

**Wieland Schwanebeck, M.A.**

**1220  
70320  
2220  
2420  
73120  
73130**

**British Comedies**

**Tue (2) JAN 27**

- Ü 2 KP (regular and active participation, 15-minute presentation or written assignments)
- PS 6 KP (regular and active participation, 15-minute presentation or written assignments, term paper)

English humour ranks prominently amongst national stereotypes, and serves as a major foundation for some of the best-known plays in English literary history. English comedies often feature eccentricity, absurd plot constellations, and bitter sarcasm. Despite recurring features, most of us will be hard-pressed for a proper definition of comedy applicable to both Shakespearean plays and contemporary examples. Fittingly, the part of Aristotle's *Poetics* in which he discusses comedy was lost ages ago, adding to the mystery surrounding the genre.

By looking at comedies from different centuries, we not only want to explore the different comic strategies to be found in some classical texts (like puns, slapstick, or witty repartee). The seminar will also provide an introduction to the analysis of drama, including character studies, speech conventions, the classical structure of plays and its modification in the contemporary age. We will refer to the introduction by Vera & Ansgar Nünning (<sup>4</sup>2008), but the course is also aimed at students who have yet to attend the introductory lecture.

We will study the following texts together, which can be linked by the topic of theatre and performance on a meta-level:

William Shakespeare: *As You Like It*. Ed. Juliet Dusinberre. London: A&C Black, <sup>3</sup>2004 (The Arden Shakespeare). [ISBN 1904271227]

George Bernard Shaw: *Pygmalion: A Romance in Five Acts*. London: Penguin, <sup>4</sup>2003. [ISBN 0141439505]

Michael Frayn: *Noises Off!* (1982)

You should have purchased and read Shakespeare's play before the start of the term.