



ENGLISH 399: Comics Journalism

FALL 2021 | MW 12:15-1:45 PM | CRN 22075 | 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.

Land Acknowledgement

The University of Oregon is located on Kalapuya Ilihi, the traditional indigenous homeland of the Kalapuya people. Following treaties between 1851 and 1855, Kalapuya people were dispossessed of their indigenous homeland by the United States government and forcibly removed to the Coast Reservation in Western Oregon. Today, descendants are citizens of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians of Oregon, and continue to make important contributions in their communities, at UO, and across the land we now refer to as Oregon.

Course Description

4 Credits, Fulfills A & L, English Major, C-Literature 1789-Present, E-Media/Folklore/Culture, English Minor, Comics Studies Minor

Welcome to ENG 399. I want to highlight the ways in which our remote 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. However, I am inspired by the possibilities for ethical response that this class will provide. 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:

- Understand Comics Journalism as a specific form with a commitment to social justice;
- 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 community 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.

In the last two decades, comics journalism has become one of the most provocative forms of creative nonfiction and an essential field of comics art. University of Oregon alum Joe Sacco, who received his BA in journalism in 1981, effectively founded contemporary comics journalism through his graphic reportage in *Safe Area Goražde* (2000), *Palestine* (2001), *Paying the Land* (2020), and numerous other projects. In this class, we will engage with primary examples of the genre and critically interrogate its categorical difference from other genres of comics and nonfiction. Repudiating both the ever-increasing rapidity of the 24-hour news cycle as well as the valorization of journalistic objectivity, journalists who use comics and graphic narrative to document current events and human rights struggles insist that careful witnessing takes time and involves human subjects. From displaced persons in refugee camps (Sacco 2013; Glidden 2016) to frontline workers in a pandemic (Bui 2020), the humans who drive comics journalism are likewise rendered by the work of human hands, which draw and record their stories. In the age of Russian bots and fake news, comics journalism reframes conceptualizations of accuracy and truth.

Required Texts

- *Safe Area Goražde*, Joe Sacco, ISBN 9781560974703
- *Rolling Blackouts*, Sarah Glidden, ISBN 9781770462557
- *Guantanamo Voices*, Sarah Mirk, et al., ISBN 9781627799034
- *Paying the Land*, Joe Sacco, ISBN 9781419746901
- 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 a remote 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 journalism and learn how to develop your own comics reportage. Given the shift to remote instruction, our course will be divided into ten weeks with required readings and assignments; you will be expected to attend sessions as specified in the syllabus. This course constitutes four credits, or 120 hours of student engagement; therefore, you are expected to spend 10-14 hours on the course each

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 literary and cultural texts 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 journalism and other cultural texts; 4. Write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose; 5. Employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments.

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 uoaec@uoregon.edu.

Course Policies

Class Sessions

We will meet via Zoom for our class discussions. Please be on-time for our class meetings and keep your video on. There are some weeks in the schedule when only some of the class will meet via Zoom. We will discuss these days together.

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 Canvas Chat each week on Mondays from 11am-2pm, 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.

Ask for clarification. 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

Schedule subject to change. Please pay attention to when your group is meeting on Zoom.

Week 1: Course introductions

Jan 4	Jan 6
GREEN + YELLOW: Zoom Introductions	G+Y: Zoom What Is Comics Journalism?
Readings Due: Syllabus	Readings Due: Joe Sacco “A Manifesto Anyone?” (Canvas)
Assignments Due: 1. Syllabus quiz 2. Introduce yourself discussion board	Dan Archer “ What Is Comics Journalism? ” Josh Neufeld “ Adventures in Comics Journalism ” Thi Bui, Sarah Mirk, et al. “ In/Vulnerable ” Ben Passmore, “ Takin Em Down ” S.I. Rosenbaum and Arrigon Starr, “ How to Have a Powwow in a Pandemic ”

	Assignments Due: Reading discussion board
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Week 2: *Safe Area Goražde*

Jan 11	Jan 13
G: Zoom Discuss <i>Safe Area Goražde</i> , 1-75 Y: Group discussion board and brainstorm assignment	Y: Zoom Discuss <i>Safe Area Goražde</i> , 75-150 G: Group discussion board and brainstorm assignment
Readings Due: Sacco, <i>Safe Area Goražde</i> , 1-75 Hatfield "An Art of Tensions: The Otherness of Comics Reading" Assignments Due: 1. Reading discussion board 2. Brainstorm board+preliminary schedule	Readings Due: Sacco, <i>Safe Area Goražde</i> , 75-150 Assignments Due: 1. Reading discussion board 2. Brainstorm board+preliminary schedule

Week 3: *Safe Area Goražde*

Jan 18	Jan 20
Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday	G+Y: Zoom Discuss <i>Safe Area Goražde</i> , 150-end and <i>Disaster Drawn</i> excerpts Readings Due: Discuss <i>Safe Area Goražde</i> , 150-end Chute, <i>Disaster Drawn</i> Chapter 5 Assignments Due: Reading discussion board

Week 4: *Rolling Blackouts*

Jan 25	Jan 27
Y: Zoom Discuss <i>Rolling Blackouts</i> , 1-140 G: Research, reporting, and progress discussion	G: Zoom Discuss <i>Rolling Blackouts</i> , 140-213 Y: Research, reporting, and progress discussion
Readings Due: Glidden, <i>Rolling Blackouts</i> , 1-140 Assignments Due: Reading discussion board	Readings Due: Glidden, <i>Rolling Blackouts</i> , 140-213 Assignments Due: Reading discussion board

Week 5:

Feb 1	Feb 3
G+Y: Zoom Discuss <i>Rolling Blackouts</i> with Sarah Glidden Readings Due: <i>Rolling Blackouts</i> 215-298 Assignments Due: Reading discussion board	G+Y: Zoom Discuss <i>Guantanamo Voices</i> , v-85 Readings Due: Mirk, <i>Guantanamo Voices</i> v-85

	Assignments Due: 1. Reading discussion board 2. Select your individual article for close-reading assignment
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Week 6:

Feb 8	Feb 10
G: Zoom Discuss <i>Guantanamo Voices</i> 86-155 Y: Work on scripts	Y: Zoom Discuss <i>Guantanamo Voices</i> 156-190 G: Work on scripts
Readings Due: Mirk, <i>Guantanamo Voices</i> 86-155 Assignments Due: 1. Reading discussion board 2. Submit preliminary script	Readings Due: <i>Guantanamo Voices</i> 156-190 Assignments Due: 1. Reading discussion board 2. Submit preliminary script 3. Close-reading micro-essay due Feb. 12

Week 7: Comics Journalism

Feb 15	Feb 17
G+Y: Discuss <i>Guantanamo Voices</i> and comics journalism with Sarah Mirk	G+Y: Discuss close-reading selections—to be posted
Readings Due: TBD Assignments Due: Reading Discussion Board	Readings Due: Selections from close-reading essay Assignments Due: Reading discussion board

Week 8:

Feb 22	Feb 24
Y: Zoom Discuss <i>Paying the Land</i> , 1-92 G: Finalizing sketches or storyboards collaboration	G: Zoom Discuss <i>Paying the Land</i> , 93-160 Y: Finalizing sketches or storyboards collaboration
Reading Due Sacco, <i>Paying the Land</i> , 1-92 Assignments Due: 1. Reading Discussion Board 2. Sketches or storyboards due	Readings Due: Sacco, <i>Paying the Land</i> , 93-160 Assignments Due: 1. Reading Discussion Board 2. Sketches or storyboards due

Week 9:

Mar 1	Mar 3
G+Y: Zoom Joe Sacco Discussion	G+Y: Zoom Discuss interactive comics journalism

<p>Reading Due Sacco, <i>Paying the Land</i>, 161-264 Assignments Due: Reading discussion board</p>	<p>Required Reading: Chapatte and Widman, "Inside Death Row" Jesús Cossio, "The War for Water" ("La Guerra por el Agua") "Interview with Archer" "Empathetic Media" Schlichting, "Interactive Graphic Journalism" Assignments Due: 1. Reading discussion board 2. Final Project Works Cited</p>
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Week 10: Journalism Presentations

Mar 8	Mar 10
<p>Group Y Presentations G+Y: Zoom</p>	<p>Group G Presentations G+Y: Zoom</p>
<p>All Projects due: 3/12 Reflection due: 3/16</p>	