

Comics and Graphic Novels

UHON 301-016 T R 11:00-12:15 SHC 22

Comics are a major form of storytelling in modern culture, from early strips like *The Yellow Kid* and *Dick Tracy* to contemporary, award-winning works such as Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus*. In this course, we will study the history of comics, from newspaper strips and superhero books to the canonization of the contemporary "graphic novel," as well as the unique structure and style of the comics form. Along with comics themselves, we will read critical essays from the emerging field of comics studies that seek to develop unique methods for the interpretation of comics as a literary and visual form. Over the course of the semester, we will explore how to read, interpret, and contextualize comics. More particularly, we will focus on comics history, the comics form, and classic comics in the first half of the semester, and in the second half of the semester, we will read a number of contemporary graphic narratives and develop our own accounts of contemporary comics art and culture.

Readings

We will read a number of comics from the late nineteenth century to the present, including comic strips (*Yellow Kid*, *Krazy Kat*, *Gasoline Alley*, *Little Orphan Annie*, *Dick Tracy*, *Popeye*, and *Peanuts*), superhero comics (*Superman*, the *Avengers*, *X-Men*, and *Watchmen*), horror and war comics (*Tales from the Crypt* and *Two-Fisted Tales*), alternative comic by R. Crumb and Justin Green, and contemporary graphic novels. Graphic novels will include: Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, Lynda Barry's *One Hundred Demons*, Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, Charles Burns' *Black Hole*, and Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*. Alongside these texts, we will also read a number of essays on the history of comics, comics form, and visual culture.

Requirements

Two analytical papers, one creative research paper, one oral presentation, weekly participation in online discussion board, monthly reports on reading a comic book of your own choosing in serial form, and active participation in class discussion.

About the Instructor

Daniel Worden received his Ph.D. in English and American Literature from Brandeis University. His work on U.S. fiction, comics, and television has appeared in *Arizona Quarterly*, *Canadian Review of American Studies*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, and *Southern Literary Journal*, as well as the anthology *The Comics of Chris Ware: Drawing is a Way of Thinking*.

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