

**UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG**  
**ENGL 3980.3-001 Fall 2015**  
**T&Th 10-11:15am**  
**Topics in Comics & Graphic Narratives:**  
**Life Writing**  
**Dr. Candida Rifkind**

**NB: This course is on a different topic from the Fall 2014 version of ENGL 3980: Topics in Comics and Graphic Narratives: Non-Fiction.**

Life writing refers to stories that take the self as their central subject, whether the author writes about their own life (memoir, diary) or the lives of others (biography). Over the past two decades, there has been an explosion of life writing in the form of comics, especially in the field of alternative graphic narratives (as opposed to serial, mass market, or super hero comics). This course will focus on alternative graphic life narratives that depict the self in relation to others so that we can explore the blurred lines between auto/biography. This will allow us to think about the relationships between memory and history, child and parent, individual and community, self and other, documentary and creativity, subjectivity and objectivity. Students should expect to study serious topics (war, genocide, trauma, family dysfunction) in a seemingly lightweight medium. We will investigate the tensions between such serious topics and the visual pleasures of the comics page. The course takes a cultural studies approach and will include critical and theoretical readings from both life writing studies and comics studies. Students need no prior experience in reading or studying comics, only a willingness to engage with them critically.

**Required Texts (ordered through UW bookstore; in order of reading)**

Clayton, Ryan. *Autobiographical Conversations*. Lansing, MI: Elephant Eater, 2013. Print.

Spiegelman, Art. *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale*. New York: Pantheon, 1996. Print.

Pekar, Harvey. *Best of American Splendor*. New York: Ballantine, 2005. Print.

Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2007. Print.

Weaver, Lisa Quintero. *Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White*. Tuscaloosa, AL: U of Alabama P, 2012. Print.

Fleming, Ann-Marie. *The Magical Life of Long Tack Sam*. Toronto: Riverhead, 2007. Print.

**NB: Additional short readings will be posted to Nexus.**