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ENG 280 CRN 12117

Dr. O'Kelly

Contact through Canvas Inbox (not through UO email)

On Campus Office Hours in 206 PLC: TR 12:20-1:50

### **Course Description:**

This class provides an introduction to the academic discipline of Comics Studies. We will explore a spectrum of comic-art forms (the newspaper strip, the comic book, the graphic novel) and a variety of modes and genres. We will read examples of contemporary comics scholarship, analyze the form and narrative of a range of comics, and experiment with creating our own comics.

### **Required Texts (in reading order):**

Scott McCloud: *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*

Van Lente and Dunlavey: *Comic Book History of Comics: Birth of a Medium*

Jess Smart Smiley: *Let's Make Comics!*

Lemire and Smallwood: *Moon Knight: Lunatic*

George Herriman: *Krazy and Ignatz, 1937-1938*

Various Creators: *The Best of Archie*

Brubaker and Phillips: *Criminal: Last of the Innocent*

Gilbert Hernandez: *Heartbreak Soup*

Alison Bechdel: *Fun Home*

All these texts will be available at the Duck Store. ***Peanuts* comics (for week 5), EC Comics (for week 7) and supplementary essays will be available as PDFs or through links on Canvas.** You may use electronic versions of texts—many of the assigned readings may be available with a subscription to Comixology Unlimited—but I do suggest that you read physical copies of at least a few books (Herriman, in particular, should be read in a physical edition).

Please be aware that due to the production costs associated with graphic novels your textbook bill will be higher than for a typical English class. You should not enroll in this course if you are unable or unwilling to meet this expense.

Readings may contain explicit depictions of sex, violence, adult themes, coarse language, and material that some might find offensive. If you think that this might be a problem for you, please contact us to discuss whether we can find a solution, or if this is the best class for you.

WEEK 1	What is Comics?: McCloud's <i>Understanding Comics</i>
WEEK 2	What is Comics? McCloud continued Begin <b>Formal Analysis</b> Lemire and Smallwood's <i>Moon Knight</i> <b>Two Expanded Labor Options will be made available:</b> <b>(Expanded Labor Option) Creation Project: Can be turned in until the end of week 8)</b> <b>(Expanded Labor Option) Tracing Project: Can be turned until the end of week 8)</b>
WEEK 3	The Comic Strip and Modernity: from <i>The Yellow Kid</i> to <i>Krazy and Ignatz</i> <b>Formal Analysis Due</b>
WEEK 4	Cultural Analysis and Comic Poetics: <i>Krazy and Ignatz</i> continued
WEEK 5	The Newspaper Strip: Repetitions and Cycles in Schulz's <i>Peanuts</i> <b>Essay #2 Option One: A Year of the Daily Strip Essay</b>
WEEK 6	<i>Archie</i> : Comics, Supermarkets, America
WEEK 7	Comics, Violence, <i>Seduction of the Innocent</i> : EC Crime Comics <b>Essay #2 Option Two: Innocence or Corruption? (Or Essay #3: Expanded Option)</b>

WEEK 8	<i>Alternative Comics and Graphic Art: Hernandez' Heartbreak Soup</i> <b>(Expanded Labor Option) Creation Project: Final Deadline</b> <b>(Expanded Labor Option) Tracing Project: Final Deadline</b>
WEEK 9	Comic Book Revisionism: Brubaker and Phillips, <i>Criminal: Last of the Innocent</i> <b>Essay #4 (Expanded Labor Option) Magical Realism or Revisionism? Essay</b>
WEEK 10	Prestige, Identity, and The Graphic Novel: Bechdel's <i>Fun Home</i> <b>Final Essay Due During Final's Week</b> <b>(Expanded Labor Option) Expanded Final Essay</b>

### Navigating this course:

This course is fully online. You will be able to complete all work remotely. You will not be required to attend class on campus or submit hard copies of work.

The course is organized in 10 modules, following the 10-week term. Although some online courses can be completed in a flurry of activity at the very end of the term, this course will require consistent and regular participation in different activities and assignments each week. **You cannot wait until the end of the term to complete the work for the course. To succeed in the course, you will need to follow the weekly schedule of readings, discussions, and assignments.** To help you manage your time, each week's content will only unlock on Monday (at 7 a.m.).

Remaining engaged also requires you to check your university email at least once a day. Canvas Inbox will be our primary method of contact with you, and announcements made to the entire class will also notify in your university email's inbox. **Double check your Canvas notification settings, and make sure if you have your university email forwarded to a personal email client that all relevant emails from us and/or Canvas are making it to your inbox. "I didn't receive that email" or "I didn't see that announcement on Canvas" will never be an excuse for late or missed work in this class.** Let me know if you have questions or concerns about communications and notifications for this class.

Since the readings are sequential and the skills you will develop in this course are progressive, your success and the success of the course depend on your timely participation and submission of assignments.

Success in any online course will require keen time management and organization, as well as the ability to work both diligently and independently. **If at any time you find yourself struggling to keep up with the assignments, reach out to me as soon as possible.**

## Learning Outcomes and Policies:

### Learning Objectives

You should expect to put **at least** 12 hours per week into this course, with that number rising to **at least** 12-14 hours during weeks when assignments are due. Assuming you are able to 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; the range of comic forms (from newspaper strip to graphic novel). In addition, you will have gained experience and proficiency in the following activities:

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

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements will be posted in Canvas when necessary. They will appear on your dashboard when you log in and/or will be sent to you directly through your preferred method of notification . Please make certain to check them regularly, as they will contain any important information about upcoming projects or class concerns.

### EMAIL

In this course we will use the CONVERSATIONS feature on the help corner (located in the upper right hand navigation links, or through the INBOX icon on the left) to send email for private messages. You can either check your messages in the CANVAS system or set your notifications to your preferred method of contact. Please check your messages regularly. When submitting messages, please do the following:<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[2]</sub>

- Put a subject in the subject line that describes the email content with your name, week and message subject. For example: YOURNAMEWK2ASSIGNMENT.
- Send email only to CONVERSATIONS and not to my UO email account.
- Do not send messages asking general information about the class, please post those in the QUESTION FORUM (see below).

- Do not submit your assignments via message; submit them via the Canvas assignment.
- Make certain to check your messages frequently.

## QUESTIONS

In online courses it is normal to have many questions about things that relate to the course, such as clarification about assignments, course materials, or assessments. Please post these in the QUESTION FORUM which you can access by clicking the DISCUSSIONS button in the course navigation links. This is an open forum, and you are encouraged to give answers and help each other.

## DISCUSSION FORUMS

Discussion Forums are a way for you to engage with each other about the course content. Each lesson module will have a dedicated discussion forum. You can also access each forum by clicking on the DISCUSSIONS button in the course navigation links. In order to get full credit for each discussion, you will need to post a thoughtful, well-written response to the question and respond to two of your classmates' answers.

## TURNAROUND/FEEDBACK

During the week (M-F) I will my Canvas Inbox throughout the day. If you have a concern and send me message, you can expect a response within two days. Please allow extra time if sending a message over the weekend.

## IMPORTANT DATES

The due dates for your assignments can be found in the CALENDAR in the navigation links at the left side of your screen, as well as in each lesson module. Please review these.

## Method of Assessment:

This course uses a labor-based grading scheme. This scheme differs from the one you are most familiar with in that your grades are not based on my judgments about your work. Instead, your work is evaluated on whether it meets the requirements for the assignment. Labor-based grading allows you to take risks in your writing without fearing punishment through grading-based penalties. Moreover, you get to decide how much labor you want to invest in this class. All work is assessed as either "complete" or "incomplete" according to assignment-specific rubrics.

The default grade for this class is a B (85%). If you do all that is asked of you for the course, in the manner and spirit it is asked, and if you work through our assignments and participate in discussion forums and activities, you will earn a B at the end of the course. You can earn higher or lower grades depending on how much or how little labor you perform while completing coursework. If you miss more than the allowed number of classes, are not engaged in discussions and activities, turn in late assignments, or otherwise do less labor than is stipulated in the agreement, you will earn less than a B in the course. If you do *more*, you can earn grades up to an A. See the [Labor Agreement](#) for details.

## WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

Each week you will need to complete the following:

- Read/watch the assigned course material posted on the relevant module.
- Complete the weekly Quiz with a perfect score (multiple attempts are allowed) by Friday at 11:59 pm PT (Pacific Time). You cannot unlock the following week's module without completing each week's quiz.
- Post in the weekly Discussion Forum by Friday at 11:59pm PT. Instructions are posted on the Forum.
- Respond to two other students' posts in the Discussion Forum by Sunday at 11:59 pm PT.
- Complete projects or activities by dates listed on each module (projects will usually be due on Sundays at 11:59 pm PT Not every week or module has an assignment or activity).

### *Discussion Boards*

In an online class, the only way for us to have consistent, shared discussion about readings, course topics, and other relevant issues is through the use of Canvas's discussion boards. Weekly discussions will be in groups of around 10. Groups will change weekly. **There will be at least one discussion board question (and sometimes more than one) every week of the course. Initial posts, in response to the prompt, are due on Fridays by 11:59pm.** Posts after Fridays at midnight will count as late, and initial discussion board posts uploaded after midnight on Sundays will be considered missing. **Responses to your peers (two each week) are due on Sundays by 11:59 p.m.** Responses posted after Sundays at midnight will count as late, and responses posted after midnight on the following Tuesday will be considered missing. **Initial posts and responses are both required for on-time complete credit.**

### *Weekly Quizzes*

There will be a short quiz assigned each week related to that week's readings and materials. Some quizzes will be multiple choice, some will be short responses, and others will require you to upload pictures of your work from *Let's Make Comics!* **These quizzes must be completed each week by Friday at 11:59pm, you must answer all questions on the quizzes correctly and you will have as many attempts as required to do so.** Any quiz completed between midnight on Friday and midnight on Sunday will count as a late assignment but after midnight on Sunday the quiz will be considered missing. **NOTE: Each week's quiz must be completed in order to unlock the next week's module and content – even if it's completed after midnight on Sunday as a missing assignment. You can't move on in the course if you do not complete the weekly quiz – no exceptions.**

### **List of Assignments**

**Detailed instructions and requirements for all assignments will be made available on Canvas a minimum of 2 weeks before the due date.**

**Essay #1: Formal Analysis (3-4 pages)**

Making use of the terminology, theories, and examples laid out in Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* perform a close formal analysis of between one and three pages from Lemire and Smallwood's *Moon Knight: Lunatic*. As the name suggests, a formal analysis **gives priority to the form of an artwork** (how it is made, composed, and designed) and considers the ways in which those formal elements shape our perception of the content (the plot, themes, or subject of the work). Therefore, the assignment should not summarize or analyze *Moon Knight's* plot. It should focus exclusively on its formal elements.

**Essay # 2 Option One: A Year of the Daily Strip (3-4 pages):** Prompts will allow for a range of essay topics considering the form of the daily comic strip in relation to either Herriman's *Krazy and Ignatz* or Schulz's *Peanuts*. Detailed guidelines and requirements will be available on Canvas.

**Essay #2 Option Two or Essay #3 (Expanded Option): Innocence of Corruption? (3-4 pages)** Prompts will allow for a range of essay topics considering the formal and thematic elements of *Archie* comics, the quintessentially innocent comic, or *EC Comics*, the most prominent example of "morally corrupting" comics during the 1954 Congressional Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency. Detailed guidelines and requirements will be available on Canvas.

**(Expanded Option) Essay #4: Magical Realism or Revisionism? (3-4 pages)** Prompts will allow for a range of essay topics considering the formal and thematic elements of Hernandez's *Heartbreak Soup* or Brubaker and Philips' *Criminal: Last of the Innocent*. Detailed guidelines and requirements will be available on Canvas.

**Open Topic Final Essay (6-8 pages) or Expanded Final Essay (10-12 pages)** For your final essay, you may write about any of the texts we have studied this term. **Choose a topic that you wish we could have spent more time discussing and use this essay as an opportunity to find out more about it, and write your best thoughts about it.** You are encouraged to consult additional critical resources (academic essays, online discussions, creator-interviews, etc.) to supplement your work, as long as they are properly cited (according to MLA or Chicago methods of academic citation). Once again, these essays should combine formal analysis with a larger claim or argument. I encourage you to discuss your topic with me, either through Canvas Inbox or during my scheduled on campus office hours.

**(Expanded Option) Tracing Project:** This project gives you the opportunity to draw on what you've learned from class, reading McCloud, and working through Smiley's *Let's Make Comics!* to trace two pages from one of our required books of comics (you'll choose which) and annotate your tracings with notes. Detailed instructions and requirements will be available on Canvas.

**(Expanded Option) Creation Project:** This project gives you the opportunity to build on what you've learned from class, reading McCloud, and working through Smiley's *Let's Make Comics* draw a 2-4 page standalone comic or comic "excerpt" (i.e. not a free-standing, complete comic, but a single scene). Detailed instructions and requirements will be available on Canvas.

**Technological Requirements and Additional Resources and Information Available on Course Website**