

Graphic Novels & Comic Books Syllabus

Instructor: Stephanie Iasiello

Reforming Arts, Inc. Monday 4th Track Winter Quarter 2018

“When you look at a photo or realistic drawing of a face, you see it as the face of another. But when you enter the world of the cartoon, you see yourself.”

– Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*

“Graphic novels are not traditional literature, but that does not mean they are second-rate. Images are a way of writing. When you have the talent to be able to write and to draw, it seems a shame to choose one. I think it's better to do both.”

– Marjane Satrapi

Course Description: This course is an exploration of graphic storytelling designed to give you many opportunities to practice your critical thinking and writing skills. We will do this by engaging with different types of what Scott McCloud refers to as “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence,” in other words, comic books and graphic novels. We will look at this form in relation to other more familiar literary forms such as the novel, poem and play to ask the question “what possibilities are afforded by graphic storytelling that are not possible in other forms?”

Learning Outcomes:

Rhetorical Knowledge: You will learn how audience, purpose, genre, and content shape the meaning and effectiveness of all writing and literature, specifically graphic storytelling.

Critical Reading, Thinking, and Writing: You will learn to use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating. You will learn how to integrate your original ideas with the ideas of others.

Genre: You will develop an understanding of how form and content interact to generate meaning.

Required Texts:

- McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (selections provided)
- Butler, Octavia. *Kindred*
- Butler, Octavia & John Jennings. *Kindred: A Graphic Novel Adaptation*
- Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*
- Satrapi, Marjane. *The Complete Persepolis*
- Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*.
- Moore, Alan and Dave Gibbons. *Watchmen*.
- Ware, Chris. *Jimmy Corrigan, The Smartest Kid on Earth*.

Copies will be provided of supplemental readings

REFORMING ARTS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Philosophy on Education and Learning: Each instructor and participant is respected as both teacher and a learner. The students participating in this class are seen as experts of their own lives who will develop their own solutions to problems as they define them, not as passive participants needing to be “saved” by the instructor.

Anti-Racism/Sexism/Classism/Ageism/Heteronormism/Ableism: Reforming Arts does not support oppression. Therefore, this curriculum is infused with ideology that recognizes the inherent dignity and equality of every person. No one is considered superior or inferior to anyone else on the basis of race, sex, gender identity, economic class, age, religious beliefs, sexuality, physical or mental characteristics, education level, or criminal justice classification. Therefore, participants are encouraged to enter into discussions with an open mind and to listen to each other. An important part of maintaining such an environment is the commitment to protect the health and safety of every member of the class. Belligerent, abusive, profane, threatening and/or inappropriate behavior on the part of students is a violation of this policy. Students who engage in behavior that threatens the safe space of our classroom may be subject to immediate dismissal from the class/program.

Lock Down: If a student misses a class because she was in lockdown, she will be required to provide a two page explanation of how her actions contributed to being locked up before returning to class. A student who receives a DR because of violence will be removed from the roster and required to reapply to the program.

CLASS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

First and foremost, this is YOUR class and as such I want you to feel ownership of it. I welcome open and honest feedback at any time and am willing to make reasonable modifications to class content and operations to better serve the needs of the students. Please talk to me if at any point you would like to see changes to the structure of the course.

Class sessions will consist of lectures, class discussions, film screenings & in-class assignments.

Attendance

- You are expected to come to every class. More than two unexcused or three excused absences will result in a participation rather than completion certificate for the class.
- If you miss class, it is **YOUR** responsibility to find out what you missed. I suggest you trade name and contact information with a class member to provide you with information on what you missed, but it is not their responsibility to get the information to you.
- **Please let me know—as soon as possible—if you will miss class.**

Missed Assignments

- Missed in-class assignments and activities **may not** be made up.
- Missed homework\written assignments due to an absence will not be made up without prior arrangements or an excused absence (medical condition or court appearance, for example). Homework is due on the assigned date whether or not you are in class.
- The instructor may choose to create new assignments and tests for students eligible for makeup work.
- All assignments must be completed and submitted in order to receive a completion certificate.

Disability Issues: If you have any form of disability or impairment and need any special assistance, please let me know at the beginning of the semester. I cannot help you if you do not talk to me. I assure you that anything you tell me in confidence will remain in confidence.

Final Notes:

- Arrive **on time** and stay until dismissal.
- Bring your **textbook** and notebook to every class.
- Come to class **prepared** to take notes, participate in the discussion, and complete activities/assignments.
- No **sleeping** or heads on the desk.
- **Engage!** Be an active learner.
- **Be respectful of your instructor and classmates and remain open to diverse perspectives. We are all different and we are all learning!**
- Be a courteous listener and present your ideas in a way that shows respect for your colleagues.
- Read the assigned material and be prepared to participate.
- **Keep copies of all your written work.**

COURSE COMPONENTS

Weekly Response Papers: Each week I would like a written response of 2-3 pages for the assigned readings for that week. The response can be an informal reaction to the readings, a formal analysis of the readings, as well as questions you would like to discuss in class.

Class participation: I take this very seriously. Please review the criteria below. The quality of the course depends on your active and engaged participation:

“**A**”: Demonstrates excellent preparation: has analyzed reading exceptionally well, relating it to other material (e.g., readings, lecture, course material, discussions, experiences, etc.).

Offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of reading (e.g., puts together pieces of discussion and lecture to develop new approaches that take the class further).

Contributes significantly to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused, responds very thoughtfully to other students’ comments, contributes to cooperative argument building, suggests alternative ways of approaching material and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate, etc. Demonstrates active involvement daily.

“B”: Demonstrates good preparation: knows reading well, has thought through implications of reading. Offers interpretations and analysis (more than just the facts) to class. Contributes well to discussion in an ongoing way: responds to other students' points, thinks through own points, questions others constructively, offers and supports suggestions that may be counter to majority opinion. Demonstrates consistent, ongoing involvement.

“C”: Demonstrates adequate preparation: knows basic reading facts, but does not show evidence of interpretation or analysis.

Does not offer to contribute to discussion but contributes to a moderate degree when called on.

Demonstrates sporadic involvement.

“D” Present, not disruptive.

Tries to respond when called on but little response.

Any response is frequently a summary or appropriation of what instructor said in class.

Demonstrates infrequent involvement in discussion or tries to make up lost discussion ground by monologuing.

“F”: Absent frequently and thus unable to contribute.

Final Presentations and Projects: Each student will submit a final project at the end of the quarter. You will have 2 options:

- 1) Write a 10 page traditional literary analysis paper on one of the texts that we covered.
- 2) Write and design your own graphic story

Along with this you will be required to present your final project/paper in the final class session.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated based on the quality and effort demonstrated in the weekly reflections, class discussion, final presentations, and final project. Each student is encouraged to put serious and consistent effort into the class by reading slowly and often. A certificate of completion will be given to each student at the end of the quarter that has demonstrated an understanding of the materials, has turned in all assignments, and meets the attendance requirement. Certificates of completion count for 2 hours of credit within Reforming Arts' internal tally. A certificate of participation will be given to students who do not meet all requirements but shows effort. Certificates of participation do not carry any credit hours and students will be expected to repeat the course.

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Course Calendar

This calendar is tentative and may be amended. You will be notified of any changes.

Date	Main Topic	Readings* Due	Assignments Due
1/8	Introductions Review Syllabus Scott McCloud TED Talk		
1/15	MLK Day - No class		
1/22	Introduction to the graphic storytelling form	Scott McCloud <i>Understanding Comics</i> (Selections) Roger Sabin "What is a Comic"	Analyzing a Comic Book Essay Due Today
1/29	<i>Kindred</i> What is the difference between a novel and a graphic novel?	<i>Kindred</i> (Selections) Kindred: A Graphic Novel Adaptation - Part I	Response Paper
2/5	<i>Kindred</i> What is the difference between a novel and a graphic novel?	<i>Kindred</i> (Selections) Kindred: A Graphic Novel Adaptation - Part I	Response Paper
2/12	<i>Maus: A Survivor's Tale</i>	<i>Maus: A Survivor's Tale</i>	Response Paper
2/19	<i>The Complete Persepolis</i>	<i>The Complete Persepolis</i>	Response Paper
2/26	<i>Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic</i> Selections from the musical adaptation	<i>Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic</i>	Response Paper
3/05	<i>Watchmen</i>	<i>Watchmen</i>	Response Paper
3/12	<i>The Smartest Kid on Earth</i>	<i>The Smartest Kid on Earth</i>	Response Paper
3/19	Final Presentations		Final Projects & 2 Page self-evaluation

- All assigned readings are expected to be completed before class on the day we will be discussing them. Be prepared to discuss the readings when you come to class. This schedule is tentative and subject to change.

- **Self Evaluation:** On the last day of class, please come with a 2-3 page written self-evaluation. This is an opportunity for you to tell me how you think you did throughout the course as well as give feedback on the course itself (things you think went

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well, things you would like to see change in future courses). This is primarily a space for honest reflection.