Welcome to this revised, online version of ENG 280.

I know that many of you are disappointed that we cannot meet in person this term. I certainly am, and I fervently wish things could be otherwise.

But although we cannot proceed as we might have hoped, we can still:

- engage our intellects and expand the horizons of our knowledge through purposeful reading;
- explore a range of exciting, challenging, and influential comics and graphic novels from the past one hundred years;
- become familiar with some of the interpretive responses and intellectual debates that these works have already inspired;
- expand our conceptual vocabulary and historical knowledge in ways that will improve our understanding of those comics and graphic novels;
- develop our observational and analytic skills;
- employ our minds and our creative instincts to produce our own original works of interpretation.

This document addresses some of the changes forced upon us by the online format, and provides guidelines for procedures that may be unfamiliar. It also outlines the basic requirements of the course, in the manner of a traditional syllabus. (Detailed assignment descriptions are provided separately.)

Please read through the entire document carefully. Then, if you have any further questions, please feel free to reach out to me, your GE, or your FIG TA. (See below for contact information.)

College-level courses are supposed to be challenging, and our current circumstances don’t make things any easier. We often experience a certain amount of frustration and anxiety when we learn new skills, even during a “normal” school term! So remember, when you feel these feelings, it doesn’t necessarily mean that something is wrong—it is to be expected—and we are here to help.

Course Description

This class offers an introduction to the academic discipline of Comics Studies.

We will study a wide variety of comic-art forms (the newspaper strip, the serialized comic book, the graphic novel) and genres (humor, horror, memoir) by a diverse set of creators from the past one-hundred years. You will also be required to read some works of contemporary comics scholarship.

You will be required to produce brief written responses to pre-assigned reading questions on a weekly basis; you will also write one formal analysis paper (due on Friday October 30th), and either a traditional final paper or a creative final project. (More detail on these assignments will be provided separately.)
Required Texts

Jeff Lemire and Greg Smallwood  Moon Knight: Lunatic
Emily Carroll  Through the Woods
Junji Ito  Uzumaki
Nick Drnaso  Sabrina
Gilbert Hernandez  Heartbreak Soup
Lynda Barry  One Hundred Demons
John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, Nate Powell  March Book One

These books are all available for purchase at The Duck Store or through Amazon.com. A small number of copies will also be available at our best local comics shop, Books With Pictures, in downtown Eugene at 99 W Broadway C. (Founded and owned by UO Ph.D. Andréa Gilroy, this store is well worth a visit, even if you purchase your course texts from elsewhere.)

Remember, it is **your responsibility** to ensure that you have access to these texts. A number of additional readings will be supplied throughout the term as PDFs; always check Canvas a few days in advance of every class to make sure you have read all the required readings.

Participation Requirements and Grading

You should anticipate devoting an average of nine hours per week to this course (on top of the time spent in our online lectures and discussion sections), with that number rising to fourteen hours when longer assignments are due.

Please read all assigned materials for the day in question prior to signing on for class. For our synchronous (real time) discussions, please be sure to sign in on time, have appropriate materials on hand (course readings, paper and pen for taking notes), and be ready to focus on the topics of the day.

Grades will be based on weekly reading responses totaling 60% of your final grade; a mid-term formal analysis worth 20%; and either a final paper or creative assignment, also worth 20%. Detailed assignment descriptions with due dates will be provided separately.

In accordance with administrative guidelines during this national crisis, we will not penalize students for non-attendance of lectures or discussions. However, we will continue to reward students who take an active and engaged role in discussion by offering a measure of discretionary extra-credit (up to a third of a letter grade), which may be awarded for distinguished class participation. (Please note: This does not mean that you get points merely for talking or contributing to the “chat”. But students who consistently demonstrate familiarity with the readings, who advance our discussions by asking pertinent questions, and who ground their observations in specific details from the texts will be rewarded for their contributions.) In addition, please bear in mind that non-attendance will limit your understanding of the required texts and probably compromise your performance, even without direct penalty.

Late Work

Work is due by the times indicated on the assignments. Late assignments will be downgraded by a third of a letter grade for each day they are late, unless explicit permission for an extension has been granted in advance by your GE.

Extensions

Extensions will only be granted in the event of emergencies (for example, illness, a family crisis, or similar circumstance). Please request the extension as soon as you know it is required, and give your GE realistic
estimate of the time you will need to complete the work. We understand that life can sometimes throw us for a loop, wrecking even the most carefully laid plans, and we are more than willing to offer reasonable accommodations when we can; but we can only do so if we are informed. So, above all, stay in touch.

Contact Information

Outside of our scheduled synchronous (real time) online discussions, all announcements and general emails will be made via Canvas. These will be automatically forwarded to your UO email. (Check and adjust your settings under Account > Notifications if you would also like to receive announcements via text.) The Professor, GE and FIG TA will each host office hours via Zoom at the times listed below. You can also email us with questions at any time throughout the term, as usual.

**Professor Ben Saunders**
Email: ben@uoregon.edu  
Online Office Hours: Fridays 2-4 pm or by appointment.

Email Professor Saunders during the prior week to set up an office-hours Zoom meeting. (Please assume forty-eight hours of notice if you need to schedule an appointment outside of regular hours.)

**GE Alex Newsom**
Email: anewsom@uoregon.edu  
Online Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 1-2 pm; Friday 1.30-2.30 pm

**FIG TA Emily Duru**
Email: eduru@uoregon.edu  
Online Office Hours: By Appointment

Technical Requirements, Guidance, and Best Practices

The primary platforms that we will be using for this online course are Canvas and Zoom. If you have questions about accessing and using Canvas, visit the Canvas support page. Canvas and Technology Support is also available by phone or live chat: Monday–Sunday | 6 a.m.–12 a.m. 541-346-4357 | livehelp.uoregon.edu

Specific Guidelines for Best Practices Using Zoom:

Zoom is an accessible online platform for video and audio conferencing.

You will be sent an invitation prior to each Zoom meeting via email. If you do not already have the Zoom app on your device, you will be prompted to download it the first time you click on the URL inviting you to the meeting.

- Please make the same effort to join the meeting on time that you would make to arrive on time for class. **Just as in a traditional class, it can be disruptive when participants join late.** We will try to schedule things so that people can join the meeting up to ten minutes prior to the officially scheduled start of each session.

- **Always be mindful that others can see you and your surroundings if your camera is on.** If you prefer to keep your camera off, that’s fine—but (assuming your environment is not distracting), we would love to see your faces. It helps to make our Zoom sessions feel more like a regular class meeting, and it may also help you to pay more focused attention.

- Having said that, it is very important that you find a quiet setting from which to participate, without background noise or activity; anything else can be disruptive, not just to you, but to the teacher and your fellow classmates. If you know you cannot prevent others around you
from moving into the frame, making noise, or creating other possible distractions, it is better that you turn your camera off.

- Please do not consult your phones or otherwise attempt to multitask during our online class meetings; it conveys disrespect to the teacher and to your fellow classmates who are there to learn, and it is (again) potentially distracting. Instead, treat our time online as if it were a regular class, and conduct yourself accordingly; turn off your phone and put it away at the start of the session.

- Similarly, please ensure you have a pen and paper for notetaking at the start of the session. It is better than taking notes on the same computer screen that you are using to attend the class—and you will also be less tempted to check email or respond to other notifications if you have a pen and paper on hand. (Doodling during class, even if you just draw endless spirals, *Uzumaki* style, is preferable and more in the spirit of our inquiries than, say, checking your FB page. If you know you can be distracted when online—and seriously, is there anyone who has not had that experience?—try doodling instead, and see if it helps; you can even take pictures of your most inspired doodles after the class and send them to us if you like.)

- Because this is a large class, we will mute everyone’s audio except for when you are actively contributing. You can indicate when you want to contribute by using the “raise hand” function in the Chat bar. You can also ask questions or offer insights during the lectures or in response to your classmates using the Chat bar. Please confine questions and observations to the subject matter of the class—just as you would in a more traditional learning environment.

**Academic Integrity**

Academic dishonesty will result in an automatic failing grade. In addition, all incidents of plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.

Plagiarism is the use of another person’s words or ideas without due acknowledgment. The use of all external sources (whether quoted directly or paraphrased) must be properly documented. Cutting and pasting from online sources without due acknowledgment is plagiarism; but so is rephrasing someone else’s work if you do so without acknowledging the source; it is also considered plagiarism if you buy a paper or ask someone else to do academic work in your name.

To avoid the charge of plagiarism you should:

- Accurately quote the original author’s words when you are quoting.
- Enclose the quotation within quotation marks.
- Follow the quotation with an in-text citation.
- Introduce quotations with a phrase that includes the author's name (EG “Baxter argues that…”)

In addition:

- If you paraphrase someone else’s ideas or words rather than quoting directly, you still must cite the source for all the ideas and concepts that you are paraphrasing, with in-text citations, footnotes, and phrasing that includes the author’s name.
- Always provide a list of references with full citation information at the end of the paper.

Remember, it is your responsibility to know what plagiarism is. Ignorance is not considered a defense in cases of academic dishonesty; those who claim to have committed plagiarism “by accident” will not be excused.

For further guidance, see the UO library website (under “How-To Guides” on the library homepage) for more on citation practices. If you remain uncertain as to what constitutes plagiarism, definitions are available in the
Inclusive Learning Environments

This is an inclusive learning environment. Please contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu for additional resources and support if there are aspects of the instruction or course design that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. If the AEC determines that you need accommodations, please get in touch with Professor Saunders as soon as possible, so we can make appropriate adjustments.

Course Content Advisory

Some people still think of comics as a form of children’s literature. This is a misapprehension. Just like novels and movies, comics treat adult themes and subject matter. As such, you can expect to encounter depictions of sex acts, violence, and profane language in these texts. In addition, some texts we read may express historical attitudes that we now broadly reject as a society; some may express political or religious ideas that do not accord with your own strongly held beliefs; and some may simply fail to satisfy your personal aesthetic preferences.

The ability to adopt an attitude of critical distance when discussing difficult and distressing representations—or even just works that we don’t much care for—is fundamental to the process of studying the arts and humanities at the college level. To do this intellectual work we must also attend to the role played by different contexts (historical, institutional, national, political, personal) in the shaping of meaning.

It may help to remember that when we discuss artworks in a scholarly way we are trying to move beyond the simplistic binary logic of a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” vote. That’s why you are not required to like everything you will be asked to read, but are nevertheless required to read it.

To take a scholarly approach to literature and the arts does not mean we cannot take escapist pleasure in our reading. I can still enjoy losing myself in a book. But escapism is not the primary motive for scholarly reading: instead, our primary motive is the acquisition of knowledge (perhaps a more rarified form of pleasure). To gain scholarly knowledge, we need to be able to approach our readings with an open mind, and an awareness that a text or artwork does not have to express current values or reflect our own perspective in order to be worthy of careful analysis, interpretation, and discussion.

Indeed, as history shows, “current values” are not set in stone but always subject to revision and change. The study of art and literature is in part the study of these shifting processes of evaluation and interpretation. It becomes our job to try to understand why values—aesthetic and political—become established, and why and how they change. (For example, one question this course asks is why comics were once regarded as the lowest form of print culture—not worthy of the designation of either “art” or “literature”—and why and how that changed, so that comics are now preserved in libraries, taught in schools, exhibited in galleries, and studied at the college level.)

The cultivation of such open-mindedness and contextual awareness is good practice not merely for scholars of literature, art, and media; it may also help prepare us to live as members of a diverse and inclusive society by encouraging a perspective of informed tolerance.
## Sequence of Readings

### Week One: Questions of History and Definition

- **Tues 9/29**  
  Lecture: Comics History/Comics Form  
  Readings:  
  - Charles Hatfield, *An Art of Tensions* (pdf)  
  - Scott McCloud, excerpts from *Understanding Comics* (pdf)

- **Thur 10/1**  
  Discussion: McCloud, Hatfield, Moon Knight  
  Readings:  
  - Jeff Lemire and Greg Smallwood, *Moon Knight: Lunatic*

### Week Two: It’s a Krazy World

- **Tues 10/6**  
  Lecture: Comics and/as Modernity  
  Readings:  
  - Douglas Wolk (pdf)  
  - Robert Harvey (pdf)  
  - Ian Gordon (pdf)  
  - George Herriman (pdf #1)

- **Thur 10/8**  
  Discussion: The Politics and Poetics of *Krazy Kat*  
  Readings:  
  - George Herriman, Selected *Krazy Kat* Sundays (pdf #2)

### Week Three: Losing All The Time

- **Tues 10/13**  
  Lecture: Re-Introducing *Peanuts*  
  Readings:  
  - Charles Schulz, Selected *Peanuts* strips (pdf)

- **Thur 10/15**  
  Discussion: Sex/Gender/Peanuts  
  Readings:  
  - Charles Schulz, Selected *Peanuts* strips (pdf)  
  - Ben Saunders, *Peppermint Patty’s Desire* (pdf)

### Week Four: The Horror Genre (Part One)

- **Tues 10/20**  
  Lecture: The 1950s War on Comics  
  Readings:  
  - Amy Kiste Nyberg, “The Senate Investigation” (pdf)  
  - Selected 1950s Horror Comics (pdf)  
  - Supplemental (not required): David Hajdu “The Triumph of Doctor Payne” (pdf)

- **Thur 10/22**  
  Discussion: Old School Horror Comics  
  Readings:  
  - Selected 1950s Horror Comics (pdfs)

### Week Five: The Horror Genre (Part Two)

- **Tues 10/27**  
  Discussion: Theorizing Horror  
  Readings:  
  - Jeffrey Cohen, Monster Culture (pdf)  
  - Noel Carroll, *The Nature of Horror* (pdf)  
  - Selected 1950s Horror Comics (pdfs)

- **Thur 10/29**  
  Discussion: The Gothic Fairy Tale  
  Readings:  
  - Emily Carroll, *Through The Woods*

### Week Six: The Horror Genre (Part Three)
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<td>Patterns and Curses</td>
<td>Junji Ito, <em>Uzumaki</em>, Chapters 1-14</td>
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<td>Week Seven: Real-World Horror</td>
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<td>Tues 11/10</td>
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<td>Loss, Grief, and Conspiracy Theories</td>
<td>Nick Drnaso, <em>Sabrina</em> pp. 1-118</td>
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<td>Thur 11/12</td>
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<td>Re-thinking Comic Book “Realism”</td>
<td>Nick Drnaso, <em>Sabrina</em> pp. 119-end</td>
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<td>Destructive Desires</td>
<td>Gilbert Hernandez, <em>Heartbreak Soup</em></td>
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<td>Week Nine: Creativity and Memory</td>
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<td>Tues 11/24</td>
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<td>Conjuring and Exorcising</td>
<td>Linda Barry, <em>One Hundred Demons</em></td>
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<td>Thursday 11/26</td>
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<td>HAPPY THANKSGIVING!</td>
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<td>Week Ten: Painful Progress</td>
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<td>Tues 12/1</td>
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<td>History and/as Memoir</td>
<td>John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, Nate Powell, <em>March Book One</em></td>
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<td>Thur 12/3</td>
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<td>No class.</td>
<td>Additional Office Hours By Appointment</td>
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