaphoric Story ‘Russia Is Rising from Her Knees’ in Social Media**

Ludmilla A. A’Beckett, University of the Free State

The metaphoric story (Cameron 2010) “Russia is rising from her knees” was coined by Yeltsyn in 1990. Recently, the mini-narrative (Musolff 2004, 2012, 2017) has been frequently used by Russian revanchists.

The aim of this research is to represent different variants of the mini-narrative and analyse underlying messages. The basic interpretation of this story can be reconstructed as follows. In the past the ‘anthropomorphised’ Russia was not very strong and bent down in front of bullies. This position is a matter of national shame, but at present Russia is gaining potency and spurs. She is bouncing back. This motion makes Russians proud.

This mini-narrative was also adopted by those who are sceptical about the positive prospects for Russia. They use this slogan ironically. The mechanism of ironic twists can hinge on introduction of situations which contradict the conceptualisation “UP IS GOOD” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) and also the situations which denote a permanent lying or kneeling position (e.g. death or chronic alcoholism). The database of examples consists of 40 verbal and multimodal texts that were collected through a Google search of the sentence “Russia is rising from her knees”. Irony is understood in the paper as an implicit negation of the narrative (Giora 2003). The covert denial of the basic scenario also invokes a humorous effect since it suggests a contradiction.

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## The Relationship Between Perceived Humour and Perceived Criticism in Verbal Irony

Thorsten Aichele, University of Würzburg

Verbal irony can be both, funny and criticizing. Both variables typically demonstrate medium-sized correlations (Boylan & Katz, 2013). Irony scholars often assume that perceived humour and perceived criticism of irony utterances are both affected by perceived contrast between the literal meaning of the ironic utterances and the intended meaning, which is considered as an inversion of the literal meaning (an ironic “good job” refers to an intended “bad job” and an ironic “best job ever” refers to an intended “worst job ever”).

However, experimental results are inconclusive: Some studies found support, but two studies even found negative relationships between either perceived contrast and perceived humour (Calmus & Caillies, 2014) and between perceived humour and perceived meanness (Filippova & Astington, 2010).

Thus, I assume that perceived contrast only predicts perceived criticism, while perceived absurdity that partially overlaps with perceived contrast should predict perceived humour. I conducted an online-experiment (N=154) in which I compared four different types of ironic utterances (low contrast and regular meaning-reversal irony, medium-contrast hyperbolic irony, high-contrast ironic superlatives and absurd irony which I assumed to demonstrate a high absurdity but only a medium contrast). Participants received 20 scenarios, which contained different ironic responses, which they rated for perceived irony, perceived humour, perceived criticism, perceived absurdity and perceived contrast between literal and intended meaning.

Both, repeated measures ANOVA and hierarchical regression analyses (block 1: gender + age, block 2: perceived contrast, block 3: perceived absurdity) mostly confirmed my assumptions: absurd irony was more funny and less criticizing than any of the other three types of ironic utterance ( $p$ 's < .004,  $\eta_p^2$ 's > .5). Perceived contrast consistently predicted perceived criticism ( $\beta$ 's > .18,  $p$ 's < .025) but did not predict perceived humour ( $\beta$ 's > .1,  $p$ 's > .4). Instead, perceived absurdity predicted perceived humour in two of the four different types of ironic utterances (meaning reversal irony and ironic superlatives,  $\beta$ 's > .25,  $p$ 's < .002). Concerning the relationship between perceived humour and perceived criticism, I found a positive relationship between perceived humour and perceived criticism in regular irony ( $r = .334$ ,  $p < .001$ ). However, ironic hyperbole ( $r = -.218$ ,  $p = .007$ ), ironic

superlatives ( $r = -.183, p = .023$ ) and absurd irony ( $r = -.143, p = .076$ ) displayed mostly significant negative correlations between perceived humour and perceived criticism.

Our results indicate that perceived humour and perceived criticism in verbal irony depend on more than just one variable. Therefore, some low-contrast ironic utterances display a positive relationship between these two variables while other rather high-contrast or high-absurd ironic utterances might display a negative relationship between perceived humour and perceived criticism.

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**Thorsten Aichele** is a humor scholar from Wuerzburg, Germany who studies the psychology of verbal irony. After finishing his PHD on learning with hypertext, Thorsten decided to move towards a more funny type of comprehension problems: those that come along with ironic utterances. His research is based on quantitative, experimental methods, although he is aware of the fact that statistical analyses of a rather subjective phenomenon like irony might appear involuntary ironic for some audiences. Email: [thorsten.aichele@uni-wuerzburg.de](mailto:thorsten.aichele@uni-wuerzburg.de)

## The Joy of Deceiving Others - The Dark Triad as Predictors of Verbal Irony Use

Thorsten Aichele, University of Würzburg

Verbal irony can be both funny and harmful. Most irony scholars consider irony as necessarily critical and most ironic utterances use a positive wording in order to convey an inverse negative message. Humour scholars tend to identify ironic utterances with aggressive humour. Consequently, verbal irony can be a social acceptable funny way of uttering verbal aggression. We assume that antisocial personality traits like the dark triad of personality (narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism) show a preference of ironic utterances over corresponding literal utterances. Previous research (Bruntsch & Ruch, 2017) already identified the related construct of psychoticism as a predictor of verbal irony use. We further assume that these personalities avoid so-called *irony markers* that make it easier to identify the ironic intent behind the ironic utterance, as this would reduce the joy of ridiculing those that misinterpret the ironic utterance as a literal utterance (Hallmann et al., 2016).

We conducted an online study (N=180) in which we measured irony production (16 items), irony marker production (12 items) and self-reported use of irony markers (16 items). Each irony production item contained 2x2 response options: person-centered vs. situation-centered utterance x literal vs. ironic utterance. Each item measuring the production of irony markers contained 2x2x2 versions of the same ironic response that contained between zero and three different irony markers. Each of the two productions scales applied blame-by-praise irony (ironic criticism: something did not work out as expected but the ironist reacts to it by inverting the negative literal response, saying either something positive about the person which can be seen as the cause of the disaster or about the situation). The material was balanced for high vs. low common ground as well as public vs. private conversation.

Hierarchical regressions analyses (block 1: age + gender, block 2: dark triad) revealed significant positive effects on the use of irony for psychopathy ( $\beta = .228, p = .011, \Delta R^2 = .044$ ) and narcissism ( $\beta = .254, p = .002, \Delta R^2 = .063$ ). Post hoc tests ( $\alpha = .005$ ) revealed that psychopaths prefer person-centered irony in low common ground situations ( $\beta = .254, p = .004, \Delta R^2 = .055$ ) while narcissists

generally prefer situation-centered irony ( $\beta = .237, p = .005, \Delta R^2 = .054$ ). Against expectations, we found no effects of the dark triad on the production of irony markers ( $\beta$ 's  $< .05, p$ 's  $> .6$ ).

Results further indicate that both narcissists and psychopaths prefer different kinds of verbal irony. One possible explanation for the non-significant effects in the use of irony markers is be that irony markers not only affect perceived irony but also increase perceived criticism by increasing perceived contrast between literal and intended meaning of the ironic utterance (Colston & O'Brien, 2000).

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**Thorsten Aichele** is a humor scholar from Wuerzburg, Germany who studies the psychology of verbal irony. After finishing his PHD on learning with hypertext, Thorsten decided to move towards a more funny type of comprehension problems: those that come along with ironic utterances. His research is based on quantitative, experimental methods, although he is aware of the fact that statistical analyses of a rather subjective phenomenon like irony might appear involuntary ironic for some audiences. Email: [thorsten.aichele@uni-wuerzburg.de](mailto:thorsten.aichele@uni-wuerzburg.de)

## Using Applied Improv Comedy with Refugee Groups in Indonesia

Cale Bain, University Technology Sydney

In 2019, a team from University of Technology Sydney went to the Cisarua Refugee Learning Center (CRLC) north of Jakarta in Indonesia to work with the students, teachers and adult learners using improvised comedy theatre (improv) to support resiliency, improve community engagement and provide an opportunity for some levity through humour in otherwise challenging lives. CRLC is organised and run by and for the refugee community of mostly Hazara peoples, primarily from Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. The community live in flux, everyone waiting to hear from the UNHCR if they are fortunate enough to be among the few hundred in Indonesia resettled to a host nation each year. There are over 14000 refugees, many of whom have been told they'll never be resettled. Refugees in Indonesia can neither work nor go to school, so the CRLC offers a place for people to learn and feel like they can spend their time productively, despite the obvious difficulty of living in flux, not to mention the hardships that led to people claiming refugee status in the first place. The improv workshops were built with the basic understanding that humour can help build resiliency (Clinton 2008; Edward & Warelow 2005) and a model for resiliency was constructed using the work of Knox (1999) and Spring (2012). The team went to the centre three times over the year and collected ethnographic data in the form of individual and group interviews. The findings from the interviews and reflections reveal that the workshops went beyond resiliency, also helping facilitate an improvement in communications and communication skills, a way for people to “forget about their problems” and even level the gender gap amongst the teachers.

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**Cale Bain** is a PhD candidate from UTS, studying the confluence of comedy and news, and the impacts that intersection has on the professional practice and the public sphere. He is also the founding Artistic Director of Improv Theatre Sydney, having originally trained at the Second City Theatre in Toronto and teaches improv comedy at NIDA and around Australia. Cale travels Australia and the world teaching and performing improv and was the improv director for the *Whose Line Is It Anyway Australia*. Email: [cale.bain@uts.edu.au](mailto:cale.bain@uts.edu.au)

## **“We Are Real Friends”: Teasing in the Talk of Chinese Female Friends: A Case Study of Chinese Reality TV Show**

Ying Cao, Western Sydney University

Teasing is central to women’s friendship talk (Coates, 1997), and it can accomplish a range of social actions in friend’s talk, such as building friendship, enhancing bonding and relieving tension (Straehle, 1993). This paper explores how multifunctional teasing is exploited as a source to build and strengthen friendship between Chinese female friends, establishing a link between previous linguistic research on teasing and women’s talk. This paper aims to address two major research concern: (1) what are the characteristics of teasing used in the talk of Chinese female friends? And (2) how teasing play a role in enhancing affiliation and friendship among Chinese female friends? The data was collected from of the Chinese reality TV show, *We Are Real Friends*. Approximately 700 minutes (total ten episodes) of presumably spontaneous talk between four mid-aged Chinese female celebrities, who are also recognized as close friends in real-life, during their oversea traveling are recorded and broadcasted in the Reality Show, and the 700 minutes’ talk among the four female friends were transcribed as the main corpus of the current study.

This study draws on Attardo (1994)’s General Theory of Verbal Humour and Holmes (2008)’s analytical framework of humour and gender as a combined framework to analyse teasing in the talk of Chinese female friends. This study investigates teasing from both semantic and pragmatic dimensions by focusing on the distribution, topic, response and function of teasing in women’s talk. The preliminary findings reveal that teasing is usually initiated to introduce a new topic. Interestingly, the topics of teasing, such as appearance and make-up, occupy a significant portion in Chinese female friends’ talk, and then followed by career-related topics. In most cases, the speaker’s teasing is followed by a joint-teasing sequence from other participants, and teasing usually play roles as an accomplishment of fun-based solidarity; a release of underlying tensions; a display of dominance and superiority; and an implicit criticism towards other speakers’ speeches and behaviours.

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**Ying Cao** is a Ph.D candidate supervised by Dr. Xiangdong Liu, Dr. Chong Han and Dr. Adrian Hale in the School of Humanities and Communication Arts at Western Sydney University. Her research interests focus on humour, gender and (im)politeness in the discourse of TV fictional dialogues, Chinese conceptions of humour, and linguistic research of Chinese sitcoms. She is one of AHSN2020 scholarship winners. Email: [18485644@student.westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:18485644@student.westernsydney.edu.au)

## Is There – *Can There Be* – Humour in an Abstract Art Such as Music?

John Carmody, University of Sydney

Like life itself, such artforms as literature and painting are perfectly capable of containing and expressing humour. Whether music, unless accompanied by words, has that same capacity is a nettlesome question. Humour can be subtle or broad, but probably *must be* amusing. Wit, on the other hand need not be “funny”, but it must be clever. The question at hand is: does wit need *words* to operate? This presentation will seek to extend its thinking beyond Cuddon’s elegant exegesis of both qualities and skills.

I began thinking about this question, already persuaded that, because other sounds besides words can be expressed or juxtaposed as effectively as a *mot juste*, wit *is* possible music but -- unless we consider it as the worst type of “slapstick” -- music is inherently not “funny” (other, perhaps, than by association or parody: such as with Spike Jones’s treatment of Rossini’s overture to “William Tell”, an opera which is not in the least “funny”). Hence, it cannot convey humour. I rule out onomatopoeia here, though sometimes the partition can be thin: such as the storm music in Rossini’s “Barber of Seville” (which, unquestionably, directors can *stage* in amusing ways); or Handel’s spectacularly florid recorders (imitating birds) in Almirena’s aria, “Augelletti, che cantate” in his opera *Rinaldo* (real birds were released into the auditorium of the Queen’s Theatre during the first performance: is that “slapstick”?).

Wit seems another matter entirely: and it is not limited to any specific period. For example, when Arnold Schoenberg took his cue from the poem and wrote a palindromic canon in “Mondfleck” (in his melodrama, *Pierrot Lunaire*), I think that he was being “witty”; the result seems an exact parallel to verbal “wit”. Likewise, in Martin Wesley-Smith’s song, “In the good old good old days” (his twin-brother, Peter, wrote the lyrics), the stout former Federal Minister, Amanda Vanstone, is described as “so demurer”, which the piano mocks deliciously

Logically, therefore, I think that I am obliged to concede that, even though it lasts only a single minute, when György Ligeti wrote a palindrome for 12 car-hooters as the prelude for his opera *Le grand Macabre*, the result is funny (and unforgettable) even if, like the opera, it is perfectly serious as well as completely mad.

By judicious use of musical examples, the conference presentation will, therefore, attempt to deal (lightly) with the answer to that question in the title of its abstract.

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**John Carmody:** During his years as a medical student at the University of Queensland, John Carmody was active in undergraduate journalism and politics. Those predilections continued during his 40 years' membership of the Faculty of Medicine at UNSW, when he did a good deal of radio work on science and wrote about theatre, opera and concert music, as well as doing much book-reviewing. Some of his readers claimed that his writing was amusing as well as informative and he always insisted to his academic colleagues that he would rather be remembered for his cheap entertainment value than be totally forgotten. Email: [john.carmody@sydney.edu.au](mailto:john.carmody@sydney.edu.au)

## Overcoming Awkwardness: A Chinese Attempt at Understanding Australian Humour

Jocelyn Chey, University of Sydney and Western Sydney University

At this present time when bilateral relations between Australia and China are fraught, to put it mildly, the Chinese press is more ready to criticise Australia, or to put a negative spin on life and culture in Australia, than to offer praise. It is therefore particularly interesting to note that some public commentators in China have focussed on what they regard as positive aspects of the use of humour in Australia, since by implication they thereby indicate that they see some shortcomings in humour usage in their own country.

Two recent articles by Zhang Yongxian and “Reyu” (blogger penname) respectively, may be found at <http://www.chinanews.com/hr/hr-hwsh/news/2010/01-05/2055441.shtml> and <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/okaNOr6-QqRAcr7dLRYOEA>. These defined “Australian humour” in terms of what the authors believe to be its use to defuse awkward situations. They have been widely read and circulated. Online comments have been positive. This interpretation of Australian humour usage is of course a stereotype and largely determined by the cultural background of the authors. Chinese cultural practice and the social construct of ‘face’ make it very hard or even impossible to resolve awkward situations, as noted by numerous authorities, from Brown and Levinson *Politeness: Some universals in language usage* (1987) onwards. At the same time, humour is a well-known coping mechanism in many cultures, as defined by Rod Martin and others – see for instance Martin’s article in *Humor* (1996) “The Situational Humor Response Questionnaire (SHRQ) and Coping Humor Scale (CHS): A decade of findings.” The ability to create humour under conditions of stress or threat in various cultural contexts has been continuously researched since then, as most recently outlined by Papousek, Rominger, Weiss, Perchtold and Fink in *Current Psychology* (May 2019) “Humor creation during efforts to find humorous cognitive reappraisals of threatening situations.” Guo-hai Chen has extended Martin’s work on Coping Humour through a survey of humour styles used by Chinese university students, as reported in *Humor* 2007, “A comparison of humor styles, coping humor and mental health between Chinese and Canadian university students.”

This paper uses a close reading and pragmatic analysis of the two texts by Zhang Yongxian and Reyu to show that in each example of humour usage that they cite, the humour effect depends on the reception of the joke. It is therefore not essentially “humour creation” because it is neither inherent in the text nor in the intention of the originators of the so-called jokes but rather in those who hear the joke, whether as intended or unintended audience. Zhang and Reyu define the events as jokes because, from their cultural perspective, they conclude that the joke originators were deliberately breaking social conventions with humorous intent. The underlying implication was that if a Chinese had behaved in the same way it would have been rude or at least insensitive. This paper argues that, because of their own social conventions, the authors of the two cited articles admire how the Australians involved in the ‘jokes’ resolved matters with humour without causing offence. They leave comparisons with social conventions in China to the imagination of readers.

This paper is not intended to be a contribution to the developing field of studies of Chinese humour, as opened up by Chey and Davis *Humour in Chinese Life and Letters* in 2013 and Davis and Chey *Humour in Chinese Life and Culture* 2014, but rather to the emerging field of the study of humour in cross-cultural communication.

**Jocelyn Chey** is Professor in the Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture, Western Sydney University and a Visiting Professor in the School of Languages and Cultures, University of Sydney. Her current research fields include the cultural aspects of Chinese humour and cultural diplomacy with special relevance to China and Taiwan. Together with Jessica Milner Davis, she has co-authored and co-edited two books on Chinese humour, published in 2012 and 2013, and published numerous articles on cultural diplomacy and Chinese international relations, including Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Jocelyn completed her Master degree at the University of Hong Kong in modern Chinese history and her Doctor degree at the University of Sydney in Chinese historiography. After the establishment of diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China in December 1972, she moved to Canberra, first as China Relations Officer in the Department of Overseas Trade, before being posted to Beijing as the first Australian Cultural Counsellor. She was the first Executive Director of the Australia-China Council 1979-1984, Senior Trade Commissioner in Beijing 1985-88 and Consul General to

Hong Kong 1992-95. From 1988 to 1992 she was the Director of the China Branch of the International Wool Secretariat.

Jocelyn Chey is a Life Member of the Oriental Society of Australia and a Councillor of the Australian Institute for International Affairs New South Wales. She was awarded the Australia-China Council Medal for contributions to the development of relations between Australia and China in 2008 and in 2009 honoured with the Medal of Australia and also made a Fellow of the Institute of International Affairs. In 2016-17 she was the founding Director of the Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture, Western Sydney University. Email: [jocelynchey@gmail.com](mailto:jocelynchey@gmail.com)

## The 'Participant Zero' in Satire

Alex Cothren, Flinders University

The move to define satire as a mode of communication, or discourse, has led theorists such as Paul Simpson to create models defining who is involved in each act of satiric communication. The standard model of satiric discourse includes three distinct subject positions: the satirist (the creator of the satire), the audience (the consumers of the satire), and the target (the subject of the satire's attack). However, my paper argues that another position should be added to such models in order to more accurately represent who participates in satire. I believe that the central action of satire, a satirist attempting to persuade an audience that a target is worthy of attack, cannot take place without at least some involvement of a fourth participant: *those who the satirist believes have been negatively affected by the target*. To put it simply, if a target has done something wrong, at least in the eyes of the satirist, then it follows that *someone* has been *wronged*. I call this position the 'participant zero', as without the alleged negative effects suffered by these participants, satirists would have no justification for attacking their targets.

To highlight the importance of the 'participant zero', my paper will use a case study of Bill Blitt's controversial *New Yorker* cartoon, 'The Politics of Fear'. Blitt's cartoon, published in the lead up to the 2008 U.S. presidential election, was described by its creator as an attempt to satirize the racist and paranoid rhetoric surrounding the then Democratic nominee for president, Barack Obama, and his wife, Michelle Obama. However, despite the Obamas being visually represented in the cartoon, their participation would not be recognized in Simpson et al's models. The Obamas are neither the cartoon's creator nor target, and although they could be placed into the audience position, I argue that the personal impact the cartoon's publication had on them makes them distinct from other audience members. Furthermore, analysis of the cartoon's reception suggests that some audience members were concerned about the cartoon's potential impact on the Obamas, and that this concern shaped their reception to the cartoon in ways that cannot be fully explained by the three-position model of satiric discourse.

Therefore, I believe that the inclusion of the ‘participant zero’ position in models of satiric discourse will allow us to better analyse how audiences respond to satire, as well as highlight the ethical and creative challenges faced by practitioners (such as myself) working in the satiric mode.

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**Laughing on the Inside: Exclusionary Humour and Feminist Comic Critique in Jean Rhys' *Voyage in the Dark* and *Good Morning, Midnight*.**

Amanda Cooper, Western Sydney University

Laughter increases in importance across Jean Rhys' early novels. This paper will explore how the laughter of Rhys' characters helps convey her idiosyncratic modes of female Modernism and feminist comedy. Best known for her relentlessly melancholic portraits of fallen women, Dominican born Rhys has rarely been understood as a comic author. Only a few critics have noted a thread of dark humour running throughout her oeuvre. This paper will expand on the theories of Katharine Streip, Laura Wainwright and Judy Little who have all argued, differently and briefly, that Rhys' underlying comic sensibility challenges traditional notions of comedy while critiquing socio-cultural constructs of gender and race. For Wainwright, Rhys' comedy is also pivotal to her Modernism. *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) and *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939) represent both the culmination of Rhys' early career and the disparate literary developments of the Modernist period. As such, they neatly fit Lisa Colletta's theory of Modernist dark humour as providing no social purpose or corrective function, only momentary psychological protection from the meaningless brutality of modern life. Like all of Rhys' heroines, *Voyage in the Dark*'s Anna indulges in bouts of cathartic, incongruous, alienated laughter. The laughter of others is also used in this novel to shame the innocence and police the behaviour of Rhys' naïve Creole heroine. In *Good Morning, Midnight*, places, objects and people seem to be forever giggling and sneering at Sasha. In both works, Rhys depicts laughter as an act of social violence that can alienate, humiliate and denigrate. This paper will suggest, however, that the hostile, exclusionary laughter of Rhys' novels is not simply an intellectual quirk of Modernism but a feminist literary device. It arguably contributes to the downfall of Anna and Sasha, with each novel slowly building to a crescendo of manic, grotesque laughter. Laughter features strongly in Anna's post-termination fever dream, in which she is transported back to her beloved West Indian home. It likewise features strongly, as both weapon and cure, in the climactic sexual assault of Sasha. This paper will conclude that by mixing comedy with such tragedies, Rhys underscores the potentially harmful, negative effects of comedy while simultaneously endowing her heroines with enough protective, positive humour to combat the brutality of their societies' ridicule.

**Amanda Cooper** is a PhD student working in the Writing and Society Research Centre at Western Sydney University. During her Bachelor of Arts degree at WSU, she made the Dean's Merit List of 2012, 2013 and 2014. Graduating with distinction, she was awarded a Dean's Medal for Academic Excellence by the School of Humanities and Communication Arts. Amanda went on to receive a high distinction for her Master of Research project, which focused on feminist literary comedy in Muriel Spark's novel, *Robinson*. Expanding on her Master's research, Amanda's PhD project will investigate feminist literary comedy in the works of three twentieth-century female authors: Jean Rhys, Muriel Spark and Angela Carter. She is one of the AHSN2020 scholarship winners. Email: [17360180@student.westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:17360180@student.westernsydney.edu.au)

## Humour and Aging

Bruce Findlay, Swinburne University of Technology

There are relatively few studies of humour in older adults. Many of those that exist consider adults as young as 60. The studies are also problematic in that comparisons across ages tend to be cross-sectional, and are thus subject to cohort effects. That is, that the older participants have quite different lived experiences, such as developmental influences, role models, and favourite TV shows, so that it cannot be assumed that any humour differences found are not due to these influences rather than simply age. This presentation will briefly describe some of the earlier empirical studies reported in Nahemow, McCluskey and McGhee (1986), then report on the “Mini-Review” of Greengross (2013), and the Special Issue on “Humor and the challenge of aging” in *Social Work in Mental Health* (2015). Finally, a recent empirical study by Nimrod and Berdychevsky (2018) reporting on online sex-related humour by seniors will be described. While still subject to the concerns raised above, this is an imaginative and thoughtful study. Conclusions include a warning to beware of ageist stereotypes in our research, to be conscientious in defining terms, and, for those of us in older cohorts, to be optimistic about maintaining our senses of humour.

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**Bruce Findlay** taught psychology at Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne for 25 years, and continued to supervise PhD candidates for several more years after retiring, as an Adjunct Teaching Fellow. His main research interests were human relationships and humour. He has been

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## A National Treasure Vanishing Act

Lindsay Foyle (Cartoonist)

In July 1933 Stan Cross drew what is said to be the world's funniest cartoon, especially by Australians. It had the caption, "For gor'sake stop laughing, this is serious!", a saying which has been used on its own, almost as often as the cartoon has been published in full.

The cartoon was said to have been published in every country in the world, and thousands of reprints of it were sold in Australia. But for over 80 years, the original drawing was thought to be lost and possibly destroyed. A sad situation for a cartoon which made the everyone laugh, and considered to belong to the nation.

The full story of how it was drawn, published, lost and found has only recently been compiled and will be reported in this paper, making a vital contribution to the history of Australian cartooning and humour.

**Lindsay Foyle** has been a cartoonist for over 40 years and has been writing on the subject for over 30 years. He has been Deputy Editor of *The Bulletin*, *Australian Business Monthly* and worked at *The Australian*. He helped establish the Stanley Awards for Australian cartooning in 1985 and has twice been the president of Australian Cartoonist's Association. He is a member of the Media and Entertainment Arts Alliance since the 1960s and was on Federal Council for over 20 years. He is also on the Australian Humour Studies Network Review Panel. Email: [lindsay44@optusnet.com.au](mailto:lindsay44@optusnet.com.au)

**Second Language Pragmatics with Humorous Dialogues:  
“I’d Help You with Your Problem If I Could See It”**

Scott Gardner, Okayama University, Japan

This study looks at humorous dialogues in 32 junior high school EFL (English as a Foreign Language) textbooks from a number of countries, and assesses how these examples of interactional humor can assist teachers in helping learners of English attain L2 pragmatic competence.

Language learning researchers have described a greater need to address pragmatic competence in second language learning, in addition to other aspects of “communicative competence” such as linguistic and strategic competencies. Pragmatic competence includes the ability to recognize the underlying purposes of what people say in their everyday interactions—including their use of humor. It has been argued (Bell, 2009, 2014; Bell & Pomerantz, 2016; Blackmore, 2013; Davies, 2015) that language teachers and materials developers need to give more attention to target language interactional humor, given that it is such an important element of native-speaker interactions in many languages. One goal of this research is to assess whether the (rare) instances of interactional humor in language learning textbooks can work as models of target language pragmatics, or be salvaged somehow by thoughtful treatment in the classroom. I will address this by first applying a modified categorization of basic conversational humor goals by Schnurr (2010) to the instances found in these textbooks. I will then suggest possible activities that may heighten student awareness of how and why the humor appears in contexts such as these, both concocted textbook contexts and real-world ones.

Another goal of the research is to make a cross-cultural comparison of the different ways and degrees interactional humor is portrayed in these junior high school textbooks. Some textbook series put greater weight on model dialogues than others, so opportunities to teach pragmatic competence—and to model interactional humor of target language speakers—may vary greatly from series to series and from country to country. The textbooks studied so far come from Asia, Europe, and North America, including some from multinational publishers whose products are available around the globe. Textbooks targeted for junior high school students are the focus here, though there is as yet no specific age or level at which “L2 humor competence training” is seen as ideal.

It is hoped that this analysis will shed light on teachers' and materials developers' roles in promoting L2 humor and L2 pragmatics appreciation in foreign/second language study. This research in its completed form is expected to become a chapter in a book on the roles of humor in foreign/second language learning and teaching, to come out in 2020.

**Scott Gardner** has been teaching English and Communication at Okayama University in Japan since 1998. His main research interests are utilising classroom humour, humour and politeness, dialogism in education, and improving student writing. Email: [scott@okayama-u.ac.jp](mailto:scott@okayama-u.ac.jp)

## Is “Laughter” the Direct Product of Natural Selection?

Cliff Goddard & David Lambert, Griffith University

This paper combines linguistic semantics and perspectives of evolutionary biology to ask: What is “laughter” and how did it evolve? The linguistic analysis is useful to clarify the meaning of the word “laughter” in ordinary language, and in particular to disentangle its physiological aspects and assumed psychosocial functions (Wierzbicka 2016). One can then consider more clearly how these different aspects may have evolved under natural selection.

In evolutionary biology, the evolution of so-called “individual characters” has been a subject of a great debate, but popular thinking on the subject is still dominated by a very idea that goes back to George C. Williams (1966). He suggested that natural selection moulds, fashions or shapes individual characters to each perform a particular 'function' or 'purpose'. In its general format the approach goes like this: first identify a character (this can be anatomical, behavioural, cytological character), propose a hypothetical 'function' for it, then construct a narrative to explain the evolution of that character. In this way of thinking, if one assumes that the function of “feathers” is ‘flight’, one is prompted to seek evolutionary pathways (under natural selection) whereby the anatomical features of feathers develop in order to serve the purpose of flight. It is known, however, that are plenty of avian species that do not fly and yet still have feathers; and more importantly, it is now known that Theropod dinosaurs ancestors of birds had feathers but did not fly. Feathers were originally evolved for temperature regulation and their use for flight is what Stephen Jay Gould and Elizabeth Vrba (1966) called an “exaptation”, i.e. an acquired function for which they were not originally selected.

So, is “laughter” a character that evolved for some function? If so, what is it? Certainly human laughter is used in many ways, e.g. to express some kind of good feeling, as glue for social cohesion, to intimidate or denigrate others. But are any of these current uses, i.e. the current utility of laughter, the *raison d'être* for its evolution under natural selection? Almost certainly not. Probably all or most of these modern human uses of “laughter” are exaptations. This us to speculate how natural selection have operated to develop the original anatomical and behavioural antecedents of laughter, which was possibly in the context of social play.

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## **‘Do Mormons Think *The Book of Mormon* Is Funny?’**

Adrian Hale, Western Sydney University

Public ridicule of a person or minority *should* predict a defensive response from the target of that humour. After all, the public spectacle of humour typically provokes a polarising, binary in-group/out-group transaction, where the majority enjoys a humorous face reward, and solidarity, at the expense of the butt of the joke. The greater the face investment by the target in the topic of the joke, whether it be a deity, prophet, sacred text or public status-reputation, the more likely the target of the joke will feel excluded and uncomfortable. This was clearly the case in the instance of the Danish cartoons incident, where some Muslims felt that their only recourse was to stage violent protests (Rose, 2014) in response to the caricatures of their prophet. By contrast, some female politicians in Australia opted to publicly laugh with media cartoons that depicted them in clearly misogynistic ways (Hale, 2018).

The problem, of course, with both of these responses, is that they accentuated the binary nature of such humour, creating a discursive alignment or rejection of the humorous text itself, according to perceptions of community solidarity and offensiveness. In aligning with, or rejecting the humorous text, these respondents sought a simplistic outcome in order to negate the face-loss inherent in the public reception of the jokes – only to bring even more public attention to the humorous text itself, and, potentially, more face loss for themselves, personally, and as (frequently, self-appointed) representatives of groups.

This paper will briefly review the effectiveness of these strategies before comparing them with the far more complex (official, and unofficial) responses by the Mormon Church and some individual Mormons, to the Broadway musical comedy *The Book of Mormon* (2011). This paper will analyse media reports and official Church communications before arguing that an innovative public relations exercise was employed in an effort to minimise personal and organisational face-loss without explicitly engaging with the textual content itself. This ‘official’ response will then be contrasted with the responses collected via a survey of Mormons who have actually seen the musical (some, multiple times), in order to discover how these persons vary from the official response which ostensibly represents them as a community of persons affiliated with this religion. Interestingly, both

the official Church response and the individuals who participated in the survey, made overt claims to being 'in on the joke'. This particular claim, of belonging both to the wider community, and to the community of faith, will be tested. Given the fact that very little research has been conducted into the field of humour as it relates to the Mormon Church (McIntyre, 2012, 2013), this research offers important insights into the ways in which minorities respond to face-threatening acts of humour.

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## ***I Fail at Geography: Jocular Self-deprecation in Initial Interactions***

Michael Haugh (University of Queensland), Danielle Pillet-Shore (University of New Hampshire),  
Lara Weinglass (University of Queensland)

Self-deprecation is a form of self-criticism, that is, where one negatively evaluates self for some act or quality for which self is deemed responsible (Pillet-Shore, 2016: 54). Studies in pragmatics have generally focused on instances of self-deprecation that is couched within a non-serious, jocular or playful frame (Ervin-Tripp & Lampert, 2009; Haugh, 2011; Schnurr & Chan, 2011), while in conversation analysis, self-deprecation has been studied primarily through the lens of negative assessments (Childs & Walsh, 2017; Kim, 2015; Pomerantz, 1984).

In this paper we focus on analysing jocular forms of self-deprecation, and how it is managed by participants, identified in 80 audio(visual) recordings of initial interactions between American and Australian speakers of English. Our analysis reveals that self-deprecations occur in two key sequential environments: either as the “main business” of the current sequence-in-progress or as “side sequences” to that main business (Jefferson, 1972). We then consider the conflicting preferences speakers face in responding to self-deprecations (Pomerantz, 1984; Pillet-Shore, 2017), and the way in which responses to them appear to be contingent on the sequential environment in which they occur. We note that self-deprecations arising in side sequences tend to be responded to with laughter, while they tend to be reciprocated when they arise as the main business of the sequence-in-progress. We conclude that the relational work accomplished through self-deprecations in initial interactions is contingent on the sequential environment in which they arise.

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**Danielle Pillet-Shore** is Associate Professor of Communication at the University of New Hampshire (USA). She uses the methods of conversation analysis to examine video recorded naturally occurring interactions between people coming together to socialize and/or do work, focusing on how people create and maintain their social and professional relationships – and minimize conflict and maximize social harmony – in everyday life. She is currently investigating how both previously acquainted and unacquainted parties open their face-to-face interactions across a wide variety of settings, how primary school teachers and their students' parents interact during parent-teacher conferences, and how undergraduate college students talk with peers about their own everyday lives. Dr. Pillet-Shore's findings have been published in the *Journal of Communication, Communication Monographs, Research on Language and*

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**Lara Weinglass** is a confirmed PhD candidate in Linguistics at the School of Languages and Cultures at the University of Queensland. The working title for her PhD project is *Humour and Laughter in Australian Workplace Interactions*, and she is currently analysing data for her project. She is particularly interested in conversational humour, conversation analysis, and interactional pragmatics. She is one the AHSN2020 scholarship winners. Email: [l.weinglass@uq.edu.au](mailto:l.weinglass@uq.edu.au)

## **The Making of *Funny As* - the History of New Zealand Comedy**

Paul Horan, Documentary maker

An outline of the issues in making the five-part documentary series and book. In 116 full-length interviews over 6 months, the series went to air this year on Television New Zealand's main channel and it was hailed as "...the definitive historical document of New Zealand comedy" by The Spinoff July 21 2019.

Making a broad cultural history of the comedy in a small country presents both unique opportunities as well as many complex issues. There is a good chance of being able to map a greater breadth of traditions and movements because there are fewer of them. In New Zealand's case colonial settlement is not yet 200 years old so, for example, much of the primary research material and oral histories are still largely intact.

But many of the contemporary issues in plotting a history of comedy became the defining challenges that shaped the way the project was done. We will look at the following three issues in particular.

The different approach needed to include Maori and Pacific Island voices and traditions. To show how different these threads thrive almost in isolation, yet when they do cross over with the white mainstream - they are influential.

Because live performance comedy often trades in 'hot button' contemporary issues, it was of no surprise to see the impact of #metoo on the interviews. Not only were the comedians talking about the influence of Hannah Gadsby's *Nanette* on the way that comedy was being performed and written, there was also a change in the audiences. #metoo influenced the documentaries structure by providing a lens with which to view the history of women in comedy.

The definition of comedy was vital to tackle. Not only was this important for the marketing of the show but it was vital for the planning of the episodes and who to include. Approaching comedy as a

mode of expression rather than as a genre enabled us to move beyond a televisual or industry narrative to a broader cultural conversation that better suited New Zealand conditions.

These issues, combined with the lack of precedent, meant that the project was often in unknown territory. Using video footage and the detailed notes from the projects creation this hopes to outline how this huge project was achieved.

**Paul Horan** has worked in TV and live performance for 30 years. He co-founded the New Zealand Comedy Festival and The Classic comedy venue before basing himself in Australia from 2003. Here he helped create The Project and works as a senior TV producer. Currently he is an executive producer for Taika Waititi's company Piki and created the documentary series Funny As: The story of New Zealand Comedy with Augusto for TVNZ. This year he contributed an article to the special issue of Journal of Comedy Studies on John Clarke. Email: [paulrjhoran@hotmail.com](mailto:paulrjhoran@hotmail.com)

## A Comparative Study of Indigenous Humour Internationally

Angelina Hurley, Griffith University

This paper will investigate how laughter for Indigenous peoples worldwide reinstates a position of belonging for them. It will identify through our sense of humour not only how Indigenous peoples have an affinity with place and situation locally, but broadly within the world.

As an Aboriginal writer in the genre of comedy I have been influenced from a young age from many areas of the genre including film, theatre, and mostly stand up comedy. As such this paper is also a reflection of the early influences in my life from the 1970s and 1980s, where the humour and comedy of other cultures became prominent and influential. From the exports of shows like *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, *Dave Allen At Large*, *The Goodies* from the United Kingdom, to the discovery of the genius of American comedians Mel Brooks, Native American comedian Charlie Hill, and Richard Pryor there are parallels that resonate about the differences between peoples: Christians and atheists, the rich and the poor, the free and the restricted, and the past and the present.

I will provide examples of the use of humour that made me laugh including the Maori peoples of New Zealand, Native American peoples in the United States, First Nations peoples of Canada, and African Americans and other peoples of colour. Through shared values, the world's Indigenous peoples use humour, on the one hand, to resist ongoing oppression, racism, and colonial-based white supremacy and, on the other, to express strong, resilient identities. In spite of the impacts of colonisation, racism, conflict, and oppression, the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia prevails through humor.

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## Swilliam of *The Bulletin*: The Fine, Dying Art of Light Verse

Peter Kirkpatrick, University of Sydney

Writing under the pseudonym “Swilliam”, Ronald McCuaig (1908-1993) produced hundreds of witty topical poems for the *Bulletin* in the period 1949-1961. In doing so he took over the position of staff poet from Andrée Hayward, or “T. the R.” (“Thomas the Rhymer”), who had occupied the role since 1922. When McCuaig published a selection of his light verse in *The Ballad of Bloodthirsty Bessie and Other Poems* in 1961, the presence of so many comic journalistic pieces – including the title poem – became a stumbling-block to some reviewers, who rated his achievements as a lyrical poet less than seriously.

Newspapers had published topical verse since the Victorian age, but by the 1950s the practice seemed decidedly old-fashioned. Indeed, by then the *Bulletin* itself had settled into the role of a conservative institution, having long shifted from its 1890s republicanism to what one of its founders, J.F. Archibald, had predicted would be “a dull old man”. From its pages in the fifties, what aspects of contemporary Australian life attracted McCuaig’s humour? And how did he navigate the paper’s often aggressive editorial line?

Many of McCuaig’s light verses for the *Bulletin* remain very funny indeed, for their word play these days rather than for their satirical skills against what are now *passé* topics. This paper examines a selection of these poems in terms of their comic strategies with an eye to larger questions of the relationship between poetry and journalism, and the place of humour itself in modern verse.

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## **The Meme Is the New Political Cartoon: Is It Really Though?**

Lucien Leon, Australian National University

Researchers and commentators have remarked on the teleological similarities of political memes and cartoons, and, in the context of a news audience shifting inexorably away from traditional media and towards online and social media platforms, declared the meme the satirical successor to the political cartoon. At their best, memes can be an effective satirical and democratic tool whose participatory modes of production and dissemination promote broad public discourse and scrutiny of political players. On the other hand, the co-option of memes by political players and partisan groups has blurred the line between propaganda, advertising and journalism. In this paper I survey the visual political satire disseminated immediately before, during and after the 2019 Australian federal election and examine the implications for democratic discourse brought about by the decline of political cartoons and the emergence of memes. I conclude that political cartoons retain their unique capacity to frame complex events and ideas in recognisable and easily digestible metaphors, with newspaper readership figures suggesting that any report of their demise is an exaggeration (but only slightly). On the other hand, the typically crude shorthand and shareability of memes promotes an engagement with political issues beyond the traditional news audience. Finally, in contextualising the decline of political cartooning within a general decline in professionally-produced political satire, I ask whether the democratisation of satire has come at the expense of illuminating, insightful political critique.

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Media Age: Cases from Australia, the USA and the UK', in *Satire and Politics: The Interplay of Heritage and Practice* (ed. Jessica Milner Davis, Palgrave, 2017), 'Walt Handelsman' in *American Political Humor: Masters of Satire and Their Impact on U.S. Policy and Culture* (ed. Jody Baumgartner, ABC-Clio, 2019) and 'The Only Poll that Matters: Cartoons, Memes and Videos in Election 2019', *Morrison's Miracle: Analysing the 2019 Australian Federal Election* (ed. Marian Sawyer, ASSA, in press). Email: [Lucien.Leon@anu.edu.au](mailto:Lucien.Leon@anu.edu.au)

## Circles of Laughter: Contemporary Art and the Burdens of Authenticity

Chrisoula Lionis, University of Manchester

In his seminal text *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, Henri Bergson observed that although the experience of shared laughter can travel through a wide circle of people, the circle of laughter remains nonetheless a closed one. The ‘circle’ of humour to which Bergson alludes is one that is contingent on a shared understanding of the world, and therefore a shared appreciation of humour.

This paper investigates the ‘circles of laughter’ manifest in the contemporary art world, an arena that is stereotypically understood as void of humour, or even ‘misogelast’ (Billig, 2005). The stubbornness of this perception comes in part because where marginalised groups are expected to engage humour to ‘perform’ their identity in popular culture (e.g. POC, female, or queer stand-up comedians), the opposite might be said to be true in the contemporary art world, where performances of ‘sincerity’, ‘authenticity’ are seen as central to cultural encounters.

Arguing that this emphasis on authenticity operates as a discriminatory burden, this paper analyses work from three contemporary artists from diverse sites of emergency - Megan Cope (b.1982) who lives and works in Australia, Panos Sklavenitis (b.1977) who lives and works in Greece, and Khaled Hourani (b.1965) who lives and works in Palestine. This paper will examine how these artists use humour to subvert the expectation that artists didactically narrate experiences of marginality or trauma to satisfy art market trends. Focusing on the ‘secret codes’ at play in their work, this paper uncovers how humour in contemporary art bolsters collective identity, challenges stereotypes, and nurtures cultural resilience.

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## **Can a Trained Hand Be a Disruptive Force Within Political Cartooning? & Can It Become a New Working Model for the Newspaper Artist?**

Eric Lobbecke, Cartoonist for The Australian

This paper reports on an on-going studio research project in which a trained hand refers to a 30-year practice in the discipline of creating political cartoons for the Opinion Page of The Australian.

The constraints upon an artist working in this field are firstly, the dictates of the ideas contained within the singular piece of writing (the article) being responded to with a cartoon, and secondly, tight deadlines.

On the Opinion Page, my drawing is the communication device that extrapolates the tone and intent of one writer's idea(s) which can be characterised as a Closed Gestalt.

Since the completed drawing emerges from numerous component parts (an Open Gestalt), the concept of Open or Closed Gestalt is the theoretical framework in which this exploration of ideas will take place.

Gestalt theorist Max Wertheimer characterised using familiar routines and procedures as "Reproductive Thinking"<sup>1</sup> In contrast, he argues that "Productive Thinking" uses shifts in perspective which allow the problem solver to consider new, transformational approaches to problem solving.

Consequently, to go beyond the limitations of the current Opinion Page working model, I proposed to "The Australian" that I experiment with a process of drawing that could be described as "Productive Thinking" within an Open Gestalt.

Instead of one particular article to respond to, I will solicit from many readers their ideas on a topical subject each week for inspiration, drawing in a mode of "Democratic Art-working".

This has been accepted by The Australian and is called *Work in Progress*. The current form collects commentary from readers over a five-day period to 'grow' a 'bigger picture' which is published in the Review Section of 'The Weekend Australian'.

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<sup>1</sup> J. BARTON CUNNINGHAM JAMES N. MACGREGOR, 2013 Productive and Re-productive Thinking in Solving Insight Problems, The Journal of Creative Behaviour, Vol. 48, Iss. 1, pp. 44 by the Creative Education Foundation

In this way the Work in Progress drawings will explore the viability of a collectively formed and freely interpreted Open Gestalt drawing process.

My studio research methodology of experimental digital drawing is key to enabling this process. By using digital tablets, each drawing possessed a significant ‘time dimension’. That is, the retained digital file, a stroke by stroke time-line video of the drawing’s production. The drawing could grow in response to sequential inputs, and stages in this timeline could be captured and published on a daily basis. Finally, at the end of each drawing there is an animated movie/record of the drawing’s creation.

Having the potential to sequentially capture a drawing as it grows with progressive inputs begs the question as to what those inputs might be?

Both cultural and commercial interests could be explored (and likely progressed) by establishing a mechanism for readers’ contributions to the progressive development of drawings with a heuristic method of enquiry - a systematic form of qualitative research where the artist responds to an individual’s subjective experience.

Consequently, editors at ‘The Australian’ agreed to institute this *Work in Progress*, by publishing the drawing as; a daily update each weekday (online); the finished four panel cartoon on the weekend; and hosting the animation on their online media platform.

Watch: <https://youtu.be/WI0CXgifu5I>

**Eric Lobbecke:** Walkley award winning Cartoonist /Illustrator for The Australian since 1988, Studying a Masters of Fine Art (Research) UNSW College of Art and Design Paddington, Sydney (completion date August 2020) and a Practicing Fine Artist currently un-represented, with 4 Solo Exhibitions, the last 2018 at ARO Gallery in Sydney. Email: [lobbeckee@theaustralian.com.au](mailto:lobbeckee@theaustralian.com.au)

## **Sour Pussies and Period Preachers: Emergent Trends in Humor and Menstruation Taboos**

Fiona McKeague, Griffith University

Crimson tide. Shark week. Communists in the Fun House. In 2016 a survey found over 5,000 euphemisms for the word “period”, and - perhaps most interesting of all - the survey was commissioned by the makers of ‘Clue’, a leading menstruation tracking app.

Makers of commercial period products have a long history of shaping our shared knowledge and language of periods. The entry of new generation of menstrual products, such as menstrual cups and monthly tracking apps which require the user to be more intimately acquainted with their period than ever before, has coincided with a new wave of feminist humour capitalising on long-held menstruation taboos.

These new forms of humour have the characteristics of an in-joke, and are designed to challenge and re-negotiate taboos about menstruation. Frequently referencing the ‘MeToo’ movement and themes of underground feminist punk, menstrual humour echos many traits of third-wave feminism. In doing so, it also has much in common with ‘Riot Grrrl’ feminist punk philosophy and aesthetics: activism, d-i-y approaches, anti-consumerism, and the bold, unapologetic re-claiming of gendered space.

Herein lies a tension: while feminist activists create period humour for distinctly non-commercial (and sometimes explicitly anti-consumerist) purposes, commercial entities who desire to reach the same audience of “liberated women” attempt to replicate forms of period humour to suit their own commercial agendas.

This paper discusses emergent trends of the current menstrual revolution, where subversive forms of humour are being generated and used by both commercial entities and performance artists for divergent and convergent aims.

**Fiona McKeague** is growing dangerously close to becoming a self-styled period preacher, something that would have made her thirteen-year-old self die of shame. None of this is common

knowledge to her colleagues in the world of rock art research, where she works as a research assistant, although she is prone to popping a period pun from time to time. As she gradually sheds her shame – along with the lining of her uterus – she dreams of starting a bicycle gang to go on full moon rides under the banner of the ‘menstrual cyclists’. Email: [f.mckeague@griffith.edu.au](mailto:f.mckeague@griffith.edu.au)

## **The Role of Laughter in Establishing Social Solidarity**

Angus James McLachlan, Federation University of Australia

The traditional psychological model of laughter sees the behaviour as the ‘natural’ expression of an underlying emotion, usually joy. A minority perspective, drawing on linguistic and pragmatic ideas, is that conversational laughter is better understood as a communicative act, the significance of which varies with context. The basic premise of what Fridlund (1997) has termed a behavioural ecological approach is that laughter signifies the non-seriousness of the verbal and non-verbal activity that occurs immediately before the laughter, during the laughter, and, very occasionally, after the laughter. In support of this approach, instances of laughter derived from an experimental study of two person conversations concerning hypothetical life dilemmas will be examined. It will be argued that the context invoked by the experimental setting offers considerable latitude with respect to how seriously the discussion might be taken by participants. Most speakers in these experimental discussions periodically offer laughter or laughables, such as incongruous asides, primarily, it appears, to characterise their immediate contributions as non-serious. That is, the content of the conversation will have little or no ramifications for the participants after the experiment has been concluded. Further, in offering the occasional laugh or laughable, the way is open for the listener to reciprocate the laughter of the speaker or laugh at the laughable. Listener laughter elicited by a laughable may be reciprocated by the speaker. Such reciprocated laughter, in contrast to solitary laughter offered by either the speaker or the listener, might be understood as a marker of affinity or solidarity, which would explain the prevalent finding that females tend to engage in more reciprocated laughter than males in mixed gender interactions (see Smoski & Bachorowski, 2003). The use of laughter during these experimental discussions as a means of setting the general tone of the discussion as well as allowing participants to modulate their relationship is suggested to be a more compelling account than that of laughter as an expression of positive affect. For instance, frequencies of solitary and reciprocated laughter were not influenced by whether participants were friends or strangers or whether they agreed or disagreed with one another; both factors that would be expected to influence laughter were it an outward manifestation of pleasant emotions. By way of conclusion, the paper will explore the implications of conceiving laughter as a context-dependent,

communicative act, including the occasions in which laughter is not used as a transient signifier of non-seriousness but constitutes an affirmation of play, such as joke telling, or recounting humorous anecdotes. In such playful episodes, laughter might be better understood in a way that is closer to the traditional emotional expression view, as a signifier of a strong positive emotional response to an entire social episode that is conventionally structured to engender enjoyment.

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Smoski, M. J., & Bachorowski, J. (2003a). Antiphonal laughter between friends and strangers. *Cognition and Emotion*, 17 (2), 327-340.

**Angus McLachlan:** Now retired from Federation University Australia, Angus continues to potter along the academic highways and byways of laughter and humour. He is still convinced that tickling is the means by which laughter becomes part of talk, from which all forms of humour develop. In an effort not to get too carried away by his grand theory, he has joined the Victorian CFA as a voluntary firefighter. He is the current Chair of the AHSN Review Panel. Email: [mclachlan@ncable.net.au](mailto:mclachlan@ncable.net.au)

## Applying Bergson's Theory of the Comic to a Rare Comic Text

Jessica Milner Davis, University of Sydney

Bergson's theoretical approach to laughter and the comic (2005 [1910]) sees it as dependant upon a "temporary anaesthesia of the heart". In other works however (2005 [1907]), he stresses the importance of increasing moral and empathetic *rapprochement* between peoples, considering it essential to balance material and mechanical progress. Reconciling these two ideas involves Bergson's then-novel ideas about time and personal freedom (Guerlac 2005). Living in time (i.e. what is measured by the cyclical repetition of clocks) suppresses human flexibility, creating a kind of phantom human life. Time is thus a relative concept, subject to individual experiential variations so that what seems to one person to last a long time can pass in a flash to others (Bergson 2001 [1889]). For Bergson, laughter resulting from comedy is part of a human(e) and humanising reaction to such domination by time—a way to regain lost sensibilities.

Bergson's comic theory was based on experiential responses to live comedy by audiences of the Parisian theatres of the 1890s. The stage was dominated by great farceurs such as Eugène Labiche, Georges Feydeau and Victorien Sardou, writing in a tradition descended from Molière. This paper will apply his ideas in analysis of a popular farce from a very different time and culture: one written for the classical Nō theatre of Japan, played as a comic interlude or kyōgen. The example selected for analysis is *Busu (Poison)*. The text, still played today, originates in the Muromachi period of Japan (roughly 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century) and was handed down in oral tradition among the player guilds. The text is transcribed in KOYAMA (1960: 315-23) and the English translation by Sakanishi SHIO (1960: 84-89), will be discussed.

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**Jessica Milner Davis** FRSN is an honorary research associate at the University of Sydney, a life member of Clare Hall, Cambridge, and an affiliate of Brunel University London's Centre for Comedy Studies Research. Her books deal with comedy, farce, satire and cross-cultural studies of humour in Australia, UK, Japan and China. She is founder and co-ordinator of the Australasian Humour Studies Network hosted by the University of Sydney. Her most recent book was *Judges, Judging and Humour* (co-edited with Sharyn Roach Anleu, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) and she is currently working on a special issue of *Journal of East Asian Pragmatics* (with Daniel Kádár) exploring humour in Japanese, Korean and Chinese cultures. Email: [jessica.davis@sydney.edu.au](mailto:jessica.davis@sydney.edu.au)

## On the Dark Side: Facebook Humour Used for Inclusion and Exclusion

Kerry Mullan, RMIT

*“And just like that, the Dictator turned off the comments. Then all of the lemmings ran back to their share houses and swapped succulents until Peace was restored. The End.”* (FB post 15.05.18)

This study examines the use of online humour in a subversive local community Facebook group, set up by disgruntled members banned from a similar group “in opposition to [its] arbitrarily-applied rules, [its] enforced happiness, and [its] suppression of any post that isn't about giving away lemons or asking to borrow small appliances”. The dissatisfaction with the guidelines and the administration of the original Facebook group (as presented at AHSN conference 2018) provides rich material for humorous posts, many with varying degrees of aggression directed at the founder and certain members of the “Dark Side”, as the original group is frequently referred to. This paper will demonstrate how the use of humour (subversive and otherwise) in this rival Facebook group is used to include and exclude members, and how it contributes to a sense of belonging in this online community.

The analysis of several posts and discussion threads was carried out using elements of computer-mediated discourse analysis, such as Conversation Analysis, Interactional Sociolinguistics and interactional pragmatics. In addition, members were invited to respond to a short questionnaire on their impressions and use of the humour in the group. As increasingly common among scholars studying discourse in social media, I also used a participant-observer online ethnographic approach to more fully understand the practices and references of this community.

**Kerry Mullan** is Associate Professor and Convenor of Languages in the School of Global, Urban and Social Studies at RMIT University. She teaches French language and culture, and sociolinguistics. Her main research interests are cross-cultural communication and the differing interactional styles of French and Australian English speakers. She also researches in the areas of intercultural pragmatics, discourse analysis, language teaching and in humour in social interactions.

She is also Chair of the new Australasian Humour Studies network (AHSN) Board. Email: [kerry.mullan@rmit.edu.au](mailto:kerry.mullan@rmit.edu.au)

## Belonging in Joke Work: The Protagonists of Workplace Humour

Barbara Plester, University of Auckland

Humour is ubiquitous (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940) played out every day in offices, warehouses, factories, and shops. Humour interactions may be theatrical, performative acts or can be quips such as banter, witticisms and sarcasm (Plester, 2016). Humour may include structured verbal monologues (canned jokes), duologues such as ‘knock knock’ jokes, or enacted silently in shared gestures. This paper argues that in humorous interactions, people adopt various roles in and around the dialogue or physical humour enactment.

Drawing upon classic theories of incongruity (Attardo, 1997), relief and release (Freud, 1905) and superiority (Hobbes 1640), this paper suggests that people at work enact specific humour roles to manage humour interactions and maintain harmonious workplace relationships. Humour roles include: jokers who instigate or create humour; gatekeepers who constrain or moderate humour; (Plester & Orams, 2008) targets (sometimes the ‘victim’) of humour (Roy, 1959); the audience for whom the humour is intended; and ‘bystanders’ to the humour interaction (Plester & Inkson, 2019).

It is difficult to determine the intention or purpose of some humour and analysis of the roles people play in humour events helps to unravel intentional and unintentional motivations and outcomes of workplace humour. Workplace humour can allow emotional expression, ease conversations, promote idea exchanges, and soften some workplace interactions (Maon et al, 2018). Alternatively, humour can be aggressive and hostile, can deliver critique or ridicule and may even promote subversion and disorder among colleagues (Billig, 2005; Plester 2016). Understanding the roles different protagonists play in humour enactments offers useful insight into power relations and workplace politics that may contribute to an emerging critical humour agenda.

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## American Late-Night Comedians and the Geopolitical Imagination of China

Darren Edward Purcell, University of Oklahoma

The impact of late-night humor on the American political system has been a subject for debate over the last twenty years as surveys have shown the late-night comedians do have influence on specific segments of the citizenry. Accepting this premise that late-night comedians can influence at least understandings of political, and geopolitical issues, this paper explores how the People's Republic of China has been portrayed in American late-night humor and demonstrates that the comedians and writers mine news events to replicate specific framings of the country. Situating this research in both the popular geopolitics literature and the burgeoning humor and geopolitics literature (e.g. Dodds, and Kirby, 2013; Fluri and Clark, 2019; Purcell, et al., 2009; Purcell, et al. 2016), the paper explores a dataset of jokes covering 1996-2019 and highlights framings that link back to older media framings, including the Communist other, human rights, economic linkages, and China as a threat. The combination of these frames reproduces understandings of China that are activated by U.S. politicians to support their geopolitical imaginations.

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## **A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Perception of Rhetorical Humour in Islamic Discourse**

Maram Mohammad Qasim, Deakin University

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century humour has become an abundant discursive practice in the spoken Arabic Islamic discourse. By humour use a breed of media-savvy preachers and muftis fluctuates the nature of dispute in Islam from a traditional rigorous mode to a modern witty discourse, thereby mediating innovative Islamic experiences transnationally. Muslim preachers' and muftis' enterprise of delivering religion through humour is accompanied by sophisticated networks of intentions, motivations and communicative strategies that give a boost to internal debates on the effectiveness of humour in Islamic contexts and generate disparate arrays of responses among Muslim media audience around the world. Through a qualitative analysis of open-ended interviews with Muslims in Australia who are required to watch a selection of religious-humorous YouTube video-clips immediately prior to interviewing them, this study indicates that humour in the speeches of Muslim preachers and muftis lightens the mood within the online Islamic contexts and makes spiritual life more enjoyable; but more often is a rhetorical tool to perform a serious and untypical work, such as depicting attention, persuasion, and influence. This study delineates a method of Critical Discourse Analysis which uniquely explores the aspects of power and control of the 'powerful'. Such a theoretical-analytical method offers an applicable framework to analyse the balances of power and dominance in the practices of reformulating and transmitting Islamic values and opinions through humour, probing for whether this kind of discourse ever leads to any consequential actions or decision-making in the daily life of the listener.

**Maram Qasim** is currently a PhD candidate (late phase) in Applied linguistics at Deakin University. Maram has been studying humour use in the spoken Arabic Islamic discourses of preaching and fatwa-issuing from the Critical Discourse Analysis perspective. Maram held a BA and MA in English Language and Linguistics from Yarmouk University – Jordan. Maram worked as a lecturer at the Department of Applied Linguistics in Jordan University of Science and Technology from 2012 to 2015. Email: [mmqasim@deakin.edu.au](mailto:mmqasim@deakin.edu.au)

## Absurdity and Jocular Pretence in Persian Television Talkshows

Amir Sheikhan & Michael Haugh, University of Queensland

Jocular pretence, instances where recipients are momentarily led to believe something that isn't true for humorous effect, has recently become a focus of research amongst scholars working on conversational humour (Haugh, 2016; Dynel, 2017, 2018a, 2018b; cf. Goddard, 2017, 2018). However, most of these studies have only examined instances of jocular pretence in English, and this phenomenon has barely received any attention in other languages and cultures. The present study sheds light on the role of absurdity in instances of jocular pretence in Persian.

Using the framework of interactional pragmatics, the data draws on two popular TV talkshows broadcast in Iran with entertaining and comedy themes, namely 'Dorehæmi' and 'Xændevâneh'. These shows consist of semi-structured and informal one-to-one interviews with the guests who answer an array of questions, ranging from private to more general ones. Initially, a number of episodes of these TV programs were retrieved which amount to circa 120 hours of interviews. In the next stage of the study, instances of absurdity in jocular pretence practices were identified and transcribed using CA transcription conventions. These instances were then scrutinised with respect to their sequential placement, their pragmatic functions, and the targets' responses to them.

Preliminary results show that absurdity in jocular pretence is mostly utilised as a strategy to deflect the ongoing topic of discussion or the question posed. Moreover, while the jocularity is overtly perceived on the part of the interlocutors and the audience, the targets mostly treat the locus of pretence as a genuine misinterpretation of their previous turn.

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## *Everybody's Comfier with a Good Pillow: The Makura of Rakugo*

M. W. Shores, University of Sydney

*Rakugo*, traditional Japanese comic storytelling, boils down to three parts: *makura*, *hondai*, *ochi*. Respectively, these are introduction, story proper, and punch line. Scholars have spent a good deal of time scrutinizing *hondai* and *ochi* because they are considered fundamental to the art. *Makura* (lit. 'pillow'), on the other hand, have received far less attention. This is because the art can arguably do without *makura*—particularly if the storyteller (*rakugoka*, also *hanashika*) is not performing live (i.e., when *rakugo* appears in print and other media). Still, because the art was crafted as live entertainment and continues to thrive as such, *makura* are in fact vital and deserve more scrutiny. *Makura* allow *rakugoka* to present topical material that ties into the *hondai*, they elucidate subject matter that can prove difficult later, 'feel out' the audience, and establish rapport. It is crucial that *rakugoka* make a strong start and there are many approaches to this. Of chief concern, however—particularly since many view *rakugo* as 'traditional' and therefore perceive it to be abstruse—is providing context and making audiences confident that they will be able to follow the story to the end. Better yet, *rakugoka* want to make audiences feel as though they already share common ground, that they already possess the knowledge needed to enjoy stories. *Makura* are for putting audiences at ease and whetting appetites. This paper analyses fifteen *makura* through conversation analysis and transcript rendering in order to highlight their linguistic—namely, pragmatic—qualities and to examine laughter's central role therein.

**Matt Shores** is a scholar of early modern and modern Japanese literary arts and entertainment. Much of his work to date has focused on modern comic storytelling (*rakugo*) and its early modern precursors, literary and otherwise. Shores began his career in the UK, where he was a Governing Body Fellow and Director of East Asian Studies at Peterhouse, the oldest of the Cambridge colleges. He joined The University of Sydney in 2019. Email: [matthew.shores@sydney.edu.au](mailto:matthew.shores@sydney.edu.au)

## **“Should I Bring My Own Snowboard or Will Rentals Be Available?”: A Collective Co-construction of Humour, a ‘Jester’ Identity and Exclusion of Non-jokers**

Valeria Sinkeviciute, The University of Queensland

Humour can be used to achieve various goals, whether to amuse, criticise, bond or exclude. The bigger the community that is exposed to an attempt at humour, the more complex situation becomes, which is the case of attempts at humour on social media (e.g. Baym 1995; Locher & Bolander, 2015; Demjén, 2016). This paper looks at a public event page entitled “Mt Coo-tha Ski Field Opening Day 2019” that ‘took’ place in winter in Brisbane. The humour potential (and the fakeness of the event, mentioned in the disclaimer) can be explained through the incongruity between what is known about Brisbane’s winters (20° during the day) and the conditions necessary for skiing. Interestingly, this event attracted the interest of 37 thousand Facebook users, with almost 6 thousand of them stating that they were going to attend the opening of the ski field. The focus of this multi-modal (image and text) analysis is on how humour is further co-constructed by the posters who join the discussion of this event. I examine 28 posts (from January to June 2019; excluding the posts published by the event organisers) that generated 497 comments, including verbal comments and image-based comments (gifs, photos and videos). Preliminary results show that the jocularity of the event is collectively co-constructed through fantasy scenarios (e.g. Chovanec, 2012; Stallone & Haugh, 2017; Tsakona, 2018), whether by way of (1) reassurance of the event’s genuineness, (2) questions surrounding the event details or (3) pictures posted from Mt Coo-tha skiing site. All of such scenarios are validated by a considerable amount of ‘laughing’ emojis. It is argued here that this co-construction of humour functions as a means of group identity construction, namely, belonging to a ‘jester’ identity. Importantly, the discussion participants who do not seem to recognise the humorous potential of those posts, who present serious counter-arguments or appear to believe in the event being real are explicitly excluded from the humorous group by means of various impoliteness practices, e.g. questioning their mental abilities, sense of humour or name-calling.

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## Investigating Perceptions of Humour and Novelty in Figurative Language Production

Stephen Skalicky, Victoria University of Wellington

Figurative language and humour are both examples of linguistic creativity that rely on incongruity between form and meaning. However, the reasons why a joke may be perceived as humorous differs from figurative language. There has been a wealth of research investigating the processing and comprehension of humour and figurative irony, whereas relatively few studies focus on investigating variables that influence the production of figurative language and humour. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether cognitive and demographic individual differences influence the production quality of metaphorical and sarcastic utterances as measured by human perceptions of creativity and humour.

60 American undergraduate and graduate students were recruited to participate. They completed surveys designed to gather demographic information (e.g., age, language background) as well as different cognitive measures. Specifically, these included Need for Cognition (NFC; the desire to engage in cognitively difficult tasks) and Abstract Thinking (the tendency to construe events abstractly or concretely). Afterwards, participants completed metaphorical and sarcastic utterance production activities.

For the metaphorical utterances, participants were presented with prompts designed to produce conventional (commonly used) or novel metaphors. For the sarcastic utterances, participants were presented with 12 different cartoons depicting frustrating situations and asked to think of a sarcastic utterance they would make if they were in the illustrated situation. After the data was collected, two human raters were trained to rate the figurative utterances for three different features. The metaphorical utterances were rated for conceptual distance, novelty, and mirth, while the sarcastic utterances were rated for incongruity, novelty, and mirth.

The data was analyzed using linear mixed models. The ratings of novelty and mirth for both metaphorical and sarcastic utterances were strongly correlated and collapsed into a single dependent variable. Results for metaphorical utterances included a significant interaction between NFC and metaphor type, in that higher levels of NFC were significantly associated with higher ratings of novelty/mirth for novel metaphors when compared to conventional metaphors ( $t = 2.612, p < .001$ ). Additionally, metaphors judged to have greater conceptual distance were also associated with

significantly higher novelty/mirth scores ( $t = 13.094$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Results for the sarcastic utterances included a significant effect for judgements of incongruity only, in that sarcastic utterances rated as more incongruous were associated with significantly higher novelty/mirth ratings ( $t = 3.835$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

These results provide information into differences associated with perceptions of humour in metaphorical and sarcastic utterances. Specifically, the results suggest that perceptions of novelty/mirth in metaphors are associated with greater conceptual distance as well as NFC, and that the NFC effect was moderated by metaphor type. These findings align with theories of conceptual metaphor, which posit tight links between cognition and metaphor. The results for the sarcastic utterances included only one significant effect suggesting sarcastic utterances with greater incongruity between the meaning of the utterance and the situation depicted in the prompts were associated with greater perceptions of novelty/mirth. Thus, perception of novelty/mirth in sarcastic utterances may rely more heavily on the contextual information when compared to metaphorical utterances.

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## Restoring 'Art' to Clowning: The Jandaschewsky Family

Mark Valentine St Leon, Independent scholar

For more than a century, from the gold rush era of the 1850s until the introduction of television in the 1950s, the travelling show delivered professional entertainment to Australia's small and widely-settled population. The ubiquitous circus was the most perennial example of travelling show.

Humour lies at the heart of any circus program and one of the chief exponents of humour in circus is the clown. Unfortunately, in Australian circus at least, the clown has had a chequered history. Far removed from the comic traditions of the Old World and examples of the constant innovations in clowning taking place in Europe and America, Australia's circus clowns did little to advance the art beyond what had already been done many times before. The initial transfers of Grimaldi and *commedia dell'arte* were progressively enfeebled before colonial audiences:

The clown ... was very funny, but the same old jokes were perpetrated. If the present clowns would abandon their role and give place to a new set, the public would look forward to the advent of a circus with more pleasure, than they apparently do now, but until the present old things are replaced with new witticisms etc., circus proprietors need not feel disappointed at their shows being only moderately patronised, for the public do not care to listen to the one thing over and over again ... <sup>2</sup> [Gundagai, NSW, 1879].

The clowns retail the same anything but hale and hearty old jokes and indulge in mirth provoking antics in the orthodox way, with a success which shows how much we colonials revere the antique ...<sup>3</sup> [Adelaide, SA, 1883].

Australian audiences had to await the brief visits of major circus companies and circus troupes from America and Europe to be reminded that clowning was an art, not a job.

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<sup>2</sup> *Gundagai Times*, 3 October 1879.

<sup>3</sup> *South Australian Register*, 5 March 1883.

Possessed of a fund of native humour ... Mr Cooke ... demonstrated that a clown is not necessarily a fool - that genial wit is not necessarily offensive, or even coarse, and that there can be as much true philosophy and sound maxim in an ostensible jest as in the weightier deliverance of some of our would be sages ...<sup>4</sup> [Sydney, NSW, 1866].

Mr Reynolds is ... the best circus clown that has ever visited the Australian colonies; there are no stale or vulgar jokes; nothing to displease the most fastidious; his manner is gentlemanly; his conversation refined and full of wit and humour ...<sup>5</sup> [Roma, Qld, 1879]

Despite their occasional presence, the brief visits of these imported clowns did little to raise the quality of the local product although Australian circus advanced in other directions. By the dawn of the 20th century, Australia was served by numerous circus companies, including two of international standing. Australian circus companies ventured beyond Australia's shores and exported exceptional Australian circus artists. And yet, specifically, the quality of Australian circus clowning remained impoverished and frequently attracted criticism:

To be even a decent clown in a circus requires the art of an actor, the diction of an elocutionist, and the agility of an acrobat. To get these attainments in one individual is practically impossible. Consequently circus proprietors in the colonies don't even try to make their clown an interesting individuality ... Hence we have any rouse-about in the show rigged up in an extravagant costume and painted like a barber's poll, permitted to let himself loose on a long-suffering audience, which one of these days will arise in its might and sweep him off the face of the earth.<sup>6</sup>

In 1900, the proprietors of FitzGerald Bros Circus - Australia's leading circus of the day - decided to directly confront the impoverished state of Australian circus clowning by engaging a family of Russo-Greek clowns, the Jandaschewskys, to tour throughout Australasia. Blending humour with music, dancing, acrobatics, costuming and pantomime, the Jandaschewskys delivered a refreshing

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<sup>4</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News*, 16 March 1866.

<sup>5</sup> *Western Star*, 2 June 1879.

<sup>6</sup> 'Onlooker' [pseud.], 'Spangles & Sawdust: A Chronicle of Colonial Circus Life', in *The Theatre*, December 1907.

alternative to the banality and vulgarity that had characterised Australian circus clowning and had assaulted circus audiences for several decades.

Enamoured of Australia, the Jandaschewskys remained here and enriched the entertainment scene. They ran their own touring vaudeville company. One of their number, 'Jandy' was seen on the vaudeville stage and even early Australian television programs.

In this paper, I intend to (a) briefly outline the professional origins of the Jandaschewsky family (b) briefly place the role of the Jandaschewsky family within the wider context of circus clowning (c) briefly describe the Jandaschewsky family's performances as seen in Australia and their impact (d) briefly outline the Jandaschewsky family's subsequent contribution to the annals of Australian humour.

My talk will be illustrated with several exquisite photographs and a *brief* video clip of the famous 'Jandy' as seen on Australian television c.1960.

**Mark St Leon** is a freelance lecturer in accounting, economics and management. He is descended from one of Australia's earliest circus families. He is the author of the definitive history of Australian circus, *Circus: The Australian Story* [Melbourne Books, 2011] and has written numerous monographs and articles on the subject. In 1991, he launched the Sydney Arts Management Advisory Group ['SAMAG'], now in its 28<sup>th</sup> year of continuous, non-profit operation. He was recently appointed a Councillor of the Royal Australian Historical Society. Email: [markstleon@bigpond.com](mailto:markstleon@bigpond.com)

## **‘The More Horrible the Thing Was, the More They Laughed’: Refugees, Laughter and Responses to Trauma**

Jessica Stroja, Griffith University

The role of laughter and its relevance within refugee studies and trauma recovery is understudied. Following the Second World War, refugees that were displaced as a result of conflict became a global concern. These Displaced Persons had experienced horrific violence and loss, and many were resettled under the auspices of the International Refugee Organisation. Numerous refugees were resettled in Australia via this programme. A significant number of these post-war refugees were initially settled in Queensland, in locations of low linguistic and cultural diversity and without pre-existing support networks for refugees and migrants.

Using the post-Second World War resettlement of displaced families in Queensland as a case study, this paper will explore the vital role of laughter in refugees’ long term trauma recovery. This paper draws on an oral history methodology, combined with the extensive use of archival research. This includes more than 50 oral history interviews, and more than 10 000 archival files used to develop more than 300 case studies of Displaced Persons’ resettlement in Queensland. In so doing, it will establish the importance of laughter for refugees during resettlement, and the ways in which this intersects with shared community experiences that continue to resonate decades after these refugees’ initial resettlement. In addressing this understudied intersection between humour studies and refugee trauma, this paper will highlight the practical role of laughter for refugees who are recovering from ongoing trauma, particularly those resettled in locations without pre-existing support structures and migrant networks.

**Jessica Stroja** is a PhD Candidate at Griffith University, where her thesis is currently under submission. She is also a 2018-2019 National Archives of Australia-Australian Historical Association Scholar. Her research surrounds migration caused by conflict and the effects of wartime experiences. She was awarded First Class Honours for her research discussing Australian responses to the Finnish Winter War. She also maintains a strong interest in museums, local history and their relevance within the surrounding landscape. Jessica’s PhD thesis focuses on the experiences of child

Displaced Persons who migrated to Queensland following the Second World War. It questions the ways in which the legacy and memory of violence influenced the post-war experiences of child refugees and the relevance of this for refugees' experiences today. Email: [jessica.stroja@griffithuni.edu.au](mailto:jessica.stroja@griffithuni.edu.au)

## **Interactional Functions of Conversational Humour: Contrasting Australian English Speakers with Asian Users of English as a Lingua Franca**

Ian Walkinshaw & Andy Kirkpatrick, Griffith University

The study of conversational humour is not new. Research has explored types of humour and the pragmatic or interactional functions they serve in a variety of contexts. But the majority of studies have examined humour in first languages rather than in lingua franca contexts. And most lingua franca humour studies that do exist are concentrated in Europe or Scandinavia. With a few exceptions, studies of conversational humour among Asian speakers of English as a lingua franca (ELF) are thin on the ground. Still more uncommon is research contrasting first-language humour with lingua franca humour; this is the focus of the research project on which we are reporting.

Our study compares data from an existing study of conversational humour among Australian English speakers (Béal & Mullan 2017) with a similar dataset drawn from the Asian Corpus of English, a million-word spoken corpus of English being used as a lingua franca by Asian multilinguals spanning a variety of social, professional and geographical contexts. All interactants in the dataset have established friendships and the interactions take place against an informal, non-hierarchical, non-task-focused contextual background.

Our qualitative contrastive analysis of the two datasets reveals significant insights into humour's interactional functions among Asian ELF speakers compared with an Australian first-language context. Some key findings of the analysis are: (i) Self-oriented, self-deprecating humour is a common feature of both datasets. Producers of such utterances often degrade their own face through humour, though cognisant that doing so increases their positive self-image as being able to laugh at themselves. (ii) Whereas other-oriented humour in the Australian English dataset is overwhelmingly (if jocularly) face-threatening, the Asian ELF dataset contains numerous examples of non-face-threatening humour. (iii) Unlike the Australian English dataset, humour is seldom occasioned by an aspect of the situational context (e.g. arriving late to a party) in the Asian ELF dataset. It is either a stand-alone utterance targeting a co-interactant or a response to an interlocutor's (humorous or non-humorous) prior utterance. (iv) In the Australian English dataset interactants occasionally employ humour to disarm inadvertent face-threats and normalise conversations. There are no such instances among Asian ELF users.

In this paper we shall report on the findings from the ACE data set, compare them with Béal and Mullan's findings and suggest some reasons for the differences. Although the scale of this research is limited, it offers fascinating preliminary insights into the nature of humour in English as a lingua franca in Asia which are fertile ground for further exploration.

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## Using Conversational Humour and Laughter to *Belong* in an Australian Blue-collar Workplace

Lara Weinglass, The University of Queensland

While the study of conversational humour (Norrick, 1993; Attardo, 1994) is an established subfield of humour studies, little research has been done investigating the importance of conversational humour in the workplace context. Taking an interactional pragmatics and conversation analytic perspective, this paper seeks to address this gap in the under-researched area of Australian blue-collar workplaces.

The data for the study was collected at three blue-collar workplaces in and around Brisbane and consists of over 120 hours of audio and video recordings of naturally occurring interactions between co-workers: farm workers, landscape gardeners and plasterers. The recordings consist of several types of interaction, e.g. talk while performing tasks, during shared breaks and in informal meetings.

Data analysis is informed by the design and response features of jocular mockery (Haugh, 2014) and the conversational humour framework proposed by Béal and Mullan (2013, 2017), focussing on the turn design, the target of the humour (particularly self- or other- directed) and the pragmatic functions. This study provides an in-depth analysis of longer sequences involving both other-directed humour, specifically teasing, focussing on where it occurs sequentially with respect to self-directed humour (including self-deprecation), and with laughter. Preliminary findings suggest that sequences involving teasing followed by self-deprecation are used to show *belonging*, i.e. they build rapport and create solidarity amongst co-workers. This paper seeks to enhance our understanding of linguistic practices in the Australian workplace and has implications for understanding relationality in the workplace context, in particular, what it means to *belong* in an Australian blue-collar workplace.

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## **The Lion Has Learnt to Tell Its Side of the Story. Reframing Identity, Power and Place through Humour: The Case of Slang Toponyms**

Dorcas Zuvalinyenga, University of Newcastle

This article explores the ways in which slang toponyms are being used as a humorous way of providing alternative identities, ideologies and indirect comments when direct ones are not feasible. The exploration of slang toponyms came as a result of realising that interconnections between place names and identity are unquestionable. It has long been established that place names convey various types of identities depending on the context and for various reasons (Helleland, Ore, & Wikstrøm, 2012). However, because naming places is done by people in and with power and/or authority, the identity and messages the place names convey, do not always have anything to do with the residents or inhabitants of the named places but those of the powerful. This scenario has made place naming an extremely loaded and contested exercise (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, & Azaryahu, 2017). These contestations have taken many forms and are sometimes tension and friction filled. Thus, this article proposes that one of the ways in which objection to linguo-socio-political ideological power and domination, has been the coining of place nicknames or slang toponyms. The study employs a critical discourse analysis of place naming practices to explore power relations embedded in them. The results from a survey have shown that slang toponyms are both manifestations of a complex and fascinating relationship between toponyms and identity and a means of regulating social relations in tense social interactions in order to avoid confrontation and possible conflict. The article also contends that these slang place names are at once, a way of practical communication to identify place and an expression of belonging by certain groups, a reinforcement of social bonds as well as a form of social control. The article then concludes by arguing that highlighting these variant place naming practices exposes different identities and ideologies in humorous ways. It also lays bare unequal relations embedded in naming practices and recommends strategies and solutions to create inclusive and integrated place naming practices in a multi-lingual, multi-cultural and diverse society.

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**Dorcas Zuvalinyenga** is a doctoral candidate at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Her research is an interdisciplinary study in socio-onomastics focusing on identity, power and communication in place naming practices. She received her Bachelor of Arts Honours in English and Master of Arts in English from the University of Zimbabwe. She tutored at the same university for a couple of years before moving to Bindura where she lecturers in the Department of Languages and Communication at Bindura University of Science Education. Her research interest include socio-onomastics, toponymy, language and gender, critical discourse analysis, English as a Second Language (ESL), Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), language and identity, literary and cultural studies and language and equity. Email: [Dorcas.Zuvalinyenga@uon.edu.au](mailto:Dorcas.Zuvalinyenga@uon.edu.au)

## Information on venue, transport and accommodation

### Venue

AHSN 2020 will be held at Griffith University's South Bank Campus. The conference sessions will be held in Building S07 and the main public sessions will be organised at S06; i.e. The Ship Inn (pictured below).



An established beacon in the world-class sea of the South Bank dining precinct, The Ship Inn has transformed itself from a rowdy sailor hangout to one of Brisbane's premier watering holes over its 144-year history. A dependable port of call, the hotel ensures a lively crowd, excellent fare and ice-cold drinks. The Ship Inn is part of the Griffith University's Southbank Campus (building S06 in campus maps) and will host AHSN2020 in February 2020.

Southbank Campus is located in Brisbane's picturesque South Bank Parklands and encompasses the [Queensland College of Art](#), the [Queensland Conservatorium](#), Griffith Graduate Centre (S07) and the [Griffith Film School](#). Ideally positioned in Brisbane's cultural heart, the campus is a 10-minute walk from the Brisbane CBD across the river and is adjacent to the Queensland Art Gallery, the Gallery of

Modern Art, the State Library, the Queensland Museum, the Queensland Performing Arts Centre and the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre. Good eating places and bars proliferate along Grey Street.

Southbank Campus is located at 226 Grey Street, South Bank, Qld 4101. Read more about the Southbank campus [here](#).

Southbank campus [maps](#).

### **Public Transport**

**Bus:** You can catch the bus from a variety of locations to the South Bank Busway Station. This station is a very short walk from the campus.

**Train:** The South Bank Railway Station is directly across Grey Street, behind the campus.

Plan your trips in Brisbane with TransLink app or [website](#).

In order to use public transport in Brisbane (and also South East Queensland) you can buy a *go card* which is TransLink's electronic ticket. Or you have the option to buy a single paper trip ticket at train stations or on the bus from the driver. However, please note that a *go card* is a little cheaper than paper tickets. You can buy a *go card* at shops, newsstands, airport, and post offices. There are [two special tickets](#) designed for visitors and tourists that you might like to buy for your stay in Brisbane.

### **Getting to Southbank Campus from the Brisbane airport**

**Airtrain:** Train is the best and cheapest option. This service runs every 15–30 minutes. The train goes all the way through Brisbane to the Gold Coast and has a stop at The South Bank Railway Station immediately behind the campus, after South Brisbane Station at the other end of South Bank.

A taxi to the Southbank Campus from the Airport should cost between A\$45 and A\$65.

Uber, Ola, or Didi from the Airport should cost between A\$40 and A\$50.

Parking: There is no car park at the Southbank Campus (neither for visitors nor for students and staff). The car parks in the vicinity are managed by third party companies.

The closest car park is the Southbank Parklands Car Park which is underground parking below the campus. [Check the rates and if necessary make a booking.](#)

Secure Parking also offers some parking options in the vicinity where Southpoint Car Park at 40 Tribune Street is the closest one to the campus. [Check and book online](#) for best rates.

## **Accommodation**

Four and Five Stars:

[Emporium Hotel South Bank](#)

[Rydges South Bank Brisbane](#)

[Swiss-Belhotel South Bank Brisbane](#)

[Novotel Brisbane South Bank](#)

Medium Range:

[Allegro Apartments](#)

[River Plaza Apartments](#)

Budget (hostels):

[Brisbane Backpackers Resort](#)

[Breeze Lodge](#)

In addition, there are many reasonable offers on [Airbnb](#), [Booking.com](#), [Expedia](#), etc. You can also book your accommodation in Brisbane CBD which is a short walk away across Brisbane River to the Southbank.

[What's on](#) in Brisbane

**Things to do / Places to See:**

In [Southbank Parklands](#)

In [Greater Brisbane](#)

Day trips from Brisbane:

[Gold Coast](#)

[Sunshine Coast Beaches](#)

[Sunshine Coast Hinterland](#)

[Gold Coast Hinterland](#)

## Conference dinner Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> Feb 6:30-9:30pm

The conference dinner is held at [Mado Turkish restaurant](#) on Thursday evening at 6:00 for 6:30 pm start. It is only a 500-metre walk from the conference venue.

Address: 1-3/15 Tribune St, South Brisbane QLD 4101

The price for a three-course dinner is \$49 per person and must be paid beforehand to the conference organisers. Drinks can be purchased separately at the restaurant. Partners are welcome. Please see the menu below.

Registration for dinner is essential. **Can you please indicate [at this link](#) by 30th January, 2020 whether you will be joining us?** If you will be attending the dinner, **please bring \$49 in cash and pay at the registration desk** when you first register. Alternatively, email the conference organisers at [ahsn2020conference@gmail.com](mailto:ahsn2020conference@gmail.com) to arrange online payment before 30<sup>th</sup> January.

