

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG**  
**ENGL-2922-002**  
**TOPICS IN WOMEN WRITERS:**  
**WOMEN AND COMICS**

Term: Winter 2016  
Time: Wednesday 6:00-9:00pm  
Room: 2M77  
Email: c.rifkind@uwinnipeg.ca

Professor: Dr. Candida Rifkind  
Office: 2A38  
Phone: 204-786-9198 (emergencies only)  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 4:00-5:00pm

---

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This version of Topics in Women Writers focuses on female cartoonists working in alternative comics or “graphic novels” (rather than superhero, mass market, or educational comics). Over the past two decades, the field of alternative comics has gained prestige as a contemporary form of storytelling and visual experimentation. Alternative comics often blend autobiographical or historical content with more fictional or fantastical elements. Numerous female cartoonists have embraced the possibilities this offers for telling stories that have traditionally been marginalized or overlooked because they have been deemed insignificant, silly, or uncomfortable for the dominant culture and/or unsuitable for “proper” literature.

This course will explore how gender and sexuality intersect with other identity formations, such as race, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, class, education, and dis/ability, in comics drawn by women. Students should be prepared for some serious content, including representations of trauma, violence, and war. We will also encounter playful and funny texts that remind us of the pleasures of drawing and reading across the full spectrum of visual styles, from realism to surrealism and from illustration to caricature. Throughout, we will consider how female cartoonists from diverse backgrounds have negotiated the traditionally male-dominated field of comics and explore the different ways they have both embodied and represented the female artist.

The course is divided into three modules: life writing; wonder tales; serial stories. This course should appeal to students interested in women writers and artists as well as students of comics, the visual arts, cultural studies, history and politics, and popular culture. In addition to the comic books, critical readings will introduce students to the fields of comics studies and gender studies. No prior knowledge of comics is necessary, and part of our work will be to establish the protocols for studying graphic narratives in an academic context.

**REQUIRED TEXTS (in order of reading)**

**Life Writing**

Satrapi, Marjane. *The Complete Persepolis*. New York: Pantheon, 2007. Print.  
Doucet, Julie. *My New York Diary*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2011. Print.  
Barry, Lynda. *One! Hundred! Demons!* Seattle: Sasquatch, 2005. Print.  
Bell, Cece. *El Deafo*. New York: Abrams, 2014. Print.

**Wonder Tales**

Patil, Amruta. *Kari*. Noida, UP: HarperCollins India, 2008. Print.  
Carroll, Emily. *Through the Woods*. New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2014. Print.  
Obomsawin, Diane. *Kaspar*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2009. Print.

**Serial Stories**

Tamaki, Jillian. *Super Mutant Magic Academy*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2009. Print.  
Jansson, Tove. *Moomin Book One*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2006. Print.  
Beaton, Kate. *Hark! A Vagrant*. Web. (selections to be determined by students)

**Required critical readings are posted to the Nexus course site. Check the weekly schedule for details.**