

FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
COURSE OUTLINE

ENGLISH 388.04-01 Topic in Popular Genres: Comics and Graphic Novels WINTER 2016

Location: ICT 116

Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 3:30-4:45

Instructors: Nick Sousanis and Frederik Byrn Køhlert

Office: Nick: SS 1004; Frederik: SS 1028

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Office hours: Wednesdays 1:30-3:00 at either office, and by appointment

Course Description:

This course will introduce the scholarly study of comic books and graphic novels, with a particular focus on the formal elements that differentiate comics from other forms of literature (poetry, prose), and the history of the comic book format as it has evolved from the 1830s to today. No prerequisites.

This is a co-taught class in which both professors will be contributing equally to the lectures, discussions, and grading. Each of us brings a different perspective to the study of comics (Nick is a maker-theorist-educator; Frederik focuses on the formal and cultural aspects of the form), and we are excited to combine our approaches to expand upon the depth of the conversation. With the exception of a few times when one of us will have to travel to speak about our work, we will both be in class presenting and facilitating discussion and other in-class activities. We expect that at the conclusion of our time together, students will come away with a deeper appreciation and understanding of comics as a distinct art form, which they will carry with them as readers, scholars, and perhaps even as makers of comics.

Texts and Readings:

Alison Bechdel: *Fun Home*

Chester Brown: *Louis Riel*

David Mazzucchelli: *Asterios Polyp*

Scott McCloud: *Understanding Comics*

Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons: *Watchmen*

Mariko and Jillian Tamaki: *This One Summer*

G. Willow Wilson and Adrian Alphona: *Ms. Marvel Volume 1: No Normal*

Jim Woodring: *Fran*

Gene Luen Yang: *American Born Chinese*

In addition to these required texts, we will supplement discussion with short comics from other authors, as well with additional texts of a theoretical or critical nature, all of which will be available via the web or D2L.

Required Materials:

Since we will be doing some drawing in this course, you are required to purchase the following supplies:

- Index cards, 3x5 inches, one package of 100
- A notebook/journal/sketchbook of some sort
- Drawing tool of your choice (pen, pencil, etc.)

Assignments and Evaluation:

25%	Ongoing mini assignments
20%	Visual analysis/annotation project
20%	Midterm exam
5%	Proposal for final project
30%	Final project

Ongoing Mini Assignments (25%):

Your success in this course will depend on your participation in a large number of in-class or take home mini assignments, which you will complete on index cards. The assignments will vary in nature, and you will be asked to produce for example quick drawings, thumbnails of page layouts, or questions in response to our readings on your cards, which you will hand in at the end of each class. [Please note that prior drawing experience is not necessary, and that every exercise can be done by anyone of any skill level or background in drawing. In fact, we expect that these drawing activities will provide additional insight into the process that goes into making a comic.] The collected assignments from each class (which may vary in number) will be worth 1% of your final grade, for a total of 25%. You will receive either a pass (1%) or fail (0%) grade for the assignments in each class, depending on their satisfactory completion. Since we will meet for 26 classes, you can miss one assignment without penalty; if you complete the assignments for all 26 classes, your lowest score will be dropped. While accommodations will be made for excused absences, you cannot make up assignments after each class without first making specific arrangements with us. On the lower right hand corner of one side of each card you hand in, please print your last name and first initial, along with the date.

Visual Analysis/Annotation Project (20%):

For this early-term assignment, you will choose a page from a comic on the reading list to visually annotate and analyze. This means that you will either trace the page on tracing paper, redraw it in your own hand, or make a photocopy. You will then annotate the page with notes and diagrammatic elements, in which you explain the effect of the various stylistic and other creative elements of the page. In other words, you will need to offer analytical commentary about why certain interesting creative decisions seem to have been made, and what they do to your understanding of the comic. The emphasis here is on observation—how much can you notice?—and what you can deduce from everything you have observed. The assignment is designed to help you think about the construction of a comic—how is it made, why is it made in this way, and what is the effect of it being made this way?

Midterm Exam (20%):

The midterm exam will cover all of the readings and lecture material from the first half of the course. The exam will be a mixed format, and may include short and long answers, visual analysis, and a

brief essay assignment. In your responses, you should be able to demonstrate familiarity with both the primary and secondary texts we have read up until this point, as well as material covered in class.

Proposal for Final Project (5%):

Before you begin the final project, you will be required to submit a formal proposal outlining your motivations, goals, and the form the project will take. The proposal must be between 100-150 words long, and should clearly state how your project relates to course material. Finally, it should indicate the working thesis of your proposed project.

Final Project (30%):

The final project may take any of the following 3 forms:

1) Traditional Essay:

For this assignment, you will draw on everything you have learned about the comics form to write a traditional analytical essay of 1500-2000 words. Your essay should have a clearly-outlined thesis—that is, it should have an argument, and be an attempt to convince the reader of something concerning the comic. What does this comic mean, how does it achieve its effects, and what is the value of reading the comic the way you do? Your essay must focus on a primary text (or texts, if your approach is comparative) we have read for the course, and while you are welcome to include secondary material (whether historical, theoretical, etc.), you are not required to do so. Essays must be submitted through D2L as a PDF file; no work is accepted outside of this forum.

2) Review Comic:

For this assignment, you will pick a comic from outside the class material to review in comics form—that is, you'll be creating your own comic that describes, reflects on, and evaluates another comic. Your comic can take any form you like, but the result should display awareness, understanding, and use of the comics form as discussed in class. In addition, it should have a clearly-defined opinion about the quality of the comic that goes well beyond a simple binary (this is awesome/this sucks) evaluation. There is no specific length requirement, but your comic should represent a substantial engagement with the comic under review. If you genuinely feel like it is long enough to achieve this, it probably is. You are welcome to create the comic any way you like (by hand or digitally), but you must bring a hard copy to hand in for our final class.

3) Research Presentation:

For this assignment, you will conduct original research in the library's George Morley Cartoon Collection and present your findings in a public talk. At the University of Calgary, we are fortunate to have access to the Morley Collection, which consists of an enormous personal collection of clippings, comic books, newspaper sheets, and original artwork, as well as numerous reference books and materials about comics. The collection is currently waiting for students and researchers to take full advantage of it, and this project is therefore meant as a way of bringing attention to the collection at the same time that it gives you the chance to conduct original research and present your unique findings to both the university community and the public at large. Your presentation should last approximately 20 minutes, and while it should go well beyond a simple "show and tell," it does not need to have an original argument as such. If you select this option for your final project, we strongly encourage you to discuss your ideas with us before you start crafting your presentation.

4) Invent Your Own Project:

Finally, you have the option of inventing your own final project. While there is no required format and we encourage you to be creative, your project needs to address course material in some fundamental way. That is, your project should indicate an advanced understanding of the academic study of comics, whether or not it directly references course readings or in-class lectures and discussions. In order to ensure that your project will fulfill the requirements, you will need to meet with either of us during office hours to discuss your project. In addition to your project itself, you are required to submit a reflective essay of 500-1000 words that outlines your motivations and aims for the project in relation to the overall course content.

General Assignment Information and Late Policy:

There is no Registrar-scheduled exam for this course. No extra credit assignments will be allowed, and students must complete all assignments in order to receive a passing grade for the course.

Late assignments will be penalized with the loss of a third of a grade (from A- to B+, for example) for each business day that the assignment is overdue. If you are concerned that you will not be able to make a due date, contact us in advance, and we may negotiate an extension. We will not grant extensions the day the assignment is due or after a due date has passed, and we will not accept an assignment that is more than a week late if no extension has been negotiated.

Please make every effort to take assignments directly to the instructors. If it is not possible to do so, take your assignment to SS 1152 and put it in the dropbox. Your assignment will be date-stamped and placed in either of the instructors' mailbox. It is your responsibility to keep a copy of all assignments in case of loss by any cause. Assignments cannot be returned by staff in the Department office.

Laptops and smart devices, if used well, can complement discussion and so are permitted in class. If they are being used in a way that detracts from the overall environment, we will address that.

Grading System:

The University of Calgary's four-point Undergraduate Grading System, as described in the Calendar (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/f-2.html>), will be used in this course.

A+/A (4.0); A- (3.7); B+ (3.3); B (3.0); B- (2.7); C+ (2.3); C (2.0); C- (1.7); D+ (1.3); D (1.0); F (0)

Please note that, according to the University Calendar (F.1), instructors may use their discretion when rounding upwards or downwards when the average of term work and exams is between two letter grades.

Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the four-point system, the course instructor will employ this mark to distinguish superlative work that exceeds expectations in style, correctness, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality.

90 + %	A+	4.0
85 – 89 %	A	4.0
80 – 84 %	A–	3.7
77 – 79 %	B+	3.3

74 – 76 %	B	3.0
70 – 73 %	B–	2.7
67 – 69 %	C+	2.3
64 – 66 %	C	2.0
60 – 63 %	C–	1.7
55 – 59 %	D+	1.3
50 – 54 %	D	1.0
0 – 49 %	F	0

Plagiarism:

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Please refer to the following information and make sure you are familiar with the statement below on plagiarism.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

Scribe and Muse Club for English Students:

The Scribe and Muse Reading and Writing Club (SMRWC) fosters and champions reading and writing through community service, leadership, and engagement. We strive to enhance the academic and social experience of undergraduate students by promoting academic excellence and interaction between students, faculty, and the community, through social, cultural, and academic events

<http://english.ucalgary.ca/scribe-and-muse-english-club>.

Our email address is smecuofc@gmail.com.

English Department Website:

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English, please go to our website at <http://english.ucalgary.ca>. Please note that the course outlines posted on the English Department website constitute the official course outline for purposes of appeals. Students should verify any hard copies against this posted version. For courses which employ numerical grades, the official departmental percentage to letter grade conversion scale is also posted on the department website.

Writing support:

The Student Success Centre offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Guidelines on e-mail Etiquette:

<http://www.enough.utoronto.ca/computeruse/eetiquette.htm>

Library and Research Support:

Melanie Boyd, Librarian for English, offers research support to students, including strategies for finding articles, books, and other library materials. Contact: maboym@ucalgary.ca

Find The English Pages research guide here: <http://libguides.ucalgary.ca/english>

Follow the Department of English on Facebook & Twitter:



Academic regulations and schedules:

Consult the Calendar for course information, university and faculty regulations, dates, deadlines and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the University Calendar is

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/index.htm>

Grade appeals:

Consult the following University Calendar link and request advice from the English Department office, SS 1152. Please note that “mere dissatisfaction with a decision is not sufficient grounds for the appeal of a grade or other academic decision.”

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

Deferral of term work and final examinations:

Should you require an extension for completion of term papers or assignments beyond the deadline of five days after the end of lectures, an Application of Deferment of Term Work form must be completed. The University also has regulations governing the deferral of final examinations. See Calendar:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>,

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>.

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available

at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf.

Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints;>

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/>

“Safewalk” Program:

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night: call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot pay booths.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk/>

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources:

Have a question, but not sure where to start? The new Arts Students' Centre (ASC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS102, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at ascarts@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.

For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre (formerly the Undergraduate programs Office) at (403) 220-5881 or visit them in their new space on the 3rd Floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

Contact for Students Union Representatives for the Faculty of Arts:

arts1@su.ucalgary.ca, arts2@su.ucalgary.ca, arts3@su.ucalgary.ca, arts4@su.ucalgary.ca

Contact for Students Ombudsman's Office:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI):

"At the University of Calgary, feedback provided by students through the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) survey provides valuable information to help with evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching, and selecting courses (www.ucalgary.ca/usri). Your responses make a difference - please participate in USRI Surveys."

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence. Please read the following information carefully. The penalty routinely recommended by the English Department for documented plagiarism is failure of the course in which the offence occurred; academic probation is also routinely applied at the Faculty level. Suspension or expulsion can result from severe or repeated plagiarism.

The University Calendar states:

1. Plagiarism - Essentially plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:

- (a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),
- (b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,
- (c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,
- (d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted.

Plagiarism occurs when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, or when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. Citing your sources in a bibliography is not enough, because a bibliography does not establish which parts of a student's work are taken from other sources. MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose. Advice on adequate documentation can be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT

According to the University Calendar, (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/j.html>) "The University of Calgary community has undertaken to be guided by the following statements of purpose and values: to promote free inquiry and debate, to act as a community of scholars, . . . , to respect, appreciate, and encourage diversity, [and] to display care and concern for community". The Department of English, like the university as a whole, is committed to a "positive and productive learning and working environment." This environment is characterized by appreciation and encouragement of diversity and respect for the dignity of all persons: students, support staff, and faculty. The department will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, such as threatening gestures, threatening or abusive verbal or written communication (including e-mails), or any conduct that "seriously disrupts the lawful education and related activities of students and/or university staff". Any cases of such misconduct should be reported immediately to the department Head, who, depending on the nature and severity of the incident, may then take further appropriate action.