

Syllabus

Comedy-Comic Content Production and Comedy Writing

Program: Produksi Media, Vocational Education Program, Universitas Indonesia

Format: 8 sessions

Suggested duration: 100 minutes per session

Target students: Cross-specialization students from writing, film, photography, performance, animation, game/esports, digital branding, music/audio, and media technology streams

Final output: 1 short comedy content package + script portfolio + audience testing report

1. Course Description

This course introduces students to the principles and practice of comedy content production for contemporary digital media. Students will learn how to generate comic premises, build comedic characters, write sketches and short-form scripts, perform or direct comic scenes, produce platform-ready videos, and revise comedy based on audience response.

The course is designed for students across different media specializations. Writing students may focus on script and joke construction; film and photography students may focus on visual timing and shot design; performance students may focus on delivery and blocking; animation and design students may focus on visual comedy and meme logic; music/audio students may focus on sound timing and comedic rhythm; game, esports, and web students may focus on interactive, reaction-based, or participatory comedy formats.

The course treats comedy not only as entertainment, but also as a form of communication, critique, branding, and audience engagement. Students are required to apply ethical judgment, cultural sensitivity, and platform awareness in every stage of content development.

2. Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. **Analyze** different comedy formats, including sketch comedy, sitcom scenes, parody, satire, meme-based humor, reaction comedy, and short-form platform comedy.
2. **Develop** comic premises, characters, conflict, escalation, and punchline structures for digital content.

3. **Write** short comedy scripts using setup, misdirection, callback, contrast, exaggeration, reversal, and undercutting.
4. **Produce** short comedy content using appropriate visual, audio, editing, and performance techniques.
5. **Evaluate** humor ethically by identifying risks related to stereotypes, humiliation, harassment, hate speech, cultural misreading, and audience harm.
6. **Revise** comedy content based on table reads, peer critique, audience testing, and platform analytics.
7. **Collaborate** across media specializations to create a polished comedy content package.

3. Cross-Specialization Implementation

Student Specialization	Possible Role in Comedy Project
Writing / Content Planning	Premise, joke structure, dialogue, script polish
Film / Photography	Shot design, blocking, framing, lighting, visual rhythm
Performing Arts	Character performance, timing, expression, improvisation
Music / Audio	Sound cues, silence, comedic beat, audio punchline
Animation / Design	Visual gag, motion graphics, meme template, character exaggeration
Digital Branding / Advertising	Branded comedy, campaign tone, audience positioning
Game / Esports / Web	Reaction format, interactive comedy, livestream comedy, community response
Media Intelligence	Audience testing, engagement data, content evaluation

4. Assessment Structure

Component	Weight	Description
Weekly Comedy Writing Exercises	20%	Short writing outputs from Sessions 1–6
Table Read and Peer Feedback Participation	15%	Active critique, revision notes, collaborative response
Comedy Ethics and Audience Risk Analysis	15%	Short written analysis of humor boundaries and target audience
Production Package	20%	Script, shot list, production plan, visual/audio concept
Final Comedy Content Project	25%	3–5 minute comedy video or equivalent platform-ready content

Component	Weight	Description
Reflection and Audience Testing Report	5%	Revision log, response analysis, and learning reflection

5. Final Project

Each group produces one comedy content package consisting of:

- 1. Final comedy video/content**
Suggested length: 3–5 minutes, or 3 short-form videos of 30–60 seconds each.
- 2. Script portfolio**
Includes logline, premise, character notes, beat sheet, draft script, revised script, and final script.
- 3. Production package**
Includes shot list, audio plan, visual references, performance notes, editing style, and platform target.
- 4. Audience testing report**
Includes at least 10 audience responses, humor effectiveness notes, ethical risk reflection, and revision decisions.

6. Weekly Session Plan

Session 1 — Understanding Comedy as Media Communication

Main Topic

Comedy as storytelling, communication, critique, and audience engagement.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, students should be able to:

- Explain comedy as a structured media form, not merely spontaneous humor.
- Identify different comedy formats across digital platforms.
- Distinguish between joke, sketch, bit, satire, parody, meme, and comic scene.
- Recognize how audience, context, timing, and platform shape what becomes funny.

Key Concepts

- Comedy premise
- Setup and payoff
- Incongruity
- Surprise
- Timing
- Comic perspective
- Platform humor
- Audience contract

In-Class Activities

Activity 1: Comedy Format Mapping

Students work in groups and list comedy formats they encounter on TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, podcasts, sitcoms, stand-up, livestreams, games, and campus content. Each group categorizes examples into:

- Observational comedy
- Character comedy
- Situation comedy
- Parody
- Satire
- Meme-based humor
- Reaction comedy
- Physical comedy
- Awkward comedy
- Absurd comedy

Activity 2: Why Is This Funny?

The lecturer shows 3–5 short comedy examples. Students break down each example using:

- Who is the target?
- What is the expectation?
- What is the surprise?
- Where is the comic turn?
- What makes the joke safe, risky, or weak?

Activity 3: Personal Comic Lens

Each student writes five “things I find funny about campus life, student life, media production, internships, technology, or social media.” These become raw materials for future scripts.

Output

Individual comedy observation list: **10 potential comedy premises.**

Assignment

Write a one-page “Comedy Observation Journal” containing:

- 10 everyday observations
- 3 possible characters
- 3 possible campus-based situations
- 1 issue that can be treated comedically without attacking vulnerable groups

Suggested Reading

Matamoros-Fernández argues that humor and play are central to TikTok culture, especially through sound reuse, duet features, imitation, remixing, and memetic transformation.

Session 2 — Comedy Premise, Comic Character, and Point of View

Main Topic

Developing a clear comic idea through character, contradiction, and point of view.

Learning Objectives

Students should be able to:

- Create a comic premise from daily observation.
- Build a comic character based on contradiction, desire, flaw, and behavior.
- Develop a comic point of view that is specific, repeatable, and performable.
- Convert raw ideas into short-form content concepts.

Key Concepts

- Comic flaw
- Character engine
- Desire versus limitation
- Status gap
- Fish-out-of-water
- Comic contradiction
- Specificity
- Repetition with variation

In-Class Activities

Activity 1: Premise Compression Drill

Students turn broad topics into sharp comedy premises.

Example:

- Broad topic: “Group assignment”
- Sharper premise: “A group leader treats a simple class presentation like a military operation.”
- Sharper character: “A student who makes a 70-slide deck for a 5-minute presentation.”

Activity 2: Character Contradiction Lab

Each group creates three comic characters using this structure:

- Name
- What they want
- What they believe
- What they are bad at
- What they do under pressure
- Why this is funny

Activity 3: Cross-Specialization Character Adaptation

Each group adapts the same character into different media formats:

- Sketch scene
- 30-second vertical video
- Animated meme
- Livestream segment
- Branded content concept
- Game/esports commentary format

Output

Group character sheet and 3 comedy premises.

Assignment

Write one comic character profile and one 1-minute comedy scene outline.

Suggested Reading

Basanese’s comedy pilot writing guide emphasizes the importance of world-building, memorable comic characters, sitcom structure, and emotional through-line in comedy writing.

Session 3 — Joke Mechanics: Setup, Misdirection, Escalation, and Punchline

Main Topic

Writing comedy at sentence, beat, and scene level.

Learning Objectives

Students should be able to:

- Identify the structure of setup and punchline.
- Use misdirection, contrast, exaggeration, reversal, and callback.
- Build escalation across multiple comic beats.
- Write jokes that serve character and situation rather than random one-liners.

Key Concepts

- Setup
- Punchline
- Misdirection
- Escalation
- Rule of three
- Callback
- Undercutting
- Heightening
- Comic beat

In-Class Activities

Activity 1: Setup-Punchline Rewrite

Students are given flat statements and must rewrite them into joke structures.

Example:

- Flat: “Online meetings are tiring.”
- Comedy version: “Online meetings taught me one thing: my internet connection has better boundaries than I do.”

Activity 2: Rule of Three Drill

Students write three-part jokes where the third item breaks the pattern.

Activity 3: Escalation Board

Each group creates a five-beat escalation from one simple problem.

Example:

- Problem: “A student forgot to submit an assignment.”
- Beat 1: Makes excuse.
- Beat 2: Blames Wi-Fi.
- Beat 3: Blames Google Drive.
- Beat 4: Blames time zone.
- Beat 5: Claims the assignment is “a performance art piece about academic pressure.”

Activity 4: Table Read

Students read jokes aloud. The class marks where the laugh should happen and where the rhythm fails.

Output

Minimum 10 written jokes and 1 short comic beat sequence.

Assignment

Write a 1–2 page sketch draft using at least three comedy tools: misdirection, escalation, callback, reversal, or undercutting.

Suggested Reading

Head’s 2025 comedy scriptwriting toolkit is positioned as a practical guide for sitcoms, comedy dramas, sketches, short films, and screenplays, with emphasis on comic characters, jokes, dialogue, action, and scene construction.

Session 4 — Sketch Writing and Short-Form Comedy Structure

Main Topic

Turning comic ideas into structured sketches and short-form scripts.

Learning Objectives

Students should be able to:

- Structure a comedy sketch with a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Develop comic escalation within a short duration.
- Write dialogue that reveals character and advances the joke.
- Prepare a script for production.

Key Concepts

- Sketch premise
- Game of the scene
- Beat sheet
- Button ending
- Cold open
- Scene economy
- Dialogue compression
- Visual punchline

In-Class Activities

Activity 1: Sketch Anatomy Breakdown

Students analyze a short sketch using the following structure:

1. Normal world
2. Comic disruption
3. Rule of the joke
4. Escalation
5. Reversal
6. Button ending

Activity 2: Game of the Scene Exercise

Each group identifies the “comic rule” of their sketch.

Example:

- “Every time the student tries to explain, the explanation becomes more complicated than the problem.”

Activity 3: Script Clinic

Students exchange scripts and provide feedback using a checklist:

- Is the premise clear?
- Is the first joke early enough?
- Does the scene escalate?
- Are the characters distinct?
- Does the ending land?
- Is there any ethical risk?

Activity 4: Revision Sprint

Students revise the first page of the sketch in class.

Output

Revised 2–3 page comedy sketch.

Assignment

Submit revised sketch draft with beat sheet and production notes.

Suggested Reading

Spörk et al. show that comedy-script writing can function as an experiential learning method by giving students humor basics, writing practice, and guidance toward higher-quality comedy scripts.

Session 5 — Performance, Directing, Visual Comedy, and Audio Timing

Main Topic

How performance, camera, editing, and sound affect comedy.

Learning Objectives

Students should be able to:

- Direct actors or performers for comic timing.
- Use framing, silence, reaction shots, and cuts to enhance humor.
- Apply sound, music, and pause as comedic devices.
- Translate written jokes into performable media moments.

Key Concepts

- Timing
- Pause
- Reaction shot
- Deadpan
- Overacting versus underplaying
- Visual gag
- Sound punchline
- Editing rhythm
- Performance status

In-Class Activities

Activity 1: Same Line, Different Delivery

Students perform the same line in five different styles:

- Deadpan
- Overly serious
- Panicked
- Passive-aggressive
- Overconfident

The class discusses which version works best and why.

Activity 2: Reaction Shot Workshop

Groups shoot the same joke twice:

- Version A: no reaction shot
- Version B: with reaction shot

They compare how editing changes the comedic effect.

Activity 3: Sound Timing Drill

Music/audio students or assigned sound leads design three versions of the same scene:

- No sound cue
- Realistic sound cue
- Exaggerated comic sound cue

Activity 4: Micro-Production Exercise

Groups shoot a 30-second comedy scene using only:

- One location
- Two performers
- Three shots
- One sound cue
- One visual punchline

Output

30-second comedy prototype.

Assignment

Revise script based on performance and production test. Submit shot list and audio plan.

Session 6 — Platform Comedy: TikTok, Reels, Shorts, Memes, and Branded Comedy

Main Topic

Writing and producing comedy for digital platforms and audience behavior.

Learning Objectives

Students should be able to:

- Adapt comedy ideas for vertical video and short-form platforms.
- Use hooks, captions, sound trends, remix logic, and repeatable formats.
- Develop comedy content for personal brands, campus campaigns, or institutional communication.
- Understand the difference between funny content and strategically useful comedy.

Key Concepts

- Hook
- Loop
- Shareability
- Meme template
- Remix culture
- Sound reuse
- Duet/stitch logic
- Caption timing
- Branded comedy
- Audience participation

In-Class Activities

Activity 1: Platform Format Audit

Students compare how the same comedy idea changes across:

- TikTok
- Instagram Reels
- YouTube Shorts
- Podcast clip
- Campus activation
- Livestream segment

Activity 2: Hook Writing Sprint

Each group writes 10 opening hooks for the same premise.

Examples:

- “POV: Your group leader discovered Notion.”
- “When the lecturer says ‘just a short assignment.’”
- “Nobody: UI students before deadline:”

Activity 3: Meme Adaptation Lab

Groups convert their sketch into:

- 1 meme template
- 1 15-second video
- 1 caption-based joke
- 1 branded comedy idea

Activity 4: Branded Comedy Risk Check

Students identify whether a comedy idea can work for:

- Campus event promotion
- Study program branding
- Student recruitment
- Social campaign
- Sponsor activation
- Public service message

Output

Short-form comedy adaptation package.

Assignment

Produce one short-form version of the final project and prepare for testing.

Suggested Reading

Recent work on meme-sharing shows that different humor styles—affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating—can relate differently to social connection and well-being, which is useful for students when deciding whether a joke builds community or creates risk.

Session 7 — Ethics, Sensitivity, Audience Testing, and Revision

Main Topic

Testing comedy without ignoring audience harm, cultural context, and platform risk.

Learning Objectives

Students should be able to:

- Identify potentially harmful comedy mechanisms.
- Distinguish satire from mockery, critique from humiliation, and parody from stereotyping.
- Conduct small-scale audience testing.
- Use feedback to revise comedy responsibly.

Key Concepts

- Punching up versus punching down
- Stereotype risk
- Humorous hate speech
- Cultural misreading
- Context collapse
- Audience testing
- Feedback coding
- Revision ethics
- Platform moderation

In-Class Activities

Activity 1: Comedy Ethics Checklist

Students evaluate their own script using the following questions:

- Who is the target of the joke?
- Is the joke attacking behavior, power, system, or identity?
- Could the joke normalize harassment or hate?
- Could the joke be misread outside its intended context?
- Does the joke rely on stereotype, body shaming, classism, racism, sexism, ableism, or religious insult?
- Is the content still funny if the harmful element is removed?

Activity 2: Audience Testing Simulation

Groups screen their rough cut or read their script to another group. The audience gives feedback using four indicators:

- Clarity: Did they understand the joke?
- Surprise: Was there a comic turn?
- Timing: Did the beat land?
- Risk: Was anything uncomfortable for the wrong reason?

Activity 3: Feedback Coding

Students classify comments into:

- Keep
- Cut
- Rewrite
- Re-perform
- Re-edit
- Ethical risk
- Platform risk

Activity 4: Revision Plan

Each group writes a revision decision log.

Output

Audience testing sheet and revision plan.

Assignment

Revise final project and prepare final presentation.

Suggested Reading

Schmid's 2025 study on humorous hate speech warns that hostile views may become more commonplace when hate speech is masked by humor. Bricker and Godioli also describe digital humor as ambivalent: it can foster critique and solidarity, but it can also intensify conflict, ambiguity, and polarization online.

Session 8 — Final Presentation, Screening, and Professional Reflection

Main Topic

Final comedy content screening and project evaluation.

Learning Objectives

Students should be able to:

- Present a complete comedy content package.
- Explain creative decisions from premise to production.
- Defend ethical and platform choices.

- Reflect on audience feedback and revision.
- Evaluate comedy as a professional media production skill.

In-Class Activities

Activity 1: Final Screening

Each group presents:

- Final comedy video/content
- Logline
- Target audience
- Platform target
- Main comedy mechanism
- Revision history
- Ethical consideration

Activity 2: Peer Review Panel

Class evaluates each project using a structured rubric:

- Is the premise clear?
- Does the comedy escalate?
- Are the characters or situations memorable?
- Does the production support the joke?
- Is the content platform-ready?
- Is the humor ethically defensible?
- Would the audience share it?

Activity 3: Industry Simulation Pitch

Each group delivers a 3-minute pitch as if presenting to:

- Campus media channel
- Brand partner
- Comedy producer
- Digital agency
- Student event committee
- Streaming/livestream platform

Activity 4: Individual Reflection

Each student writes a short reflection:

- What was my role?
- What comedy tool did I learn?
- What failed?
- What changed after testing?
- What would I improve in a professional production?

Final Submission

Group submission must include:

- 1. Final comedy content
- 2. Final script
- 3. Beat sheet
- 4. Shot list
- 5. Audience testing summary
- 6. Ethical risk checklist
- 7. Revision log
- 8. Individual reflection

7. Detailed Final Project Rubric

Criteria	Weight	Excellent Standard
Comedy Premise and Originality	15%	Clear, specific, fresh, and relevant to target audience
Script Structure	20%	Strong setup, escalation, payoff, character logic, and ending
Joke Craft	15%	Effective use of misdirection, contrast, reversal, callback, undercutting, or visual gag
Performance and Direction	15%	Timing, delivery, blocking, expression, and reaction support the humor
Production Quality	15%	Visual, audio, editing, and pacing support the comedy
Platform Strategy	10%	Format fits intended platform and audience behavior
Ethical Awareness	10%	Humor avoids harmful stereotypes and includes clear risk reflection

8. Suggested Weekly Assignments

Week	Assignment
1	Comedy Observation Journal
2	Comic Character Profile and Scene Outline
3	10 Jokes + 1 Beat Sequence
4	2–3 Page Sketch Draft
5	30-Second Prototype + Production Notes
6	Short-Form Comedy Adaptation

Week	Assignment
7	Audience Testing Report + Revision Plan
8	Final Comedy Content Package

9. Recommended Reference List

All references below are from 2021–2026.

1. Basanese, M. (2021). *Writing the Comedy Pilot Script: A Step-by-Step Guide to Creating an Original TV Series*. Routledge.
2. Head, C. (2025). *The Complete Comedy Script Toolkit*. Yellow Door Books.
3. Matamoros-Fernández, A. (2023). “Taking Humor Seriously on TikTok.” *Social Media + Society*.
4. Spörk, A., Martinuzzi, R.-A., Findler, F., & Vogel-Pöschl, H. (2023). “When Students Write Comedy Scripts: Humor as an Experiential Learning Method in Environmental Education.” *Environmental Education Research*, 29(4), 552–568.
5. Schmid, U. K. (2025). “Humorous Hate Speech on Social Media: A Mixed-Methods Investigation of Users’ Perceptions and Processing of Hateful Memes.” *New Media & Society*.
6. Bricker, A. B., & Godioli, A. (2025). “Humour and Conflict in the Digital Age.” *The European Journal of Humour Research*, 13(4), 1–13.
7. Luo, M., & Ng, Y. L. (2025). “Exploring the Mediating Role of Online Social Capital in the Association Between Sharing Memes Using Four Humor Styles and Subjective Well-Being.” *Social Media + Society*.
8. Hu, Y., Ngai, C. S. B., & Koon, A. C. K. (2026). “Humor in Social Media Health Communication: A Systematic Review of Strategic Uses and Effects.” *Behavioral Sciences*, 16(4), 509.
9. Jentzsch, S., & Kersting, K. (2023). “ChatGPT Is Fun, but It Is Not Funny! Humor Is Still Challenging Large Language Models.” *arXiv*.
10. Toplyn, J. (2023). “Witscript 2: A System for Generating Improvised Jokes Without Wordplay.” *arXiv*.