

**Carleton University
Fall 2017
Department of English**

**ENGL 3011A: Comics and Graphic Novels
Prerequisite(s): third-year standing or permission of the department.**

**Tuesday and Thursday / 11:35am-12:55pm
Location: 409 Southam Hall**

**Instructor: B. Johnson
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Office: 1917 Dunton Tower
Phone: (613) 520-2600 ext. 2331
Office Hours: Mondays 12:00pm-2:00pm**

Course Description

This course has several broad goals, foremost among them is to guide students towards a fuller, richer, more pleasurable, more knowledgeable, and more intellectually stimulating experience of reading comics. To this end, the course will begin with a substantial introduction to the formal and technical dimensions of comics as a medium of expression. We will learn about how elements like the comic panel and the comic page function as systems of meaning and how visual and verbal systems of signification converge and interact within graphic space. We will develop our skills in visual literacy and examine some of the ways that comic narratives have shaped but also challenged the conventions of the medium across a very broad range of visual styles, genres, and aesthetic projects. Once we have developed some preliminary facility with the formal elements and technical language of comics, we will begin to pursue the secondary goals of the course in greater detail: (1) developing a sense of the material and cultural history of North American comics and (2) developing a sense of the emergent academic field of comic studies. As we work through the fascinating history of comics in North America, we will examine a series of representative comics from various eras (pre- and post-Comics Code, the various “ages” of superhero comics, etc.) as well as from various sites of production and circulation (mainstream comics published by Marvel and DC, underground and alternative comics, graphic novels by major book publishers). Concurrently, we will delve into some of the analytic techniques and concerns that animate the growing field of comic studies. Some topics we may consider for closer study include: the relation between ideology and comic subgenres (romance, superheroes, horror, sf, memoir, etc.); the politics of representation and the role comics play in mediating intersectional identities (race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, age, etc.); the function and effects of alternative reading practices and fan appropriations; the relation between comics, the “graphic novel,” and cultural prestige; the reception of comics; “distant reading” practices, etc. Students will have the option of writing a formal essay or of creating their own comic (with critical commentary) as a component of the formal evaluation for this class.

Required Texts (available at the campus bookstore)

Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*
 Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester, *A Comics Studies Reader*
 Hergé, *King Ottokar's Sceptre (The Adventures of Tintin)*
 Mariko and Jillian Tamaki. *This One Summer*
 Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, *Watchmen*
 Art Spiegelman, *Maus, vols. I and II*

Additional Required Texts (available digitally at Comixology.com)

Lee, Stan and Jack Kirby, *Fantastic Four (1961-1998) #90*
 Miller, Frank, Klaus Jansen, and Lynn Varley, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns #1*
 Eisner, Will, *The Spirit #485: Ten Minutes*
 Eisner, Will, *The Spirit #446: Two Lives*
 Moore, Alan, John Totleben, and Steve Bissette, *Swamp Thing (1982-1996) #34*
 Steranko, Jim. *Nick Fury: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. (1968-71) #1*
 Eisner, Will, *The Spirit #404: Life Below*
 DeConnick, Kelly Sue and Valentine De Landro, *Bitch Planet #1*
 Fraction, Matt and David Aja. *Hawkeye (2012-2015) #11* (“Then Came Barney”)
 Gaiman, Neil, Kelley Jones, and Malcolm Jones III. *The Sandman #18* (“A Dream of a
 Thousand Cats”)
 Schultz, Charles. *The Complete Peanuts Vol. 8: 1965-1966*
 Lee, Stan, Steve Ditko, Tom DeFalco, Ron Frenz, *Amazing Spider-Man (1963-1998) #275*
 Thomas, Roy and John Buscema, *Avengers (1963-1996) #60*
 Wilson, G. Willow and Adrian Alphona, *Ms. Marvel (2014-15) #1-2*
 Claremont, Chris, and Brent Anderson, *Marvel Graphic Novel #5: X-Men: God Loves, Man Kills*

More Required Texts (available digitally on ARES)

Hernandez, Jaime. “Flies on the Ceiling”
 Barks, Carl, Uncle Scrooge: “The Secret of Atlantis” and “Tralla La”
 Spiegelman, Art. “Abstract Thought is a Warm Puppy”
 Ware, Chris. “Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Linus, Lucy...”
 Seth. “Good Grief!”
 Feldstein, Al and Jack Kamen, “The Neat Job”
 Feldstein, Al and Jack Kamen, “Split Second!”

Method of Evaluation

Attendance/Participation	10%	students expected to attend all classes
Short Comic Analysis	20%	Due: Tuesday, Oct. 31
Critical Essay --OR-- Creative Project with Critical Commentary	40%	Due: Thursday, Dec. 7
Exam (3 hours)*	30%	TBA

***The final exam and airplane ticket bookings:** The final exam period is December 10-22, 2017 (including Saturdays and Sundays). Since the Registrar's Office does not set exam dates until well into the term, you must plan to be available throughout the entire examination period. Do not purchase plane tickets with departure dates prior to December 23, 2017. Exams will not be rescheduled for students who take on other commitments.

Course Procedures, Grades, and Grading

Basic Preparation: As a matter of course you are expected to: (1) attend the lectures, (2) complete the scheduled readings beforehand, (3) arrive prepared to discuss what you have read, (4) bring the relevant text(s) to class. It is strongly recommended that you take detailed notes on the lectures and keep a record of the passages we discuss in class. Writing in the margins of your books and marking off key passages as you read is also a good idea.

Handing In Assignments/Late Penalty: Assignments are to be submitted in class the day they are due. Assignments submitted outside of class (via the drop box on the 18th Floor of Dunton Tower beside the main English Office) on the day they are due are considered late and will automatically be penalized by $\frac{1}{3}$ of a letter grade, as well as an additional $\frac{1}{3}$ of a letter grade for each day they are late beyond the original due date. Hard copies only; no emailed assignments accepted.

Emergencies and Extensions: The only exceptions to the above rule regarding the late penalty and in-class submission are those rare instances for which corroborating documentation can be provided (such as a medical emergency or the death of an immediate family member). Computer and/or printing difficulties do not qualify as emergencies. Requests for extension may be granted in some instances in advance, but only for compelling reasons. Any such request must be made in writing or in person to the professor (not the Teaching Assistant) no later than 48 hours prior to the due date of the assignment. Requests for "retroactive" extensions (i.e. requests made on or after the due date of the essay) will not be considered.

Grading Criteria: Grades for term work will be based on insightfulness, originality, focus, organization of ideas, clarity of expression, scholarly rigor, correct use of MLA style, spelling, and grammar.

Grade Scale:

Letter	%	GPA
A+	90-100	12
A	85-89	11
A-	80-84	10
B+	77-79	9
B	73-76	8
B-	70-72	7

C+	67-69	6
C	63-66	5
C-	60-62	4
D+	57-59	3
D	53-56	2
D-	50-52	1
F	0-49	0

Plagiarism: Plagiarism means passing off someone else's words or ideas as your own or submitting the same work in two different academic contexts (self-plagiarism). The consequences of plagiarism are severe and are issued by the Dean and the University Senate. In order to avoid plagiarism, you must correctly attribute the sources of the ideas you pick up from books, the internet, and other people. For additional information, consult the section on Instructional Offenses in the Undergraduate Calendar.

Request for Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). **Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.** After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website (www.carleton.ca/pmc) for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*).

Schedule of Readings

Note: For the first half of the term, up until Fall Break, we will be focusing on theoretical readings about the language of comics (McLeod's *Understanding Comics* and readings from the *Comic Studies Reader*), while simultaneously referring to a range of primary texts, which we will compare and contrast. In addition to the theory chapters listed class-by-class, please immediately read issue #90 of *Fantastic Four* on Comixology (be sure that you are downloading the correct series, as there are multiple series of *Fantastic Four*; you want the one marked 1961-1998). Then, please also start reading the larger graphic novels by Hergé, the Tamakis, and Miller (see below). We will be working with these 4 texts extensively throughout the first half of the term. We will also be adding single issues (available on Comixology.com), here and there, throughout this period, so look carefully at the readings for each day (comics by Eisner, Moore, Steranko, Hernandez, Gaiman, Fraction, DeConnick, Claremont, and Wilson). Please have the graphic novels by Hergé, the Tamakis, and Miller completed by September 21st. Your first major assignment will be to produce a close reading of part or all of one of these texts.

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| Thursday, Sept. 7 | Introduction to the Course / Reading Comics Personal Bibliography and Reflection |
| Tuesday, Sept. 12 | Reading Comics: Personal Bibliography and Reflections (discussion)
Lee, Stan and Jack Kirby, <i>Fantastic Four</i> (1961-1998) #90 (Comixology)
Hergé, <i>The Adventures of Tintin King Ottokar's Sceptre</i> (start reading...)
Tamaki, Mariko and Jillian Tamaki. <i>This One Summer</i> (start reading...)
Miller, Frank, Klaus Jansen, and Lynn Varley, <i>Batman: The Dark Knight Returns</i> #1 (Comixology) (start reading...) |
| Thursday, Sept. 14 | What Are Comics? Challenges of Definition
McLeod, <i>Understanding Comics</i> , Chapter 1 "Setting the Record Straight"
Groensteen, Thierry. "The Impossible Definition," <i>CSR</i> 124-31. |
| Tuesday, Sept. 19 | What Were Comics? Historical Considerations
McLeod, <i>Understanding Comics</i> , Chapter 1 "Setting the Record Straight"
Kunzle, "Rodolphe Töpffer's Aesthetic Revolution," <i>CSR</i> 17-24.
Harvey, "How Comics Came to Be: Through the Juncture of Word and Image from Magazine Gag Cartoons to Newspaper Strips, Tools for Critical Appreciation plus Rare Seldom Witnessed Historical Facts," <i>CSR</i> 25-45. |
| Thursday, Sept. 21 | The Vocabulary of Comics
McLeod, <i>Understanding Comics</i> , Chapter 2 "The Vocabulary of Comics"
Lee, Stan and Jack Kirby, <i>Fantastic Four</i> (1961-1998) #90 (Comixology)
Hergé, <i>The Adventures of Tintin King Ottokar's Sceptre</i>
Tamaki, Mariko and Jillian Tamaki. <i>This One Summer</i>
Miller, Frank, Klaus Jansen, and Lynn Varley, <i>Batman: The Dark Knight Returns</i> #1 (Comixology) |

- Tuesday, Sept. 26 **What Happened? Action and Meaning**
 McLeod, *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 3 “Blood in the Gutter”
 Lee, Stan and Jack Kirby, *Fantastic Four* (1961-1998) #90 (Comixology)
 Hergé, *The Adventures of Tintin King Ottokar’s Sceptre*
 Tamaki, Mariko and Jillian Tamaki. *This One Summer*
 Miller, Frank, Klaus Jansen, and Lynn Varley, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* #1 (Comixology)
- Thursday, Sept. 28 **Time and Space**
 McLeod, *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 4 “Time Frames” (Comixology)
 Eisner, Will, *The Spirit* #485: Ten Minutes (Comixology)
 Eisner, Will, *The Spirit* #446: Two Lives (Comixology)
 Lee, Stan and Jack Kirby, *Fantastic Four* (1961-1998) #90 (Comixology)
 Hergé, *The Adventures of Tintin King Ottokar’s Sceptre*
 Tamaki, Mariko and Jillian Tamaki. *This One Summer*
 Miller, Frank, Klaus Jansen, and Lynn Varley, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* #1 (Comixology)
- Tuesday, Oct. 3 **Style and Expression: Line and Colour**
 McLeod, *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 5 “Living in Line” and Chapter 8
 “A Word About Color”
 Lee, Stan and Jack Kirby, *Fantastic Four* (1961-1998) #90 (Comixology)
 Hergé, *The Adventures of Tintin King Ottokar’s Sceptre*
 Moore, Alan, John Totleben, and Steve Bisette, *Swamp Thing* (1982-
 1996) #34 (Comixology)
 Miller, Frank, Klaus Jansen, and Lynn Varley, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* #1 (Comixology)
- Thursday, Oct. 5 **Interactions of Word and Image**
 McLeod, *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 6 “Show and Tell”
 Lee, Stan and Jack Kirby, *Fantastic Four* (1961-1998) #90 (Comixology)
 Hergé, *The Adventures of Tintin King Ottokar’s Sceptre*
 Tamaki, Mariko and Jillian Tamaki. *This One Summer*
 Moore, Alan, John Totleben, and Steve Bisette, *Swamp Thing* (1982-
 1996) #34 (Comixology)
 Miller, Frank, Klaus Jansen, and Lynn Varley, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* #1 (Comixology)
- Tuesday, Oct. 10 **The System of Comics**
 McLeod, *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 9 “Putting It All Together”
 Hatfield, Charles. “The Art of Tensions,” *CSR* 132-48.
 Witek, Joseph. “The Arrow and the Grid,” *CSR* 149-56.
 LeFèvre, Pascal. “The Construction of Space in Comics,” *CSR* 157-62.

Steranko, Jim. *Nick Fury: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* (1968-71) #1

Thursday, Oct. 12

Analyzing Comics

Benson, John, David Kasakove, and Art Spiegelman, "An Examination of 'Master Race,'" *CSR* 288-305.

Hernandez, Jaime. "Flies on the Ceiling" (ARES)

Eisner, Will, *The Spirit* #404: Life Below (Comixology)

DeConnick, Kelly Sue and Valentine De Landro, *Bitch Planet* #1

Tuesday, Oct. 17

Analyzing Comics

Fraction, Matt and David Aja. *Hawkeye* (2012-2015) #11 ("Then Came Barney") (Comixology)

Gaiman, Neil, Kelley Jones, and Malcolm Jones III. *The Sandman* #18 ("A Dream of a Thousand Cats") (Comixology)

Thursday, Oct. 19

Comics, Art, Meaning, and Value

Barks, Carl, Uncle Scrooge: "The Secret of Atlantis" and "Tralla La" (ARES)

Andrae, Thomas, "The Garden in the Machine," *CSR* 270-87

McLeod, *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 7 "The Six Steps"

Groensteen, Thierry. "Why Are Comics Still in Search of Cultural Legitimation?" *CSR* 3-12.

FALL BREAK

Tuesday, Oct. 31

****Short Comic Analysis Due****

Single-Panel "Gag" Cartoons

Selections to be distributed from *The New Yorker*, Bil Keane's *Family Circus*, Gary Larson's *Far Side*, Dan Piraro's *Bizarro*, and others

Thursday, Nov. 2

Newspaper Strips

Schultz, Charles. *The Complete Peanuts Vol. 8: 1965-1966* (Comixology)

Inge, M. Thomas. "Two Boys from the Twin Cities," *CSR* 94-100

Schulz, Charles M. "Developing a Comic Strip" (ARES)

Tuesday, Nov. 7

Newspaper Strips

Schultz, Charles. *The Complete Peanuts Vol. 8: 1965-1966* (Comixology)

Spiegelman, Art. "Abstract Thought is a Warm Puppy" (ARES)

Ware, Chris. "Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Linus, Lucy..." (ARES)

Seth. "Good Grief!" (ARES)

Thursday, Nov. 9

Crime and Horror Comics and Comics Censorship

Wertham, Fredric, "Excerpt from *Seduction of the Innocent*," *CSR* 53-57

Nyberg, Amy Kiste, "William Gaines and the Battle over EC Comics," *CSR* 58-68

Feldstein, Al and Jack Kamen, "The Neat Job" (ARES)

Feldstein, Al and Jack Kamen, "Split Second!" (ARES)

Tuesday, Nov. 14

Superheroes

Coogan, Peter, "The Definition of the Superhero," *CSR* 77-93

Lee, Stan, Steve Ditko, Tom DeFalco, Ron Frenz, *Amazing Spider-Man* (1963-1998) #275 (Comixology)

Thomas, Roy and John Buscema, *Avengers* (1963-1996) #60 (Comixology)

Wilson, G. Willow and Adrian Alphona, *Ms. Marvel* (2014-15) #1-2 (Comixology)

Claremont, Chris, and Brent Anderson, *Marvel Graphic Novel #5: X-Men: God Loves, Man Kills* (Comixology)

Thursday, Nov. 16

Superheroes

Moore, Alan and Dave Gibbons. *Watchmen* (Chapters 1-4)

Tuesday, Nov. 21

Superheroes

Moore, Alan and Dave Gibbons. *Watchmen* (Chapters 5-8)

Thursday, Nov. 23

Superheroes

Moore, Alan and Dave Gibbons. *Watchmen* (Chapters 9-12)

Tuesday, Nov. 28

Graphic Memoir

Spiegelman, *Maus*, vol. I

Chute, Hillary, "History and Graphic Representation in *Maus*," *CSR* 340-62

Thursday, Nov. 30

Graphic Memoir

Spiegelman, *Maus*, vols. I & II

Tuesday, Dec. 5

Graphic Memoir

Spiegelman, *Maus*, vol. II

Thursday, Dec. 7

****Final Project Due****

Exam Review

Dec. 10-22

Final Examination Period. Exams are held all seven days of the week.

Exam Schedule will be posted later in the term at carleton.ca.

Reading Comics: Personal Bibliography and Reflection (TWO PAGES)

My Comics, Then and Now

MY COMICS THEN

1. Name 5-10 of the **earliest** comics you remember reading and enjoying. “Comics” in this context can mean comic books (Archie, Batman, Richie Rich, X-Men, American Splendor, Love and Rockets, etc.), newspaper strips (Calvin and Hobbes, Doonesbury, Peanuts, Garfield), webcomics (Diesel Sweeties, The Order of the Stick, The Perry Bible Fellowship), single panel “gag” comics (Family Circus, The Far Side, New Yorker cartoons), etc.

_____	_____
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2. Write a short autobiographical reflection on what you liked or didn't like about reading comics when you were younger. Did comic reading form part of a daily or weekly ritual for you? Was it essentially a private experience, or a social one? Were there any comics that especially stood out to you as special or meaningful for some reason?

(please turn over the page for part 2 of the assignment) →

MY COMICS NOW

3. a. Do you currently read comics and/or graphic novels for pleasure? YES NO
- b. If so, where do you typically obtain them? (bookstore, digitally, comic specialty store, etc.)
4. If you currently read comics and/or graphic novels, name 5-10 that you hold in high regard. Select a couple of these and briefly comment on what about them you find engaging.
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5. If you currently read comics, what genres or styles of comics do you most enjoy reading? (eg. superhero, manga, autobiography/memoir, non-fiction, science fiction, fantasy, horror, romance, underground/alternative, newspaper strips, webcomics, gag cartoons (one panel), etc.
6. If you read them, what you most enjoy about the comics you read today? How does the experience of reading comics and graphic novels as an adult differ from your earlier reading of comics. (If you do not read comics today, reflect instead on what has drawn you to a course that studies comics in university).

Thank you. Please hand this in at the end of the class..