

Carleton University Department of Political Science
PSCI 4809

**Special Topics in Political Science:
Political Identity through Graphic Novels**

Prof. Mira Sucharov

Winter 2015

Mondays 11:35-2:25

(please confirm location on Carleton central)

Professor Mira Sucharov

Email: mira.sucharov@carleton.ca

Phone: 613-520-2600 x. 3010.

If trying to leave me a message, please use email rather than voice mail.

Office: 678 Loeb

Course Description:

This seminar is intended for those who wish to engage in deep and careful reading of graphic novels as a way to consider the sources and implications of political identity. Through this dynamic and emerging medium, we will look at themes surrounding collective trauma and memory, the Holocaust, sense of place, prostitution, revolution, war, religion, race, occupation and resistance, terrorism, loss, and gender and sexuality. I expect that it will be a fun and satisfying course, *provided that we all actually read* what's on offer each week.

Office Hours: I've found that holding regular office hours often ends up being a mostly lose-lose situation for all involved, given student course and work schedules, and other pre-set advising meetings. Rather than have you show up and risk having to wait in line, please email me to set up an appointment in advance. I check email very frequently, and will do my best to accommodate you at various points during the week. I am happy to set up in-person meetings, of course, or phone meetings, or both.

Books: (All are available at the Carleton University bookstore)

Art Spiegelman – The Complete Maus

ISBN-10: 0141014083

ISBN-13: 978-0141014081

Will Eisner -- Dropsie Avenue

ISBN-10: 0393328112

ISBN-13: 978-0393328110

Rutu Modan -- The Property
ISBN-10: 1770461159
ISBN-13: 978-1770461154

Marjane Satrapi – The Complete Persepolis
ISBN-10: 0375714839
ISBN-13: 978-0375714832

Alison Bechdel -- Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic
ISBN-10: 0618871713
ISBN-13: 978-0618871711

Jason Lutes: Berlin: City of Stones & Berlin: City of Smoke
ISBN-10: 1896597297
ISBN-13: 978-1896597294

and

ISBN-10: 1897299532
ISBN-13: 978-1897299531

Chester Brown, Paying for It
ISBN-10: 1770460489
ISBN-13: 978-1770460485

Ellen Forney, Marbles: Mania, Depression, Michelangelo, and Me
ISBN-10: 1592407323
ISBN-13: 978-1592407323

Guy Delisle, Pyongyang
ISBN-10: 1897299214
ISBN-13: 978-1897299210

Joe Sacco — Palestine
ISBN-10: 156097432X
ISBN-13: 978-1560974321

Alissa Torres, American Widow
ISBN-10: 0345500695
ISBN-13: 978-0345500694

Schedule of Topics:

Week 1 (Jan. 11) Intro

Week 2 (Jan. 18) *Maus I & II*
Week 3 (Jan. 25) *The Property*
Week 4 (Feb. 1) *Fun Home: A Tragicomic*
Week 5 (Feb. 8) *Persepolis* (Complete)
Week 6 (Feb. 15) No class - reading week
Week 7 (Feb. 22): *Dropsie Avenue*
Week 8 (Feb. 29) *Marbles*
Week 9 (March 7) *Pyongyang*
Week 10 (March 14) *Paying for It*
Week 11 (March 21) *Berlin I & II*
Week 12 (March 28) *Palestine*
Week 13 (April 4) *American Widow*

Weekly Readings:

Each week beginning Jan. 18, we will read the given graphic novel(s) assigned for that week, *plus three other readings to be chosen by the presenter(s)*. *Presenters need to email me their chosen readings one week in advance*. I will then forward the article titles (with links, if applicable) to the class. Presenters should select three articles, of which at least one must be a journal article, and at least one an op-ed. Each article should relate to one or more themes that you have gleaned from the graphic novel. Articles need not refer directly to the graphic novel; they need only capture relevant themes. I will give further instructions during the first class.

Assessments:

Op-Ed: 25% (Due Feb. 11 by 11 pm, via email)

Paper: 25% (Due April 8 by 11 pm, via email)

Presentation: 20%

Participation: 30%

Op-ed: You will select *one graphic novel* from our course list on which to write an op-ed style paper. The aim of the assignment is to analyze a current event or a contemporary policy debate through reference to a theme that is illuminated within the given graphic novel. You will make direct reference to the novel in your argument. You will also include scholarly sources and news/data sources to make your points. More information will be given closer to the time.

Length: 750-800 words, plus footnotes and references.

Paper: You will select *two graphic novels* from our course (not the one on which you wrote your op-ed, and not the one on which you presented) on which to write a scholarly paper. Select three themes around which to structure a compare & contrast discussion. Each section of the paper should discuss one of the themes, bringing in examples from each of the two novels, plus real-life examples of the issues at hand from scholarly and

news/commentary sources. In the intro, make sure to capture all of this in an over-arching research question, followed by an argument. A key question to consider in structuring your research question is “what does this graphic novel say about the human experience?” More info will be given closer to the time.

Length: 2500 words

Presentation: You will choose an additional novel (not the ones on which you will write the op-ed or the paper) to make an oral presentation. The presentation must pose a research question, followed by an argument, capturing three themes. (See directions for the paper assignment.) You will make direct reference to the graphic novel to build your argument. You will present on the week assigned to the given novel. Presentations will typically be done in pairs; pairs of students should coordinate well in advance to plan the structure of the presentation. I will grade you individually. *Don't forget to email me your selections of supplementary readings one week in advance (see above).*

Participation: Your participation grade will be derived from three sources:

- *Written Reading Response Assignments.* Each week, you will email me a short, two-paragraph discussion piece on the readings each week. The first paragraph should offer a concise summary. The second paragraph should focus on two or three questions you wish to pose, which the authors don't directly address. I will grade these on an A/B/C basis (A signifies deep engagement and deep insight with the material; B signifies good engagement and some insight; C signifies barely adequate engagement and little insight. Not handing it in will earn you 0.) Participation emails must be sent by email before class begins.
- *Oral Participation.* I will be looking for constructive engagement with the topic at hand, an attempt to dialogue with the presenters on any given day (including listening carefully and responding with analytical questions and comments), and evidence that you have done the readings.
- *Attendance.* Be here, eyes up, and off your phones and laptops unless taking class notes. (There's no final exam in the course, so I'm less concerned about you writing down everything we say than I am about you being an active listener and contributor.) I realize people sometimes need to take an occasional glance at an incoming email or text, but please keep that to a minimum.

LATE POLICY: For papers and op-eds, one percentage point off per day late. Late discussion questions will earn you half of what you would otherwise have earned.
