This course is not an historical survey but rather an eclectic attempt to define “satire” by exploring its appearance in poetry, fiction, drama, essay, and cartoon art. Very little formal literary background will be needed for success in this course, but, of course, students will be expected to write well on the papers and exams.

If you have no sense of humor or are easily offended, this course is not for you. Most of us will have some of our cherished beliefs trampled on by the writers we study. The satirist often deliberately tries to offend his or her satiric targets in order to attack folly or vice as he or she perceives them and to rid society, as Northrup Frye puts it, of its “fossilized beliefs.” We may look at some items that most people might regard as being in “bad taste”; we will exam such material to see if it is appropriate for satire or if there are some subjects not grist for the satiric mill.

Students will be evaluated as follows. A series of quizzes will be given, the two lowest grades of which will not be counted. Quizzes are short and objective. Class time will not be spent on discussing quizzes, but students with questions may see me after class about the issue. Students cannot make up missed quizzes except for those engaged in university-sponsored activities, like sports or music events, or those with religious obligations. Such students must give me notice a week in advance that they will miss class. To accommodate those students who have had legitimate reasons for missing class, a make-up quiz of 10-12 points will be given near the end of the semester. All students may take this quiz for extra credit. PLEASE DO NOT ASK ME TO MAKE UP OTHER MISSED QUIZZES. There will be two short (4-6 pages each) papers. The first paper may be rewritten for a higher grade not to exceed 85. Late papers will be penalized 3 points for each late day. Late papers which are rewritten will have 5 points deducted from the rewritten grade. There will be a mid-term and a final exam. The quizzes, papers, and exams will count 20% each of the final grade. ALL WORK MUST BE COMPLETED ON TIME. I DO NOT GIVE THE GRADE OF INCOMPLETE EXCEPT FOR RARE OCCURRENCES SUCH AS HOSPITALIZATION.

Please keep cell phones turned off in class. Students whose phones go off in class may be asked to leave the classroom and not return until the next class. If someone is expecting a possible emergency call, the phone may be left on but please let me know before class begins. Students coming in after quizzes are already in progress for two or more minutes will not be allowed to take the quiz. The course will be a lot of fun with spirited discussions if everyone takes part with an open mind. Students are encouraged to express their own opinions during our discussions.

The following reading schedule is designed to keep students from falling behind on their reading. We are likely to be behind on the schedule because it is impossible to know ahead of time how long we will spend discussing each item. However, students are expected to follow the reading schedule and to have every item read COMPLETELY on the day scheduled except when the schedule indicates otherwise. In order to give us breathing room on our reading schedule, I have left three days late in the semester marked “catch-up.” THESE ARE NOT DAYS OFF--STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO ATTEND CLASS ON THOSE DAYS.
Wed., 24 Aug.  Introduction to class; give out handouts.
Fri., 26  "  Satire defined
Mon., 29 "  Dorothy Parker set of poems
Fri., 2 Sep.  “The Politician”
Mon., 5 Sep.  LABOR DAY—NO CLASSES
Wed., 7 "  ANIMAL FARM
Fri., 9 "  ANIMAL FARM. Cartoons.
Mon., 12 "  “First Confession”; “Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister.”
Wed., 14 "  “In Westminster Abbey”; “Holy Willie’s Prayer.”
Fri., 16 "  “Harrison Bergeron”
Mon., 19 "  GULLIVER’S TRAVELS (Part I).
Wed., 21 "  GULLIVER’S TRAVELS (Part II).
Fri., 23 "  GULLIVER’S TRAVELS (Part III).
Mon., 26 "  GULLIVER’S TRAVELS (Part IV).
Wed., 28 "  “A Modest Proposal”
Fri., 30 "  “April Inventory.”
Mon., 3 Oct, "  THE LOVED ONE
Wed., 5 "  THE LOVED ONE
Fri., 7 "  Onion Packet
Mon., 10 "  “Mr. Z”; “Booker T. and W.E.B.” [PAPER I DUE.]
Wed., 12 "  “Award”
Fri., 14 "  “The Unknown Citizen”
Mon., 17 "  MID-TERM
Wed., 19 "  THE RIVALS
Fri., 21 "  THE RIVALS
Mon., 24 "  “To the Person Sitting in Darkness”
Wed., 26 "  “To the Person Sitting in Darkness”
Fri., 28 "  “The Literary Offenses of Fenimore Cooper”
Mon., 31 "  CANDIDE [REWRITTEN PAPER DUE]
Wed., 2 Nov.  CANDIDE
Fri., 4 "  CANDIDE
Mon., 7 "  “Rape of the Lock”
Wed., 9 "  “Rape of the Lock”
Fri., 11 "  “Rape of the Lock”
Mon., 14 "  Catch-up
Wed., 16 "  Catch-up
Fri., 18 "  Catch-up
Mon., 20 Nov.  “I Sing of Olaf”; “Base Details.”
Wed., 22 " “La Migra”
Thur.-Sun. 24-27 Nov.  [THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY—NO CLASSES]
Mon., 28 Nov.  CATCH-22
Wed., 30 " CATCH-22
Fri., 2 Dec.  CATCH-22
Mon., 5 " CATCH-22
Wed., 7 " CATCH-22 [PAPER II DUE]
Thur.-Fri.  8-9 Dec.  [STUDY DAYS—NO CLASSES]

Wed., 14 Dec.  FINAL EXAM—1:30-4:00