COURSE INFORMATION

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Office: PLC 241 (541.346.0531)
Office hours: Tuesdays 1pm – 4pm, and by appointment

Course Overview
This class provides an introduction to the political and aesthetic history of Anglo-American comics, and to the academic discipline of Comics Studies. You will be exposed to a variety of comic-art forms (the newspaper strip, the comic book, the graphic novel, the webcomic) and a spectrum of modes and genres (fiction, non-fiction, kids comics, crime comics, and so on). You will also be asked to read several examples of contemporary comics scholarship.

Learning Outcomes
During a regular week, you should expect to put at least 10 hours into this course (in addition to class time); expect to put in more time during weeks when major assignments are due. If you devote yourself fully to the readings and assignments, by the end of the class you will have acquired a deeper knowledge of: the origins and historical developments of American comics; the specific achievements of key comic strip and comic book creators; the economic and material conditions of comic book production; and the range of comic forms (from newspaper strip to graphic novel). In addition, you will have gained experience and proficiency in the following activities:

1. Reading both comics and critical texts with a view to better understanding their conventions.
2. Drawing on relevant information to situate these texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts.
3. Performing formal analyses of a narrative medium that combines visual and verbal elements in a unique way.
4. Writing focused analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose.
5. Employing logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments.
6. Employing a diversity of primary and secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, to generate a persuasive written argument.

Required Texts
You will need to purchase the following books for this course. All are available at the Duckstore, but you have no obligation to purchase them there. If you do purchase any of these books elsewhere, please check the ISBN to make sure you’re getting the right thing (i.e. volume or edition). Please see me during Week 1 if the cost of books is going to create an undue financial burden.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art</td>
<td>Scott McCloud</td>
<td>978-0060976255</td>
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<tr>
<td>We3</td>
<td>Grant Morrison, Frank Quitely</td>
<td>978-1401243029</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Best of Archie Comics: 75 Year, 75 Stories</td>
<td>Archie Superstars</td>
<td>978-1627389921</td>
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<tr>
<td>One Hundred Demons</td>
<td>Lynda Barry</td>
<td>978-1570614590</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swallow Me Whole</td>
<td>Nate Powell</td>
<td>978-1603090339</td>
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<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>Joe Sacco</td>
<td>978-1560974321</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richard Stark's Parker, Vol 1: The Hunter</td>
<td>Darwyn Cooke (make sure you get Cooke's graphic adaptation, not Stark's original novel from the '60s)</td>
<td>978-1613773994</td>
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<td>Torso</td>
<td>Brian Michael Bendis, Marc Andreyko</td>
<td>978-0785153566</td>
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<tr>
<td>Criminal, Vol 6: The Last of the Innocent</td>
<td>Ed Brubaker, Sean Phillips</td>
<td>978-1632152992</td>
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<td>David Boring</td>
<td>Daniel Clowes</td>
<td>978-0375714528</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ghost World</td>
<td>Daniel Clowes</td>
<td>978-1560974277</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth</td>
<td>Chris Ware</td>
<td>978-0375714542</td>
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In addition to the books above, we will use a course site on UO blogs:
https://blogs.uoregon.edu/eng280w16tanner

This is a private blog space that only those registered for the class may access, using their DuckID. That means that anything you write or post to the site can only be seen or searched by those in the class. In addition to a blog assignment, I will use the course blog to post additional readings in PDF form. I will post all primary readings (selections from comics) two weeks in advance; I will post all secondary readings (critical articles) at least one week in advance. (If I haven’t posted something within that time schedule, feel free to poke at me.)

**Course Work and Grading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Distribution</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>5%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blog Posts</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 1: Formal Analysis</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 2: Demo-Graphic Analysis</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 3: Final Essay</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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**Participation 5% of Course Grade**

These points should be easy, because they’re rewarding you for doing what you’re supposed to be doing anyway. I know that everyone participates differently, so I will treat your participation grade on a demerit system: all of you start with this full 5% unless you prove that you deserve otherwise. These are the easiest (but not the only) ways to lose participation:

- Come to class unprepared. I expect you to come prepared to each class session—that means you’ve done the required reading for the day, taken notes and thought about it, brought the text to class, and perhaps even prepared questions and/or passages you’d like to discuss. If I notice that you haven’t prepared the bare minimum (done the reading and brought the text), I will penalize your participation grade accordingly.
- Refuse to take part in an activity or discussion. I understand that speaking up in front of a large group is not everyone’s cup of tea, and so I will make sure there are a variety of ways for you to pitch in, beyond full-class discussions—blog posts, small group discussions, round-robins, activities (to name a few). If you refuse to take part in some way, I will penalize your participation grade.
- Fall asleep. I will wake you up and then penalize your participation grade.
- Misuse your technology. You’re all adults and professional students, so I’ll expect you to use your phones, tablets, laptops in an adult, professional way. The first time I catch you getting distracted by technology, I’ll give you a Look of Doom. The next time, I’ll start to penalize your participation grade.

**Blog Posts 15% of Course Grade**

We’re going to maintain a private course blog for this class throughout the term. The purpose of doing this is to give you a chance to think and write about comics in a less formal way than a full academic essay (and, let’s face it, using the medium through which most people talk about comics), to extend our conversations beyond the classroom, and to trade ideas with each other. Each week, starting in Week 2, 6-8 of you will write posts before our Tuesday class (the deadline will be 8am on Tuesday mornings). Your posts should come to around 300-500 words (a couple paragraphs) and consider a single page/scene/strip from the week’s reading (either Tuesday’s or, if you’re reading ahead, Thursday’s).

The rest of you are responsible for leaving comments on at least two of the posts before Thursday’s class (the deadline will be 8am on Thursdays). Your posts can be short, but must be substantive. You can agree with an idea made in the post and explain your interest in it, debate an idea, elaborate on or add to an idea, point out a missing detail, offer alternatives, tie an idea to an earlier or upcoming text, etc. You are welcome to be critical, but stay collegial.

You will be responsible for posting twice during the term (I’ll assign weeks during the first day), and
commenting seven times (total: two posts, minimum of fourteen comments). Each commenting week is worth 1% of your course grade (7% total) and each post is worth 4% of your course grade. I will provide more details during the first week of classes.

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<tr>
<th>Close Reading Analysis</th>
<th>20% of Course Grade</th>
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<td>Your first formal assignment for this course will be an analysis of graphic form. Drawing from the vocabulary and structures we learn from McCloud and Cohn, and your own knowledge of written/aesthetic form, you will do close reading analysis of a 2-3 page selection from Morrison and Quitely’s <em>We3</em>. The assignment should come to about 1200 words (3-4 pages, longer if you include visuals), and will be due electronically by <strong>8am on Tuesday, 1/19</strong> (you get an extra day, courtesy of Dr. King). I will give you specific details in class for how to write this assignment.</td>
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<th>Demo-Graphic Analysis</th>
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<td>Your second formal assignment for this course will take your awareness of formal conventions one step further, analyzing how form and content work together to represent a demographic group. For this assignment, you will choose a selection (a scene, a chapter, a strip) from a text, and interrogate the ways that your selection represents people of a particular gender, sexuality, body type, age, race, class, etc. The assignment should come to about 1500 words (4-5 pages, longer if you include visuals), and will be due electronically by <strong>8am on Monday, February 15</strong> (it will be like your valentine to me). I will give you specific details in class for how to write this assignment.</td>
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<th>Final Essay</th>
<th>35% of Course Grade</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Your final assignment for this course will be an open-ended critical essay that makes an argument about at least one text from the course. You have considerable freedom with the direction of assignment, but I’ll ask that you come and chat with me in office hours if you want to do anything weird. For those of you who haven’t taken English courses, we’ll spend some time in class during Week 8 discussing what is generally expected of a critical, argumentative, text-based essay. The assignment should come to about 2500 words (7-8 pages, longer if you include visuals), and will be due electronically by <strong>noon on Tuesday, March 15</strong>.</td>
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**COURSE POLICIES**

| Email and Course Site | This course relies heavily on email and our course blog site. I will send any announcements or last-minute changes to the schedule to your University of Oregon email account (not your personal email account). If you have not activated your UO email account, please do so ASAP and **make sure to check it before every class period**. I will post all assignment directions to the course blog site, and you will submit all required work via Dropbox. We will not use Canvas regularly, but I will log your grades in the Canvas gradebook. |

| Attendance | Attendance is required. You are allowed two unexcused absences, and I don’t care what they’re for—whether you’re sick or taking a mental health day, it all counts the same. **If you miss class, do not email me before or after to ask what you missed.** It’s your responsibility to come to my office hours and/or consult your classmates. If an emergency arises, though, please do email me to let me know what’s going on, and we'll discuss a fair arrangement. |

|                         | Attendance also involves coming to class on time. If you come into class more than ten minutes late, I will take note. Every three late entries will constitute an absence. |

|                         | After your two absences, I will start to penalize your course grade. For every absence beyond two, your course grade will drop by 1/3. For example, the first additional absence will reduce a B- to a C+, the second additional absence will reduce a B- to a C, and so on. **Any more than 7 absences will result in course failure.** |

| Adult Content | You should be aware that some of the comics we will read this term deal with adult themes and subjects. A few are violent; others explore the range of human sexuality. Some are shockingly unconventional in their representations. |

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3 of 6
### Warning

Warning: The treatment of political and religious issues. You are not required to like everything you read—indeed, I hope for a more complicated response than that—but please be ready to meet the intellectual challenges of this material with an open mind.

### Formatting and Submission Guidelines

All written work must be typed and double-spaced, using 12-point Times New Roman font and 1” margins on all sides. Formatting for quotes and cited sources must adhere to MLA requirements, and you must include a Work Cited page at the end of all formal assignments.

You will submit all of your work electronically, via Dropbox (you don’t need to have a Dropbox account. I will provide submission links for each assignment on the course site). **All assignment submissions must be PDF (preferred) or DOC/X files**—I will not accept Pages files or any other file extension generated from open-source word processing software. If you do not have Microsoft Word on your personal computer, please convert your file to a PDF before submitting it or use one of the computers in the library (which all have Microsoft Office). I will mark your assignment late until you submit it in the proper form.

### Late Work

Since you will submit all of your work electronically, missing a class is not an excuse for submitting your work late. Late work will drop a full letter grade for each 24-hour period beyond the due time. If unexpected circumstances arise that keep you from submitting your work on time, please email me immediately so that we can discuss accommodations.

### Cell Phone Use

As I mentioned above, you’re all adults and professional students, and I expect you to use your technology like professional adults. I have no problem with laptops, tablets, and phones in the classroom as long as they’re used for class-related purposes. Remember that I see you: you’re never really being as surreptitious about checking your texts as you think you’re being.

### Academic Honesty

All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course, which means you may not submit papers or portions of papers you have written for any other course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. Please refer to the [Student Conduct Code](#) on the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards website. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources.

### Harassment

The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

Please be aware that all UO employees are required reporters. This means that if you tell me about a situation, I may have to report the information to my supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need.

If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO’s 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at [safe.uoregon.edu](http://safe.uoregon.edu).

### Access

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me in week one if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You may also wish to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-
**Tentative Course Schedule**

Below, you’ll find the schedule of primary readings for each course meeting. I may include one or two short critical readings to accompany the primary reading for each session. If/when I do, I will post those additional readings in PDF form on the course blog at least a week in advance, and announce them in class. Everything below is subject to change.

Any primary readings marked “(Blog)” will be available on the course blog at least two weeks in advance.

**Wk 1**
- **T 1/5: Introduction**
  - *We3*
- **R 1/7: Form, Pt 1**
  - *Understanding Comics*, ch 1-5

**Wk 2**
- **T 1/12: Form, Pt 2**
  - *Understanding Comics*, ch 6-9
  - *We3*
- **R 1/14: Newspaper Classics, Pt 1**
  - *Peanuts* reader (blog)

**Wk 3**
- Assignment 1 due by 8am on Tuesday, 1/19
- **T 1/19: Newspaper Classics, Pt 2**
  - *Calvin and Hobbes* reader (blog)
- **R 1/21: Stretching the Strips, Pt 1**
  - *Krazy & Ignatz* 1937-1938 (first 1/2)

**Wk 4**
- **T 1/26: Stretching the Strips, Pt 2**
  - Finish *Krazy & Ignatz*
  - *Little Nemo* reader (blog)
- **R 1/28: Wholesome Comics**
  - *The Best of Archie Comics: 75 Years, 75 Stories*

**Wk 5**
- **T 2/2: Not-so-wholesome Comics**
  - ’70s Underground Comix Reader (blog)
- **R 2/4: Graphic Intro/extro-spection, Pt 1**
  - *One Hundred Demons*

**Wk 6**
- **T 2/9: Graphic Intro/extro-spection, Pt 2**
  - *Swallow Me Whole*
- **R 2/11: Graphic Intro/extro-sception, Pt 3**
  - *Palestine*

**Wk 7**
- Assignment 2 Due by 5pm Friday (2/5)
- **T 2/16: Graphic Intro/extro-spection, Pt 4**
  - *Palestine*
- **R 2/18: Graphic Noir, Pt 1**
  - *Richard Stark's Parker: The Hunter*
Wk 8

T 2/23: Graphic Noir, Pt 2
• Torso
• Criminal, Book 6: The Last of the Innocents

R 2/25: Artist Spotlight: The self-confident weirdo lowbrow, Daniel Clowes, Pt 1
• Ghost World
• Movie version of Ghost World (screening TBD early in week 8; also available to rent on Amazon for $2.99, and Rachel has a DVD she could loan)

Wk 9

T 3/1: Artist Spotlight: The self-confident weirdo lowbrow, Daniel Clowes, Pt 2
• David Boring
• Dan Clowes ephemera (blog)

R 3/3: Artist Spotlight: The insecure highbrow, Chris Ware, Pt 1
• Quimby Mouse (blog)
• Chris Ware ephemera (blog)

Wk 10

T 3/8: Artist Spotlight: The insecure highbrow, Chris Ware, Pt 2
• Jimmy Corrigan, The Smartest Kid on Earth

R 3/10: Webcomix
• Selections from XKCD, Penny Arcade, Dino Comics, Questionable Content

Wk 11

• Assignment 3 Due by 12 noon Tuesday (3/15)