

ENGLISH 251 - The Graphic Novel

fall 2020

syllabus v5.0

Instructor: Dr. Darren Wershler

Department of English, LB 653-04

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synchronous meetings: Wednesdays 8:45 AM - 10:00 AM

office hours (virtual): Wednesdays 10 AM - 11 AM

Description

This course examines both literary and popular antecedents to the graphic novel, the variety of its forms, and its status in contemporary literature. Students are introduced to critical approaches that can take account of both verbal and visual aspects of the graphic novel.

Objectives

1. Introduce literary students to key concepts in contemporary comics studies in order to enable them to think critically about the term "graphic novel" and the objects to which it might apply (as opposed to comics in general)
2. Learn the historical roles of comics creators, readers, fans, collectors, reviewers, publishers, critics, distributors, retailers and other agents in the accreditation of comics as graphic novels
3. Learn how to write reflectively, critically and collaboratively about comics and graphic novels in a networked digital environment

Course Requirements

Group Work (40%)

15-20 minutes of every class will consist of group work. During this time, the groups work in breakout rooms on Moodle to respond to a discussion question I pose during the beginning of synchronous class meetings. You will be randomly assigned to a group of 7 or 8 students with your classmates. Please see the separate specifications documents for each assignment. Group work consists of the following elements:

Group Reports (20%)

Each week, the group will pick a different recording secretary to transcribe and organize the group's ideas. On November 20, the group will submit its four best examples for grading. (4 x 5% = 20%)

4 BEST GROUP REPORTS DUE DATE: November 27

Zoom Presentations to Class (10%)

Each week from September 30 - November 18 (inclusive), I will pick two or three groups to respond to the discussion question over Zoom. Each group secretary's presentation will be about 5 minutes in duration, and each group will present twice during the term. (2 x 5% = 10%)

Peer Assessment (10%)

After group presentations end, all members of each group will perform an assessment of the contributions of the other members of their group to their collective efforts. These assessments are private and will follow a standardized form. (10%)

PEER ASSESSMENTS DUE DATE: November 27

Individual Work (60%)

Individual work happens over the course of the term. Some items have both a regular deadline and an early "bonus" submission date (see below); if you hand your work in by the earlier date, you receive a bonus of 1% per item. Please see the separate specifications documents for each assignment. Individual work consists of the following items:

Annotated Graphic Novel Page (10%)

This assignment requires you to make an image of a graphic novel page or two-page spread (via screen capture or photograph) from any graphic novel on the syllabus and to provide a close reading of it via an annotated description. You can either use software to place your annotations directly on the image or provide

a separate text document containing your annotations. You will do this twice over the term. (2 x 5% = 10%)

ANNOTATION 1 EARLY BONUS DUE DATE: October 9 (+1%)

ANNOTATION 1 DUE DATE: October 23

ANNOTATION 2 EARLY BONUS DUE DATE: November 6 (+1%)

ANNOTATION 2 DUE DATE: November 20

Blog Posts (15%)

Each week from September 30 - November 18 (inclusive), every student will post a 250-300 word consideration of the graphic novel for that week in terms of the critical readings that that class has conducted up to that point. Each student will write a total of 8 blog posts and choose their best 3 for grading. (3 x 5% = 15%)

WEEKLY BLOG POST DUE DATE: Friday mornings

3 BEST BLOG POSTS DUE DATE: November 27

Graphic Novel Review and Recommendation (10%)

This assignment requires you to select a graphic novel of your choice that is not on the syllabus, and review it in 500-600 words of text or 5 minutes of video, including an explanation of why you recommend it.

GRAPHIC NOVEL RECOMMENDATION EARLY BONUS DUE DATE: October 9

GRAPHIC NOVEL RECOMMENDATION DUE DATE: October 23

Final Paper

The final paper will be an expansion of your best blog post into a 1500 word/6 page paper.

FINAL PAPER EARLY BONUS DUE DATE: December 2

FINAL PAPER DUE DATE: December 9

Late Submission Policy

All work is due to be submitted electronically via Moodle at 8:45 AM on the specified due date. Submissions will be locked at that point, stamping all subsequent submissions as Late. All Late submissions are worth zero, with the following exception.

Each student receives two "tokens" each term. Each token is worth exactly one Late day (so one assignment can be two days late, or two assignments can be one day Late). You can apply them to any individual

assignment that is Late by submitting your completed assignment to Moodle as usual for a time stamp, and then notifying me directly that you wish to use a token or tokens.

Course Materials

There are many ways to obtain the graphic novels for this course. If you choose electronic editions, see the notes on each title (below) to ensure you have the correct editions.

PRINT EDITIONS: Most of these books are available in print copies from The Concordia Bookstore, or you can buy them used from the retailer of your choice. The advantage of buying them through Concordia is the potential to sell them back to the store after the course is over.

DIGITAL EDITIONS: Many of the books on this course are available in several digital formats. Ensure that you select a format supported by your electronic devices.

Julie Doucet's *My New York Diary* is available in paperback only, from any source.

Seth's *The Great Northern Brotherhood of Canadian Cartoonists* is a special case, because we will be talking explicitly about its print format. I *strongly* suggest that you buy it as a print textbook, or you may not be able to complete the assignment that focuses on it.

CRITICAL READINGS: Critical readings are available from the library reserve page associated with this course.

A Note on Amazon, Kindle, Comixology and MadeFire

Part of what we will be studying is the differences that medium and format make, so in most cases, you can choose which medium and format suits your textbook needs best. In most cases, the digital editions will be cheaper than the print ones. Prices differ on Kindle and Comixology, and they change regularly, so for titles that are available on both platforms, compare before you buy to get the best price.

In order to purchase digital editions *from either Amazon or Comixology*, you will need to make an Amazon.ca account with a credit card attached to it.

Concordia's Ed Tech Guidelines do not require institutional approval for a third-party technology to be used in teaching and learning, and they no longer put the onus on the professor to provide an alternative learning activity for students who opt-out of using a technology. If you decide to sign up with Amazon.ca and its subsidiary, Comixology.com, the sites will ask you to agree to their Terms and Conditions (TOC) as part of their regular registration and sign-in procedures. *If you disagree with the TOC of these sites due to privacy*

concerns or for any other reason, you can choose not to use them. Note, though, that opting out of the use of these technologies triggers a responsibility on your part (as the student), to work with me (the professor) to find an acceptable way for you to meet the requirements of the course. This can include you buying a print copy, borrowing a copy from a library or friend, or looking for other strategies to protect your privacy while using the technology.

In order to use the Kindle and/or Comixology reader apps, you need to have an Amazon profile, with a credit card associated with that profile. Buy your Kindle e-books inside the Amazon.ca site, and then you can sync them with a free Kindle e-reader app on your iOS or Android device, Mac, or PC as you choose. You do not need to use a Kindle device, but can do so if you have access to one.

You also need to have an Amazon profile to use the Comixology app. Sign in to Comixology.com with your Amazon profile. Comixology will then ask you if you would like to share your Amazon profile information and credit card information with Comixology. If you do, you can then purchase titles through Comixology.com and then sync them with the free Comixology app for iOS, Android or Kindle Fire.

NB: COMIXOLOGY UNLIMITED IS CURRENTLY NOT AVAILABLE IN CANADA, so ignore any prompts you see to sign up for it. You can't make purchases from within the Comixology app because Comixology wants to avoid paying Apple a fee for any transactions conducted through its app services.

The MadeFire app is free, and the title "*Hellboy in Hell* episode 1" is also free.

Hernandez, *The Girl from H.O.P.P.E.R.S.*

Amazon Kindle Store: https://www.amazon.ca/Girl-H-P-P-R-S-Rockets-ebook/dp/B013XRZB96/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=the+girl+from+hoppers&qid=1598979202&s=digital-text&sr=1-1

Comixology.com: <https://www.comixology.com/The-Girl-From-H-O-P-P-E-R-S-The-Love-Rockets-Library-Locas-Book-2/digital-comic/31124?ref=c2VhcmNoL2luZGV4L2Rlc2t0b3Avc2xpZGVyTGZldC90b3BSZXN1bHRzU2xpZGVy>

Mignola et. al., *Hellboy: Seed of Destruction* vol. 1

Amazon Kindle Store: https://www.amazon.ca/Hellboy-1-Destruction-Mike-Mignola-ebook/dp/B00A820Y6U/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=_Hellboy%3A+Seed+of+Destruction_+vol.+1&qid=1598979299&s=digital-text&sr=1-1

Comixology.com: <https://www.comixology.com/Hellboy-Vol-1-Seed-of-Destruction/digital-comic/2255?ref=c2VhcmNoL2luZGV4L2Rlc2t0b3Avc2xpZGVyTGJzdC90b3BSZXN1bHRzU2xpZGVy>

Eisner, *A Contract with God*

Amazon Kindle Store: https://www.amazon.ca/Contract-God-Will-Eisner-ebook/dp/B002AKPEMC/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=a+contract+with+god&qid=1598979543&s=digital-text&sr=1-1

Nicholson, ed., *Moonshot vol. 1*

Comixology.com: <https://www.comixology.com/Moonshot-The-Indigenous-Comics-Collection-Vol-1/digital-comic/284761?ref=c2VhcmNoL2luZGV4L2Rlc2t0b3Avc2xpZGVyTGJzdC90b3BSZXN1bHRzU2xpZGVy>

Fraction et. al., *Hawkeye*

Comixology.com: <https://www.comixology.com/Hawkeye-by-Matt-Fraction-and-David-Aja/digital-comic/805909?ref=c2VhcmNoL2luZGV4L2Rlc2t0b3Avc2xpZGVyTGJzdC9pdGVtU2xpZGVy>

Seth, *The Great Northern Brotherhood of Canadian Cartoonists*

Amazon Kindle Store (not recommended): https://www.amazon.ca/Northern-Brotherhood-Canadian-Cartoonists-Wimbledon-ebook/dp/B087H4H2GW/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=The+Great+Northern+Brotherhood+of+Canadian+Cartoonists&qid=1598980431&s=books&sr=1-1

Comixology.com (not recommended): <https://www.comixology.com/The-Great-Northern-Brotherhood-of-Canadian-Cartoonists/digital-comic/858419?ref=c2VhcmNoL2luZGV4L2Rlc2t0b3Avc2xpZGVyTGJzdC90b3BSZXN1bHRzU2xpZGVy>

Doucet, *My New York Diary*

PAPERBACK ONLY

Tamaki e.t. al., *Harley Quinn*

Amazon Kindle Store: https://www.amazon.ca/Mariko-Tamaki-ebook/dp/B07WWD57PF/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=harley+quinn+breaking+glass&qid=1598980725&s=digital-text&sr=1-1

Comixology.com: <https://www.comixology.com/Harley-Quinn-Breaking-Glass/digital-comic/802478?ref=c2VhcmNoL2luZGV4L2Rlc2t0b3Avc2xpZGVyTGZldC90b3BSZXN1bHRzU2xpZGVy>

Baker, *Why I Hate Saturn*

Amazon Kindle Store: https://www.amazon.ca/Why-I-Hate-Saturn-1-ebook/dp/B0120EM7LS/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=why+i+hate+saturn&qid=1598980819&s=digital-text&sr=1-1

Comixology.com (NB - you need all three single issues): <https://www.comixology.com/Why-I-Hate-Saturn/comics-series/54179?ref=c2VhcmNoL2luZGV4L2Rlc2t0b3Avc2xpZGVyTGZldC90b3BSZXN1bHRzU2xpZGVy>

Stephenson, *Nimona*

Amazon Kindle Store: https://www.amazon.ca/Nimona-Noelle-Stevenson-ebook/dp/B00N0W1XGU/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=nimona&qid=1598981012&s=digital-text&sr=1-1

Internet Archive version (FREE):
<https://web.archive.org/web/20130305011652/http://gingerhaze.com/nimona/comic/page-1>

Mignola et. al., *Hellboy in Hell* episode 1 MadeFire version FREE

NFB via CLUES Concordia

The documentary *Seth's Dominion* is available to view for free if you are signed in to your Concordia library account.

Seth's Dominion
https://encore.concordia.ca/iii/encore/record/C_Rb3846714_Sseth%27s%20dominion_Orighresult_U_X7?lang=eng&suite=def

A Note on Amazon, Kindle and Comixology

Most of the graphic novels on this course are available in both print and digital editions. Part of what we will be studying is the differences that medium and format make, so in most cases, you can choose which format suits your needs best. In most cases, the digital editions will be cheaper than the print ones. Prices differ on Kindle and Comixology, and they change regularly, so for titles that are available on both platforms, compare before you buy to get the best price. However, in order to use these digital editions, you will need to make an Amazon.com account with a credit card attached to it.

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If you decide to sign up with Amazon and its subsidiary, Comixology.com, the sites will ask you to agree to their Terms and Conditions (TOC) as part of their regular registration and sign-in procedures. *If* you disagree with the TOC of these sites due to privacy concerns or for any other reason, you can choose not to use them. Note, though, that opting out of the use of these technologies triggers a responsibility on your part (as the student), to work with me (the professor) to find an acceptable way for you to meet the requirements of the course. This can include you buying a print copy, borrowing one from a library or friend, or looking for other strategies to protect your privacy while using the technology.

In order to use the Kindle and/or Comixology reader apps, you need to have an Amazon profile, with a credit card associated with that profile. Buy your Kindle e-books inside the Amazon.ca site, and then you can sync them with a free Kindle e-reader app on your iOS or Android device, Mac, or PC as you choose. You do not need to use a Kindle device, but can if you have access to one.

You also need to have an Amazon profile to use the Comixology app. Sign in to Comixology.com with your Amazon profile. Comixology will then ask you if you would like to share your Amazon profile information and credit card information with Comixology. If you do, you can then purchase titles through Comixology.com and then sync them with the free Comixology app for iOS, Android or Kindle Fire.

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Also note that you can't make purchases from within the Comixology app because Comixology wants to avoid paying Apple a fee for any transactions conducted through its app services.

Schedule

Each week the course members will meet in Zoom on Wednesdays 8:45 AM - 10:00 AM. Check Moodle for the persistent meeting link.

Course members are responsible for arriving in the meeting having read all primary and secondary materials.

Introduction (September 9)

About This Course About Your Professor How to Use Comixology, Kindle, and Madefire The Grading System

Studying Graphic Novels (September 16)

graphic novel: Hernandez, Jaime. *The Girl from H.O.P.P.E.R.S.* Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2007. ISBN-13 978-1560978510

critical reading: Mittell, Jason. "On Disliking *Mad Men*." Just TV. July 29, 2010.

<https://justtv.wordpress.com/2010/07/29/on-disliking-mad-men/>

Bogost, Ian. "Against Aca-Fandom: On Jason Mittell On *Mad Men*." Ian Bogost blog. July 29, 2010.

http://bogost.com/writing/blog/against_aca-fandom/

Jenkins, Henry. "On *Mad Men*, Aca-Fandom, and the Goals of Cultural Criticism." Confessions of an Aca-Fan. August 11, 2010. henryjenkins.org/blog/2010/08/on_mad_men_aca-fan_and_the_nat.html

documentary film (optional): Spheeris, Penelope, dir. *The Decline of Western Civilization part 1*. 100 minutes. Nu Image Film/Media Home Entertainment. July 1981. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxWjbpP6Fio>

Note that *The Decline of Western Civilization part 1* is a documentary and includes racist, sexist and homophobic language, as well as moments of violence.

concepts: the aca-fan problem comparative analysis biographical comics close reading comics

Medium, Format, Genre (September 23)

graphic novel: Mignola, Mike. *Hellboy: Seed of Destruction*. vol. 1. Milwaukee: Dark Horse Books, 2004. ISBN-13 978-1593070946

critical reading: Bukatman, Scott. "Sculpture, Stasis, the Comics, and Hellboy." *Critical Inquiry* 40.3 (2014): 104-17.

concepts: medium differential media format genre platforms historicization

Novelization (September 30)

graphic novel: Eisner, Will. *A Contract with God*. [1978]. W.W. Norton. First edition. ISBN 978-0393328042

critical reading: Williams, Paul. "Introduction." *Dreaming the Graphic Novel: The Novelization of Comics*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2020. 1-25.

concepts: novelization as historical process discursive analysis the term "graphic novel" cultural capital highbrow vs lowbrow history of the novel pernicious literature and moral panic BD "albums"

The Comics Art World (October 7)

graphic novel: Nicholson, Hope, ed. *Moonshot: The Indigenous Comics Collection*. volume 1. Toronto: Inhabit Education Books, 2015.

critical reading: Beaty, Bart. "What if Comics Were Art? Defining A Comics Art World." *Comics versus Art*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012. 17-48.

concepts: the comics art world (ethos) "world" (Bourdieu) and "worlding" (Latour) the comics form hybridity class power relations collective activity

The Author-Function (October 14)

graphic novel: Fraction, Matt, David Aja, Javier Pulido, Francesco Francavilla, Steve Leiber & Jesse Hamm, Annie Wu, Matt Hollingsworth, Chris Eliopoulos. (*Young Avengers Presents 6*: Matt Fraction, Alan Davis, Mark Farmer, Paul Mounts, VC's Cory Petit, Jim Cheung, John Dell & Justin Ponsor). *Hawkeye*. volume 1. New York: Marvel Worldwide, 2013. Comixology version.

critical reading: Mac Udhir, Christy. "Comics and Collective Authorship."

concepts: the author-function the oeuvre comics creation teams and roles auteur theory

Production (October 21)

graphic novel: Seth, *The Great Northern Brotherhood of Canadian Cartoonists*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2011. ISBN 9781770460539

documentary film: Chamberland, Luc, Dir. *Seth's Dominion*. 42 minutes. National Film Board of Canada, 2014.

critical reading: Boym, Svetlana. "Nostalgia and Its Discontents." *Hedgehog Review* (summer 2007): 7-18.

concepts: materiality and ethos the role of the publisher book design and the small press nostalgia kitsch national narratives and cultural policy cultural capital

Circulation (October 28)

graphic novel: Doucet, Julie. *My New York Diary*. 2nd edition. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2004. 978-1896597836

critical reading: Deman, J. Andrew. "'Oh Well': *My New York Diary*, Autographics, and the Depiction of Female Sexuality in Comics." *Canadian Graphic: Picturing Life Narratives*. Ed. Candida Rifkind and Linda Warley. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016. 75-98.

concepts: autographics expert communities comic cons comics markets (newsstand, direct market, digital) alternative comics anthologizing kunstlerroman the circulation of styles wimmins' comix

Consumption (November 4)

graphic novel: Tamaki, Mariko, Steve Pugh, Carlos M. Mangual. *Harley Quinn: Breaking Glass*. Burbank: DC Comics, 2019. 9781401283292

critical reading: Beaty, Bart, and Benjamin Woo. "Not by a White Man?" *The Greatest Comic Book of All Time: Symbolic Capital and the Field of American Comic Books*. Palgrave Studies in Comics and Graphic Novels. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 97-107.

concepts: audiences and marketing YA as market major houses and indie authors hero/villain revisionism continuity as myth

Subjectivation and Difference (November 11)

graphic novel: Baker, Kyle. *Why I Hate Saturn* [1990]. 3 issues. Burbank: Vertigo/DC, 2004. Comixology version.

critical reading: Tensuan, Theresa. "Difference." Hatfield, Charles, and Bart Beaty, eds. *Comics Studies: A Guidebook*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2020. 138-50.

concepts: subjectivization hierarchies of difference the visual construction of the social field

Transmedia and Platformization (November 18)

graphic novel: Stevenson, Noelle. *Nimona*. New York: HarperTeen, 2015. 9780062278227

Webcomic version (on Archive.org):

<https://web.archive.org/web/20130305011652/http://gingerhaze.com/nimona/comic/page-1>

Mignola, Mike, Dave Stewart, Clem Robins. *Hellboy in Hell* episode one. App build: Matt Harding, Jennie Yim. Music composer/arranger: Wendell Yuponce. 2013. Madefire app.

critical reading: Scott, Suzanne. "The Trouble with Transmediation: Fandom's Negotiation of Transmedia Storytelling Systems." *Spectator* 30.1. Translating Media. Ed. Chera Kee. (spring 2010): 30-34.

concepts: transmedia platformization comics as media property churn vs continuity the Amazon-Apple-Comixology-Kindle_Marvel ecosystem

Putting It All Together (November 25)

Review

Preparation Week (December 2)

FINAL PAPER DUE DECEMBER 9

A Note on Recording

Recording any portion of this course without permission of the Access Centre for Disabilities and the course instructor, and/or recording and distributing any portion of this course, or distributing any course materials, is a violation of the Concordia Academic Code of Conduct and will be treated as such.