



# The Hilarity of the Awful

Symposium in Uppsala, October 31, 2017  
10:15 am–7 pm, The Humanities Theatre (Humanistiska teatern), Engelska parken

**WHY DO WE LAUGH AT THINGS THAT APPALL US?** In our increasingly fraught world we know that jokes about distressing situations arise and are popular in such situations themselves. We also know that in-group gallows humor can be appropriated and used by others whose intention is to offend, but who deflect criticism by saying they are being ironic or “just kidding”.

Can we think about humor like this in ways that see it as something other than, or more than, the generally agreed-upon ways of considering humor: as an expression of superiority, the release of nervous energy, or the perception of incongruity? Does the hilarity of the awful offer us any special perspective on engagement with other human beings, and the world?

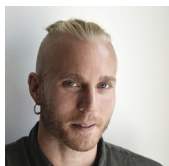
## PROGRAM



Don Kulick, Distinguished University Professor of Anthropology and director of the ENGAGING VULNERABILITY research program, **will open the symposium.**



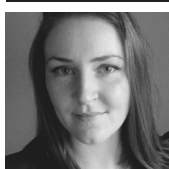
Glenda Carpio, Professor of English and of African and African American studies, Harvard University, **will talk about black humor and American slavery.**



Karl Ekeman, Doctoral student, Literature and Rhetoric, Uppsala University **will talk about the webcomic meme “Captain Sweden”.**



### 12.15 LUNCH BUFFET



Angela Nagle, Cultural critic for *The Baffler* and the *Dublin Review of Books*, **will talk about irony and the alt-right.**



Delia Chiaro, Professor of English Language and Translation, University of Bologna, **will talk about the resurgence of poop jokes in contemporary culture.**



Giseline Kuipers, Professor of Cultural Sociology, University of Amsterdam, **will talk about humor and the cultivation of disgust.**



### 15.00 COFFEE BREAK



Deborah Cameron, Rupert Murdock Professor of Language and Communication, Oxford University, **will talk about academic awfulness.**



Carl Johan De Geer, artist, designer, filmmaker and author, **will discuss aesthetics beyond good and bad.**



### 17.15 MINGLE AND BUFFET

**ENGAGING VULNERABILITY** is a decade-long interdisciplinary research program at Uppsala University financed with the support of the Swedish Research Council. The program examines vulnerability as a productive set of relations that entail demands.