

## **ENGL 370 Graphic Novel – Winter Session 2014**

**Instructor: Will Eggers**

### **Required Texts:**

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics*.

Miller, Frank. *Batman: the Dark Knight Returns*.

Moore, Alan. *Watchmen*.

Kirkman. *The Walking Dead: Book 1. Days Gone By*. (Compendium not required, but you may want.)

O'Malley, Brian Lee. *Scott Pilgrim 1-6*.

Speigelman, Art. *The Complete Maus*.

Mazzuchelli, David. *Asterios Polyp*.

Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home*.

Cruse, Howard. *Stuck Rubber Baby*,

Sacco, Joe. *Safe Area Goradze*.

### **Ideas to explore:**

Since the ground-breaking publication of Art Spiegelman's *Maus* in 1993, "graphic novels" have entered the global cultural mainstream. A truly multicultural genre, comics created by men and women around the world now appear in U.S. high school and college curricula, hold the attention of academic critics, and earn big box-office returns in cinematic adaptations.

In this course we will survey the current field and read works of fiction (such as *THE WATCHMEN*), autobiography (*MAUS*, *FUN HOME*), journalism (*SAFE AREA GORAZDE*), and what we might call "comic theory" (*UNDERSTANDING COMICS*). And just as comics have become a global medium, they are perhaps inherently "postmodern." Many contemporary comics are self-conscious about questions of form and theories of representation, a characteristic that will help us formulate new versions of the questions often considered in literary study. How do words and pictures drawn together in sequential narratives tell stories? What different skills are needed to comprehend this complex play of image, language, and time? What can graphic books do that other books cannot, and what are the constraints that shape this form?

In order to better understand these works and the culture that produced them, we will consider them through lenses including history, gender, psychology, and class, as well as their visual elements. We will also put together short sequential art sequences of our own (not judged on their artistic merit!).

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

#### **By Jan. 6-hand in via email: Preparatory Reading Response.**

Please read all required works on our list before you arrive in class. For each work on the list, write out a brief response. Each response should include:

- Your initial response to the work in a couple of sentences.
- Two questions you have about each work (we will return to these in class)

#### **By Jan. 8: Choose one graphic novel not on our list.**

Choose and discuss one graphic novel not included on our list that you would like to

consider for your oral presentation (I will send out a list of potential readings in case you do not have one in mind).

**Due Jan. 10: One three-page analytical essay** using interpretive lenses.

**Due Jan. 14: One three-page analytical essay** on visual elements (using McCloud).

**Due Jan. 17: One short graphic work of your own creation with two-page commentary.** We will have some time every day in class to work on this. Never fear! The work will not be judged on artistic merit but on the insight you have gained.

**Due Jan. 17: Oral Presentation on a graphic novel of your choice.**  
Consider this a step in preparation for your final paper.

**Due Jan. 21: One five-page paper, bringing together several interpretive elements.**

Grades:

Total	<u>100</u>
5 page research essay	20
3 page essay	10
3 page essay	10
Graphic work of your own (with commentary)	10
Oral Presentation	10
Class Discussion / responses	30
Preparatory reading response	10

Readings

Unit One: Interpretive Frameworks

- Scott McCloud
- Interpretive lenses
  - o Psychology: Freud, Lacan, Jung
  - o Gender: Mulvey, Sedgwick
  - o Class: Marx, Althusser
  - o Cultural: Foucault
  - o Structure: Rimmon-Kenan

Unit Two: Becoming “Graphic Novels”

- Batman: The Dark Knight Returns
- The Watchmen
- The Walking Dead

Unit Three:

- Maus
- Asterios Polyp

#### Unit Four

- Scott Pilgrim v the World (1-6)
- Ghost World
- American Born Chinese

#### Unit Five

- Fun Home
- Stuck Rubber Baby
- Safe Area Gorazde