

Carleton University
Fall 2018
Department of English

ENGL 3011A: Comics and Graphic Novels

Prerequisite(s): third-year standing or permission of the department

Wednesday and Friday / 2:35 p.m.-3:55pm

Location: 280 University Center

confirm meeting place on Carleton Central prior to the first class

Instructor: B. Johnson

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Office: 1917 Dunton Tower

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

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.

Course Objectives

This course will help you develop an introductory knowledge of the language of comics and give you significant practice at interpreting, analyzing, and writing about comics and graphic novels. Although its emphasis is formalist rather than historical, the course will also help you develop an introductory knowledge of the cultural history of American comics and of some of the questions and debates that inform comic studies as an academic field.

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*

Seth, *It's a Good Life If You Don't Weaken*

Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, *Watchmen* (also available on Comixology)

Frank Miller, Klaus Janson, and Lynn Varley, *The Dark Knight Returns* (also available on Comixology)

Additional required texts are listed in the schedule of readings below. Some additional critical readings will be made available on ARES as well. All of this material is examinable.

Method of Evaluation

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

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

***The final exam and airplane ticket bookings:** The final exam period is December 9-21 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 22, 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
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Plagiarism: The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- ☐ reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- ☐ submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- ☐ using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- ☐ using another’s data or research findings;
- ☐ failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- ☐ handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

The policy can be found at: <http://carleton.ca/fass/wp-content/uploads/Academic-Integrity-Sept-2017.pdf>

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

Please contact your instructor 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, visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

Religious obligation

Please contact your instructor 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, visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.

carleton.ca/pmc

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and is survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor 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. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

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 (McCloud'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. 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.

Schedule of Readings

Wed, Sept. 5

Introduction to the Course

Fri, Sept. 7

“You’re Studying Comics?” Challenges of Definition and Legitimization

Groensteen, Thierry, “Why Are Comics Still in Search of Cultural Legitimization?,”

CSR 3-11.

McLeod, *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 1 “Setting the Record Straight”
Groensteen, Thierry. “The Impossible Definition,” CSR 124-31.

Wed, Sept. 12

What Were Comics? Historical Considerations

McLeod, *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 1 “Setting the Record Straight”
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,” CSR 25-45.

Fri, Sept. 14

The Vocabulary of Comics

McLeod, *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 2 “The Vocabulary of Comics”
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)

Wed, Sept. 19

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)

Fri, Sept. 21

Time and Space

McLeod, *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 4 “Time Frames” (Comixology)
Eisner, Will, *The Spirit* #485: Ten Minutes (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)

Wed, Sept. 26

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 Bissette, *Swamp Thing* (1982-
1996) #34 (Comixology)
Miller, Frank, Klaus Jansen, and Lynn Varley, *Batman: The Dark Knight
Returns* #1 (Comixology)

- Fri, Sept. 28 **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 Bissette, *Swamp Thing* (1982-1996) #34 (Comixology)
 Miller, Frank, Klaus Jansen, and Lynn Varley, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* #1 (Comixology)
- Wed, Oct. 3 **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 (Comixology)
- Fri, Oct. 5 **Analyzing Comics**
 Eisner, Will, *The Spirit* #404: Life Below (Comixology)
 DeConnick, Kelly Sue and Valentine De Landro, *Bitch Planet* #1 (Comixology)
 Darcy, Dame, *Meat Cake* #1 (Comixology)
- Wed, Oct. 10 **Analyzing Comics**
 Hernandez, Jaime. “Flies on the Ceiling” (ARES)
 Woodring, Jim, “Frank Acquires Pupshaw” (ARES)
- Fri, Oct. 12 **Analyzing Comics**
 Barks, Carl, Uncle Scrooge: “The Secret of Atlantis” and “Tralla La” (ARES)
 Andrae, Thomas, “The Garden in the Machine,” *CSR* 270-87
- Wed, Oct. 17 **Analyzing Comics**
 Benson, John, David Kasakove, and Art Spiegelman, “An Examination of ‘Master Race,’” *CSR* 288-305.
 Chute, Hillary, “History and Graphic Representation in *Maus*,” *CSR* 340-62. from *MAUS*, vols. I and II (ARES)
- Fri, Oct. 19 **Analyzing Comics**
 Schultz, Charles M., selections from *Peanuts* (will be distributed)
 Inge, M. Thomas. “Two Boys from the Twin Cities,” *CSR* 94-100
 Schulz, Charles M. “Developing a Comic Strip” (ARES)

FALL BREAK

Wed, Oct. 31	<p>New Yorker Cartoons</p> <p>Selections to be distributed from <i>The New Yorker</i></p> <p>**Short Comic Analysis Due**</p>
Fri, Nov. 2	Seth, <i>It's a Good Life If You Don't Weaken</i>
Wed, Nov. 7	Seth, <i>It's a Good Life If You Don't Weaken</i>
Fri, Nov. 9	Class attends Alootook Ipellie exhibition tour at CUAG
Wed, Nov. 14	<p>Ipellie, Alootook, selected political cartoons:</p> <p>http://digitalcollections.stlawu.edu/collections/inuit-art/bycreator/Ipellie,%20Alootook</p> <p>Ipellie, Alootook, from <i>Arctic Dreams and Nightmares</i> (ARES)</p>
Fri, Nov. 16	<p>Reading Genre: Superheroes</p> <p>Coogan, Peter, "The Definition of the Superhero," <i>CSR</i> 77-93</p> <p>Eco, Umberto, "The Myth of Superman" (ARES)</p> <p>Siegel, Jerry and Joe Shuster, <i>Action Comics</i> (1938-2011) #1</p> <p>Binder, Otto, Dick Sprang, Stan Kaye, and Curt Swan, <i>Superman</i> (1939-2011) #123</p> <p>Kanigher, Robert, Ross Andru, and Mike Esposito, <i>Wonder Woman</i> (1942-1986) # 115</p> <p>Fox, Gardner, Mike Friedrich, Dennis O'Neil, Neal Adams, <i>Batman</i> (1940-2011) #234</p> <p>O'Neil, Dennis and Neal Adams, <i>Batman</i> (1940-2011) #251</p> <p>Lee, Stan, Steve Ditko, Tom DeFalco, Ron Frenz, <i>Amazing Spider-Man</i> (1963-1998) #275 (Comixology)</p> <p>Lee, Stan, and Jack Kirby, <i>The Incredible Hulk</i> (1962-1999) #1</p>
Wed, Nov. 21	<p>Bukatman, Scott, "X-Bodies" (ARES)</p> <p>Fawaz, Ramzi, from <i>The New Mutants</i> (ARES)</p> <p>Friedrich, Garry and John Romita Sr., <i>Captain America</i> (1968-1996) #143 (Comixology)</p> <p>Thomas, Roy and John Buscema, <i>Avengers</i> (1963-1996) #58 (Comixology)</p> <p>Conway, Gerry, John Buscema, and Joe Sinnott, <i>Ms. Marvel</i> (1977-1979) #1 (Comixology)</p> <p>Claremont, Chris and Paul Smith, <i>The Uncanny X-Men</i> (1963-2011) #169 (Comixology)</p> <p>Claremont, Chris and John Romita Jr., <i>The Uncanny X-Men</i> (1963-2011) #200 (Comixology)</p> <p>Wilson, G. Willow and Adrian Alphona, <i>Ms. Marvel</i> (2014-15) #1-2 (Comixology)</p>

Fri, Nov. 23	Lopes, Paul, from <i>Demanding Respect</i> (ARES) Miller, Frank, Klaus Janson, and Lynn Varley, <i>Batman: The Dark Knight Returns</i> #1, 2, 3, and 4 (Comixology; can be purchased as a collected edition).
Wed, Nov. 28	Moore, Alan and Dave Gibbons. <i>Watchmen</i> (Chapters 1-4)
Fri, Nov. 30	Moore, Alan and Dave Gibbons. <i>Watchmen</i> (Chapters 5-8)
Wed, Dec. 5	Moore, Alan and Dave Gibbons. <i>Watchmen</i> (Chapters 9-12)
Fri, Dec. 7	**Final Project Due** Exam Review
Dec. 9-21	Final Examination Period. Exams are held all seven days of the week. Exam Schedule will be posted later in the term at carleton.ca