

English 385: Graphic Narrative and Cultural Theory
Fall 2013, CRN 17281
MW 10-11:20 am, 307 Volcanology

Dr. Elizabeth Wheeler

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Graphic novels are literary narratives in comic book form. This course examines 20th and 21st century graphic novels about the United States and the Middle East, focusing on different kinds of histories: personal, political, ethnic, and national. We will study and apply trauma theory and comics theory, talk about autobiography and world history, analyze pictures as well as texts, and create our own comic books. This course counts for the Arts and Letters Requirement, the Literary Criticism/Theory requirement for the English major, and the Comics Studies minor. The required books are on reserve at Knight Library as well as for sale at the Duck Store on 13th St.

REQUIRED BOOKS for sale at UO bookstore

Primary Sources

Art Spiegelman, *Maus I* and *Maus II* or *The Complete Maus*
Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*
Jeremy Love, *Bayou: Volume I*
Marjane Satrapi, *The Complete Persepolis*
Joe Sacco, *Palestine*

Secondary Sources

Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*
Scott McCloud, *Making Comics*

REQUIRED SECONDARY SOURCES on Blackboard

Available as pdf files on the ENG 385 Blackboard site under “Course Documents.” Marked on syllabus with an asterisk: *

1. Lawrence Langer, “Deep Memory” from *Holocaust Testimonies* (1991) (2 sections; read both)
2. “LaCapra on Trauma.” Excerpts from D. LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001)
3. Karen Armstrong, Excerpts from *The Battle for God* (2000) (2 sections; read both plus glossary)

4. Charles Hirschkind and Saba Mahmood, “Feminism, the Taliban, and the Politics of Counter-Insurgency” (2002)
5. Lila Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?” (2002)

ASSIGNMENTS

- 35% Part I Essay. 4-5 pages, due Wed Week 6.** Develop an argument about one or more of the graphic novels from Part I, incorporating: a) At least one of the assigned secondary sources; and b) Close readings of words, pictures, and their interactions. See Essay Guidelines below.
- 35% DIY Comic Book. 7 pages, Due Wed Week 10.** Students will work together in a DIY Comic Book Group to create an original comic book 6 pages long plus title page. Each student will have a particular job: writing, art, or lettering/production management. On the last day of class we will have a comic book art show. See DIY Comic Book Guidelines below.
- 20% Final Exam. Monday, December 9, 10:15 am.**
- 10% Attendance, Homework, and In-Class Work.** These assignments may be unannounced and will include in-class writing and impromptu group work on the day’s readings.

POLICIES

Late Paper Policy: I accept only one late paper per term, so please use this option carefully. If you choose to turn in a paper late, you must notify me by phone, e-mail, or in person before class the day the paper is due. Otherwise, I may refuse the paper. Late papers are due the next class session, unless you arrange otherwise. I accept electronic submissions only by special arrangement.

Participation: I welcome any and all communications from you, including time spent in office hours. I expect and appreciate your well-read, steady class participation. If problems interfere with your attendance or assignments, please let me know as soon as possible. I’m not fond of mysterious disappearances. If you communicate with me, I’m glad to help whenever I can.

Disability: If you have a disability, I am happy to accommodate your needs. Just let me know.

SCHEDULE

Week	Monday	Wednesday
Part I: American Stories		
1	September 30 Introduction	October 2 <i>Maus I</i> <i>Understanding Comics</i> pages 5-9 and all of chapter 2
2	October 7 <i>Maus I</i> <i>Understanding Comics</i> , chapter 3	October 9 <i>Maus II</i> Langer, “Deep Memory”* Sign up for DIY Comic Book jobs
3	October 14 <i>Maus II</i> <i>Understanding Comics</i> chapter 4 and pages 124-131 and 152-161	October 16 <i>Fun Home</i> <i>Making Comics</i> Intro, Ch. 1, and #2 p. 56 DIY Comic Book Groups meet
4	October 21 <i>Fun Home</i> <i>Making Comics</i> Ch. 2 #1 p. 127, but 2nd half is Bechdel	October 23 <i>Fun Home</i> <i>Making Comics</i> Ch. 3, #2 p. 157 DIY Writers: Scripts due
5	October 28 <i>Bayou</i> <i>Understanding Comics</i> Ch. 8	October 30 <i>Bayou</i> “LaCapra on Trauma”* DIY Storyboards due
6	November 4 Emmett Till video <i>Making Comics</i> Chs. 4 and 5	November 6 Paper 1 due DIY Artists: Sketches due DIY Comic Book Groups meet

Part II: Middle Eastern Stories

7	November 11 <i>Persepolis I</i> <i>Battle for God</i> excerpts*	November 13 <i>Persepolis I</i> <i>Making Comics</i> DIY Revisions due
8	November 18 <i>Persepolis II</i> “Feminism, the Taliban...” article* Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?”*	November 20 <i>Persepolis II</i> Artists: Final art due DIY Comic Book Groups meet
9	November 25 <i>Palestine</i>	November 27 <i>Palestine</i> DIY Letterers: Sketches due DIY Final Review meeting
10	December 2 <i>Palestine</i> Exam Review	December 4 DIY Comic Book Art Show
Final Exam	Monday, December 9, 10:15 am.	

ESSAY GUIDELINES

The Essay is open topic, based on your own ideas about the books. As evidence you'll use your own close readings of pictures and quotations from the texts. Please close-read the visuals as carefully as you do the words. The essay should include at least 1 thorough close reading. The grading criteria are:

- 1) Originality.
- 2) Careful, detailed close reading of text and visuals.
- 3) A clear, strong enthymeme (main point, thesis statement).
- 4) Clear linkage of each paragraph to the main point.
- 5) Skillful use of at least one secondary source.
- 6) Polished, well-revised prose with no grammatical or spelling errors.

TIPS FOR WRITERS

- 1.) Close reading is important because it is the building block of your paper. Your topics evolve not from someone else's truth but from your own observations. Therefore, the more closely you can observe, the more fresh ideas you will have. Pick a page that catches your imagination and gives you something to say. Sit down to write with the page in front of you. Look at it very carefully and thoroughly and write down all the ideas that occur to you. Really set your eyes on the page and dig into the meanings. Don't be afraid to "go out on a limb" with your interpretations. Please analyze the visuals as carefully as you do the words. What do you notice first? What do you notice second? Do the two things go together or contradict each other? What mood does the excerpt convey? Are there paradoxes? What is left out, kept silent or invisible? How does the author call upon the 5 senses? Look closely at style, vocabulary, images, figures of speech, rhythm, body postures and gestures, and point of view. What is the relationship between what is being said, how it's being said, and how it's drawn? What does it teach us about the work as a whole? Does your example remind you of other authors you've read or other ideas you've had?
- 2.) Your introduction should do 3 jobs: state the paper's thesis, declare the paper's topic, and provide a road map for the paper.
- 3.) Carefully think over possible counter-arguments, and strengthen your arguments against them.
- 4.) Please make sure every paragraph has a topic sentence, stating the paragraph's main point and linking this paragraph's point to the main point of the essay.
- 5.) Cut out all plot summary. Don't summarize the story--you can assume I've read the book or article and remember what's going on. Organize your essay according to the logic of your argument, not according to the order of the story itself. Instead of summarizing information, whenever possible substitute a specific quotation or example of a picture from the text combined with your own close reading and interpretation.
- 6.) Revise the essay's style. Cut needless words and word repetitions. Break run-on sentences into several smaller thought-clusters. Make the prose flow.
- 7.) Check the essay's spelling and grammar. Make sure the quotations are properly punctuated. Long quotes should be indented with no quote marks around them. "Shorter quotes should be integrated with your prose and have quote marks on both ends." Please give page numbers. You don't have to footnote

the works we read in class; just put the author's name and the page number in parentheses after the quotation, like this: (Moore 2) If you want you can include a picture of the page under discussion in your paper, or you can just give the page number of the text. Papers should be typed, double-spaced, printed out and submitted at the start of the class session.

DO-IT-YOURSELF COMIC BOOK GUIDELINES

We'll work together in a team of 1 writer, 2 artists, and 1 letterer/production manager to create a 6-page black-and white comic book, plus splash (title) page. The genre, characters, style, and story are up to you. In Week 2 you'll sign up for your first, second, and third choice of job and your preferred genre(s). In Weeks 3-10 you'll have a comic book assignment due on Wednesday of each week. Please make photocopies of your weekly work and turn it in to me and your group members. Because this is a group assignment, keeping your promises and sticking to deadlines is essential. The artists can't do their job until the writer has done his or hers, and so forth. Procedures are in place to assure that no extra burden will be placed on group mates for late or undone work by one group member. Groups will meet both in and outside class. Leave plenty of time for revisions. We'll have a comic book art show on the last day of class.

MINI-DEADLINES FOR DIY COMIC BOOKS:

Wed Week 2 Sign up for jobs. Have in mind your preferred genres (realistic memoir or fiction, superhero, fantasy, manga, children's cartoons, etc.) and first, second, and third choices of jobs (writing, art, lettering/production management).

Wed Week 3 First group meeting in class.

Wed Week 4 Writers: Scripts due to me and group.

Wed Week 5 Storyboards due to me and group.

Wed Week 6 Artists: Sketches due to me and group. Group meeting in class.

Wed Week 7 Revisions due to me and group.

Wed Week 8 Artists: Final art due to me and group. Group meeting in class.

Wed Week 9 Letterers: Sketches due to me and group. **Final Review meeting** in class.

Wed Week 10: Comic Books due. Art Show in class.

