

Assignment #4: Comedy Sketch

5-6 pages / 1-2 page individual reflection / 3 mini ungraded assignments

In this assignment, you will move from analyzing pop culture to *producing* pop culture. Write a comedy sketch about a current social or political issue, exploring how you can use comedy to work through that issue and present it in a new way. Your sketch should, at minimum, help us understand the answer to the following question: what is inherently funny about this issue?

You will be working in groups of 3.

Assignment Breakdown

The preparation for this sketch will include several **ungraded assignments** designed to prepare you for the challenge of comedy writing. Your completion of these assignments will factor into your participation grade. The smaller assignments include:

- Research Assignment #1: How to Write a Comedy Sketch (Due 11/15)
A small piece of research that answers a question you have about sketch/comedy writing (to be shared in class and posted on Canvas for everyone). For example, a short paragraph from a book, blog, or interview with a comedy writer.
- Research Assignment #2: Generating an Idea (Due 11/17)
A small piece of research to generate ideas for your sketch. For example, a crazy Facebook rant on your topic or some statistics about the issue that might inspire specific choices for plot/character. Paste your findings in a document and write a sentence or two about how they could be used to make the sketch funnier.
- “Analyzing a Comedy Sketch” (Due 11/17)
A short analysis of a comedy sketch, in which you will identify several elements that help to drive the comedy of the sketch. (I will hand out a separate assignment for this.)

Your final draft will also include a 1-2 page **informal reflection**, which will factor into your final grade. For the reflection, discuss your experience writing the comedy sketch. Possible questions to address include:

- How did your presence add to the group? How did you complicate it?
- Were there any problems you came across in the collaborative writing process? How did you work through them?
- How did you approach a new and challenging writing assignment? What techniques might you use to approach a new type of writing in the future?

Your audience: someone with a sense of humor who doesn't want to get bored halfway through watching your sketch.

Schedule

Thursday, November 10

Bring **three** topic ideas to class to discuss in groups.

Tuesday, November 15

Find a source that answers a question you have about sketch/comedy writing. Post it on Canvas (in a designated discussion thread) by 3pm and be prepared to read or describe it to your classmates.

Thursday, November 17

Email your research findings to me and the members of your group by 8am the morning of class. Submit your comedy sketch analysis to me on Canvas by the same time.

Tuesday, November 22

Upload copy of the first draft on Canvas before class. I will email copies to the whole class.

Tuesday, November 29 (In-class Workshop)

Make sure you have read and are prepared to provide comments on all four comedy sketches written by the other groups.

Tuesday, December 6

Final draft due, on Canvas, before class. In addition, each student in your group should individually upload a 1-2 page reflection by the same time.

Be prepared to perform your group's comedy sketch in class. This includes casting anyone you need outside of your group and giving them a copy of the script to read in advance.

Writerly Objectives

- Give your audience what they want: be funny!
- Start with a hook: a line or moment that will catch your viewer's attention and include an ending.
- Use dialogue to make your characters consistent, realistic, and entertaining.
- Follow structure and formatting practices for the genre.
- Write a reflection that shows insight on the following two topics:
 - Difficulties associated with taking on a new type of writing assignment.
 - The challenges and benefits of the collaborative writing process.