

ENG 260 | Special Topics in Comics/Graphic Novels | Room, B112 | Wednesdays 11:00 – 1:40 |  
Bristol Community College

Dr. Genie Giaimo | genie.giaimo@bristolcc.edu | Office, B117b FRI Office Hours Wednesdays 10 – 11 and by appointment

### **Course Description**

This course will explore the aesthetic and thematic content of comics and graphic novels. Students will engage in a critical analysis of comics and graphic novels as literary texts that embrace and challenge traditional practices of reading, writing, and studying literature. Students will learn the “language of comics,” as well as its history, in order to engage in visual and textual close reading of the medium. Through a combination of weekly, critical, writing logs, a close reading assignment and a scholarly research project, students will experience the connections between the critical, the creative, and the conceptual by interpreting, discussing, and writing about these multimodal texts. All required books will be at the BCC library (site specific) on reserve.

### **Course Objectives**

This course will enable you to:

- Speak and write knowledgably about comics and graphic novels. .
- Apply the close reading method to textual/visual analysis.
- Collaborate with peers in activities such as group work, peer review, and presentations.
- Intervene in the conversations and debates surrounding the viability of the graphic novel as a literary form.
- Explore the history of comics and the emergence of the graphic novel.
- Analyze different genres of comics and graphic novels that authors work within and identify any recurring genre-specific patterns or themes.
- Select, evaluate, sort, and document research effectively according to MLA Citation Guidelines

### **Texts**

#### **Handouts/Online Under Black Board Readings**

- *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud (Excerpt Provided in class)
- *Comics Art*, Paul Gravett (Excerpt on BB)
- “Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative,” Hillary Chute (Article on BB)
- “Q&A With Art Spiegelman, Creator of ‘Maus,’” *Tablet Magazine* (Interview, on BB)
- *Outside the Box: Interviews with Contemporary Cartoonists*, Hillary Chute (Source Material Excerpts on BB)
- “What to Expect When You Pick Up a Graphic Novel,” Lisa Zunshine (Article on BB)

#### **Purchase \*(the starred books are also on course reserve at the BCC Fall River Library)\***

- \*Auster, Paul, Paul Karasik (Adapter), and David Mazzucchelli (Adapter). *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel (New York Trilogy)*. ISBN: 978-0312423605
- Bechdel, Alison. *Are You My Mother? A Comic Drama*. ISBN: 978-0544002234
- \*Clowes, Daniel. *Ghost World*. 978-1560974277
- Moore, Alan. *The Watchmen*. ISBN: 978-0930289232

- Sacco, Joe. *Journalism*. ISBN: 978-0805097931
- \*Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood Volume I*. ISBN: 978-0375714573
- \*Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*. ISBN: 978-0679406419
- Yang, Gene Luen. *American Born Chinese*. ISBN: 978-0312384487

### Grade Breakdown

Attendance/ Participation	15%
Weekly Writing Logs and Class Memo	30%
Close Reading Visual Analysis Assignment (3 - 4 pgs)	15%
Annotated bibliography and 1 Page Proposal	10%
Draft of Final Paper	10%
Final Paper (6 - 8pgs)	20%

### Attendance

You are allowed two unexcused absences. After that, the instructor has the right to withdraw you from the course, or give a failing grade.

### Participation

Participation does not only include your physical presence in our class; it also includes active participation in class discussion and activities, coming to class prepared to discuss the reading, coming to class with the appropriate materials (books, syllabus, etc.), following instructions for homework and paper assignments, and handing in assignments on time. Your participation grade is connected to your attendance grade. If you (habitually) come to class unprepared you will be marked late and/or absent.

### Extra Resources

There are a number of on-campus resources for students who need extra help. [Disability services](#) (Location, L109 Fall River) offers extra help, tutoring, note-taking, deaf and hard-of-hearing assistance etc. You can contact them at 508.678.2811, ext. 2955. The Bristol Community College Writing Center has locations in Fall River, New Bedford, and Attleboro, and walk-in hours in Taunton—[check website](#) for phone numbers, hours, and locations. Questions about the Writing Center can also be directed to Director Dr. Genie Giaimo. Depending on the nature of the need for support, there are also these services: [Veterans Services](#), [Minority Student Services](#), [Advising](#), and [Tutoring and Academic Support Centers](#).

### Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is taking someone else's ideas or words and representing them as your own. It involves copying, paraphrasing, or quoting without giving credit to the source and using the appropriate citation system. I am more than happy to have you incorporate someone else's ideas or words into your own essays—I, in fact, require it—but you **must** properly cite these words. Here is a [website on citation](#) that will be of use.

### Weekly Writing Logs

Think of these writing logs as a response journal: you may write about any of the articles, excerpts, comics, or graphic novels that we are reading for the week. You may also make connections between materials from week to week. **The weekly log is due the day our class meets, no later than 10AM unless otherwise noted.** Please post logs to the appropriate Black Board Discussion

Thread. Length may vary but should be *at minimum* 2 double-spaced typed pages. You are not required to include outside sources, though they are most certainly welcome. You are, however, required to work with the text at hand, which means including in-text citations (although no works cited). Make sure to add pages as well as a title/heading to your logs. You might also want to include an image of the panel(s) that you are analyzing in your writing. Logs will be graded on a check minus, check, check plus scale.

### **Close Reading Visual Analysis Assignment**

For this assignment you will engage in the close reading of one text. You may not use outside material for this assignment, as the primary focus will be on making an argument and supporting that argument using the formal narrative and visual structures of the text, as well as the expression of content through formal qualities. Some elements you might want to focus on include: metaphor and other descriptive language, cultural references and allusions, structural elements, rhetorical features, arrangement of gutters and panels, the representation of time, movement, and space, etc. A close reading exercise encourages you to engage formal, structural and visual qualities of a chosen text, which, in turn, allows you to become a stronger reader and interpreter. Attention to linguistic and syntactical structure, for example, is rigorous and demands full attention. Thus you will most likely only be working with a short selection from the text, though you may make connections between two selected sections. Please include the panels you are working with as a .jpeg at the beginning of the paper, along with all other proper MLA formatting items (name, date, title, works cited, etc.) The general structure of the close reading paper should move from an observation of particular facts and visual/textual details to a conclusion or interpretation based on those observations. There are many fine websites that go into further detail. You may view Harvard's website for a "how-to" on close reading: <<http://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/how-do-close-reading>>. You may also visit UMass's website <<http://blogs.umass.edu/honors291g-cdg/how-to-write-a-close-reading-essay/>> for a model of a close reading assignment, with directions. Please note that these are only models, I expect you to work with a text from our class.

### **Final Paper (With Annotated Bibliography & 1 Page Proposal AND First Draft)**

To begin, you will propose a paper topic and thesis, along with an annotated bibliography that includes peer reviewed articles on the books of your choice. Because this paper is 6-8 pages in length (with a limited number of jpeg images from the graphic novels and comics from our class), you will need to limit your selection of primary sources to those that we have read in class. Some examples of pairings that I would suggest include a graphic novel and an interview with the author/artist, or a film and a comic, for example—the more complex the text, the more attention you will want to pay to it in your paper, so limit primary sources. You may, however, draw from a robust selection of secondary sources that are both academic (peer reviewed and published in refereed academic journals) and popular (film critiques, blogs, periodicals, etc.). Proper MLA format (works cited page, numbered pages, proper heading, etc.) will be required of the proposal/annotated bibliography, as well as the final paper. Visit the Owl Writing Lab at Purdue University <<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/>> for guidelines on formatting an annotated bibliography.

\*Subject to change, check Black Board regularly for updates\*

**1/20 Week 1—Introduction to Comics and Graphic Novels**

Read *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud, Chapters 1 and 2 (Provided)

**No Weekly Log Due**

**1/27 Week 2—“Serious” Superhero Comics**

Alan Moore, *The Watchmen*

*Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud (Excerpt, Chapter 3, BB)

**Log #1 Due**

**2/3 Week 3—“Serious” Superhero Comics**

Alan Moore, *The Watchmen*

“Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative,” Hillary Chute (BB)

**Log #2 Due**

**2/10 Week 4—Historical Graphic Narratives**

Art Spiegelman, *Maus* (Part I)

“Q&A With Art Spiegelman, Creator of ‘Maus,’” *Tablet Magazine* (BB)

**Log #3 Due**

**2/17 Week 5—Historical Graphic Narratives Cont’d**

Art Spiegelman, *Maus* (Part II)

Read excerpt *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud, Chapter 4 (BB)

Professor will share *MetaMaus* and source material for book in class.

**Log #4 Due**

**2/24 Week 6—Historical Graphic Narratives, Cont’d**

Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*, Vol I

Read excerpt *Comics Art* by Paul Gravett, Chapter 6 (BB)

**Close reading Visual Analysis Assignment Due**

**3/2 Week 7— Comics and Reportage**

Sacco, Joe. *Journalism*.

Read Interview with Joe Sacco by Hillary Chute (BB)

**Log #5 Due**

**3/9 Week 8—Alternative Comics and censorship**

Clowes, Daniel. *Ghost World*.

Read excerpt *Comics Art* by Paul Gravett, Chapter 5 (BB)

**Log #6 Due**

**3/16 Week 9—SPRING BREAK**

**3/23 Week 10— Comics and Adaptations (novels into comics)**

Paul Auster (with Paul Karasik (Adapter), David Mazzucchelli). *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel* (*New York Trilogy*)

“What to Expect When You Pick Up a Graphic Novel,” Lisa Zunshine (BB)

**Log #7 Due**

**3/30 Week 11— Graphic Memoirs**

Alison Bechdel, *Are You My Mother?*

**Log #8 Due**

**4/6 Week 12—Comics and Adaptations into Film (CCCC)**

View *The Watchman*, dir. Zack Snyder (RT 162 minutes) OR *Ghost World* (RT 1 hr 51m)

**No Weekly Log Due This Week**

**INSTEAD: Annotated Bibliography and 1 Page Proposal for Final Paper Due 4/13 by 5PM**

**4/13 Week 13—Comic Adaptations into Film Cont'd**

Discuss *The Watchman*, dir. Zack Snyder (Run Time 162 minutes)

**Log #9 Due: comparative analysis between comic and film versions of *The Watchmen***

**4/20 Week 14—MONDAY ON A WEDNESDAY SCHEDULE NO CLASS THIS WEEK**

WORK THIS WEEK ON FINAL PAPER—ATTEND WRITING CENTER AND/OR PEER REVIEW

**No Weekly Log Due This Week**

**INSTEAD: First Draft of final paper due 4/22/16 by 5PM**

**4/27 Week 15—Young Adult Comics**

Yang, Gene Luen. *American Born Chinese*

**Log #10 Due**

**5/4 Week 16—Last Class of Semester**

**Class Memo Due**

**5/11 Week 17—“Final Experience”**

**Final Paper Due**