



DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS

COURSE OUTLINE – ID 2020

Interdisciplinary Topics in Contemporary Media: Comic Books

INSTRUCTOR: Edward Bader
OFFICE: L217

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OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday and Thursdays: 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. by appointment.

PREREQUISITE(S)/COREQUISITE: None

REQUIRED TEXT BOOKS/RESOURCE MATERIALS:

The Power of Comics: History, Form and Culture, Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith, 2009. \$32.00

Understanding Comics, Scott McCloud, 1994. \$20.00

The Best of the Spirit, Will Eisner, DC Comics, 2005. Cost \$15.00

Watchmen by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, DC Comics, 1995. \$20.00

Black Hole by Charles Burns, 2008. \$22.00

Blankets by Craig Thompson, 2003,

The Sandman: Dream Country- Vol. 3, by Neil Gaiman, 1994, \$25.00

Scott Pilgrim Vol.1 by Bryan Lee O'Malley, 2004. Cost \$15.00

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION:

The course uses an interdisciplinary approach to explore on a rotating basis various topics that examine the relationship between various forms of mass media and popular culture, e.g. communication media, novels, comic books, films, video games, music videos and the internet. Course content will vary on a yearly basis depending upon student interest and the availability of faculty and expertise.

CREDIT/CONTACT HOURS: 3(0-0-3) 45 Hours

DELIVERY MODE(S): Lecture/Lab

OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES:

This course will offer a broad understanding of the medium of comic books and provide students with a coherent and comprehensive explanation of comic books, graphic novels, including coverage of their history, their communication techniques, research into their meanings and effects, the industry practices and the fan culture.

TRANSFERABILITY: University of Calgary

**** Grade of D or D+ may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability.**

GRADING CRITERIA:

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING:

Mid-term Exam: 20% Grade **TBA.**

Final: 20% Grade based on final exam **TBA.**

Comic Book Responses: 10% Grade: **Ongoing**

Class Presentations: 10% Grade: **Ongoing**

Research Paper/Comic Book: 30% Grade Due: Tuesday, April 10th, 2012

Involvement: 10% grade based on participation and class attendance.

You may choose for the major project of the term between the following:

A. Research Paper:

1500 word type-written double spaced paper that is a historical or critical analysis of some aspect of comic books or comics culture and its role as a mass medium. Possible topics or discuss with your instructor a possible topic:

1. What role do comics play in contemporary youth culture verses comics' historical role in the mid-20th century?
2. What has been the impact of "anime" on contemporary youth culture?
3. Since the 1990s the Comics Code Authority Seal of Approval has not been found on most comics. Do you think comics need external

regulation in terms of depictions of violence, race, gender and subject matter?

4. Superhero comics are no longer a mass medium phenomenon but instead the domain of “fan boys”. Do you agree or disagree?

Outline: Thursday January 19th, 2012

Bibliography: Thursday, February 2nd, 2012

First Draft: Tuesday, February 28th, 2012

Final Draft: Tuesday, April 10th, 2012

Comic Book: If you have artistic or literary aspirations you may write and illustrate a 5 page autobiographical black and white comic book that is print ready. You are asked to work in your own style and not appropriate existing styles such as “anime”.

Outline: Thursday January 19th, 2012

Script: Thursday, February 2nd, 2012

Page Thumbnails: Tuesday, February 28th, 2012

Final Comic Book: Tuesday, April 10th, 2012

Comic Book Response Papers

Response Paper:

Should be two to three pages (typed, double-spaced).

You can refer to character traits and actions to support the points you are making, but there is no need to describe all the characters or summarize the plot of the book. Your overall aim is to illuminate how content and form combine to create the substance (meaning) of the work. As the semester progresses and you learn more about these concepts your book responses should become more sophisticated.

Response 1: Visual Analysis: Spirit story by Will Eisner (Written or drawn). Based upon your reading of Scott McLeod’s *Understanding Comics*: Chapters 1 to 5 you are asked to do analysis of how meaning is developed in one of the stories included in this collection. You might consider these questions:

1. What is the meaning/subtext that you derive from this work?

2. How do **layout** (arrangement of panels on the page), **composition** (elements within the panel), **encapsulation** (breaking down the narrative into panels) and **closure** (meaning created by the combination of panels) contribute to the meaning? The language of cinematography is suited to the analysis of panel composition.

3. Are there other reasons why the work is significant?

4. Be cognizant of the material properties of the graphic novel. Its overall design in terms of "its size, shape, paper and binding" may reinforce or work against its content and should be considered.

Visual Analysis:

If you have artistic aspirations or talent you may do a 5 page visual analysis by copying and studying how the artist has laid out the graphic novel.

Provide notes regarding composition, angles, points of view, transitions between pages and scenes.

Response 2: Captain America: Compare the various versions of Captain America from 1940s, 60s and 21st century. How has Captain America been rebooted or adapted over the years to represent the ideals of each time period. (*Graphic Novels will be distributed in class and on reserve in the library*).

Response 3: Compare/Contrast Black Hole and Blankets: Critically examine how these two graphic novels depict adolescence and themes of transformation.

Response 4: Sandman: Dream Country: Discuss how the story *A Midsummer Night's Dream* references the works of William Shakespeare.

Response 5: Compare/Contrast the Comic vs. Movie: Watchmen or Scott Pilgrim Saves the World

Group Presentations:

#1: Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*

You will read Scott Cloud's *Understanding Comics* and be responsible for creating a 10-minute presentation that summarizes the material in the chapter your group has been assigned. You are asked to create a lecture, plus support materials such as handouts summarizing important concepts to be distributed to your classmates.

- Group 1:** Chapter 2 The Vocabulary of Comics
- Group 2:** Chapter 3 Blood in the Gutter
- Group 3:** Chapter 4 Time Frames
- Group 4:** Chapter 5 & 6 Living in Line, Show and Tell
- Group 5:** Chapter 7 The Six Steps

#2: International Comics Presentations:

You will research and present information on comics in other countries. Examine their origins, key features and influence if any have they had on the greater world of comics.

Your presentation should be 10 minutes in length. You should use a minimum of six sources in addition to your textbook. You may not use the Internet for all of these sources. Your topics are visual in nature, so make sure you have plenty of visual support in your presentation. Make a handout for the class (I can copy it and distribute it next class meeting) You should begin your research early, as much of the information is challenging to locate. You will need to consult a minimum of six (6) sources and of these, only a third may come from the internet (e.g., two of six); however, you can consult primary works of the figures among your sources. I will ask you two to submit a working bibliography by the end of the second week of classes to be sure that you are working diligently on this research.

- Group 1:** Canada
- Group 2:** Great Britain
- Group 3:** South East Asia/Indian Comics
- Group 4:** Japan
- Group 5:** France
- Group 6:** Spanish Comics in Old & New World

Individual Presentations:

You will research and present information on an important historical figure in the history of comics and discuss their lives, influences upon their work, their impact and importance to the development of the comics medium or discuss comics in other countries.

Your presentation should be 10 minutes in length. You should use a minimum of six sources in addition to your textbook. You may not use the Internet for all of these sources. Your topics are visual in nature, so make sure you have plenty of visual support in your presentation. Make a handout for the class (I can copy it and distribute it next class meeting) You should begin your research early, as much of the information is challenging

to locate. You will need to consult a minimum of six (6) sources in researching your figure. Of these, only a third may come from the internet (e.g., two of six); however, you can consult primary works of the figures among your sources. I will ask you two to submit a working bibliography by the end of the second week of classes to be sure that you are working diligently on this research.

Topics:

Auteurs:

Will Eisner
Jack Kirby
Harvey Kurtzman
Robert Crumb
Jamie Hernandez
Chris Ware
Osamu Tezuka
Herge
Mebius
Trina Robbins
Art Spiegelman
Frank Miller
Neal Adams
Seth
Julie Doucet
Yoshihiro Tatsumi
Joe Kubert
Neil Gaiman
Alan Moore

EXAMINATIONS:

Mid-term: February 16, 2012

Final: TBA

**LATE ASSIGNMENTS/PAPERS WILL LOSE 10 % FOR EACH DAY
THEY ARE LATE!**

A reminder that when applying for jobs, grants, or other educational institutions if your materials do not arrive by the due date specified they will not be considered. So manage your time well. Also if you complete your

paper ahead of time it allows the instructor an opportunity to provide feedback and improve the quality of your paper.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

Students are expected to take notes from lectures during class as material from lectures will be examined. Note: Lectures will not be posted on Moodle.

You are expected to arrive on time and remain for duration of class and related activities. See GPRC Admissions Guide 2011-12 p. 49.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN THE CLASSROOM:

No IPOD or MP3 players allowed with put permission!!!! You must have your own headphones to listen to music during work periods.

All cell phones must be turned off. Failure to do so will result in you being asked to leave the class.

STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING:

Please refer to page 50 of GPRC Admissions Guide 2011-12 regarding plagiarism, cheating and the resultant penalties. These are serious issues and will be dealt with severely.

COURSE SCHEDULE/TENTATIVE TIMELINE:

Students can expect to put in a minimum of 4 hours per week on out-of-class work. Assignments will be expected on the date required.

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| R Jan 5 | Introduction to the course
Lecture 1: Defining the Comics Medium
Readings: <i>Power of Comics</i> : Chapter 1
<i>Understanding Comics</i> : Chapter 1 |
| T Jan 10 | Research Paper/Comic Book
Lecture 0: Writing about Comic Books
Lecture 2: What are Comics? |
| R Jan 12 | Lecture 3: Comics as Communication
Readings: <i>Understanding Comics</i> : Chapter 2 -6
Bibliography: Auteur/ International Comics Presentation |

- T Jan 17 **Group Presentation: #1: *Understanding Comics***
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- R Jan 19 Lecture 4: Origins of Comics
Readings: *Power of Comics*: Chapter 2
Book Response 1 - Visual Analysis: Spirit
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- T Jan 24 Lecture 5: Comics and Commerce
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- R Jan 26 Lecture 6: The Adventure Strip
Research Paper Outline/Comic Book Outline
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- T Jan 31 Lecture 7: Birth of the Comic Book
Readings: *Power of Comics*: Chapter 10: Comic Book Genres: The Superhero
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- R Feb 2 Lecture 8: Comics of Post WW2 Era
Readings: *Power of Comics*: Chapter 2 and 9 – Genres
Book Response 2 - Compare the various versions of Captain America from 1940s, 60s and 21st century.
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- T Feb 7 Lecture 9: Censorship and The Comics Code Authority
Readings: *Power of Comics*: Chapter 5: The Comic Book Creators
Research Paper Bibliography/Comic Book: Script
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- R Feb 9 **Individual Presentations: Auteurs**
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- T Feb 14 **Individual Presentations: Auteurs**
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- R Feb 16 Mid-term (Material covered will be lectures, readings and presentations).
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- MID-TERM BREAK*
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- T Feb 21 Lecture 10: The Silver Age: Rebirth
Book Response 3 – **Compare/Contrast Black Hole and Blankets**

- R Feb 23 Lecture 11: Mainstream Comics in the 70s.
Readings: *Power of Comics*: Chapter 3: Maturation of a Medium
- T Feb 28 Lecture 12: Underground Comics
Readings: *Power of Comics*: Chapter 4: The Comic Book Industry
Research Paper: First Draft/Comic Book:Thumbnails
- R March 1 Lecture 13: The Direct Market Emerges
Readings: *Power of Comics*: Chapter 13: Comics Cultures around the World
- T March 6 **Group Presentations #2-** International comics
- R March 8 Lecture 14: The Dark Age
 Book Response 4 – **Sandman: Dream Country**
- T March 13 Lecture 15: Alternative Comics and the Graphic Novel
Readings: *Power of Comics*: Chapter 8: The Comic Book Readers
- R March 15 Lecture 16: Fandom and subcultures
Readings: *Power of Comics*: Chapter 6: Creating the Story
- T March 20 Lecture 17: Creating Comics
 Book Response 5 – **Sandman: Dream Country**
Readings: *Power of Comics*: Chapter 7: Experiencing the Story
- R March 22 Lecture 18: Experiencing Comics
- T March 27 Lecture 19: Comics and Movies
- T March 29 **Watchmen** Screening
- R April 3 **Scott Pilgrim** Screening
Readings: *Power of Comics*: Chapter 12 – Researching Comics
- T April 5 Lecture 20: Comics as Cultural Artifacts
 Book Response 5 – **Compare/Contrast the Comic vs. Movie**

R April 10 **Research Paper: Final Draft/Comic Book: Final Version due**
 Class presentation on research/ critique on comic book

T April 12 Lecture 21: Review for final

TBA Final Exam

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL COLLEGE			
GRADING CONVERSION CHART			
Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines	Designation
A ⁺	4.0	90 – 100	EXCELLENT
A	4.0	85 – 89	
A ⁻	3.7	80 – 84	FIRST CLASS STANDING
B ⁺	3.3	77 – 79	
B	3.0	73 – 76	GOOD
B ⁻	2.7	70 – 72	
C ⁺	2.3	67 – 69	SATISFACTORY
C	2.0	63 – 66	
C ⁻	1.7	60 – 62	
D ⁺	1.3	55 – 59	MINIMAL PASS
D	1.0	50 – 54	
F	0.0	0 – 49	FAIL
WF	0.0	0	FAIL, withdrawal after the deadline