

MLS 620-50: Liberal Studies Explorations: The Graphic Novel
Metropolitan State University
Spring, 2021, 4 credits
Saturdays, January 16 – May 1
9 – 12 noon

On Zoom:

<https://minnstate.zoom.us/j/91242366110>

Required Texts:

1)Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey. *The Graphic Novel: An Introduction.*

Charlotte Pylyser

NY: Cambridge University Press, 286 pp., 2015

ISBN 9781107655768

ISBN 9781107025233

2)Making Comics: Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels by Scott

McCloud

Publisher: HarperCollins, NY, NY.

ISBN-10 : 0060780940; ISBN-13: 9780060780944

For decades, it seemed that graphic novels served as the Rodney Dangerfields of the literary world. Thought of as little more than hard-bound comic books, the genre received scant notice from critics or mainstream readers. Erika Gonzalez, Rocky Mountain News

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Course Description: 

In this class we will explore a rich, though vastly underappreciated literary form: the graphic novel. Comic books are the ancestor of the graphic novel, opening up the opportunity for others to use collage and image in organic ways, helping to extend the possibilities of what we now call graphic novel art.

This art is considered more a format than a genre, allowing for the narrative to be fiction, non-fiction, history, fantasy, anthology and more.

We will look at this format both in terms of poetics – the interplay of word & picture – and in terms of what its exemplars have to say about our lives as human beings.

We'll learn how to read, discuss, and understand the construction and effects, and of course, to enjoy, the range of comics and graphic novels now available in English.

Competence Statement:

Students gain knowledge of the history and craft of the graphic novel and are able to use that knowledge, combined with extensive reading, initial writing and subsequent revisions, to complete one storylogue of a graphic novel.

Learning Outcomes:

- The meanings of the elements of the graphic novel to include idea, form, idiom, structure, craft and surface.
- An ability to critically evaluate readings and student work, both orally and in writing.
- Instill a motivated and engaged attitude toward writing and revision, to include:
 - one 20 page project textual narrative
 - integrated graphical elements
 - careful editing and proofreading

Course Requirements:

- Short narrative drafts to include image and text: two. [to allow for non-fiction as per description]
- Critiques of peer work: Written and oral.
- Reading/Writing assignments: one or more weekly.
- Student-Led seminar format
- Self-evaluation: one page double-spaced discussing what you feel you have learned as a writer/reader.
- Portfolio: to turn in no later than June 11th.
- Presentation of graphic story on selected date: either 6/11 or 6/13, (15 minutes).

Schedule:

Week One: Saturday, January 16  Read **McCloud** pp. 1-6; Read **Baetens/Frey** pp. 1-23 

intros to each other, books, graphic novel course

Introduction: A Special Type of Comics

Introduction

Week Two: Saturday, January 23  Read **McCloud** pp. 7-57; Read **Baetens/Frey** pp. 27-53

From Moral Panic to Pop Art Sensationalism

Writing With Pictures: Exercises

Guest Speaker  **Dawn Wing**: What is universal about comics?

Week Three: Saturday, January 30  Read **McCloud** pp.58- 127; Read **Baetens/Frey** pp. 54-73

Underground Comix and Mainstream Evolutions, 1968-1980 

 **Stories for Humans: Exercises**

Week Four: Saturday, February 6  Read **McCloud** pp. 58-127 again; **Baetens/Frey** pp. 74-100 

Stories for Humans: Exercises con't.

“Not Just for Kids”: Clever Comics and the New Graphic Novels

Week Five: Saturday, February 13  Read [McCloud](#) pp. 128-157; [Baetens/Frey](#) pp. 103-133 

[Understanding Panels and Page Layouts](#)

[The Power of Words: Exercises](#)

book review presentations

Week Six: February 20   Read [McCloud](#) pp. 128-157 again; [Baetens/Frey](#) pp. 134-161 

[Drawing and Style, Word and Image](#)

[The Power of Words: Exercises con't.](#)

Week Seven: February 27  Read [McCloud](#) pp. 158-183; [Baetens/Frey](#) pp. 162-187 

[The Graphic Novel as a Specific Form of Storytelling](#)

[World Building: Exercises](#)

Week Eight: March 6  Read [McCloud](#) pp. 158-183 again; [Baetens/Frey](#) pp. 191-216 

[The Graphic Novel and Literary Fiction: Exchanges, Interplays, and Fusions](#)

[World Building: Exercises con't.](#)

OFF FOR SPRING BREAK: March 13

Week Nine: March 20  Read [McCloud](#) pp. 184-211; [Baetens/Frey](#) pp. 217-245 

[Nostalgia and the Return of History](#)

[Tools, Techniques and Technology](#)

Week Ten: March 27  Read [McCloud](#) pp. 184-211 again;

[Tools, Techniques and Technology con't.](#)

OPEN WORKSHOP DAYS

Week Eleven: April 3  Read TBA

Week Twelve: April 10  Read TBA

Week Thirteen: April 17  Read TBA

Week Fourteen: April 24  Read TBA

Week Fifteen: May 1  Read. TBA

We reap our own reward for what we do, which is very, very small. And the reward itself is just being able to do it, and to be published and then be insulted by our publishers.

Chris Ware Author of *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*

Evaluation

Evaluation Summary

20% Participation

5% Assignments

20% Analytic Essay
35% Final Project
20% Keystone Bibliography

Grading for the course is as follows:

20%: Class participation. Attendance (you are expected to be at all six meetings) and thoughtful participation in class is a crucial part of succeeding in the course. The instructor will lead discussions, but it is each student's responsibility to actively participate in class.

20%: Assignments. All written assignments, not including your analytic essay and final project, are due in electronic form at the start of class for which they are due. Late assignments will not be accepted.

20%: Analytic essay. During the semester, you will develop a 4-7 page essay analyzing at least one graphic novel using the analytical tools and frameworks we learn in class and covering both graphic and textual components. This essay will be due toward the end of the semester. This is your major prose writing assignment.

20%: Final project: a storylogue. This course is about practical applications in the arts. Thus, the practical application – development of a piece of graphic storytelling – is the most important part of this course. Students may work individually or in groups (of up to 4 people) for the final project.

20%: Annotated bibliography of a minimum of 20 sources. Students are required to develop and turn in an annotated bibliography of a minimum of 20 sources by our fifth class. This assignment is designed to support you in writing your analytical paper, as well as your final project, therefore it will be due early in the semester, January 30, week 3. You are not just putting together a list of graphic novels and their titles, but you are also researching scholarly works of analysis, comparison, etc. More to come over zoom on this.

You are expected to be familiar with the most recent edition of the MLA Handbook (8th ed., 2016), and to follow MLA form in all written work. The 8th edition is clearer and more logical! than the previous iterations. Our library Guide offers a handy short guide.

Citation tools and management

- Automatic Bibliography and Citation Generator <http://www.easybib.com/>
“Save time by creating a Works Cited page instantly in MLA” (free)
- MLA tutorial <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/675/1/>
- Metro State Library Guide to MLA <http://libguides.metrostate.edu/MLA>

Library Resources

<http://libguides.metrostate.edu/lit> Guide with links to web content, MLA information, online reference sources, streaming media, books, and more.

Analytic Essay

For your analytic essay, you may write on any of the graphic novels we read in the course, or you may select from other substantive texts. Below is a list of suggested sources:

Uncanny X-Men: The Dark Phoenix Saga, by Chris Claremont and John Byrne. Marvel Comics.

Astonishing X-Men: "Gifted," "Dangerous," "Torn" or "Unstoppable," by Joss Whedon. Marvel Comics.

In the Shadow of No Towers, by Art Spiegelman. New York: Pantheon.

Maus, Book 2, by Art Spiegelman. New York: Pantheon.

Perspepolis: The Story of a Childhood or The Story of a Return, by Marjane Satrapi. New York: Pantheon.

Death: The High Cost of Living, by Neil Gaiman and Chris Bachalo. DC Comics: Vertigo.

Death: The Time of Your Life, by Neil Gaiman and Chris Bachalo. DC Comics: Vertigo. Michael Turner's Fathom, Vol. 1, by Michael Turner. Image Comics: Top Cow Productions.

300, by Frank Miller. Dark Horse Comics.

Ghost World, by Daniel Clowes. Fantagraphic Books (4th Ed. 2001).

Batman: The Dark Knight Returns, by Frank Miller. DC Comics.

Batman: The Dark Knight Strikes Again, by Frank Miller. DC Comics.

Rising Stars, by J. Michael Straczynski, Image Comics: Top Cow Productions.

Y: The Last Man, by Brian K. Vaughn. DC Comics: Vertigo.

League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, by Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill. DC Comics: America's Best Comics.

Lucifer, by Mike Carey. DC Comics: Vertigo.

Dykes to Watch Out For (1986) and Invasion of the Dykes to Watch Out For (2005), by Allison Bechdel.

The Sandman (1989) by Neil Gaiman with pencillers Kelly Jones, Charles Vess and Colleen Doran. DC Comics: Vertigo.

American Way (2006) by John Ridley with penciller Georges Jenty. Wildstorm.

Blankets (2003) written and drawn by Craig Thompson. Top Shelf.

Akira (2000) written and drawn by Katsuhiro Otomo. Dark Horse 2000. [Note: this is arguably the best English version, and certainly the easiest one to get a hold of.]

Love Rockets. Written and drawn by Gilbert Hernandez and Jaime Hernandez. Originally self-published 25 years ago, many of the most popular character arcs ('Maggie the mechanic') and storylines (the town of Palomar) have been re-collected in relatively self-contained volumes by Fantagraphics in 2007.

Sentences: The Life of M.F. Grimm. Written by Percy Carey with penciller Ronald Wimberly. Vertigo 2007.

X-Men: God Loves, Man Kills. Written by Chris Claremont with penciller Brent Anderson. Marvel 1982.

Planetary. Written by Warren Ellis with penciller John Cassaday. Wildstorm 2000.

The Swamp Thing. Any of Moore's collected Volumes 1-9. Written by Alan Moore, art

by various contributors. Vertigo 1984.

Malcolm X: A Graphic Biography. Written by Andrew Helfer with penciller Randy DuBurke. Hill and Wang 2006.

Wonder Struck by Brian Selznick, Scholastic Press, 2011.

Final Project – Storylogue: An Original Piece of Graphic Narration

For the course's final project, students may work individually or in groups of up to four members to create a piece of original graphic narrative. This may take the form of an issue of a series, an outline of a story with character sketches, a complete storyboard with script, a series outline, or an outline of a complete graphic novel. This may be a completely original story, or use characters already existing in a graphic universe/series/continuity. The plot of the outline must deal with one or more contemporary social issues (loosely construed). The extensiveness of the project will depend on the format chosen by

the student(s) and group size. For example, if working alone, the student will be expected to demonstrate that they have developed both a plot and some graphic storytelling for at least one issue (20 pages or so, depending on what visual medium is being used). If four students work together, they must submit a more thorough outline of a complete issue or series with a substantial graphic component. We are extremely flexible with the form this final project takes, and we encourage all students to be creative and draw from their strengths (e.g. if visual art isn't your forte, focus on a simple graphic style or team up with someone who might be stronger in this area).

Other Items of Importance

Accessibility Resources

Students requesting accommodations for disabilities must register with CAR, the Center for Accessibility Resources (651) 793-1540 as early as possible. If you have a documented learning disability, or if you suspect you have a learning disability which may impact your opportunity to succeed in this course, call CAR right away so that you can explore possible ways to reasonably accommodate your learning style.

Respect intellectual property rights

Plagiarism is the act of using another person's ideas, writings, diagrams, or materials without giving specific credit known as a citation. In an academic environment, plagiarism is considered theft, and therefore if you plagiarize any materials, you may face failure of the assignment, failure of the course, or other penalties up to and including expulsion from the university. More information regarding plagiarism and disciplinary policies can be found on the University's [student handbook](#) website:

Please review the university Academic Integrity Handbook: http://lgdata.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/docs/1181/1091697/AIP_Student_Guide.pdf In particular, note that an academic integrity violation in a capstone project is automatically counted as a Third Degree offense, and subject to the most serious academic consequences. Here is the language specific to capstones:

Third- Level Violations:

Third-level violations are serious breaches of academic integrity. These violations involve gross dishonesty or repeated ethics violations and result in severe disciplinary procedures.

Examples of third-level violations include but are not limited to:

- fabrication of evidence, falsification of data, or any instance of plagiarism in a senior thesis, capstone paper, master's thesis, doctoral dissertation, or conference presentation.