

Comedy: Funny Business: Stand Up Comedy and Its Social, Political, and Cultural Importance

Faculty: Bruce Levitt, Professor of Performing & Media Arts

Week One: July 6 – 12, 2025

Schedule: Monday - Friday, 9-12 and 1:30-3:30, except Wednesday afternoon.

Location: Schwartz Center for the Performing Arts, Collegetown

Dear CAU Summer 2025 class,

Margaret Cho may have been prescient when she said, “Comedy is the only weapon I have to battle totalitarianism.” Tina Fey also speaks in the same vein when she stated, “you work your butt off, and somebody says you can’t have your record played because it offends the. Tyrants are made of such stuff.”

Welcome to Funny Business. Comedy today is a controversial topic. It is also a performance art that takes great courage, craft and intelligence. We’ll explore comedy and its place in our culture over the past one hundred and sixty years. And we’ll listen to and watch comedy routines from the iconic comics from the past and the present.

Comics are insightful and their wisdom is essential to our democracy.

In 1926, Will Rogers became the first comedian to perform on stage with a sitting U.S. president, Woodrow Wilson, present. Our current occupant in the white house cannot bring himself to attend the annual correspondence dinner and the association that runs the dinner canceled the comic who was supposed to be featured this year.

Perhaps, as we time travel through the historical events that our comics address, we would do well to remember Will Rogers’s quip: ***Everything is changing. People are taking their comedians seriously and the politicians as a joke.***

Oh yes, and we will laugh a lot as we travel together through the cultural landmines that are the subject of comedy. Welcome to the journey.

Bruce Levitt

Professor

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Lead Facilitator, Phoenix Players Theatre Group

www.phoenixplayersatauburn.com

Project Manager, Arts, Justice and Safety Coalition

<https://www.theconfinedarts.org/arts-justice-safety-coalition.html>

<https://www.theconfinedarts.org/claiming-the-justice-narrative-project-overview.html>