

ENGLISH 280: Introduction to Comics Studies

FALL 2021 | WEB | CRN
22056

JAN 4-MARCH 12

Instructors:
Prof. Kelp-
Stebbins*

(she/her/hers)

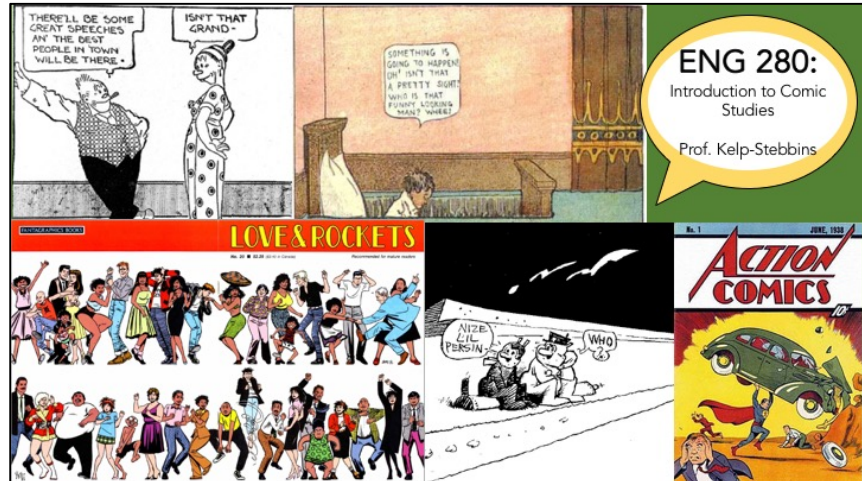
Contact: kkelp@uoregon.edu

Secondary: <https://uoregon.zoom.us/my/kkelp>

Office Hours: M 2-5pm, I will be available during this for Zoom appointments. Email me to schedule a time or to make arrangements to meet outside of office hours.

Please do not hesitate to contact me by email anytime that you have a question or issue with the course; I will respond as soon as I can.

*My students—that includes you—are always welcome to address me as Dr. K or Prof. K in email, Canvas, and Zoom interactions.



Course Description

4 Credits, Fulfills A & L, English Major, Lower-Division Elective, English Minor, Comics Studies Minor

Welcome to ENG 280. I want to begin by highlighting the ways our online format impacts our plans and policies. Most important is that we take care of each other and ourselves to the best of our abilities. I am sure that I share many of your disappointments regarding the constraints and drawbacks of the current pandemic situation. This is an unprecedented moment in history, and I am committed to our course, and to engaging and working with every one of you as we work together to:

- Be moved and challenged by comics and graphic novels;
- Practice close-reading and critical analysis, which are cross cutting, transferrable skills;
- Engage in ethical dialogue that widens our perspectives and deepens our knowledge;
- Affirm our hopefulness about the future by continuing to learn and answer questions/practice skills/examine subjects that help us appreciate the beautiful even in a time of great challenge;
- Treat each other with kindness and care and work to develop an online learning environment that is safe and supportive.

This course provides an introduction to the analysis of comics and graphic narratives in terms of their poetics, genres, forms, history, and the academic discipline of Comics Studies. Our multifaceted examination will balance close readings of primary texts with in-depth research

and analysis of the development of the form in U.S. culture. By reading a range of comic-art forms (the newspaper strip, the comic book, the graphic novel, etc.), informed by several examples of contemporary comics scholarship, we will investigate the medium's complex interplay of word and image as well as the role of cultural factors in the publication history of comics.

Required Texts

- *Watchmen*, Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons
- *The Girl from H.O.P.P.E.R.S.*, Jaime Hernandez
- *Safe Area Gorazde*, Joe Sacco
- *The Best We Could Do*, Thi Bui
- *Good Talk*, Mira Jacob
- Other **required readings** are posted to Canvas.

All of our books are available at the Duck Store, which is now offering free shipping for all textbooks.

Because this is an online course, you will need reliable access to the internet. If you need to request a laptop on loan for the term, please visit the [UO Loaner Laptop Request](#) site. UO also has resources for [low-cost and free internet options](#). If you require further assistance, please contact the [College of Arts and Sciences IT](#).

Course Objectives

In this course, you will learn about the historical development of comics and how to apply a range of comics-specific reading strategies. Given the shift to remote instruction, our course will be divided into ten modules with required readings and assignments. This course constitutes four credits, or 120 hours of student engagement; therefore, you are expected to spend 10-14 hours on the course each week. You will critically read and post questions about each assigned reading; you will annotate secondary texts; you will complete a midterm assignment; you will write one short essay and a longer final project in which you demonstrate your understanding of course materials and concepts.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT INVENTORY

Educational activity	Hours student engaged
Assigned Readings and Discussion Board Posts	60
Annotations	10
Midterm	5
Writing Assignments (1 micro essay, 1 final project)	40
Lecture Quizzes	5
Total hours:	120

Course Requirements

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

25% Discussion Posts

15% Annotations

15% Midterm

15% Micro-Essay

25% Final Project

5% Lecture Quizzes

Discussion Board Posts: We have a course discussion board on our Canvas site. You are expected to post regularly to our board based on the instructions on the syllabus and Canvas. Make sure that you complete your postings when they are due.

Reading Annotations: When a digital secondary reading is assigned, you will be responsible for submitting annotations online. Instructions for annotations will be posted to Canvas. You will also annotate one two-page spread from *The Best We Could Do*.

Micro-Essay: You will write one short essay and upload it to Canvas.

Midterm: We will have a midterm examination at the end of Week 4. This exam will provide you with an opportunity to demonstrate your attention to course concepts and materials.

Final Project: Your final project should reflect everything that you have learned in the course. You will use the course concepts in order to analyze a graphic narrative—either one that you produce yourself, or one from the required readings.

Lecture Quizzes: Lecture quizzes will allow you to demonstrate everything that you learn from lectures posted online.

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.

GRADING SCHEMA

A 100 % to 93.5% **A-** < 93.5 % to 89.5% **B+** < 89.5 % to 86.5% **B** < 86.5 % to 83.5%
B- < 83.5 % to 79.5% **C+** < 79.5 % to 76.5% **C** < 76.5 % to 73.5% **C-** < 73.5 % to 69.5%
D+ < 69.5 % to 66.5% **D** < 66.5 % to 63.5% **D-** < 63.5 % to 60.0% **F** < 60.0 % to 0.0%

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Read comics and graphic narratives with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions; 2. Draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts; 3. Perform critical, formal analyses of comics and graphic narratives; 4. Write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose.

Accessible Education Statement of Support

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 360 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoac@uoregon.edu.

Course Policies

COURSE POLICIES

Class Sessions

We will hold an online course orientation session on January 4 at 2pm. This session will last approximately one hour, and we will discuss course requirements as well as our Canvas site. I will record this session and post it on our Canvas site. This is the only time that we will “meet” virtually. The course will be conducted via online assignments, lectures, and modules.

Communication

Our class will communicate through our Canvas site. Announcements and emails are archived there and automatically forwarded to your UO email, and can even reach you by text. Check and adjust your settings under Account and enable Text Notifications.

I will host “live” office hours through Zoom each week on Mondays from 2pm-5pm, and I also have a running discussion forum on our Canvas called “Class Questions and Answers” for the entire group to ask and answer. I welcome meetings outside my regular office hours, too, knowing that there is considerable uncertainty in all of our lives right now. Just email me, kkelp@uoregon.edu, to set a time. If you experience Internet access challenges, my office phone, (541) 346-1520, is set up to deliver voicemails to my inbox.

Because we will not meet in person, it is especially important that you ask for any clarification you might need. If you are unsure about an assignment, a Canvas or technology issue, a reading, or a concept, ask me. It’s also okay to contact me if there is an idea that excites or interests you and which you want to discuss in more detail. Please also be in touch to tell me how you are doing in these difficult times—are you having a tough week? Having troubling with some aspect of the course? I would like to strategize with you. I will do everything I can to help you succeed.

RESPECT, TOLERANCE, AND DIFFICULT CONTENT

A respectful environment is essential to facilitate discussions and to create a safe space for students to share their thoughts. 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 that you may find troubling.

We will critically engage with these texts and their underlying ideologies online discussions based on mutual respect and understanding. You may wish to further interrogate these issues in your writing as well. Regardless of your personal beliefs, disagreement and ignorance are never excuses for cruelty or intolerance. At times, discomfort can be productive when our ideas are challenged, but at no time will we tolerate sexist, racist, homophobic, or transphobic comments in our class platforms and interactions. I reserve the right to sanction students if they do not adhere to these guidelines. Furthermore, the UO Student Conduct Code provides clear guidelines regarding student behavior. You are responsible for acting in accordance with this code or you will be subject to disciplinary action. Additionally, if you are having particular difficulty with a text, or feel especially troubled by a specific discussion, please let me know.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND HONESTY

The UO Student Conduct Code defines plagiarism as: “using the ideas or writings of another as one’s own.” Plagiarism is not only detrimental to your own development as a scholar and a writer; it is also a serious violation of UO policy. Any plagiarized assignment will result in a failing assignment grade, the threat of a failing course grade, and academic sanctions as determined by the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards. Please contact me with any questions about how to avoid plagiarism.

HARRASSMENT, ASSAULT, DISCRIMINATION

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 have experienced gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, getting academic and housing accommodations, getting legal protective orders, and accessing other help. If you tell me about harassment or assault, I am not required to report this information to anyone unless you request that I do so. I am required to consult with a confidential UO employee (someone with legal confidentiality, such as a counseling professional or a crisis center advocate) to ensure that you are supported. If you decide to make a report, I and other UO employees will help you to do so. My goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available and that you 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 or visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu.

YOUR WELL BEING

Life at college can be very complicated. Students often feel overwhelmed or stressed, experience anxiety or depression, struggle with relationships, or just need help navigating challenges in their life. If you're facing such challenges, you don't need to handle them on your own--there's help and support on campus.

As your instructor if I believe you may need additional support, I will express my concerns, the reasons for them, and refer you to resources that might be helpful. It is not my intention to know the details of what might be bothering you, but simply to let you know I care and that help is available. Getting help is a courageous thing to do—for yourself and those you care about.

[University Health Services](#) help students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. If you need general resources on coping with stress or want to talk with another student who has been in the same place as you, visit the Duck Nest (located in the EMU on the ground floor) and get help from one of the specially trained Peer Wellness Advocates.

University Counseling Services (UCS) has a team of dedicated staff members to support you with your concerns, many of whom can provide identity-based support. All clinical services are free and confidential. Find out more at counseling.uoregon.edu or by calling 541-346-3227 (anytime UCS is closed, the After-Hours Support and Crisis Line is available by calling this same number).

BASIC NEEDS

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students Office (346-3216, 164 Oregon Hall) for support.

The [UO Basic Needs Resource Guide](#) includes resources for food, housing, healthcare, childcare, transportation, technology, finances, and legal support.

Course Schedule

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.

Week 1: Course introductions

Jan 4-8	
Read/Watch	1) Syllabus and Canvas Site 2) Zoom Class Meeting 3) Week 1 Lecture
Do/Make	1) Discussion board (Due 1/6 by 5pm) 2) Getting to know you quiz (Due 1/6 by 5pm) 2) Syllabus quiz (Due 1/8 by 5pm)

Week 2: Newspaper Comics

Jan 11-15	
Read/Watch	1) Week 2 Lecture 2) Newspaper Comics: “Hogan’s Alley”/“The Yellow Kid” .pdfs “Little Nemo in Slumberland” .pdfs “Krazy Kat” .pdfs “Bringing Up Father” .pdfs “Peanuts” .pdfs Newspaper strips .pdf “Famous Funnies” .pdf 3) Newgarden and Karasik, “How to Read Nancy” .pdf
Do/Make	1) Discussion board post (Due 1/13 by 5pm) 2) “How to Read Nancy” annotations (Due 1/13 by 5pm) 3) Lectures quiz (Due 1/15 by 5pm)

Week 3: Early Comic Books→Watchmen

Jan 18-22	
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Read/Watch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Week 3 Lecture 2) Comic Books: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action Comics .pdf Crime Does Not Pay .pdf Young Romance .pdf Crime SuspenStories .pdf 3) Moore and Gibbons <i>Watchmen</i> Chapters 1-4
Do/Make	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Comic Books discussion board post (Due 1/20 by 5pm) 2) <i>Watchmen</i> discussion board post (Due 1/22 by 5pm)

Week 4: Watchmen

Jan 25-29	
Read/Watch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Week 4 Lecture 2) Moore and Gibbons <i>Watchmen</i> Chapters 5-12 3) Excerpt from McCloud, <i>Understanding Comics</i> .pdf
Do/Make	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Watchmen discussion board post (Due 1/27 by 5pm) 2) McCloud annotations (Due 1/27 by 5pm) 3) Midterm (Due 1/29 by 5pm)

Week 5: Underground and Alternative Comics

Feb 1-5	
Read/Watch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Week 5 Lecture 2) Hernandez, <i>The Girl from H.O.P.P.E.R.S.</i> (1-202) 3) Excerpt from Hatfield, <i>Alternative Comics</i> .pdf
Do/Make	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Alternative Comics discussion board post (Due 2/3 by 5pm) 2) Hatfield annotations (Due 2/3 by 5pm) 3) Course reflection survey (Due 2/5)

Week 6: Alternative Comics and Comics Journalism

Feb 8-12	
Read/Watch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Week 6 Lecture 2) Hernandez, <i>The Girl from H.O.P.P.E.R.S.</i> (203-284) 3) Sacco, <i>Safe Area Goražde</i> (beginning-75)
Do/Make	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>The Girl from H.O.P.P.E.R.S.</i> discussion board post (Due 2/10 by 5pm) 2) <i>Safe Area Goražde</i> discussion board post (Due 2/12 by 5pm) 3) Lectures quiz (Due 2/12 by 5pm)

Week 7: Comics Journalism

Feb 15-19	
Read/Watch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Week 7 Lecture 2) Sacco, <i>Safe Area Goražde</i> (76-227)

Do/Make	1) Discussion board post (Due 2/17 by 5pm) 2) Micro Essay due (Due 2/19 by 5pm)
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Week 8: Graphic Memoir

Feb 22-26	
Read/Watch	1) Week 8 Lecture 2) Bui, <i>The Best We Could Do</i> (1-172) 3) Excerpt from Baetens and Frey, <i>The Graphic Novel: An Introduction</i> .pdf <i>The Best We Could Do</i> (130-262)
Do/Make	1) <i>The Best We Could Do</i> discussion board (Due Feb 24 by 5pm) 2) Baetens and Frey annotation (Due 2/26 by 5pm) 3) <i>The Best We Could Do</i> annotation (Due 2/26 by 5pm)

Week 9: Graphic Memoir

Mar 1-5	
Read/Watch	1) Week 9 Lecture 2) Bui, <i>The Best We Could Do</i> (173-end) 3) <i>Good Talk</i> (1-105)
Do/Make	1) <i>The Best We Could Do</i> discussion board (Due Mar 3 by 5pm) 2) <i>Good Talk</i> Discussion Board (Due Mar 5 by 5pm) 3) Lectures quiz (Due Mar 5 by 5pm)

Week 10: Good Talk and Conclusion

Mar 8-12	
Read/Watch	1) Week 10 Lecture 2) <i>Good Talk</i> (106-349)
Do/Make	Course Conclusion discussion board (Due Mar 10 by 5pm) Final Project due by 3/15 by 5pm