

Fall 2015
ENGL 285, Sections 001-010
THEMES IN AMERICAN LITERATURE: GRAPHIC NOVELS
Lecture: MW from 10:50-11:40am in Gambrell 153

Professor: Dr. Qiana Whitted
Office Hours: MW 9:30-10:30am
Location: Humanities Office Bldg. #208
Email: whittedq@mailbox.sc.edu

Section Leader:
Office Hours:
Location:
Email:

Course Description:

Comics go by many names. Whether we refer to them as graphic novels, comic books, comix, *manga*, or *bande dessinée*, all comics use the dynamic interplay of sequential art and text to tell stories. Our class is premised unequivocally on the claim that the stories comics tell contain depths of meaning, complexity, and significance that make them not only entertaining to read, but worthy of scholarly attention. We will study the primary elements of comics as a form and even learn a little history about the comic book industry in the United States before focusing on a variety of genres and themes in recently published comics. Readings and assignments will also ask you to explore how comics engage pivotal social and cultural issues in American society, while charting the subtle nuances of human experience. We will consider the roles that design elements such as layout, perspective, pacing, and coloring play in our interpretation as well. Finally, this class encourages you to combine your studies with an appreciation for the comics culture in Columbia. See creator Gene Luen Yang on campus this Fall; visit Soda City Comic Con downtown in October; and buy a monthly at one of the many comic book stores in our city!

Learning Outcomes:

Upon the successful completion of this course, students will be able to do the following:

1. Identify the major narrative, aesthetic, and material practices of the comics form.
2. Demonstrate familiarity with a representative selection of genres in American comics that include memoir, fantasy, slice-of-life, suspense, humor, coming-of-age, and superheroes.
3. Analyze how theme and meaning are expressed through the interplay of visual and verbal elements in comics narrative.
4. Communicate ideas clearly and effectively in writing and through class discussion.
5. Recognize and articulate connections between the social and cultural concerns of the works we study and those of our own time.

Required Texts:

- McCloud, *Understanding Comics*
- Carre, *Heads or Tails*
- Yang and Liew, *The Shadow Hero*
- Lewis, Aydin, and Powell, *March: Book One*
- Cruse, *Stuck Rubber Baby*
- Latour and Aaron, *Southern Bastards, vol. 1: Here Was a Man*
- Wilson and Alphona, *Ms. Marvel, vol. 1: No Normal*
- Layman and Guillory, *Chew, vol. 1: Taster's Choice*
- *Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard*

COURSE SCHEDULE	
Week 1	Aug. 20-21 Section Introductions
Week 2: What is a comic?	Aug. 24 McCloud, Chp. 1, p. 2-23
	Aug. 26 <i>Amazing Fantasy</i> #15 (PDF on Blackboard) McCloud, Chp. 2, p. 24-49
	Aug. 27-28 Discussion Sections
Week 3: A very brief history of American comics	Aug. 31-Sept. 2 Documentary: <i>Comic Book Confidential</i>
	Sept. 3-4 Discussion Sections: <i>Bring documentary worksheet to section.</i>
Week 4: The interplay of words and pictures	Sept. 7 No Lecture (Labor Day Holiday)
	Sept. 9 Pekar, "The Harvey Pekar Name Story" (PDF on Blackboard) Barry, "Two Questions" (PDF on Blackboard)
	Sept. 10-11 Discussion Sections
Week 5: Comics storytelling and panel transitions	Sept. 14 McCloud, Chp. 3, p. 60-93 Carre, <i>Heads or Tails</i> , "Wishy Washy"
	Sept. 16 Carre, <i>Heads or Tails</i> , "The Thing About Madeline" and "Rainbow Moment"
	Sept. 17-18 Discussion Sections
Week 6: Representing time through sound and motion	Sept. 21 McCloud, Chp. 4, p. 94-117 Lewis, Aydin, and Powell, <i>March: Book One</i> , p. 1-45
	Sept. 23 Lewis, Aydin, and Powell, <i>March: Book One</i> , p. 46-74
	Sept. 24-25 Discussion Sections
Week 7: Making emotions visible	Sept. 28 McCloud, Chp. 5, p. 118-137 Lewis, Aydin, and Powell, <i>March: Book One</i> , p. 75-123
	Sept. 30 Lewis, Aydin, and Powell, <i>March: Book One</i> , conclusion
	Oct. 1-2 Discussion Sections: Friday, Oct. 2: Essay #1 due by 4:30pm
	Oct. 2-3: Soda City Con at Columbia Convention Center

Week 8: Word/Picture combinations	Oct. 5 McCloud, Chapter 6, p. 138-161 Yang and Liew, <i>The Shadow Hero</i> , p. 1-46
	Oct. 7 Yang and Liew, <i>The Shadow Hero</i> , p. 49-96
	Oct. 8-9 Discussion Sections Oct. 8: Gene Luen Yang at Hollings Room in TC Library at 6pm
Week 9	Oct. 12 Yang and Liew, <i>The Shadow Hero</i> , p. 99-152
	Oct. 14 Yang and Liew, <i>The Shadow Hero</i> , p. 154-end
	Oct. 15-16 Discussion Sections: Midterm Review
Week 10: Midterm	Oct. 19 Midterm Exam
	Oct. 21 Carre, <i>Heads or Tails</i> , “Short Bits”
	Oct. 22-23: No Discussion Section (Fall Break)
Week 11: Comics as Poetry	Oct. 26 -28 Carre, <i>Heads or Tails</i> , “Short Bits”
	Oct. 29-30 Discussion Sections: Creative Project due in Section
Week 12: Memoir/Coming-of-age	Nov. 2 Cruse, <i>Stuck Rubber Baby</i> , p. 1-113
	Nov. 4 Cruse, <i>Stuck Rubber Baby</i> , p. 114-end
	Nov. 5-6 Discussion Sections
Week 13: Suspense/Drama	Nov. 9 McCloud, Chp. 8, p. 185-192 Aaron and Latour, <i>Southern Bastards</i> (read all pages for Monday)
	Nov. 11 Aaron and Latour, <i>Southern Bastards</i>
	Nov. 12-13 Discussion Sections
Week 14: Superheroes	Nov. 16-18 Wilson and Alphona, <i>Ms. Marvel</i> (read all pages for Monday)
	Nov. 19-20 Discussion Sections
Week 15: Humor/Crime	Nov. 23-25 Layman and Guillory, <i>Chew</i> (read all pages for Monday)
	Nov. 26-27: No Discussion Sections (Thanksgiving Break)
Week 16	Nov. 30 – Dec. 2 Documentary: <i>Cartoon College</i>
	Dec. 3-4 Discussion Section: Final exam review Friday, Dec. 4: Essay #2 Due by 4:30pm
	Mon, Dec. 7 at 12:30pm Final Exam

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance:

1. You are allowed three absences without penalty for any reason, i.e. sickness, bereavement, unexpected personal emergency, and athletic competitions.
2. Your final grade will be lowered one step (e.g. from B+ to a B) for each absence after your third.
3. If you miss eight or more classes, you cannot pass the course.
4. **Lateness:** Being late three times will count as an absence. Please also refrain from disrupting your classmates by packing up early.
5. **Distractions:** If you are using your phone, reading the newspaper, emailing, web surfing, or otherwise “elsewhere” during class time, we will count you absent.
6. In the case of severe, prolonged medical or family crisis, please contact your section leader as soon as possible.
7. Students involved in University-sponsored events should meet with your discussion leader early in the semester to discuss the consequences of potential excessive absences.

Technology: Cell phones and any other digital devices must be silenced and put away during class time. You may not use a laptop or tablet to take notes or read documents during lecture and discussion section. PDFs or digital editions of our course readings may only be consulted when specifically requested by the instructor; otherwise, you’ll need to rely on your notes and the instructor’s visual aids during class time. You may not record lectures or discussion. If you need further access to technology due to a disability, please see the course accommodations policy below.

Blackboard: Please check Blackboard regularly for readings, assignments, and announcements. There will be two Blackboard sites for you to consult: the “Shared Materials” site and your section’s page. The shared course site is where you will find PDF readings for the course. Make sure the email address registered for you on Blackboard is one that you check regularly.

Missed Work:

1. If you are absent, please seek out your fellow classmates to catch up on any missed work. Your professor and discussion leader will not share slides or lecture notes, but we will gladly meet with you during office hours to discuss any questions that you might have.
2. Late assignments will be marked down by one step (e.g. from a B+ to a B) for each day they are turned in after the due date.
3. Quizzes cannot be made up or delayed.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism has serious consequences and can result in failure of the course. The *minimum* penalty for cheating or plagiarism will be a zero on that assignment. All suspected incidents of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. All work that is taken from another source (e.g. books, scholarly essays, study aids such as Spark Notes or Cliffs Notes, and internet sites) must be properly cited. To avoid plagiarism, be sure to use either quotation marks or block quotation form for all words that are not your own and to document your sources properly. Remember that you must also provide documentation for summary and paraphrase. If you have any questions about the definition of plagiarism, please see your instructor.

Accommodations: Students requiring special academic and/or physical accommodations should register with the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS) in LeConte College Room 112A or call 777-6742. **Permission for accommodations will only be granted if arranged in advance through OSDS.**

Course Requirements:

35 %	Two Essays: Essay #1 (15%) + Essay #2 (20%)
35 %	Two Exams: Midterm (15%) + Final Exam (20%)
10%	Creative project
10 %	Weekly quizzes
10 %	Class participation

Essays: You will produce two formal papers with a thesis, topic sentences, and evidence from the work(s) that you address. The first essay (**1200-1500 words; due Friday, Oct. 2**) will be a close reading of a scene from *March: Book One*. The second essay (**1500-1800 words; due Friday, Dec. 4**) will be a comparative analysis of two of our primary texts. Guidelines will be distributed and reviewed in discussion section two weeks before the due dates of each paper. Essays are due in your section leader's mailbox by 4:30pm on their due date; this is when the English department office closes, so be on time. You will also upload a Microsoft Word file of your paper to your section's Blackboard page under Safe Assignment on the due date. (Papers not uploaded to Safe Assignment will receive a failing grade.) These essays should be typed in Times New Roman 12-pt font with 1" margins all around, and your citations should follow MLA or Chicago format.

Exams: The mid-term (**Oct. 19**) will include short-answer questions and identifications. The cumulative final (**Dec. 7**) will follow the same format with the addition of a comprehensive essay. Make-up exams will only be offered when students provide documentation of a death in the family or a serious illness or injury.

Creative Project: After our unit on "Comics as Poetry," you will create your own one-page comic modeled after Lille Carre's "Short Bits" in *Heads or Tails*.

Quizzes: The quizzes will pose basic questions about the week's reading in order to test your preparedness and comprehension. These quizzes will be administered in discussion section and they cannot be made up.

Participation: Section leaders will determine your participation grade based on the following questions:

- *Did the student come to class prepared and on time? Has she/he read the material carefully enough to draw on evidence during discussion?*
- *Did the student take the initiative to raise interpretive questions of the material? Make useful connections between the readings and the concepts explained during lecture?*
- *Did the student demonstrate a willingness to listen and learn from the perspectives of others?*

Grading Scale:

For the course grade, the following values will be used:

A: 90-100; **B+:** 87-89; **B:** 80-86; **C+:** 77-79; **C:** 70-76; **D+:** 67-69; **D:** 60-66; **F:** 0-59 pts.

Essays will receive letter grades, which will be averaged using the following values:

A+ (99), **A** (95), **A-** (92), **B+** (88), **B** (85), **B-** (82), **C+** (78), **C** (75), **C-** (72), **D+** (68), **D** (65), **D-** (62), **F** (55)

Interpretation of Letter Grades:

- **A** is earned for superlative work that demonstrates exceptional execution of the assignment requirements and mastery of content, that exhibits grammatical and stylistic excellence, and further, that goes on to employ the work as a springboard for independent thought.
- **B** is earned for above average work that fulfills the requirements in a conscientious and dedicated manner, demonstrates knowledge of the course content, and is grammatically and stylistically strong.
- **C** is earned for average work that fulfills requirements in a satisfactory manner, and is grammatically and stylistically adequate, but that falls short of demonstrating rigor and content mastery.
- **D** is earned for below average work that has an accumulation of errors in mechanics, style, and content.
- **F** is earned for work that is unsatisfactory in every respect and does not meet assignment requirements.

#ComicBookStoreSelfie

Did you know that the oldest comic book shop in the Southeast is a five-minute drive away from our campus? Columbia is home to several comic book stores that welcome new readers and experienced fan-addicts alike. Visiting these shops not only supports local businesses, but also helps to build a thriving community of comic book readers in our city.

EARN CREDIT FOR TWO QUIZZES BY DOING THE FOLLOWING BY NOV. 2, 2015:

1. Stop by one of the four shops listed below and spend at least fifteen minutes browsing the racks. Don't be afraid to ask for recommendations! Discover something new!
2. Snap a selfie inside the store to document your visit – the crazier, the better. If you buy a comic, you can take the photo outside the store as long as you, your purchase, and the store sign are visible.
3. Upload to Blackboard by Nov. 2 at 11:59pm.

Additional Information:

- The store managers are aware of our class and this activity, so please be courteous to the employees and respectful of other customers.
- Try to avoid Wednesdays, which is often a comic book store's busiest day, unless you're looking specifically for a newly-released title.
- Prices can start as low as \$1.00 for older back issues and most monthly comics cost \$4-5.
- Only the four stores listed below are eligible for this activity.
- Have fun!

Prof. Whitted will post the photos to her Twitter account (@QianaWhitted) with the hashtag #ComicBookStoreSelfie. If you'd prefer that your photo not be shared, you can opt-out on the upload form.

<p>Silver City Comics (Oldest in Southeast!) 538 Knox Abbott Drive Cayce, SC Tues-Sat. 10:30am-6pm <i>Mention our class and get 10% discount.</i></p>		<p style="text-align: center;">COSMIC RAYS <i>COMICS, GAMES, CDS, DVDS, AND ARCADE!</i> Cosmic Rays 4427 Devine Street Columbia, SC Mon-Sat. 10am-7pm</p>
 <p>Punk Monkey Comics 4711 Forest Drive Columbia, SC (In Bi-Lo Shopping Center) Tues., Thurs., Fri., 12-7pm Wed. and Sat., 10am-4pm</p>	<p>Scratch n' Spin 513 12th Street West Columbia, SC Mon-Sat. 10am-7pm <i>Mention our class and get 10% discount.</i></p>	