

17434 ENG 410 Writing for Comics – Video-Conferenced

Instructor: Brian Michael Bendis

Fridays 1:00-4:00 P.M.

Email: brian1138@aol.com

Class group: <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/writing-for-comics-fall-2013>

Office hours: Skype by appointment (and please email me if you need to)

Course Description:

Writing for Comics – Video-Conferenced Bendis, Brian

The graphic novel features the unique marriage of words and pictures that has seeped into every facet of popular culture. This course will focus on all the storytelling elements that create the written word of this unique visual medium. Students will study the form and its influences, discover and create original works for both print and digital platforms, and are put through a classroom version of the editorial process. Throughout the term, there will also be a smattering of comic book professional guest lecturers.

Required Texts:

Story: Substance, Structure, Style and The Principles of Screenwriting by Robert McKee

Comics & Sequential Art by Will Eisner

On Writing by Stephen King

Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative by Will Eisner

Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art by Scott McCloud

Grading:

- | | |
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| 1. Class assignments: | 20% |
| 2. Writer/artist project | 30% |
| 3. Web comic | 20% |
| 4. Final comic book | 30% |

Course Requirements:

Attendance: Class attendance is mandatory. Sign in at the beginning of every class. If you are late, please enter quietly and sign in after class. You may be absent once without excuse, no questions asked. A second absence will result in the loss of 10% of your final grade - a **B** will become a **C**. A third absence will require you to withdraw from the course. Chronic lateness or early departure is at best impolite and will be treated as if you were absent.

Reading: You need to have *finished* reading the assigned text(s) scheduled for discussion prior to class. Though we do have a required reading list, it is also to your advantage to read the work or works of the guest artists lecturing. The required texts are available for purchase from The Duck Store, and from local comics shops and Amazon.

Graphic novels are expensive, and I'm sorry, but there's nothing I can do about that. The Downtown Library a likely source for some of the graphic novels you'll be looking for. Any additional required reading materials will be handed out in class.

NOTE: Each student is required to create a list of questions based on each reading assignment and bring them to class for discussion.

Class privacy: I want to make it perfectly clear this class is not to be recorded and or blogged about publicly. I have declined all requests on this from students and media alike. The class is meant for your personal education and nothing should distract either of us from making the most of this special situation. Breaking this rule will require you to withdraw from the course and may result in official reprimand from the school administration.

Written Work: All work, unless otherwise noted, must be typed and double-spaced. The student is advised to make and keep a copy of all work that he or she turns in.

Assignments may also be emailed to the instructor prior to due date at brian1138@aol.com. *Due to the instructor's impossibly busy schedule, no late papers will be accepted.*

Description of Assignments:

1. **Written Assignments:** The only way to learn is to-do and you will be doing. You will be writing in a handful of genres and styles and producing visual work, regardless of your visual abilities. For those with some drawing abilities, good for you, but you will not be judged on your drawing ability. You will be judged on your creativity only. Your ability to find creative answers to the visual needs of the story you want to tell. We will discuss more of what that means in class.

2. **Web Comic:** Digital is the now. Almost all mainstream media is available in this form. This assignment will require each student to create an original story and “publish” it on the Internet. Specifics will be discussed in class.

3. **Final paper:** Individual assignment. This will be a complete comic book of standard comic book length. It will be written, visually executed and self-published. The topic must be pre-approved by the instructor. Part of the assignment is to announce to the class what you will be working on — and later present it for discussion — so you’ll need to start thinking about this pretty early on.

Weekly Schedule:

Each week, the first half of the class will be dedicated to screenings and guest lectures. After a short break we will hunker down into group discussion of the topics and assignments of the day- including critique of assigned projects, scripts and script ideas.

In addition to the list of readings below, there will be supplementary handouts that you will be required to read.

(Schedule is subject to change)

October 4th: Course overview. Syllabus discussion. A viewing of the documentary “Masters of Comic Book Art.” Discussion of individual goals for the course.

Discussion: Script to art discussion. Character development, plot, story arc and the ticking clock will be discussed. Continued discussion on the similarities between TV/movie writing and sequential art writing.

October 11th: We will be watching the documentary “WILL EISNER: PORTRAIT OF A SEQUENTIAL ARTIST.”

Discussion: documentary.

Critical discussion of the graphic novel form from it’s birth till now.

Assignment: Each student is required to bring in and discuss graphic novels that moved him or her and ones that did not.

Reading: Understanding Comics

October 18th: Guest lecturer- GREG RUCKA Eisner award winning writer of WHITEOUT, STUMPTOWN, PUNISHER and BAT MAN

Discussion: details about the logistics and expectations of the mid term.

Second writing assignment MIDTERM: web comic

Discussion: Eisner’s book lecture and discussion --- bring comments, questions and observations.

October 25th: Legendary Writer/ Dark Horse executive Editor DIANA SCHUTZ discusses realities of the business and the writer/ editor relationship.

November 1st: We will be watching the documentary “VISIONS OF LIGHT.”

Discussion: The format of the comic book script and how it compares to the TV and Movie format. Discussion of “Visions of Light” and comparison of comic book and movie storytelling.

Update on the midterm project.

Reading: Story by Robert McKee

Midterm project assignment due

November 8th: Guest MICHAEL AVON OEMING artist of POWERS and DAVID MARQUEZ will be yours for a Q and A on creative collaboration and the artist/ writer relationship.

Please bring questions and observations from Story by Robert McKee.

November 15th: Guest lecturer- KELLY SUE DECONNICK writer of AVENGERS. CASTLE, and PRETTY DEADLY

Students will share with the class the final project ideas

Reading: On Writing, Steven King

November 22nd: Guest lecturer- MATT FRACTION Eisner award winning writer of THOR, IRON-MAN, X-MEN, AND CASANOVA

Students will share with the class the final project ideas

November 29th: No class. Gobble gobble.

December 6th: A viewing of “COMIC BOOK CONFIDENTIAL” documentary.

Discussion of documentary. The history of the alternative culture in comics.

Reading: On Writing, Steven King

Discussion of On Writing by Steven King.

Final project discussions

December 9th: Finals projects due. No exceptions.