

# Introduction to Comics Studies

English 280 · Summer 2018 · CRN 42457

**Instructor:** Dr. Andréa Gilroy · **email:** gilroy@uoregon.edu · **Office Hours:** MWF 12-1:00 PM & by appointment  
All office hours conducted on **Canvas Chat**. You can message me personally for private conversation.

Comics are suddenly everywhere. Sure, they're in comic books and the funny pages, but now they're on movie screens and TV screens and the computer screens, too. Millions of people attend conventions around the world dedicated to comics, many of them wearing comic-inspired costumes. If a costume is too much for you, you can find a comic book t-shirt at Target or the local mall wherever you live. But it's not just pop culture stuff; graphic novels are in serious bookstores. Graphic novelists win major book awards and MacArthur "Genius" grants. Comics of all kinds are finding their way onto the syllabi of courses in colleges across the country. So, what's the deal with comics?

This course provides an introduction to the history and aesthetic traditions of Anglo-American comics, and to the academic discipline of Comics Studies. Together we will explore a wide spectrum of comic-art forms (especially the newspaper strip, the comic book, the graphic novel) and to a variety of modes and genres. We will also examine several examples of historical and contemporary comics scholarship.

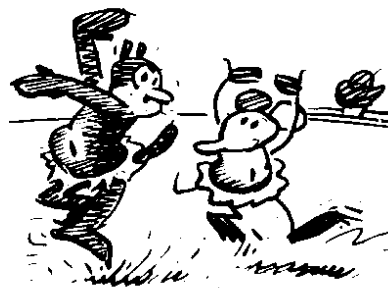
## Objectives:

This term, we will work together to...

- ...better understand the literary and cultural conventions of the comics form.
- ...explore the relevant cultural and historical information which will help situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts.
- ...use this information to develop interpretations and perform critical, formal analyses of texts. These ideas will be expressed in class discussion and in focused, analytical essays that employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments.

## Course Materials

*Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud  
*De: Tales*, Gabriel Bá and Fábio Moon  
*Wonder Woman: Volume 1*, Greg Rucka  
*Maus I & II (or The Complete Maus)*, Art Spiegelman  
*Blankets*, Craig Thompson  
*Monstress*, Marjorie Liu  
Additional PDFs on Canvas



## Course Policies

### Accessibility

The English Department and I are committed to supporting your learning. If you have a disability (physical or learning) that you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of the term so we can guarantee your full access to all classroom activities. You may also wish to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoac@uoregon.edu. Please also remember that all exams taken through the Accessible Education Center must be scheduled with their office at least two weeks in advance (this may be done online: <http://aec.uoregon.edu/>).

### Incompletes

Incompletes are strongly discouraged and only approved in the case of genuine emergencies. You must contact me to begin the process for filing for an incomplete as soon as you realize completing the class may be an issue.

## Academic Integrity and Honesty

All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. As a preventative measure, all written assignments for this course will be submitted through Vericite. Please refer to the summary of the Code of Student Conduct on the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards website for a definition of plagiarism and information on documentation. In cases where academic dishonesty has been clearly established, consequences can range from failure of an assignment to failure of the course. Please see me if you have any questions or concerns about your use of sources. <<http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct/tabid/248/Default.aspx>>

## Respect, Tolerance, and Difficult Content

Everyone in our class—regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, class status, education, physical features, political belief, or religious belief—is worthy of respect as a human being. Our diversity is our strength. We don't always have to agree, and genuine ignorance can be an opportunity for personal and communal growth. This is especially important to keep in mind because some of our course materials features plot details, language, and visual imagery you may find offensive and/or troubling.

We will critically engage with these texts and their underlying ideologies in class discussions based on mutual respect and understanding. You may wish to further interrogate these issues in your personal writing as well. Regardless of your personal beliefs, disagreement and ignorance are never excuses for cruelty. Intolerant language and/or harassing behavior is unacceptable and will lead to sanctions. If you are having particular difficulty with a text, or feel especially troubled by a specific discussion, please let me know.

## Course Information

### Grading Rubric

Reading Quizzes.....	25%	Reflection One.....	20%
Discussion Boards.....	25%	Reflection Two.....	30%

### Submitting Work

All assignments must be submitted to Canvas by the day and time they are listed as **due** in the syllabus—Pacific Standard Time. You must submit your assignment as a .doc, .docx, or a .pdf. All word processing programs will allow you to “save as” or “export to” one of these formats. For your information, all work submitted to Canvas is automatically filtered through the Vericite anti-plagiarism system.

### Late Work

Failing to turn in an assignment at the beginning of class means that the assignment is late and your grade will suffer. However, you may still earn some credit by submitting your work within 48 hours:

- Handed in within 24 hours of deadline: -10% (highest possible grade: 90%)
- Handed in 24-48 hours after deadline: -25% (highest possible grade: 75%)
- Handed in over 48 hours after deadline: 0 points - assignment will not be accepted.

If you are absent from class due to illness or emergency, I will accept email attachments (see “Technology” below).

## Technology

Because this class is entirely online, you are expected to have access to a regularly working computer with a reliable internet connection. If you do not have access to one at home, as a student you are able to use any number of PC or Apple machines in the any of the libraries on campus. The majority of my communication with the class will be through Canvas and email; you are responsible for keeping track of any changes or updates to the syllabus announced in email or on Canvas. Therefore you must check UO email and the Canvas regularly— I recommend doing so *at minimum* once a day during the duration of the term.

## Accommodations

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me as soon as possible; time is an issue in summer classes. As I said before, it is my goal that everyone can participate in this class to the fullest extent possible. However, it is easier to be flexible if I am aware there *may be* an issue ahead of time than it is try to figure out how to adjust *after* an issue has become a serious problem.

## Class Schedule and Agenda



This class is online and you can complete the assignments and readings at your own pace as long as you submit the assignments by their designated due dates. However, in order to help you conceptualize how this course might work “in the real world,” I have constructed this agenda. Most UO Summer courses meet four days a week for two hours a day (in addition to the reading and homework for each class session). The following syllabus is constructed according to that format. Again, you don’t have to follow this exactly—again, beside assignment due dates (which are hard deadlines), this is a guideline meant to help you keep on a steady pace.

Key:    Watch    Read    Do    Submit




### Week 1: Understanding Comics (and Comics Studies)






- Mon, 6/24    Lecture 1: Introduction  
               Lecture 2: What IS Comics?  
               Lecture 3: Comics Pre-History  
               Lecture 4: Print Culture  
               *Understanding Comics* p. 2-60 (Chpt. 1-2)
- Tues, 6/25    Lecture 5: The Icon  
               Lecture 6: The Gutter  
               *Understanding Comics* p. 60-117 (Chpt. 3-4)  
               *Understanding Comics* Quiz
- Wed, 6/26    Lecture 7: Visual Rhetoric  
               *Understanding Comics* p. 118-137, 192 (Chpt. 5, 8)  
               *De:Tales*, “Reflections I,” “Reflections II”  
               Visual Rhetoric Quiz





- Thur, 6/27
-  Lecture 8.1: Picture Books & Funny Pages
  -  Lecture 8.2: The Funnies Guys
  -  Lecture 9.1: Krazy Kat & George Herriman
  -  *Krazy Kat* PDF (Canvas)
  -  Gilbert Seldes, "The Krazy Kat Who Walks By Himself" (Canvas)
  -  *Funnies & Krazy Kat* Quiz






Fri, 6/28  **Discussion Board Posts** (5:00 PM)

## Week 2: Pop Culture

- Mon, 7/1
-  Lecture 9.2: Peanuts
  -  *Peanuts* PDF; Ware on Schulz PDF (Canvas)
  -  *Peanuts* Quiz




- Tues, 7/2
-  Lecture 10.1: Adventure Strips and Comic Books
  -  Lecture 10.2: Here Come the Superheroes
  -  Golden Age Comics (Canvas)
  -  Golden Age Quiz
  -  **Discussion Board Posts** (5:00 PM)








- Wed, 7/3
-  Lecture 11.1: The DC Silver Age
  -  Lecture 11.2: The Marvel Revolution
  -  Silver Age Comics PDF (Canvas)
  -  Silver Age Quiz





- Thur, 7/4
-  *Wonder Woman volume 1*, Greg Rucka, "The Hikiteia,"
  -  *Wonder Woman volume 1*, Greg Rucka, "The Mission"
  -  "The Wonder Woman Precedent" Julie D. O'Reilly (Canvas)
  -  Wonder Woman Quiz
  -  **Discussion Board Posts** (5:00 PM)




**Fri, 7/5**  **Reflection One DUE** (5:00 PM)

## Week 3: A Phoenix From the Ashes



- Mon, 7/9
-  Lecture 12: Romance Comics
  -  Romance Comics (PDF)
  -  Romance Comics Quiz




- Tues, 7/10
-  Lecture 13.1: EC Comics
  -  Lecture 13.2: Moral Panic
  -  Lecture 13.3: Judgment Day
  -  EC Comics PDF (Canvas)
  -  excerpt from *Seduction of the Innocent*, Frederic Wertham (Canvas)
  -  Moral Panic & EC Comics Quiz
  -  **Discussion Board Posts** (5:00 PM)




Wed, 7/11  Lecture 14.1: Underground Comix  
 Lecture 14.2: Underground Comix Artists  
 *Maus I*, Art Spiegelman  
 *Maus I* and Underground Comix Quiz





Thur, 7/12  Lecture 15: Alternative Comics  
 *Maus II*, Art Spiegelman  
 Alternative Comics and *Maus II* Quiz  
 **Discussion Board Posts** (5:00 PM)

## Week 4: To Infinity and Beyond

Mon, 7/15  "Mourning and Postmemory," Marianne Hirsch (Canvas)  
 Marianne Hirsch Quiz

Tues, 7/16  *Blankets*, Craig Thompson  
 *Blankets* Quiz  
 **Discussion Board Posts** (5:00 PM)

Wed, 7/17  Lecture 16: Autobiography and Comics  
 "I Made the Whole Thing Up!" Charles Hatfield (Canvas)  
 Autobiography Quiz

Thur, 7/18  Lecture 17: Wrapping Up  
 *Monstress*, Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda  
 *Monstress* Quiz  
 **Discussion Board Posts** (5:00 PM)

**Fri, 7/19**  **Reflection Two DUE** (5:00 PM)