

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)**
 - Hollywood Bowl (1982)**
 - 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):
 - Great Railway Journeys of the World (1980)
 - Around the World in 80 Days (1988)
 - 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 Munchausen (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