

Composing Graphic Narratives (Fall 2009)

Instructor: Jonathan Bass

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Office/Hours: Loree 010 / Wed 2:00-3:00 pm and by appointment

Online Class Schedule

http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~jbass/courses/402/402_fall09.htm

Required Texts

Jessica Abel and Matt Madden, *Drawing Words and Writing Pictures: Making Comics: Manga, Graphic Novels, and Beyond*. First Second.

Ivan Brunetti, editor, *An Anthology of Graphic Fiction, Cartoons, and True Stories*. Vol. 2. Yale UP.

Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. HarperCollins.

You can purchase these texts from New Jersey Books, 108 Somerset St. Other readings, both comics and critical work, will be available online via Sakai or the Web.

Required Equipment and Software

Digital storage device (e.g., flash drive), sketchbook.

Sequential Image Viewer (e.g., CDisplay Comics Reader, free download)

Adobe Photoshop or an equivalent layer-based image editing application (e.g., the free GIMP)

Digital camera or equivalent (semi-required)

Course Requirements

Below is an overview of major assignments (“work requirements”) for the semester. It is a rough forecast based on previous semesters and is subject to substitution. Also, I’ve left out a few small assignments. Much of the work will be done in class, or begun in class and completed as homework, or begun as homework and revised in class. Some of it will be purely homework.

Shorter Projects

Pictureless comic

Your work space + avatar (persona) + coloring exercise

Eight Panel Story (2-3 versions)

Fight or run

Exercises in style

Longer Projects

Two-week diary comic

Interview comic

Six-page story

Anthology chapter (part of anthology group project)

Writing Assignments

Expect three or so short (one-page) analyses of your own work, another student’s work, the assigned reading, or unassigned 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 team (two-person) presentation to the class on one of the assigned readings for a given week. Early presentations will usually be on single chapters from McCloud. Later presentations might be on chapters from Abel and Madden or theoretical readings on narrative. Students can also propose their own presentation topics (e.g., on an unassigned essay on comics, drawing, storytelling; on a favorite graphic novel, etc.).

Grading

Grading is based on your work and participation in the class. Longer projects receive letter grades and written or in-person feedback (the latter usually in the form of a critique, review, or discussion in class). Shorter projects receive full credit, half credit, or no credit, based on the degree to which they satisfy the specified requirements.

Larger projects together account for about 50% of the final grade. Shorter projects and other miscellaneous work for about 30% of the grade. Participation for about 20% of the grade.

Policies

Attendance. Attendance at all classes is expected. Students missing more than three classes fail the course – without exception. Regular latenesses will count as half-absences, effective retroactively.

Late work. Homework is due at the start of class unless otherwise noted. Printed work must be printed before the start of class. Late assignments are graded down. Students falling behind by more than two of the weekly web page assignments strongly risk failing the course.

Formatting and submitting work. Generally, you'll submit your projects and other work in at least two forms: (1) in a printed, photocopied, or handmade; and (2) online as a high-quality PDF via Scribd (<http://www.scribd.com/>) and/or a Sakai dropbox. Work will not count as submitted until both the physical and digital formats are turned in.

Submitting work by email. Unless specifically requested to submit work via email, do NOT do this.

Class participation. We do a LOT of work in class. Class participation entails attendance and active involvement in discussion and other activities. If you miss more than two classes you'll fail this part of the course and be unlikely to get higher than a "B" grade overall.

Instant messaging, 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.

Sample work. I will often want to share examples of students' work in class. Names will seldom be deleted. If you object to my using your work, let me know very clearly (in person or by email).

Email. The instructor responds to email Monday to Friday. The instructor's email is for asking questions about the course work. *Please do not use email to share your reasons for missing class or work or to ask for his permission to do so.* If you need to discuss attendance or the lateness or absence of written work, do so in class or during office hours.

Online Schedule. Students are responsible for regularly checking the online schedule for important changes. The schedule is updated weekly, usually a day or two before class. 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, photographic appropriation, and parody will be developed in class.

Departmental Review All grades are subject to departmental review.