

The Graphic Novel Section 01

ENGL 20

Fall 2023 3 Unit(s) 08/21/2023 to 12/06/2023 Modified 09/01/2023

Course Description and Requisites

Approaching the graphic novel as a form of popular literature, students examine the narrative and textual aspects of the form including the function of the text, its integration with the graphics, and formal aspects of narrative such as plot, character, theme, and symbol.

GE Area(s): C2. Humanities

Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

Attendance:

While attendance is not and cannot be graded per University Policy F15-12, regular attendance is vital to your learning and success in the course and is ultimately your responsibility. If you are sick, please stay home from class for your own and others' wellbeing. If you are unable to attend class for any reason, please email me in advance when possible to discuss how to make up what you missed.

Preparation & Participation:

Please come prepared to discuss the day's materials and participate in class activities. This means that you've completed the assigned reading for the day in advance of class, you have access to those readings during our class discussion (the exception to this is if you accessed the reading through our print course reserves), and you have your notecards, paper, and writing material. Please see more participation guidelines under "Course Requirements and Assignments."

Devices:

You are welcome to read and take notes on your phone, laptop, or tablet. However, please respect me and your peers by using your devices for class work only during our time together. If it appears that you are becoming distracted by or distracting others with your devices, we may need to have a discussion after class or via email.

Engaging in Scholarly Discourse & Community:

Our course readings and discussions will cover complex topics, such as but not limited to race and ethnicity, xenophobia, political violence, gender, and sexuality. Your respectful, responsible, and self-aware participation will be vital to maintaining a supportive learning community for all. While we will develop our own expectations and discussion guidelines together in class, here are some foundational considerations:

- We can disagree and challenge each other's thinking and ideas in a caring, respectful, and generative way as long as that disagreement is not predicated on hate speech, disinformation, or exclusion.
- We will not use sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist and other marginalizing language. If harmful language is used in class, we will address it together as a learning moment to the extent it is appropriate and safe to do so. Intentionally violent and exclusionary language (i.e., slurs or insults of any kind), however, will not be tolerated.
- Close attention to the language that we read, write, and use is a necessary component of reading and thinking like a comics studies scholar, which we all are when we enter this classroom. Please be mindful of the language you use, and we will continue to work together to unpack the relationship between and among language, identity, and power through our course readings and discussions.

Course Communication & Emails:

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](#). You are responsible for regularly checking both your email and the Canvas messaging system through MySJSU on [Spartan App Portal](#) to learn of any updates. For help with using Canvas see [Canvas Student Resources page](#).

Please be aware that I do not respond to emails outside of traditional business hours, M-F 9-5. If it is not a weekend and I have not responded to your email within 48 hours, please do not hesitate to follow up and send me a reminder (in fact, I would appreciate it).

When you email me, please be clear, concise, and respectful. Include a specific subject that states the purpose of your email as well as a greeting and a signature that includes your name.

Extensions & Late Work:

I am very willing to work with you if you anticipate that you may need extra time to submit your best work in an assignment. However, I can only do this if you communicate with me in advance. Please email me in advance if you would like to request an extension on an assignment. If an emergency or other extenuating circumstance arises that makes this impossible, please contact me, and we can work out a solution. If late work is submitted, it will be graded at the instructor's discretion and may receive a deduction.

Program Information

Welcome to this General Education course.

SJSU's General Education Program establishes a strong foundation of versatile skills, fosters curiosity about the world, promotes ethical judgment, and prepares students to engage and contribute responsibly and cooperatively in a multicultural, information-rich society. General education classes integrate areas of

study and encourage progressively more complex and creative analysis, expression, and problem solving.

The General Education Program has three goals:

Goal 1: To develop students' core competencies for academic, personal, creative, and professional pursuits.

Goal 2: To enact the university's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and justice by ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to serve and contribute to the well-being of local and global communities and the environment.

Goal 3: To offer students integrated, multidisciplinary, and innovative study in which they pose challenging questions, address complex issues, and develop cooperative and creative responses.

More information about the General Education Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) can be found on the [GE website \(https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php\)](https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php).

Course Goals

English 20: Introduction to Studying Comics and Graphic Novels is a C2 Humanities general education course that teaches students critical approaches to reading, analyzing, and responding to comic art. We will begin by exploring comics studies as an emerging and evolving field of thought, using selections from *Keywords in Comics Studies* as our guide. We will also read foundational theory, oftentimes thinking with and through the comics form, that will teach us how to understand and analyze how comics work and create meaning. Alongside these works of criticism and theory, we will read comic strips, comic books, webcomics, and graphic novels across genres, including canonical works and works that are pushing the boundaries of the canon. Students will develop their close reading (and viewing), critical thinking, and scholarly writing skills throughout the course and will showcase their learning through analytical writing as well as comics making.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

GE Area C2: Humanities

Area C Arts and Humanities courses help students to respond subjectively as well as objectively to aesthetic experiences and to develop an understanding of the integrity of both emotional and intellectual responses. C2 Humanities courses encourage students to analyze and appreciate works of philosophical, historical, literary, aesthetic, and cultural importance.

GE Area C2 Learning Outcomes (GEALOs)

Upon successful completion of a C2 course, students should be able to:

1. analyze and understand works of philosophical and humanistic importance, including their temporal and cultural dimensions;
2. explore and articulate their own subjective aesthetic and intellectual responses to such texts;
3. analyze and assess ideas of value, meaning, and knowledge, as produced within the humanistic disciplines; and

4. research and write effective analyses of works of the human intellect and imagination

Writing Practice: Students will write a minimum of 1500 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline.

English 20 Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Upon successful completion of English 20, students should be able to:

1. describe some of the foundational goals and insights of comics studies;
2. use comics theory to develop a critical vocabulary for discussing how comics work and how they create meaning;
3. discuss and analyze various forms of comic art, including comic strips, comic books, graphic novels, and webcomics and use textual (both visual and verbal) evidence to support interpretation of texts;
4. and, discuss how comics both creatively represent and critically comment on historical and contemporary issues and questions.

Course Materials

While you are not required to buy these texts, **you are responsible for getting access to the required readings listed below as they will not be posted to Canvas.** You can decide whether you want to purchase them through the campus bookstore, find them online, or check them out through the course reserves or the SJSU or SJPL libraries.

All other course readings will be available on Canvas.

Making Comics

Author: Lynda Barry

ISBN: 9781770463691

Availability: Campus Bookstore

Quince

Author: Sebastian Kadlecik and Kit Steinkellner

Publisher: Fanbase Press

ISBN: 9780998797922

Availability: Campus bookstore & both the English and the bilingual edition available on course reserve.

Feel free to read this in English or Spanish. It is available in both, although only the English version is available for purchase at the campus bookstore.

I Was Their American Dream: A Graphic Memoir

Author: Malaka Gharib

Publisher: Penguin Randomhouse

ISBN: 9780525575115

Availability: Campus bookstore & library course reserve

Fun Home: Family Tragicomic

Author: Alison Bechdel

ISBN: 9780618871711

Availability: Campus bookstore & library course reserve

The Complete Persepolis

Author: Marjane Satrapi

ISBN: 9780375714832

Availability: Campus bookstore & library course reserve

Course Requirements and Assignments

Detailed assignment directions and grading rubrics will be available on Canvas and discussed in class in advance of due dates.

Class participation (20%): I encourage you to participate in class discussion not only by sharing your thoughts and asking questions but also by actively listening and creating space for others to share. I understand, however, that we all participate and process knowledge in different ways and that our level of comfort participating in the classroom may be influenced by our own relationships to power and privilege and by experiences of educational exclusion. *The graded portion of your participation will not be based on how much you talk in class but will be based on turning in your daily participation activity each class. Know that, if you miss class, you will miss this participation credit, unless you email me to work out a solution.*

Group Teaching Facilitation (15%): The group teaching facilitations are an opportunity for you to become the teachers, share your excitement about a text, and lead class discussion. Your goal is to kickstart class discussion by offering a collaborative close reading/viewing of some salient moments in the day's reading that cohere around a particular theme of your choice. You will also guide the class through a couple of open-ended discussion questions and facilitate that discussion. Presentations will be collaborative, and groups must meet with me in office hours prior to presenting.

Making Comics Assignment (20%): Using Lynda Barry's *Making Comics* as a guide, you will develop your own short comics throughout the first half of the semester. You will then collect these short comics into a portfolio and write a critical reflection on your creative process and what you learned.

Close Reading/Viewing Paper (20%): In this paper, you will respond to a prompt by developing your own original analysis and interpretation of a comic we've read in class. You will select textual evidence, both visual and verbal details, to support your ideas and will draw from theoretical and secondary sources discussed in class and found through your own research.

Final Project (25%): In the final project, you will have the choice to showcase your learning by pursuing either an extended close reading/viewing paper or by creating your own mini-comic or zine and critically reflecting on it.

✓ Grading Information

Assignment Alignment with GEALOs

GEALO 1: Analyze and understand works of philosophical and humanistic importance, including their temporal and cultural dimensions.	All course readings, lectures, discussions, and assignments will support this outcome. All of the comics we will read have philosophical, humanistic, and aesthetic importance that we will discuss.
GEALO 2: Explore and articulate their own subjective and intellectual responses to such texts	All course readings, lectures, discussions, and assignments will support this outcome. The group teaching facilitation and the making comics assignments in particular will facilitate this goal.
GEALO 3: Analyze and assess ideas of value, meaning, and knowledge, as produced within the humanistic disciplines	Course readings, lectures, and discussions as well the close reading/viewing paper will support this outcome.
GEALO 4: Research and write effective analyses of works of human intellect and imagination.	The close reading/viewing paper and the final project will support this outcome.

Breakdown

Class participation (20%)

Group Teaching Facilitation (15%)

Making Comics Assignment (20%)

Close Reading/Viewing Paper (20%)

Final Project (25%)

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance,

counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Note that this schedule is subject to change at instructor's discretion. While I will never add more work, I may adjust readings, schedule, and assignment deadlines accordingly. All changes will be announced with fair notice via Canvas.

When	Topic	Notes
Week 1: Aug 22-24	Course Introductions	<p>Tuesday 8/28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to course • Interactive syllabus activity <p>Thursday 8/30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Lynda Barry's <i>Making Comics</i> pp. 1-52
Week 2: Aug. 29-31	Introduction to Comics Studies	<p>Tuesday 8/29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Enrique Del Rey Cabero, Michael Goodrum, and Josean Morlesín Mellado's <i>How to Study Comics & Graphic Novels: A Graphic Introduction to Comics Studies</i> <p>Thursday 8/31</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Lynda Barry's <i>Making Comics</i> pp. 53-102
Week 3: Sept. 5-7	Understanding Comics	<p>Tuesday 9/5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Scott McCloud's <i>Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art</i> Intro-Ch. 2 <p>Thursday 9/7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Scott McCloud's <i>Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art</i> Ch. 3 • Read Kate Polak's "Three Ideas"
Week 4: Sept. 12-14	Comic Strips	<p>Tuesday 9/12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Jessica Quick Stark's "Comic Strip" • Read Selected Krazy Kat comics by George Herriman <p>Thursday 9/14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Mark Newgarden and Paul Karasik's "How to Read Nancy" • Read Cathy Guisewite's "The Comic Strip" • Discuss Making Comics Assignment

When	Topic	Notes
Week 5: Sept. 19-21	Making Comics	<p>Tuesday 9/19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Lynda Barry's <i>Making Comics</i> pp. 103-137 • In-class time to work on Making Comics Assignment <p>Thursday 9/21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish reading Lynda Barry's <i>Making Comics</i> • In-class time to work on Making Comics Assignment
Week 6: Sept. 26-28	Comic Books	<p>Tuesday 9/26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Jared Gardner's "Comic Book" • Read selected comic book (we will vote on what we'd like to together) <p>Thursday 9/28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read selected comic book • Making Comics Assignment due by start of class via Canvas folder.
Week 7: Oct. 3-5	Quince	<p>Tuesday 10/3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Benjamin Saunders' "Superhero" • Sebastian Kadlecik and Kit Steinkellner's <i>Quince</i> part one <p>Thursday 10/5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sebastian Kadlecik and Kit Steinkellner's <i>Quince</i> part two
Week 8: Oct. 10-12	I Was Their American Dream	<p>Tuesday 10/10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Malaka Gharib's <i>I Was Their American Dream</i> pp. 1-47 <p>Thursday 10/12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Malaka Gharib's <i>I Was Their American Dream</i> pp. 48-105 • Discuss Close Reading/Viewing Paper
Week 9: 17- 19	I Was Their American Dream	<p>Tuesday 10/17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Malaka Gharib's <i>I Was Their American Dream</i> pp. 106-156 <p>Thursday 10/19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Close Reading Paper • Writing Workshop

When	Topic	Notes
Week 11: Oct. 31-Nov. 2	Webcomics	<p>Tuesday 10/31</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Leah Misemer's "Webcomics" • Selected webcomics <p>Thursday 11/2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comics making workshop with Breen Nuñez & Lawrence Lindell
Week 11: Oct. 31-Nov. 2	Fun Home	<p>Tuesday 10/31</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Alison Bechdel's <i>Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic</i> pp.1-54 <p>Thursday 11/2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Alison Bechdel's <i>Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic</i> pp. 55-120
Week 12: Nov. 7-9	Fun Home	<p>Tuesday 11/7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Alison Bechdel's <i>Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic</i> pp.121-186 <p>Thursday 11/9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish Alison Bechdel's <i>Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic</i> • Read Susan R. Van Dyne's "Inside the Archives of <i>Fun Home</i>"
Week 13: Nov. 14-16	Persepolis	<p>Tuesday 11/14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical context for <i>Persepolis</i> • Read Marjane Satrapi's <i>The Complete Persepolis</i> Introduction and pp. 1-53 <p>Thursday 11/16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Marjane Satrapi's <i>The Complete Persepolis</i> pp. 54-102 • Discuss final project
Week 14: Nov. 21	Persepolis	<p>Tuesday 11/21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Marjane Satrapi's <i>The Complete Persepolis</i> pp. 103-153 • Read selected article
Week 15: Nov. 28-30	Persepolis	<p>Tuesday 11/28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Marjane Satrapi's <i>The Complete Persepolis</i> pp. 155-245 <p>Thursday 11/30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Marjane Satrapi's <i>The Complete Persepolis</i> pp. 246-341

When	Topic	Notes
Week 16: Dec. 5	Final Reflections	Tuesday 12/5 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final course reflections• Check in for final project• Course evaluations
Finals Week		Thursday 12/14 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final project due by 11:59 p.m. via Canvas folder.