

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG
ENGL-3980(3)-050
Topics in Comics and Graphic Narratives:
Non-Fiction Comic Books

Term: Fall 2014

Professor: Dr. Candida Rifkind

Time: Wed 6:00-9:00pm

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Office Hours: Wed 4:00-5:00pm & Thurs 12:30-1:30pm or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores a range of comic books and graphic narratives published in the last twenty-five years that tell non-fiction stories. Often, these real stories combine extraordinary events with everyday life. Although often associated in the popular imagination with fantasy, juvenile, and lighthearted subjects, these non-fiction comics show how graphic narratives can tell serious stories about world history (slavery, rebellion, war) and individual lives (coming-of-age, trauma, family) – and how the two often collide. The course is divided into three main modules, although there is overlap between them: history; biography; and autobiography. Throughout, we explore how the seemingly “unrealistic” medium of comics offers unique possibilities for visual storytelling, especially when it comes to real stories.

REQUIRED TEXTS (in order of reading):

Brown, Chester. *Louis Riel: a comic-strip biography*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2004. Print.

Baker, Kyle. *Nat Turner*. New York: Abrams, 2008. Print.

Geary, Rick. *The Borden Tragedy: Treasury of Victorian Murder*. New York: NBM, 1997. Print.

Chantler, Scott. *Two Generals*. Toronto: Emblem Editions, 2011. Print.

Kleist, Reinhold. *The Boxer: The True Story of Holocaust Survivor Harry Haft*. New York: SelfMadeHero, 2014. Print.

Satrapi, Marjane. *The Complete Persepolis*. New York: Pantheon, 2007. Print.

Barry, Lynda. *One! Hundred! Demons!* Seattle: Sasquatch, 2005. Print.

NB: In addition to the comic books, students will be required to read comics criticism and theory (posted to Nexus) to contextualize the creative works.

RECOMMENDED TEXT(S)

There are many websites dedicated to writing and research skills but not all of them are appropriate for academic writing. The following provide excellent information and help:

1. The University of Toronto Advice on Academic Writing website (especially good for getting started, understanding essay requirements, planning and writing the first draft):

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice>

2. Purdue University has one of the largest websites dedicated to writing skills (good for specific information about grammar and style – use this to understand the comments you get back on your papers and to correct writing errors). <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/sitemap.html>

3. On using the MLA style to cite and document sources in a research paper:

<http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/mla.php>

ASSIGNMENTS (more information for each assignment will be provided in class)

NB: If any of these due dates fall on a religious holiday not officially recognized by UW, please inform me well in advance.

Textual Analysis 1000 words, due at beginning of class on Oct. 1st 20%

Tracing Project 2 pages of tracings with notes + 2000 word critical analysis,
due at beginning of class on Nov. 19th 30%

Class Presentation 20%

15-20 min. oral presentation in groups of 2 = 10%;

1000 word individual written report due one week after presentation = 10%

Final Exam (3 hours on Dec. 3, 2014 from 6:00-9:00pm) 30%

The exam will be open book. Anticipate needing a minimum of four course texts (comic books) with you during the exam. You may not share books during the exam. You must use hard copies, not electronic versions, during the exam.

REMEMBER: You are responsible for your success in this course. If at any point in the year you have questions or concerns, it is up to you to bring those to me for discussion. You are always welcome to visit during office hours or to make an appointment to discuss any aspect of the course.

GRADING SCALE

A+	90 - 100%	GPA 4.50	C+	65 - 69%	GPA 2.5
A	85 - 89%	GPA 4.25	C	60 - 64%	GPA 2.0
A-	80 – 84%	GPA 4.0	D	50 - 59%	GPA 1.0
B+	75 - 79%	GPA 3.5	F	Below 50%	GPA 0
B	70 - 74%	GPA 3.0			

English Department Notes

1. This course outline should be considered a guideline only. Time constraints and other unforeseen factors may require that some of the above topics be omitted or covered in less detail than indicated.
2. Work submitted for evaluation must be either typed or text processed.
3. Cellular phones and other electronic devices **MUST** be turned off during classes.
4. It is the student's responsibility to retain a photocopy or digitized copy of **ALL** assignments submitted for grading; in the event of loss or theft, a duplicate copy is required.
5. Students are advised to read the pertinent pages of the current course calendar for the rules regarding Registration, Voluntary Withdrawals, Academic Misconduct including plagiarism, and Appeals. **Concerning plagiarism, please note** that as a general rule, an F in the course will be the penalty recommended by the English Departmental Review Committee to the Senate Committee on Academic Misconduct for plagiarism on major assignments in English Department courses.
6. Please note that registering in this course commits you to the date and time of the course final examination. If you are aware of possible conflicts with that date, please see me immediately during the first week of the course, in case you need to register in another course to accommodate the conflict. For appeals for deferred exams, please see the Calendar.
7. **Thursday, October 23, 2014** is the final date to withdraw without academic penalty from courses that begin on September 3, 2014 and end on November 27, 2014 of the Fall 2014 term.
8. The English Department wishes to ensure your right to privacy regarding handing in and getting back assignments is protected. Most assignments will be handed in and handed back in class or at the Instructor's office. If assignments are to be handled in another way and you are concerned about others having access to your work, you should attach to your assignment a self-addressed envelope that can be sealed. If this is not done, it is assumed that you have waived your concerns in this area.
9. Students will not be asked for identification when writing a test or examination.
10. Students are advised that the UW Bookstore may run out of textbooks early in the term. Also, the bookstore always ships textbooks back to the publisher if they are not purchased within the first few weeks of term. Students are responsible for communicating directly with the bookstore if they need to order texts or ask for texts to be held for them.
11. No unauthorized material or equipment may be brought with you to the final exam.
12. For more information regarding the English Department, please refer to our website at <http://english.uwinnipeg.ca>
13. Students with documented disabilities, temporary or chronic medical conditions, requiring academic accommodations for tests/exams (e.g., private space) or during lectures/laboratories (e.g., note-takers) are encouraged to contact Accessibility Services (AS) at 786-9771 or accessibilityservices@uwinnipeg.ca to discuss appropriate options. All information about a student's disability or medical condition remains confidential.
<http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/accessibility>.
14. Students who plan to conduct research interviews, focus groups, surveys, or any other method of collecting data from any person, even a family member, must obtain the approval of the

appropriate ethics committee before commencing data collection. Exceptions are research activities in class as a learning exercise. See <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/research/human-ethics.html> for submission requirements and deadlines.

15. All students, faculty and staff have the right to participate, learn and work in an environment that is free of harassment and discrimination. The UW Respectful Working and Learning Environment Policy may be found online at www.uwinnipeg.ca/respect.
16. UWinnipeg promotes a scent-free environment. Please be respectful of the needs of classmates and the instructor by avoiding the use of scented products while attending lectures. Exposure to perfumes and other scented products (such as lotion) can trigger serious health reactions in persons with asthma, allergies, migraines or chemical sensitivities.

Instructor's Notes

1. **Late Assignment Penalties:** I encourage you to speak with me (in person, not over email) in advance if you anticipate handing an assignment in late due to extenuating circumstances, such as illness or a personal/family emergency. **Note that having a lot of work to do for your other courses is not a reasonable excuse for a late assignment in this course.** Unless prior arrangements have been made or you present a medical/legal note explaining why your assignment has been handed in late, the penalty for a late assignment is: 10% off immediately when it is not submitted on the due date and 2% off each extra weekday it is late. No unexplained late assignments will be accepted after they are 7 weekdays late. Late assignments will not receive written comments.
2. **EMAIL:** I only respond to students' emails during regular work hours (Mon.-Fri. 9am-5pm) and I may take up to 24 hours to respond. Due to the high volume of junk mail I receive, I can only respond to emails sent from UW or Nexus student accounts. Do not email me from hotmail, yahoo, gmail, or other non-UW accounts. Please observe professional email etiquette and do not add me to any mailing lists.
3. **MOBILE DEVICES AND LAPTOPS:** Absolutely no texting in class. Bag texting is still texting. All mobile devices must be turned off and put away once class begins and remain off until it is over. **Laptop or iPad use requires the instructor's permission.** You may not record lectures without my prior permission.
4. **FOOD:** Please do not eat meals in class.

Class Schedule (subject to changes announced in class)

N = reading is posted to Nexus

Week	Reading (students are expected to have completed the readings before class)	Assignments and notes
Sep. 3	Introductions: what are comics? what is non-fiction?	Upload profile photo to Nexus
Sep. 10	<p>Critical Contexts</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scott McCloud, Ch. 3, "Blood in the Gutter," from <i>Understanding Comics</i> (N) 2. Charles Hatfield, "An Art of Tensions" from <i>A Comics Studies Reader</i> (N) 3. Douglas Wolk, "Pictures, Words, and the Spaces Between Them" (N) 	Comic Strip Workshop: Bring a hard copy of one newspaper or web comic strip (3-4 panels) and be prepared to discuss it in relation to this week's readings
Sep. 17	<p>Chester Brown, <i>Louis Riel</i>. (all)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chester Brown, "My Mom Was a Schizophrenic" (N) 2. Sean Rogers essay in Tenth Anniversary Ed. of <i>Louis Riel</i> (N) 	
Sep. 24	Special class tour of the Louis Riel exhibit at the St. Boniface Museum.	Meet at the museum, 494 Taché Ave, at 6:15pm. The tour begins at 6:30 sharp. You can take the 5:55pm #50 bus from UW to Provencher & Taché. Alternately, it's about a 30 min. walk from campus. Cost is \$6.50 + GST.
Oct. 1	<p>Kyle Baker, <i>Nat Turner</i>.</p> <p>Chaney, Michael. "Slave Memory Without Words in Kyle Baker's <i>Nat Turner</i>." <i>Callaloo</i> 36.2 (2013): 279-97. Project Muse. (N)</p>	Textual Analysis due at beginning of class
Oct. 8	<p>Richard Geary, <i>The Borden Tragedy</i>.</p> <p>Schofield, Ann. "Lizzie Borden Took an Axe: History, Feminism and American Culture." <i>American Studies</i> 34.1 (1993): 91-103. (N)</p>	
Oct. 15	<p>Scott Chantler, <i>Two Generals</i>.</p> <p>Listen to the 15 min. <i>Canada's History</i> podcast with Scott Chantler online (link provided on Nexus)</p>	

Oct. 22	Reinhold Kleist, <i>The Boxer</i> . Caruth, Cathy. Introduction. <i>American Imago</i> 48.1 (1991): 1-12. (N)	
Oct. 29	Marjane Satrapi, <i>Persepolis</i> . Naghibi, Nima and Andrew O'Malley. "Estranging the Familiar: 'East' and 'West' in Satrapi's <i>Persepolis</i> ." <i>ESC English Studies in Canada</i> 31.2-3 (2005): 223-48. (N)	
Nov. 5	Marjane Satrapi, <i>Persepolis</i> (and in-class film screening)	
Nov. 12	Lynda Barry, <i>One Hundred Demons</i> . Chute, Hillary. "Materializing Memory: Lynda Barry's <i>One Hundred Demons</i> " in Michael Chaney's <i>Graphic Subjects</i> (N)	
Nov. 19	Lynda Barry, <i>One Hundred Demons</i> . WRAP UP: Read Barry's Intro. to <i>The Best American Comics</i> 2008 (N)	Tracing Project due at beginning of class

FINAL EXAM IS SCHEDULED FOR DEC. 3 FROM 6:00-9:00pm in 3C14.