



Teaching Conference for
Management Educators

**OBTC 2017 at Providence College
June 14th – 17th, 2017**

Submission Template

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

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**Submission Template for the
2017 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators**

1) Title, Abstract & Keywords

In your abstract, please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words), and three to four keywords. If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.

Laugh and learn: Engaging students through humor

For many faculty, navigating students' changing expectations can be challenging, specifically the expectation that faculty should simultaneously educate and entertain. A possible "edutainment" approach (Johnson & McElroy, 2010) to connect with students is using humor in class. Our session's goal is to frame a discussion about using humor within the context of "edutainment." This session will provide a forum to discuss our personal experiences as "edutainers" and the benefits and challenges of using humor in class. Finally, this session will provide a forum for the exchange of ideas/resources to help faculty integrate humor into classrooms for student laughter and learning.

Keywords: humor, educator roles, engagement

2) Teaching Implications:

What is the contribution of your session to management pedagogy/andragogy? Specifically, please include your learning objectives, and describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Also, include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.

The contribution of the session is to support the discussion of humor as a teaching tool in management to heighten student engagement and connection. It will allow those who already use humor to share their ideas and discuss their successful experiences and challenges. It will also provide an opportunity for those who don't use humor often or effectively to understand the importance of humor for connecting with students and learn about new methods/materials to work into their classes. We believe this session is relevant for any management course, but we will likely focus more on examples related to organizational behavior topics.

LO1: Critically think about humor as a teaching tool

LO2: Reflect on personal use of teaching/humor

LO3: Consider alternative methods for injecting humor into the classroom

As educators, we are always looking for ways to enhance student engagement and learning. We continually fight to keep their attention, especially against the lures of technology and social media. The classroom functions most effectively when there is a connection between the teacher and students. We contend that humor can be used as a tool to engage and connect with students and to enrich their learning.

Humor is a multifaceted social phenomenon that elicits positive affect and offers numerous intra and interpersonal benefits (Martin, 2007). Thus, humor can be used to

connect faculty and students. Psychological theories of emotion support the use of humor in the classroom. The Emotion Cycle Theory (ECT) takes an inter-individual perspective and discusses how positive and negative emotions cycle, or ripple through, social systems by shaping the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors of others, which ultimately shapes the larger social dynamics within dyads, groups, and organizations (Hareli and Rafaeli, 2009). Positive emotions are likely to elicit feelings of attractiveness and willingness to engage by those who experience the emotion (observers and targets) (Hareli & Rafaeli, 2009). Relatedly, Fredrickson (1998, 2000) posited the Broaden-and-Build model of positive emotions, in which positive emotions and moods spiral upwardly within social systems to transform individuals, groups, and organizations and build enduring social bonds. Hence, interpersonal connections are supported through positive affect.

In addition to connection with students that can enhance engagement in the classroom, appropriate humor has also been linked to high attention levels, higher exam scores (Ziv, 1988), positive instructor evaluations, welcoming classroom environment, perceived instructor credibility (see Banas, Dunbar, Rodriguez, & Liu, 2011 for a full review). The findings on the effect of humor on learning have been mixed (Wanzer, 2002). However, multiple studies show that when used appropriately (taking course material, student preferences, and the situation into account) humor can contribute to learning (Banas et al., 2011). In addition to the positives, using humor as a classroom tool has challenges and possible negative consequences (Wanzer, Frymeir, Wojtaszczyk, & Smith, 2006) if it is done inappropriately. Our session seeks to help instructors effectively adapt this tool to fit their own styles and preferences and to meet students' changing expectations of classroom interactions.

3) Session Description and Plan:

What will you actually do in this session? If appropriate, please include a timeline estimating the activities will you facilitate: how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Please remember that reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you'd like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session's goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session.

The session will be lead by 2 junior faculty members with different levels of comfort about using humor in the classroom. Their varying perspectives will be used to discuss the controversy in the literature over whether humor aids or distracts from learning. The session will attempt to engage the audience through discussion questions, humorous media, personal anecdotes, and hands-on individual and group activities.

Potential Session Timeline:

- 1) Background on edutainment, humor and learning/engagement 15 minutes
 - a. Present basic premise of edutainment and solicit audience feedback (e.g., how much pressure do you feel to edutain your students?; how do you try to edutain them?)
 - b. Theoretical support for humor as tool to connect with students
 - i. Inter-individual theories of emotion/attention span or memory
 - ii. Solicit audience (e.g., in what ways do you use humor in class?)

- c. Divergence in literature about humor effectiveness for learning
 - i. Example of Student feedback *Student feedback: "OB professor was hilarious, with a great sense of humor. He made quite a few jokes and the class is just like his personal show. At his class, we all feel time flies very fast. Everyone likes him. However, as it comes to the final and when we start to review these theory on the textbook and lecture notes, it occurs to us that we do not seem to learn or absorb much with our laughs at class."*
 - ii. Discussion/audience solicitation
- 2) Discuss challenges and benefits 20 minutes
- a. Benefits of using humor
 - i. Benefits (authenticity/bonding/engagement)
 - ii. Discussion of personal experiences (e.g., what benefits have you seen with humor in the classroom?)
 - b. Challenges with using humor
 - i. Complications of humor (individual differences)
 - ii. Personal challenges/fears (i.e., tell a joke and no one gets it)
 - iii. Discussion of personal experiences (e.g., what challenges have you experienced using humor in class?; how do you know what is appropriate with the changing culture/values of society?)
- 3) Hands On Humor 30 minutes
- a. Present pieces of humor and rate appropriateness of each
 - i. Read/view piece (will be given hand-out)
 - ii. Rate piece of humor individually
 - iii. As a group, debrief & discuss each piece (personal opinion, appropriateness, humor style (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003) depicted & pros/cons of each)
 - b. Humor clips relevant to OB
 - i. Present humorous video clips to illustrate OB concepts
 - ii. Analyze clip as group activity (as students would in class)
 - iii. Debrief clip
- 4) Open exchange of all things funny! 15 minutes
- a. Clips, jokes, assignments, resources, insights from the audience
- 5) Wrap up 10 minutes
- a. Quick writing reflection or other brief exercise
 - b. Summary and Questions from Audience
- 4) Application to Conference theme:
How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of *Navigating the Changing Currents?*

Technology/society has changed the expectations our students have about their experiences in the classroom. Students look to be entertained while learning. This encourages dual roles for faculty, one of an educator and one of an entertainer. This “edutainer” role requires change on the part of educators (either in the style or content of our interactions), which some may find challenging. Humor may be a useful tool for navigating our changing roles. The goal of this session is to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas/clips to help faculty consider the importance of humor and to develop OB edutainer techniques.

5) Unique Contribution to OBTC:

Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference.

We have not presented the work in this proposal before and it is not under review elsewhere.

References

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