Humor in Negotiation

- Humor plays a role at the relationship level
  - It can put negotiators at ease
  - It can strengthen the feeling of togetherness and team spirit
  - It can help dealing with aggressive feelings, releasing tension, etc.
  - It may minimize threatening interactions
  - It can help delivering bad news, accusing, etc.
  - It can help the other negotiator save face

- Humor influences the negotiation process
  - It enlivens communication (however, humorous communication is time-consuming)
  - It can be a way of being cooperative in spite of disagreement
  - It can bring forth a "change of reality" as it helps negotiators see the world in a different light; it can, therefore, foster creativity
  - It can be used to avoid difficult issues
  - Looking at the way it is being used can help diagnose the quality of the negotiation process

- Humor is linked to power
  - It is not always spontaneous. It is often used strategically (cooperatively or competitively)
  - Looking at who has the right to initiate and end joking shows who has power
  - Those who manage to make others laugh (or smile) win them over
  - It can be used for time-consuming purposes
  - Humor can be a non-threatening way of pursuing one's own goal (or to mask a threatening goal as an unthreatening one)

- Humor is risky (especially in a multicultural setting)
  - It can be misunderstood
  - It can trigger strategic reactions (laughing not because the joke was funny, but because it is "appropriate" to do so considering the circumstances – e.g. the power of the joking person)
  - It can offend the other party (e.g.: laughing at another's expense)