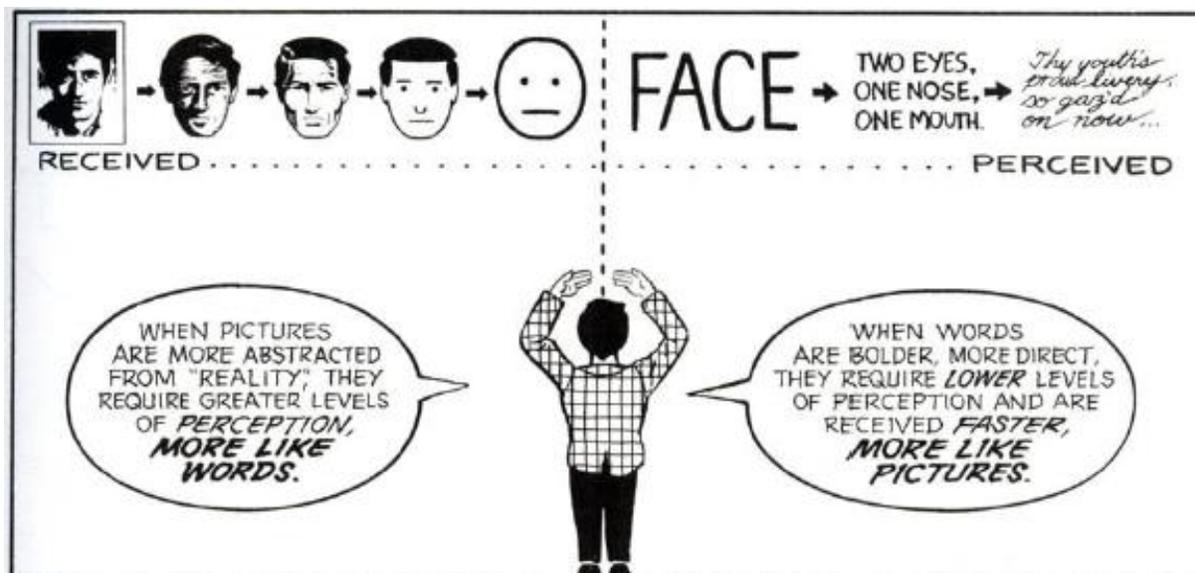


ENGLISH 385: GRAPHIC NARRATIVES & CULTURAL THEORY
Reading Images, Seeing Words



Fall 2014
Tues & Thurs 12:00p – 1:20p in CON 360

Professor Tara Fickle
Email: tfickle@uoregon.edu
Office Hours: Tues 1:30p – 2:30p;
Thurs 11:00a – 12p & 1:30p – 2:30p in 372 PLC

I. Course Description

What is the difference between a story told with words and one told with pictures? How does the latter change our understanding of traditional literary conventions like genre, plot, tone, character, and audience? Gaining rapid momentum since the 1960s, graphic fiction emerged as a phenomenon which not only extended but challenged a well-established canon of newspaper cartoons and serial comic books, not only developing unique formal qualities but incorporating completely new content. Rarely did we see the traditional figures of the superhero and his archnemesis; now real, ordinary people, with their very human weaknesses and limits, took center stage. And the worlds which they inhabited were both familiar and terrifying. This shift raises a number of important disciplinary and methodological questions, each of which will be taken up in this course. How do we “read” these novel combinations of text and image – what new methods and vocabularies are needed? In exploring these new modes of inquiry, students will learn not only a new set of analytical and interpretive skills but how to apply them in a wide variety of interdisciplinary contexts. The course thus satisfies university-wide General Education requirements; the “literary theory/criticism” requirement for the English major; and also counts towards the Comics and Cartoon Studies minor.

II. Learning Aims & Outcomes

In the broadest sense, this course will increase your media literacy – your ability to “read” any cultural text, be it graphic novel, video game, painting or toy – by giving you a transferrable toolkit of analytical strategies and a body of objects upon which to practice your critical thinking skills. “Critical thinking” means thinking more like an engineer and less like a traditional reader: treating texts not as finished products or definitive “truths” but as *processes*. Whether you aspire to become a graphic artist, a novelist, or a lawyer, this ability to “unpack” texts will allow you to design more effective websites, write more compelling prose and mount more persuasive arguments — because you will recognize that what you are doing is simultaneously creating *and* critiquing.

Specific Learning Outcomes [and modes of evaluation]

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify the most common tactics, topics and tropes employed by graphic fiction (GF), and be able to explain their historical and critical origins [Final Project, Weekly Assignments, In-Class Activities]
- Recognize and critique the relationship between GF and related cultural forms (cartoons, comics, films, photography, games, literature) [Reading Assignments, Essays, Final Project];
- Analyze GF as academic objects by developing a unique vocabulary and analytical methodology [In-Class Discussion, Essays]
- Deploy original arguments about what makes graphic novels both “graphic” and “novel,” and explain how they employ unique technical combinations of text and image to communicate information [Essays, Weekly Assignments, Final Project]

III. Format

Each class meeting will involve a combination of lecture and discussion. The lecture will introduce the relevant text in terms of historical context, major themes, and formal strategies, while the discussion will solicit student feedback and insight about specific textual content, frequently using weekly assignments (see below) as a jumping-off point. Some meetings may also include film viewings, trips to various campus resources, tutorials, in-class activities or discussions with field experts.

IV. Office Hours and E-mail

My office hours are intended to facilitate discussion regarding any aspect of the course or its policies; I strongly encourage you to come at least once during the quarter, or to schedule an alternate time if you have a recurring schedule conflict.

I check my e-mail frequently, but not constantly — and rarely on the weekends — so please allow 24 hours for a response during the week (48 hours during weeks when papers or projects are due). Please maintain professional etiquette in your e-mail communication with me, and make sure to put the course title in the subject line. If you have a serious matter to discuss with me, arrange to meet me in my office.

If you miss a class, you should contact a classmate to get notes.

Classmate 1

Name:

E-mail:

Classmate 2

Name:

E-mail:

V. Course Requirements

1. Attendance and participation. Class attendance and participation is mandatory. This does not simply mean you are physically present, but that you:

- Arrive on time (repeated tardiness will constitute absences)
- Have completed all of the required reading before class begins
- Listen attentively to whomever has the floor and respond to, develop, and/or question their ideas
- Come ready to offer your insights in a thoughtful, respectful manner
- Are not on your phone, laptop, etc. engaged in non-class activities (if this becomes a recurring issue, you may be asked to refrain from using technology during class)

Please come speak to me early in the quarter if you anticipate having difficulties with participation or attendance, or need special accommodations. If you need to miss class for any reason, you must e-mail

me at least 12 hours in advance. More than one unexcused absence will result in a lowered participation grade.

Late Policy. No late weekly assignments will be accepted, and no incompletes will be given except in extenuating circumstances. Late papers and final projects will lose 5 points (out of 100) for every 24 hours past the due date (beginning 5 minutes after the due date) and may not receive comments.

2. Course readings

(a) Required books available at the UO Bookstore. Make sure you choose the correct edition; Kindle/ebook OK but not preferred.

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993). Harper-Collins.

Eisner, Will. *A Contract with God: A Novel* (2006). Norton.

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale* (1986). Pantheon. **OR** *Metamaus* (2011).

Gloeckner, Phoebe. *A Child's Life and other stories* (2000). Frog Books.

Satrapa, Marjane. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (2003). Pantheon.

Tan, Shaun. *The Arrival* (2007). Arthur A. Levine.

Yang, Gene Luen. *American Born Chinese* (2006). Square Fish.

Helfer, Andrew and DuBurke, Randy. *Malcolm X: A Graphic Biography* (2006). Hill and Wang.

Mazzucchelli, David. *Asterios Polyp* (2009). Pantheon.

Jacobsen, Sid, and Colon, Ernie. *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation* (2006). Hill and Wang.

(b) Required secondary texts available on Blackboard as PDF files. Please print out/download and bring to class.

3. Weekly Blackboard Assignments (4). On certain weeks, you will be provided with a prompt via Blackboard, available no later than 72 hours before the due date. Choose four throughout the quarter and submit your response online (through Blackboard) no later than **5pm**. Please be prepared to discuss your responses during class; I will frequently incorporate them into lecture and use them as a jumping-off point for discussion.

4. Short Analytical Essays (2). 2-3 pages, due via Blackboard. These are intended to help you practice close-reading and analytical skills, and to help me gauge the effectiveness of in-class activities and lectures. Prompts and detailed policy explanation will be available on Blackboard no later than 2 weeks before due date.

5. DIY Comic Final Project and Write-Up. See Blackboard for explanation; prompts will be available no later than Week 5.

V. Grading Procedures

1. Weekly Blackboard Assignments (20%). Graded according to a check plus (excellent), check (adequate), check minus (inadequate) scale.
2. Short Analytical Essays (Total 25%, Essay 1: 10%, Essay 2: 15%): Graded according to numerical scale (100). Please also see the Department's detailed rubric.
3. DIY Comic Final Project (25%): Graded on a numerical scale.
4. Final Write-Up (15%): Graded on a numerical scale
5. Attendance and Participation (15%): Graded according to a check plus (consistently engaged, frequently volunteers thoughtful comments and questions), check (attentive, occasionally offers insights), check minus (multiple absences, distracted or unprepared) scale.

VI. Academic Integrity

All work must adhere to standards of academic honesty outlined in the Student Handbook. Do not turn in work prepared for other classes. Document all sources consulted, including websites and other Internet

content. Plagiarism will result in failure of the course and additional sanctions as determined by the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards.

VII. Accommodations for students with disabilities

In compliance with UO policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for student with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first two weeks of the quarter, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students are encouraged to register with the Accessible Education Center to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

VIII. Recommended Study Habits and University Resources.

University accreditation standards require at least 2 hours of work outside of class for each credit earned. This means that you are expected to dedicate ~9 hours/week of *outside of class* work. This will usually mean reading the assigned texts, but will also include time spent completing assignments, writing papers, and working on larger projects.

Numerous campus resources are available which you should avail yourself of if you desire assistance with academic or extra-academic issues. For a full list, please see the Blackboard document “University Resources”; I will also discuss relevant resources throughout the quarter.

IX. Tentative Course Schedule (subject to change)

Date & Topic	Readings to be discussed	Due
Tues 9/30 Introduction: What is “Graphic”? Keywords: Medium & Message; Graphic; Form & Content; Paratext; Pre-Reading & Pre-Seeing	N/A	
Thurs 10/2 Graphic Arguments Keywords: Perspective; Assumption & Argument; Sequential Art; Juxtaposition; Balloon & Caption Types	McCloud, <i>Understanding Comics (UC)</i> , Chapter 1; “Comic Book Grammar” (http://www.blambot.com/grammar.shtml)	“Freud” (BB): due by 5p 10/5
Tues 10/7 Genre: Graphic Realism: Perceiving means Believing Keywords: Closure; 4 Principles of Gestalt Perception (Emergence, Reification, Multistability, Invariance); Gutter; Typeface; 6 Transition Types (McCloud Ch 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Eisner, <i>Contract with God</i> (“Preface” (both) and “A Contract”) • Secondary: <i>UC</i> Chapter 3 	“Tom and Jerry” (BB): due by 5p 10/12
Thurs 10/9 Theory: Historiography; True Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: <i>Contract with God</i> (Choose either “The Street Singer,” “The Super,” or “Cookalein” based on sign-up sheet) • Secondary: Hayden White, “The Value of 	

<p>Keywords: Narrative; Non-Narrative Forms; Narrativize; Realism; Moral Authority</p>	<p>Narrativity in the Representation of Reality” (PDF)</p>	
<p>Tues 10/14</p> <p>Genre: Behind the Mask; 1. Iconic Identities</p> <p>Keywords: Icon; Representational; Masking Effect (McCloud p43)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Spiegelman, <i>Maus</i> (Chapters 1-3 [up to page 71]) • Secondary: <i>UC</i> Chapter 2 	<p>“Drawing Maus” (BB) due by 5p 10/20</p>
<p>Thurs 10/16</p> <p>Theory: Iconographic; 2. Self-Reflexivity as Multistability</p> <p>Keywords: Self-Reflexivity; Commix; Trauma Studies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Spiegelman, <i>Maus</i> (Remainder) • Secondary: James Young, “The Holocaust as Vicarious Past: Art Spiegelman's <i>Maus</i> and the Afterimages of History” (PDF) • Optional: Excerpt from Hatfield, <i>Alternative Comics</i> (PDF) 	
<p>Tues 10/21</p> <p><i>Maus</i> wrap-up</p> <p>Keywords: Shot Composition</p>	<p>Types of Shots (see http://www.pixton.com/comic/q5zowh36 and http://www.mediacollege.com/video/shots/)</p>	
<p>Thurs 10/23</p> <p>Genre: Graphic (Self-)Exposure; 1. The Inner Child</p> <p>Keywords: Autobiography; <i>Bildungsroman</i>; Atomic Individualism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Gloeckner, <i>A Child's Life</i> (“A Child's Life,” 4-55) • Secondary: O’Neill, “Love and Sex Without Jealousy” and “Update” (PDF) 	
<p>Tues 10/28</p> <p>Theory: 2. Dissecting the Pornographic</p> <p>Keywords: Scopophilia; Subjectivity;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Gloeckner, <i>A Child's Life</i> (“Grown Up Stories” and “Paintings, Drawings & Etchings”) • Secondary: Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (BB Web Link) OR Williams, “Hard Core” Chapter 1 (PDF) • Optional: Ballard, “The Atrocity Exhibition” (Author’s Note, Prologue, Chapter 1) (PDF) 	<p>Short Essay 1 (see BB for instructions)</p>
<p>Thurs 10/30</p> <p>Genre: Graphic Memory; Unveiling History</p> <p>Keywords: Orientalism; Postcolonial; Exceptionalism; Hegemony; Ideology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Satrapi, <i>Persepolis</i> (pp.1-71) • Secondary: <i>UC</i> Chapter 5 	<p>“Emojis” (BB); due by 5p 11/2</p>
<p>Tues 11/4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Satrapi, <i>Persepolis</i> (Remainder) • Secondary: Excerpt of Barzegar, <i>Persepolis</i> 	

Theory: Geographic	<i>and Orientalism</i> (PDF)	
Thurs 11/6 Genre: Pictographic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Yang, <i>American Born Chinese</i> (pp 1–108) • Secondary: <i>UC</i> Chapter 8 • Optional: Frye, “Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myth” (PDF) 	“Guest Speaker Prep” (BB): due by midnight, Sunday 11/9
Tues 11/11 Guest Speakers Theory: Cryptographic Keywords: Text-Image Combinations (Word, Picture, Duo, Additive, Parallel, Montage [p153 <i>UC</i>])	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Yang, <i>American Born Chinese</i> (Remainder) • Secondary: Wu, “The Model Minority Myth: Asian American ‘Success’ as Race Relations Failure” (PDF) 	
Thurs 11/13 Keyword Review Genre: Graphic Difference Keywords: Caricature; Mythology; Parody; Allegory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Tan, <i>The Arrival</i> (Parts I & II) • Secondary: <i>UC</i> Chapter 6 	
Tues 11/18 Theory: Mythographic Keywords: Stereotype; Model Minority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Tan, <i>The Arrival</i> (Remainder) • Secondary: Lee Chew, “Biography of a Chinaman” (PDF) • Optional: WJT Mitchell, “Text and Image” (PDF) 	Short Essay 2 Due (BB for instructions)
Thurs 11/20 Genre: Biographic Keywords: “The Veil”; Authenticity; Hyperrealism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Mazzucchelli, <i>Asterios Polyp</i> (Part One: to “In the Fall of 1991, Willy Ilium”) • Secondary: Ovid, <i>Orpheus and Eurydice</i> (PDF) 	
Tues 11/25 Genre: Graphic Style Keywords: Postmodernism; Aesthetic; Surrealism; <i>Kunstslerroman</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Mazzucchelli, <i>Asterios Polyp</i> (Remainder) • Secondary: Excerpt from Jameson, <i>Postmodernism</i> (PDF) 	“Cartoonists Remember” (BB): due by midnight 11/30
Thurs 11/27 Theory: Ideographic	Thanksgiving: No Class	
Tues 12/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Jacobson, <i>The 9/11 Report: A</i> 	

<p>Genre: Graphic Violence</p> <p>Keywords: Adaptation; Audience; Accessibility</p>	<p><i>Graphic Adaptation (TBD)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary: Excerpt from Karen Armstrong, <i>Battle for God</i> (PDF) 	
<p>Thurs 12/4</p> <p>Theory: Photographic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Jacobson, <i>The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation (TBD)</i> 	<p>Final Project Due 5pm 12/10</p>