GRAPHIC NARRATIVES · FALL 2017

Wednesday, 4:30–7:30 PM
Rutgers Academic Building

Instructor: Jonathan Bass
Office / Hours: Loree 010 / Wed 2.00–3.00 PM and by appointment

Description

The graphic narratives course combines seminar and workshop formats and meets once a week for three hours. During the semester, we’ll read and discuss a variety of short comics, as well as excerpts from a few longer works, in a range of genres, both fictional and non-fictional. The selection of material will emphasize the diversity of the contents, traditions, styles, and formats to be found in comics and their graphic relatives and will include examples of mainstream and alternative American comics, European comics, and manga. To support our reading, we’ll supplement the graphic work with theory and criticism drawn from visual, narrative, and art-historical studies.

Throughout the semester, we’ll apply and test what we learn from the reading and discussion to the making of graphic narratives of our own. We’ll work on projects ranging from one to four weeks in duration. Early projects of one to two pages will lead to a longer midterm project with a focus on collaborative world-building. The final (group) project will be a themed comics anthology.

This course does not require any special drawing or technical ability. If you can draw a stick figure inside a box, and then another one, and are open to trying new things on paper, then drawing-wise, you’ll be fine.

Required Texts

Blutch, Peplum. Publisher: New York Review Comics

Daniel Clowes, Patience. Fantagraphics Books
Brian K. Vaughn and Fiona Staples, *Saga*, volume 1. Image Comics

You can purchase these texts from the Rutgers bookstore or your preferred online vendor. Other readings, both comics and critical work, will be available online via Sakai [S] or the web [W].

**Required Equipment and Software**

Sketchbook (not ruled notebook paper) and drawing tools. Brought to every class.

Dependable access to image editing software (e.g., Adobe Photoshop or GIMP), a PDF maker (e.g., Adobe Acrobat Professional or PrimoPDF), and a good scanner.

**Course Requirements**

*Comics*

Students will complete a combination of shorter and longer projects. Much of the work will be done in class, or started in class and completed as homework, or begun as homework and revised in class. Some of it will be purely homework.

*Writing Assignments*

Expect three to five short analyses of your own work, another student’s work, the assigned reading, or unassigned reading. There may also be at least one longer piece of writing, about five pages, based on the critical and theoretical reading.

Also expect to turn in a few story proposals, character descriptions, plot outlines, or scripts related to the projects listed above.

*Presentations*

Each student will make at least one short presentation to the class on one of the assigned critical, theoretical, or technical readings for a given week. Some presentations will be solo, some paired, depending on the selected reading. Students may also propose their own presentation topics (e.g., on an unassigned
essay on comics, drawing, storytelling; or on a researched topic related to the course).

**Grading**

Grading is based on your work and participation in the class. Longer projects receive letter grades and written or in-person feedback. Shorter projects receive full credit (✔), half credit (~✔), or no credit (~), based on the degree to which they satisfy the specified requirements.

Larger projects account for about 60% of the final grade; shorter projects and other miscellaneous work for about 25% of the grade; participation (i.e., discussion and in-class activities) for about 15% of the grade.

All projects must be completed in order to receive credit for the course.

**Policies**

*Attendance.* Attendance at all classes is expected. Missing more than one class may affect your grade. Missing more than two classes will reduce your final grade by one full letter grade (i.e., an A becomes a B, a B a C, etc.). Students missing more than three classes fail the course – without exception. If you have concerns about your attendance, speak to the instructor.

*Late work.* Homework is due at the start of class unless otherwise noted. Late work receive an “L” grade that factors negatively into the final grade calculation for the semester. Furthermore, students falling behind by more than two assignments strongly risk failing the course.

*Formatting and submitting graphic work.* Generally, you’ll submit your projects and other work in at least two forms: (1) in a printed, photocopied, or handmade form; and (2) online as a high-quality PDF via Scribd (http://www.scribd.com/) and your Sakai drop box. Work will not count as submitted until both the physical and digital formats are turned in. Students are required to upload digital copies of their work to both Scribd and Sakai. Finally, multi-page work should be submitted as a single document. Use a PDF creator, such as Adobe
Acrobat Pro, to combine separate images (pages) into a single document for submission.

**Formatting and submitting written work.** Written work must be printed and follow the formatting requirements specified in the assignment description. Handwritten work won’t be accepted. Written work will need to be submitted both in a printed version and to your Sakai drop box.

**Submitting work by email.** Unless specifically requested to submit work via email, NEVER do this.

**Class participation.** We do a LOT of work in class. Class participation entails attendance and active involvement in discussion and other activities. Again: If you miss more than two classes you’ll strongly (negatively) affect (i.e., destroy) this part of the grade and be unlikely to get higher than a “B” grade overall.

**Texting, etc.** During class students are not allowed to communicate electronically (i.e., via email, IM, text message, social network interface, forum, list-serv, etc.) with any persons outside of the class. Exceptions will be made for communication related to in-class work, such as communicating with (woefully) absent collaborators.

**Sample work.** The instructor will often want to share examples of students’ work in class. Names will seldom be deleted. If you object to my using your work, often in a less than anonymous way, let the instructor know very clearly – in person or by detailed email. Speaking of which...

**Email (i).** The instructor responds to email Monday to Friday. The instructor’s email is for asking questions about course work or thoughts related to the course topic(s) – visual communication, comics, narrative, etc. *Please do not use email to share your reasons for missing class or work or to ask for the instructor’s permission to do so.* If you need to discuss attendance or the lateness or absence of written work, it’s best to do so during office hours or, when convenient, during the time shortly before or after class.

**Email (ii).** Please use your Rutgers email when contacting the instructor. Rutgers faculty are no longer allowed to send Rutgers communication to non-Rutgers email addresses.
Email (iii). Important announcements as well as feedback on your work will be sent to your Rutgers email address via Sakai. So be sure to check this email regularly during the semester.

Online Schedule. Students are responsible for regularly checking the online schedule for important changes. The schedule is updated weekly. Homework is posted at least one week before the work is due.

Plagiarism. Students must review and abide by the University’s code on plagiarism. Plagiarism covers uncredited use of another’s work, including written material, images, ideas, plots, and page designs. All textual and visual sources for a project must be listed with sufficient information in a bibliography or its equivalent.

For some projects, students will be supplied with a base text and/or visual material to modify, edit, design, deconstruct, etc. In all other cases, the work in a document should be either (1) documented quotation, replication, or paraphrase, where this makes sense, or (2) the student’s own words, images, designs.

Exceptions to this policy regarding clip art, isotype, collage, graphic homage, photo-graphic appropriation, and parody will be developed in class.

Departmental Review. All grades are subject to departmental review.

Policy Review. If any of the above policies seem unclear, ask the instructor for clarification.