



## Invitation to a guest-lecture by Dr. Jessica Milner Davis



Dr. Jessica Milner Davis, University of Sydney  
title: The Cultural Context of Humour: The Role of Comic Style  
day: Thursday, November 22, 2012  
time: 10.15 am - 12.00 pm  
room: BIN-1-D-25, Binzmühlestrasse 14/7, 8050 Zürich  
Email: jessica.davis@sydney.edu.au  
URL: <http://sydney.edu.au/humourstudies/>

### Abstract

Cross-cultural studies of humour increasingly seek to compare and contrast different cultural approaches to both humour and laughter. Collaboration on humour in Japan and China has suggested a way of categorizing some cultural variations that have the effect of constraining humour (Milner Davis, in press). These are rules – larger than individual preferences and membership of humour taste-cultures within any particular society (Kuipers 2006) -- governing cultural and social norms about what, where, when, how and with whom humour and laughter can properly be used. The relevance of such differences is highlighted by multi-country psychological studies such as those on gelotophobia etc by Ruch, Proyer et al. (2009). These conventions often relate to aspects of humour best captured by the literary concept of comic/humorous style and embodied in word-maps like that pioneered for English by Schmidt-Hidding (1963).

### Relevant references

- Milner Davis, J. (in press). "Humour and its cultural context: Introduction and overview". In J. Milner Davis and J. Chey, eds. *Humour in Chinese Life and Letters: Modern and Contemporary Approaches*, Hong Kong
- Kuipers, G. (2006). *Good humor, bad taste: A sociology of the joke*. Berlin and NY
- Schmidt-Hidding, W. (1963). *Europäische Schlüsselwörter. Bd I: Humor und Witz*. Munich.
- Proyer, René T., Willibald Ruch, Numan S. Ali, Hmoud S. Al-Olimat, Toshihiko Amemiya, Tamirie Andualem Adal et al. (2009). "Breaking ground in cross-cultural research on the fear of being laughed at (gelotophobia): A multi-national study involving seventythree countries." *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research* 22: 253-279.

### Short biography

Jessica Milner Davis, Hon. Assoc. in Letters, Art and Media at University of Sydney and Life Member, Clare Hall Cambridge, is a 2012 Senior Fellow at Università di Bologna (Instituto di Studi Avanzati). A former president of the International Society for Humor Studies (1996 and 2001), she co-ordinates the Australasian Humour Studies Network (AHSN: <http://www.sydney.edu.au/humourstudies>). Her research interests include history and theory of comic genres and multi-disciplinary research on humour and laughter across cultures. She published her first book (on farce) in 1978 (updated 2003) and her most recent is *Humour in Chinese Life and Letters* (with Jocelyn Chey, Hong Kong UP, 2011 and 2013). She is a member of the Board of Consulting Editors for *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research* (Mouton de Gruyter) and the Editorial Board for *Encyclopedia of Humor Studies* (Sage Pubs, in preparation).