

Humor: Not Just a Laughing Matter

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Learning Objectives for Class 1: at the end of this session, the learner will be able to:

- List the 3 components of the humorous experience.
- Contrast mirth and wit.
- Describe the impact of laughter on the brain.
- Discuss why babies laugh without cognitive understanding.

Assignment for Class 1: Please review the 2 following YouTube videos at the below links:

- <https://youtu.be/ddV6jyDeCKA>
 - (Vsauce) Why Are We Ticklish? Why do We Laugh?
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ck0QfHytI6w>
 - (Provine) Why Do We Laugh?

Content Outline Class 1:

- **Welcome and Course Overview**
 - How do you define humor?
 - The Humor Experience: Making the Cocktail
 - Wit: “trainwreck of the mind”
 - Brains make assumptions on what the outcome will be (jokes) based on prior experience and builds a neuro pathway
 - However, when a joke is told, it's an unexpected outcome. Our brain has no path to fire the neurons and it creates a spasm, which translates to laughter.
 - Natural aptitude for using words and ideas in a quick and inventive way to create humor
 - Mirth: sensation of merriment
 - A way to disengage from seriousness
 - Laughter: involuntary physiological response
 - Gestures & sound
 - HaHa vs HoHo
 - Types of laughter
 - Duchenne Smiles

- The brain on laughter
 - Impact on wave transmission
 - Benefits of mirthful laughter
- Laughter development
 - Impact of unexpected learning
 - Influence of social context
 - Familiarity factor
 - Magic/Possibilities
- Tickle response

- **Class 1 Summary**

References for Class 1: *The below articles are the materials I used to support the content for today's class. You may choose to review them for further information as desired, but it is not required.*

- <https://iep.utm.edu/humor/>
 - Smuts, Aaron. Humor. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (IEP)
- <https://www.humormatters.com/articles/explorin.htm>
 - Steven M. Sultanoff, Ph.D, Exploring The Land of Mirth and Funny
- https://www.reddit.com/r/explainlikeimfive/comments/3t8s71/eli5_why_do_people_laugh_when_being_tickled_even/
- <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20140131-why-do-we-laugh-when-tickled>
- Gregory A., Bryant, C., Athena Aktipis (2014). The animal nature of spontaneous human laughter. *Evolution and Human Behavior*;35(4), 327-335.
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/duchenne-smile>
- Kamiloğlu Roza G., Tanaka Akihiro, Scott Sophie K. and Sauter Disa A. (2022). Perception of group membership from spontaneous and volitional laughter. *Phil. Trans. R. Soc.* B37720200404. <http://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2020.0404>

Assignment for Class 2: Please read the following article and be prepared to discuss your thoughts about the various theories and how they relate to changes in society.

Sabato, Giovanni. "What's so Funny? The Science of Why we Laugh." Scientific American. 26 June 2019, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/whats-so-funny-the-science-of-why-we-laugh/>