RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC COURSE OUTLINE

ENGL 234: LITERATURE OF COMEDY

I. Basic Course Information

A. Course Number and Title: ENGL 234 Literature of Comedy

B. New or Modified Course: Modified

C. Date of Proposal: Semester: Spring Year: 2017

D. Effective Term: Fall 2017

E. Sponsoring Department: English

F. Semester Credit Hours: 3

G. Weekly Contact Hours: 3 Lecture: 3

Laboratory: 0

Out of class student work per week: 6

H. Prerequisites: ENGL 111 (English Composition I)

I. Laboratory Fees: None

J. Name and Telephone Number or E-Mail Address of Department Chair at time of approval: Susan Arvay, Susan.Arvay@raritanval.edu

II. Catalog Description

Prerequisite: ENGL 111 English Composition I. This course is a study of the nature and value of comic forms and traditions, from basic elements such as puns and jokes to significant works of comic vision in literature, the arts and popular culture. The course will consider, for example, the differences between verbal and visual comedy – and broaden students' understanding of the role that comedy plays in the human experience.

III. Statement of Course Need

A. Literature of Comedy offers students the opportunity to study in depth one of the most popular and pervasive of contemporary genres in the arts. In addition to providing pleasure and insight, the course allows students to gain highly focused experience as careful and responsive readers and observers, creative and analytical thinkers, lucid and incisive writers, and articulate and persuasive speakers. Because

comedy is a genre that is already familiar and popular among students, this course provides a foundation for students in understanding the perspective of comic legacies that are rooted in ancient and contemporary cultures.

- **B.** This course does not have a Lab component.
- **C.** This course generally transfers as an English program elective.

IV. Place of Course in College Curriculum

- A. Free Elective
- B. This course does not serve as a General Education course.
- C. This course meets a Category B requirement in the English AA degree.
- D. To see course transferability: a) for New Jersey schools, go to the NJ Transfer website, www.njtransfer.org; b) for all other colleges and universities, go to the individual websites.

V. Outline of Course Content

- A. Introduction to comedy as a genre
 - 1. Historical and cultural contexts for comedy
 - 2. The modes of comedy
- B. Study of comedy from diverse writers and periods
- C. Ways to read and interpret text and visual forms of comedy
- D. Ways to write about comedy

VI. General Education and Course Learning Outcomes

A. General Education Learning Outcomes:

At the completion of the course, students will be able to:

- 1. Analyze comic writing and film within its literary, historical and social contexts, both orally and in writing (GE-NJ 1, 6, 7, *)
- 2. Use textual evidence to support logical and persuasive claims in writing (GE-NJ 1, 6, *)
- 3. Assess and utilize commonly accepted approaches and criteria for analyzing comedy (GE-NJ 6)

(*Embedded critical thinking)

B. Course Learning Outcomes:

At the completion of the course, students will be able to:

- 1. Describe key elements of comic forms
- 2. Appraise cultural values reflected in comic writing and visual forms

C. Assessment Instruments

- A. research papers
- B. essays
- C. response papers
- D. discussion questions
- E. creative writing exercises and/or portfolio
- F. journals
- G. exams
- H. quizzes

VII. Grade Determinants

- A. essays and/or response papers that communicate effectively in standard English, with attention to grammar and mechanics and the finer points of writing style
- B. projects
- C. exams
- D. presentations
- E. discussion questions
- F. reading quizzes
- G. class participation
- H. journals

Given the goals and outcomes described above, the primary formats, modes, and methods for teaching and learning that may be used in the course include:

- A. lecture/discussion
- B. small group work
- C. student oral presentations
- D. student collaboration
- E. independent study
- F. regular writing activities
- G. examination of films

VIII. Texts and Materials

Samples of specific texts that may be featured:

- A. Aristotle, *The Poetics*
- B. Aristophanes, Lysistrata
- C. Chaucer, The Wife of Bath
- D. Shakespeare, The Taming of the Shrew/The Comedy of Errors
- E. The Cavalier Poets
- F. Moliere, *The Misanthrope*

- G. Swift, A Modest Proposal
- H. Carroll, The Humorous Verse of Lewis Carroll
- I. Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest
- J. Twain, How to Tell a Story/Humorous Stories and Sketches
- K. Thurber, The Thurber Carnival
- L. Shepherd, In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash
- M. Seinfeld, Sein Language
- N. Maher, If You Ride Alone, You Ride with Bin Laden

Samples of specific films/television shows that may be featured:

- A. Chaplin, The Great Dictator
- B. BBC, The Comedy of Errors
- C. Monty Python, The Search for the Holy Grail
- D. Allen, Annie Hall
- E. Coen Brothers, Fargo
- F. The Daily Show
- G. Oliver, Last Week Tonight
- H. Modern Family
- I. The Big Bang Theory

Sample anthologies that may be used:

- A. Blaisdell, Bob (editor), Humorous American Short Stories, Dover, 2013,
- B. Neale, Steve and Frank Drutnik, *Popular Film and Television Comedy*, Routledge, 2006.
- C. Shydner, Ritch and Mark Schiff (editors), *I Killed: True Stories of the Road from America's Top Comics*, Three Rivers Press, 2007.

(Please Note: The course outline is intended only as a guide to course content and resources. Do not purchase textbooks based on this outline. The RVCC Bookstore is the sole resource for the most up-to-date information about textbooks.)

IX. Resources

Students will need to use library databases and other library resources for critical research assignments if the individual instructor chooses to assign a research project.

X. Honors Options

There is no Honors Option for this course.