Don't Get Too Spicy: Effective Use of Humor in the Gen Z Classroom

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Who we are

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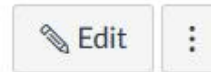
Cornell University

Business Librarian

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How did we end up here?

HADM 2720 Information Retrieval and Research Methods (2022SP)

Edit

Welcome! I'm so glad to have you in our class, and look forward to sharing some of my excitement about researching with you over the next few weeks!

Information is everywhere - how do you go about finding the most reliable, accurate, and unbiased information to allow you to think critically and write professionally?

This course introduces some of the electronic tools – both on the internet and through the library – necessary to locate, access, evaluate, and analyze information available online, and will focus on how to assess the right balance of free and fee-based resources.

- ✓ 2 credit, general research methods class with focus on business information

- ✓ 18 students enrolled Spring 2022

- ✓ Condensed 7-week class 9:40-10:55am M and W

- ✓ Overall - and historically - very positive evaluations

What we'll cover

Humor in the Classroom

Benefits of using humor in the classroom

- "Humor, appropriately used, has the potential to humanize, illustrate, defuse, encourage, reduce anxiety, and keep people thinking"

--Torok, S. E., McMorris, R. F., & Lin, W. C. (2004). Is humor an appreciated teaching tool? Perceptions of professors' teaching styles and use of humor. College Teaching, 52, 14-20. https://doi.org/10.3200/ctch.52.1.14-20

Research on humor

- There's a lot of it

- Psychology of humor, comedy, humor as a pedagogical tool, use in library classrooms, etc.

- This program does not aim to instruct on how to be funny

Table 1 Humor types

Humor type	Description	Representative work	Appropriateness for classroom
Affiliative; Solidarity-based	Amusing others, building solidarity, relieving tension	Hay (2000); Martin et al. (2003)	Appropriate
Psychological needs/Self-Enhancing	Humor used to defend oneself, regulate emotions, or cope with problems that arise during the interaction	Hay (2000); Martin et al. (2003)	Appropriate
Power-based humor	Establish boundaries and create status differences	Hay (2000)	Appropriate
Humor related to class material	Stories, jokes, or other humorous content related to class material	Cornett (1986); Frymier et al. (2008); Kaplan and Pascoe (1977); Wanzer et al. (2006)	Appropriate
Funny stories	Events or activities connected in a single event related as a tale	Bryant et al. (1979); Bryant et al. (1980)	Appropriate
Humorous comments	A brief statement with a humorous element	Bryant et al. (1979)	Appropriate
Seeking funny others	Encouraging humor use in others or seeking out other people known to be funny	Wanzer et al. (2005); Cornett (1986)	Appropriate
Humor unrelated to class material	Stories, jokes, or other humorous content not related to class material	Frymier et al. (2008); Wanzer et al. (2006)	Context-dependent
Self-disparaging humor	Making one's self the target of the humor	Bryant and Zillmann (1989); Cornett (1986); Frymier and Thompson (1992); Frymier et al. (2008); Wanzer et al. (2006)	Context-dependent
Unplanned humor	Humor that is unintentional or spontaneous	Martin (2007); Wanzer et al. (2006)	Context-dependent
Jokes or Riddles	Build-up followed by a punchline	Bryant et al. (1979, 1980); Martin (2007); Ziv (1988)	Context-dependent

Table 1 (*Continued*)

Humor type	Description	Representative work	Appropriateness for classroom
Puns	Structurally or phonetically words or phrases having two or more meanings were used simultaneously to play on the multiple meanings	Bryant et al. (1979)	Context-dependent
Low humor	Acting silly, stupid, or absurd in specific situations	Wanzer et al. (2005)	Context-dependent
Nonverbal humor	Using gestures, funny facial expressions, vocal tones, etc. for humorous intent	Wanzer et al. (2005)	Context-dependent
Impersonation	Doing impressions or mimicking voices of famous characters	Wanzer et al. (2005)	Context-dependent
Language or word play	Witty or clever verbal communication including using slang or sarcasm	Wanzer et al. (2005)	Context-dependent
Laughing	Laughing or varying intensity as a means to make others laugh	Wanzer et al. (2005)	Context-dependent
Using funny props	Using funny props such as cartoons, water pistols, funny cards, etc.	Wanzer et al. (2005)	Context-dependent
Visual illustrations	Use of pictures or items expected to promote humor	Bryant et al. (1981)	Context-dependent
Humorous Distortions	Use of irony or comical exaggerations	Bryant and Zillmann (1989)	Context-dependent
Test items	Using items on tests and assessments that contain humor	Ziv (1988)	Context-dependent
Aggressive; Other-denigrating	Manipulating or denigrating others, ridicule, or mocking	Frymier et al. (2008); Gorham and Christophel (1990); Martin et al. (2003); Stuart and Rosenfeld (1994)	Inappropriate
Offensive humor	Humor based on the race, ethnicity, sex, political affiliation, or sexual orientation of another	Frymier et al. (2008)	Inappropriate

Banas et.al., 2011

BA i would like to make my course on "information retrieval and research methods" for undergraduate business students more humorous. specifically i would like to know how i can make my class on business information research funny

Making a class on business information research funny can be a great way to engage undergraduate business students. Here are some suggestions to add humor to your course on information retrieval and research methods:

1. Use humorous examples: Incorporate funny or relatable examples when explaining concepts or demonstrating research methods. For instance, instead of using generic examples, relate them to funny or absurd business scenarios that students can relate to.

2. Include humorous videos or memes: Integrate humorous videos or memes related to business or research in your presentations or course materials. These can serve as icebreakers or attention grabbers to lighten the mood and create a more enjoyable learning environment.

3. Share funny anecdotes: Share humorous anecdotes or personal stories related to your own experiences with business information research. Stories that involve unexpected or amusing outcomes can help students relate to the subject matter and make it more memorable.

But what is *funny*?

- Humor takes many forms

- Know your bubble

- **Know your audience**
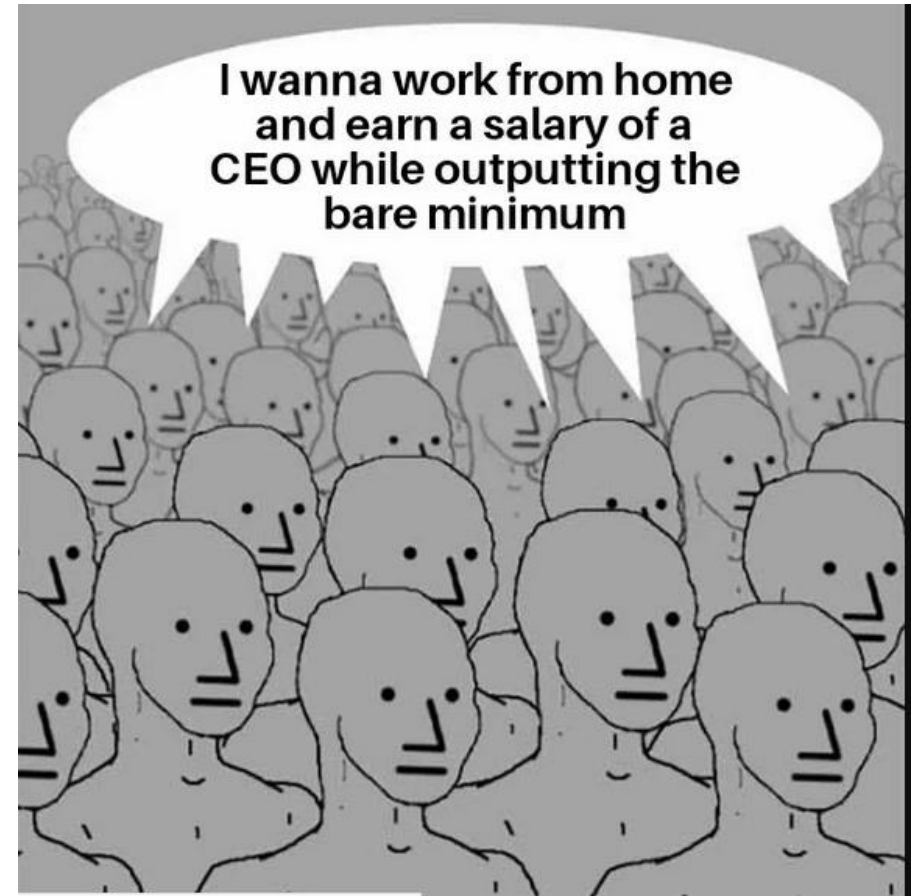
Who is Gen Z?

Defining Generations

- Silent Generation: b. 1925 - 1945

- Boomers: b. 1946 - 1964

- Generation X: b. 1965 - 1979

- Millennials: b. 1980 – 1994

- Generation Z: b. 1995 - 2012

Twenge, 2023

Defining Gen Z

Touchstones

- True "digital natives" who never knew a world without the internet

- Born into a world of climate change, economic uncertainty, and global unrest

- The last generation to remember a pre-COVID world

Theme: Chronically online

- Instant access to media on demand

- Ability to avoid exposure to challenging ideas

- Negative impact on mental health

Scrappy, pragmatic, entrepreneurial

- Born into a world of economic uncertainty

- Value being in control

- Access to information empowers them to "DIY"

Individualistic and authentic

- Aversion to "cheugyness"

- Would rather expose their own flaws than be criticized

- A response to the "edgelord" culture of the 2010s

- Quarantine allowed them to explore their identities without experiencing face-to-face mockery

Seemiller and Grace, 2019

Lorenz, 2023

Humor and Gen Z

Nostalgic

- Reviving trends of the 90s and 00s to return to simpler times as a form of escapism

- Reminiscing on childhood for comfort

Hoffower, 2022

Sanders, 2020

how I used to sleep the night before a field trip

Randa
@rannnda

Not to sound depressing but I miss being this excited about life lol

Absurd and Surreal

- In a time of information overload, you can stand out by being bizarre

- When you can't make sense of current events, you can cope with surrealism

- "Fighting lunacy with lunacy"

Lorenz, 2021

Sanders, 2020

Post-Ironic

- Functions as coded language to insulate from intergenerational criticism and cyberbullying

- When irony is expected as the norm, it's no longer funny

- Response to "post-truth" era

- An effort to embrace nuance and layers of meaning in a complex world

Monroe, 2014

Wilson, 2022

https://despair.com/products/give-up

I will not let my ex's opinion of me define my self-worth

Gallows humor and political commentary

- 😂 -> 💀⚰️

- Embracing dark humor to cope with challenging circumstances

- Openness to having difficult conversations fueled by hope for better in the future

Your FBI agent watching you laugh at memes about WWIII while preparing your draft.

Referential humor and remixing

- Templates require a shared understanding and help enforce an "in-group" dynamic

- "Deep frying" images distinguishes them from polished advertisements and skirts automated censorship

MEME MAKERS BE LIKE

"I'M GOING TO REMOVE 90% OF THE ORIGINAL WORDS FROM THE MEME"

MY BROTHER IN CHRIST YOU HAVE LEFT ME WONDERING WHAT THE HELL A SUBWAY SANDWICH IS DOING IN THIS IMAGE

Identifying themes and tropes

Gen Z Humor recap

- Nostalgic

- Absurd and Surreal

- Post-ironic

- Gallows humor and political commentary

- Referential humor and remixing

Governor of Tasteville

Includes:
Sunglasses, fake
goatee, bowling
shirt, donkey
sauce

MENS
Size Costume

CHILD
Size Costume

FIREFIGHTER

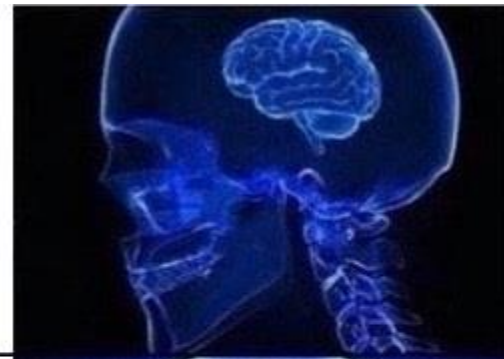My grandfather, full of lead
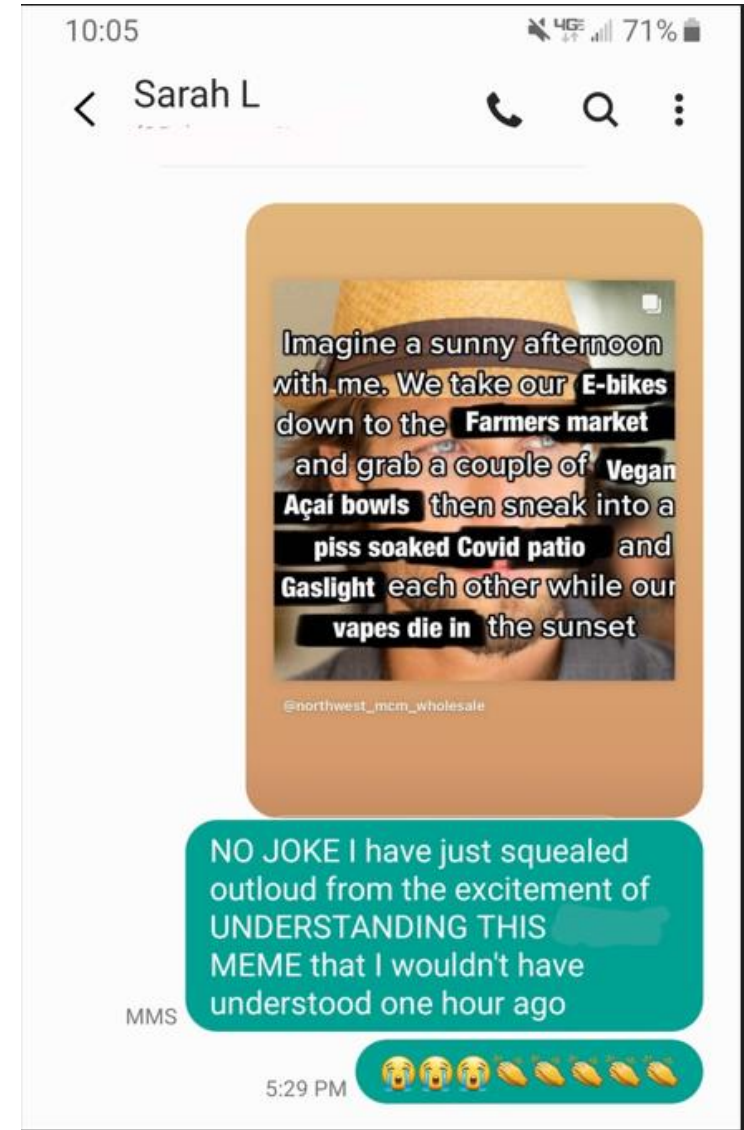
My father, full of asbestos

Me, full of microplastics

Successfully incorporating humor in the Gen Z classroom

Where do we go from here?

- Are we now "funny" to our students?

- It depends on **you**

- How did I respond to that evaluation comment?

The case for incorporating humor in the classroom

- Humor has been shown to increase attention & retention of information

- Humor relaxes

- *But use it wisely*

Humor, Equity, and Inclusion

When students have developed a disdain for school because they believe that to be successful, they must repress their authentic selves, making them see that the content being delivered respects and values their culture... becomes a way to reconcile the broken relationship [they] have to schools and schooling.

Dr. Christopher Emdin
For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood ... and the Rest of Y'all Too

Humor and Belonging

- Humor can act as a bridge between those from different backgrounds as they laugh together

- Punching up vs. punching down

- How can you remain authentic to your personality and humor while acknowledging and recognizing the values and humor of the students you teach?

Humor and information literacy

- Satire and irony are opportunities to apply information literacy principles – bias, credibility, authorship

- Use culturally-relevant examples to make concepts accessible (and add "sugar on top")

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Thank you!

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