Monty Python’s Flying Circus
Week 2

Contemporary Comedic Genius Series
Martin J. Marshall, instructor
Meet The Pythons:
Terry Jones & Michael Palin
Meet The Pythons: Terry Jones and Michael Palin

• Terry Jones
  • Met Michael Palin at The Oxford Revue
  • Appeared in *Do Not Adjust Your Set* with Palin and Eric Idle (1967-69)
  • Also wrote for the *David Frost Show*, but not with Cleese and Chapman

• Michael Palin
  • Met Jones at Oxford and worked with him on *Do Not Adjust Your Set* and the *David Frost Show* before becoming a Python
Meet The Pythons:
John Cleese & Graham Chapman
Meet The Pythons:
John Cleese and Graham Chapman

• John Cleese
  • His father changed surname from Cheese to Cleese in WWI
  • Met Graham Chapman at Cambridge in *Footlights Revue*. Renamed *Cambridge Circus*, he toured with the show to New Zealand and America, ending up on the Ed Sullivan show.
  • Began writing for *The Frost Report* with Graham Chapman in 1965.
    • In 1966, wrote with Chapman on *At Last The 1948 Show*.

• Graham Chapman
  • Met Cleese at Cambridge and joined him on all of the above.
Meet The Pythons:

Eric Idle
Meet The Pythons: Eric Idle

• Attended Cambridge one year behind Cleese and Chapman. Joined the Footlights Club.
• Starred in *Do Not Adjust Your Set* with Michael Palin and Terry Jones. Terry Gilliam provided animation for the show.
• Appeared as a guest in some episodes of *At Last the 1948 Show* with Cleese and Chapman.
• 1969 joined with Palin, Jones, Cleese, Chapman and Gilliam to form the Pythons.
Meet The Pythons:
Terry Gilliam
Meet The Pythons:
Terry Gilliam

• The only American among the Pythons, created the animations that formed the transitions between sketches.
• Graduated Occidental College in Southern California in 1962.
• Created photographic strips for Help! Magazine, which featured John Cleese.
• Created animations for Do Not Adjust Your Set, which starred Terry Jones, Michael Palin and Eric Idle.
Role-playing amongst Pythons

• **Graham Chapman:**
  – Aristocrat, High-ranking military management

• **John Cleese:**
  – Any Capitano role: Centurion, Businessman, Pope

• **Terry Jones:**
  – Lumpen proletarian, shop keeper, git

• **Eric Idle:**
  – Mr. Cheeky, space cadet, TV Host

• **Michael Palin:**
  – Everyman
The Name: Monty Python’s Flying Circus

• BBC executive Barry Took referred to the comedians as “the Circus”.

• Snoopy and the Red Baron song was popular. The villain was Baron Von Richthofen, leader of the WWI fighter wing, the “Flying Circus”. BBC added “flying”.

• John Cleese thought that something slimy and low to the ground should be added, so he came up with “Python”.

• Eric Idle added “Monty”, after a sleazy 3-card Monty dealer he knew. It was also a pun, as “full Monty” also meant stripping naked.
Monty Python

• BBC TV series 1969-174

• Movies
  And Now For Something Completely Different (1971)
  Holy Grail (1975)
  Life of Brian (1979)
  Meaning of Life (1983)
  Live (Mostly): One Down; Five To Go (2014)
Post-Python: John Cleese

- Fawlty Towers (1975, 1979)
  - Co-wrote with his wife Connie Booth
- The Secret Policeman’s Other Ball (1982)
- Time Bandits (1981)
- Silverado (1985)
- Clockwise (1986)
- A Fish Called Wanda (1988)
- Meetings, Bloody Meetings (1990s series)
- Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1994)
- Became new “Q” in James Bond films (1999-2000s)
- Pink Panther 2 (2007)
Post-Python: Michael Palin

• Ripping Yarns (1974)
• Co-wrote *Time Bandits* with Gilliam (1980)
• The Missionary (1982) with Maggie Smith
• Actor: “Brazil”, “A Fish Called Wanda”
• Documentaries (BBC):
  – Pole to Pole (1992)
  – Sahara, Himalaya, New Europe, Brazil
Post-Python: Terry Jones

- Co-wrote *Ripping Yarns* with Palin
- Labyrinth (1986)
- Erik the Viking (1989)
- Wind In The Willows (1996)
- Blazing Dragons (BBC TV, 1996-1998)
- Evil Machines (2011)
Post-Python: Terry Gilliam

• Directed:
  • Holy Grail (1975)
  • Jabberwocky (1977)
  • Time Bandits (1981)
  • Brazil (1985)
  • The Adventures of Baron Munchausen (1988)
  • The Fisher King (1991)
  • 12 Monkeys (1995)
  • Fear And Loathing in Las Vegas (1998)
  • Lost in La Mancha (1999)
  • The Brothers Grimm (2005)
  • The Imaginarium of Dr. Parnassus (2009)
Post-Python: Eric Idle

- BBC Radio Five (1973-74)
- Rutland Television Weekend (1975-76)
- The Rutles (1978)
- Adventures of Baron Munchasen (1989)
- Nuns On The Run (1990)
- Casper (1995)
- Wind In The Willows (1996)
- Suddenly Susan (NBC TV, 1999-2000)
- Spamalot (2004)
- Not The Messiah (2009)
- Live (Mostly) at the O2 Auditorium (2014)
Post-Python: Graham Chapman

- Out of the Trees (1975)
- Yellowbeard (1976)
- The Odd Job (1978)
- 1989 died of spinal cancer