Lit 61F: Introduction to a Literary Topic – Graphic Novels & Comics

Earth & Marine Sciences B214

Instructor: Cathy Thomas, ctthomas@ucsc.edu

Office: Hum 1, Rm 234, Wed. 11 AM-1 PM & by appt.

TA: Conner Bassett, cbassett@ucsc.edu

Office: Perk Coffee Bar, Thursdays 12PM to 1PM

**GRAPHIC NOVELS & COMICS: THE SYLLABUS**

Visual storytelling is part of our human origin story. Graphic novels and comics combine text and image in a synthesis where we can observe the hybridization of social, ethnic, gender, and racial ideas. The beauty of comics is in their ambivalent images that are at once and altogether confrontational, dark, humorous, confusing, and clear. The study of these realistic and non-realistic images provides new perspectives to our scholarly inquiries. **This course will be especially interested in engaging comics as a transgressive literary mode, medium and genre as well looking at how creators use images to critically question and contest normative boundaries. We will read for enjoyment. Though, by focusing on transgression, we may begin to imagine how the relationship between the reader and the reading might be otherwise.**

This course, like other Literature courses, attempts to provide critical perspectives on the following: How are art & history, public & private lives, politics & poetry, and wants & desires synthesized on the page? How does literary culture offer significant insight to a broader understanding of popular culture...and vice versa? How can fictive embodiments—superheroes—become social interventions? Most importantly, can you still enjoy a text after deconstructing it? Through careful evaluation and unbridled enjoyment of comics, we can do both.

**Reading Graphic Novels** has four goals. First, it invests time in understanding how to close read the comics page and how certain elements relate to literary tropes, specifically **metaphor and metonymy** in **graphia**. Second, it reasons that as comics have developed alongside human material and intellectual progress its comics’ content will reflect this synthesis. Third, it examines how **non-normative narratives** move from the margins to the center of literary acclaim because of protagonists. Finally, this course explores the current trend of comics criticism and what it means to dissect genres written for pleasure, catharsis or commerce. **This Literature course is reading and writing intensive** (with drawing—yes, you will create art!) You will have the opportunity to do both creative and critical work this term.

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1 Graphia- books (cartoons, comics, graphic novels) that make symbolic connections between overtly unrelated points of narrative continuity in order to create figural meaning and to uncover trope: modes of expression.

**Patty-Jo ‘n’ Ginger**, syndicated comic of Jackie Ormes—recognized as first female African American cartoonist. in the Pittsburgh Courier, an African-American newspaper that enjoyed a circulation far beyond Pittsburgh, reaching 358,000 households nationwide at its peak. Patty-Jo appeared weekly for 11 years straight, from 1945 to 1956.
Required Reading:

We will be reading across modes: in print, on the web, in the comic book store and through trading. Excerpts and Supplemental reading will be provided on Canvas or as a handout. **You will need to purchase 3 print books.** Print editions are available at the Baytree Bookstore on campus, Atlantis Fantasyworld on Locust Street off campus (10% discount) or Amazon.com. *Bitch Planet #1* will be given to you as a complimentary reprint. Other titles (whole or excerpts) include but are not limited to: *Black Panther, Wonder Woman, Maus, Fun Home, Preacher, Fantastic Four, Saga, America, Love & Rockets, Krazy Kat, and Palestine.* First and foremost, read all comics. Next, read and return to your handouts as needed. Secondary reading (essays on critical theory, narrative terms and cultural history) are all relatively short. With the PDF chapters from the *Routledge SF Encyclopedia,* please read the first 3-4 paragraphs (intro) and the last 2 (conclusion) while skimming through the middle. You will eventually go back and read, in its entirety, the critical material relevant to your paper topics and interests. Read with post-its, pens, and purpose. In parenthesis, I place the required format of the text.


This is another shorter required reading that **I will give each of you a copy in class. FREE**

- *Bitch Planet.* Kelly Sue DeConnick & Valentin DeLandro, 22pp (PRINT: Image Comics)

Excerpts on Canvas. You do not need to purchase these but are welcome to do so if you want.


All books are available through InterLoan Library or Santa Cruz public library; there are very many copies circulating if you choose not to buy books. **Please plan ahead:** figure out how and where you will obtain your texts.

**TRIGGER WARNING:** Please consider the following:

If you find that writing or reading about/viewing a particular text/theme/issue has provoked more than ordinary anxiety or concern, we encourage you to contact the campus Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS). Counseling and Psychological Services is located in the Student Health Center across from Colleges 9/10 in the new East Wing on the 2nd floor (459-2628).

The texts in this course may include graphic depictions of or allusions to death, rape, murder, and illness, particularly, but not limited to, violence against women. These texts are meant to engender powerful feelings and big ideas, and none of the primary texts depict gratuitous violence, but please think carefully
about whether you are able to take this emotional/intellectual journey at this time. In addition, there will be discussion around race, class, and power dynamics on Earth and scifi extrapolations based on our own human history. We will talk respectfully with each other: patience, accountability and a sense of humor.

Assignments & Grades

Attendance & participation ² 30% (10 in-class discussion + 20 attendance)
TEN Index Cards: short response + art (10 of attendance; used for tracking attendance)
THREE BaseCamp¹ (conversations) 30% total (10% each, this excludes personal intro)
ONE 1-hour review discussion 10%
Trading comic 5%
ONE Final paper 5-6 page close reading essay 25%

RESOURCES:

UCSC Canvas
Basecamp (for class posts, embedded on Canvas)
WebToon for sharing polished work (optional)
Comixology.com (an Amazon subsidiary)
Comicvine.com (a free database- get your learn on!)
ComicLife™ software in SocSci 1 MacLab, Room 135
You may purchase/download this from plasq.com. Also, there is a FREE 30-day trial available.

ATTENDANCE:

Regular attendance in lecture is REQUIRED. You are strongly encouraged to take advantage of office hours to get one-on-one feedback on your writing and essay arguments. You get ONE unexcused absence. With the SECOND unexcused absence, a portion of your class attendance & participation grade—worth 30% of your total grade—is an “F”. With a THIRD unexcused absence you will not be able to pass the course. 2 Tardies = 1 Absence; 10 or more minutes late is LATE. Speak to me in advance of extenuating circumstances. On the last day of class, you can make-up any unexcused absence by dressing up in full cosplay (costume play of a comic, sf, or pop culture character).

We’ll have TWO breaks: a 5-minute cell phone break and 15-minute midpoint break. In longer midpoint breaks, you will be given material to read. Our class is old school: Please, no in-class technology unless an assignment requires it. I will post Powerpoint slides of all lectures on CANVAS. Your class participation grades will be affected if you are caught using your technology for purposes unrelated to this course.

OFFICE HOURS and REVIEW SESSIONS:

It is simply impossible to give most work the attention it needs during class time, so you may need to meet privately to talk about the course material or workload in general. Please make a point to meet with Conner or I if you need additional help, have questions or concerns. There are no weekly TA sections but you will be required to attend ONE of the four possible REVIEW SESSIONS. Please sign-up in class by Thursday, August 3rd.

² Participation decoded: course preparedness, being awake & on-time, not texting, not napping. Weekly Basecamp input is a great opportunity for ‘discussion’ to accommodate the shy people. Doing the make-up prompt will be weighed toward an unexcused absence.
³ Basecamp. I will post all 5 conversations at one time. Due dates are on syllabus. You may respond more than one to a particular conversation. Conner and I will spend time toward the end of lecture to bring your posts into class discussion.
Requirements and Grading: Grades are primarily determined by your writing and participation. Late assignments will not be accepted unless I approve it ahead of time. If you anticipate missing class, you should plan on handing in work the class prior.

BASECAMP:
I’ll give you five prompts (150-500 words). You only need to respond to 3. One of the five is designed to make-up an unexcused absence; it will be a substantial prompt. Your personal intro on Basecamp does not count. On Basecamp, you will see everyone’s responses. This is not a blog space. You do not need to respond to others. It is designed for you to read the model answer and for you to read peer responses so that you can see how your analysis contributes to the broader “conversation” on comics. You will focus on clarity, citation (MLA or Chicago) and close reading. This, along with the index cards are designed to scaffold and build on ideas you have for your final project. Each is graded on a 10-point scale. Comments/grading on Canvas in your student private view.

INDEX CARDS:
I will give everyone 10 index cards each. At the beginning of each class, you will turn in an index card based on a prompt given in class, repeated on Canvas. These are short responses that have both a written and drawing component—stick figures are great. They also keep track of your attendance. Even if you do not complete an assigned card, turn in a card with your name on it for attendance. If you try but fail, you’ll have an opportunity to re-do a check minus card. Comments/grade will be placed on card and returned to you.

✔+ (check plus) exceptional post; present in class. Full credit
✔ (check) thoughtful response with image and text; present in class. Full credit
✔ - (check minus) did not answer prompt and/or missing detail; present in class. No credit. Can re-do card.
―(minus) did not do index card; present in class. No credit. Cannot re-do card.

TRADING: Comic Book Store & the “Ten-Cent Plague”
In our third week of class, on Thursday August 17, we will take a class trip and visit Atlantis Fantasyworld on Locust Ave. This comic book store has been in Santa Cruz since the 1970s. At their height of popularity, comic books were called the “ten cent plague” and they were associated with juvenile delinquency, promiscuity, and even murder. The success of comic book circulation was trading comic books. You will each purchase a comic from the dollar ($1) rack as part of a multi-part scavenger hunt. You may be offered a discount for other purchases. The hope is that you will read your comic then trade at least twice with classmates. You’ll get your comic back at the end of class. You will write a short reflection on trading comics on Basecamp worth 5% of your final grade.

FINAL ASSIGNMENT (Creative Critical): Hard copy due, Thursday August 31st at beginning of class.
Create a one-page comic, 3-panel to 9-panel, based on the euphemism (word expression) you were given in week 2. Write a 5-6 page double-spaced critical analysis based on your creative work. Biblio is not part of page count.
1. How does text and image relate to each other? How is the title relevant to your image-text choices?
2. How does your comic engage the idea of transgression?
3. Focus on ONE figurative language: metaphor (synecdoche, metonymy), pun, onomatopoeia
4. Focus on ONE narrative term: analepsis, prolepsis, ellipsis, mimesis, diegesis, frame story, plot, (leit)motif
5. Use comic book terms: panel, page, bleed, balloon, lettering, inking, coloring, caption, etc.
6. Engage ONE critical lens: feminism, CRT, alterity, cultural history, queer theory, satire, etc.
7. Proper heading, page numbers, stapled, bibliography, citation, grammar, spelling, 12-pt font, inch margins.
Plagiarism: Bad.  
"...knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful" - Samuel Johnson

There will be weekly writing assignments therefore your work will be subject the rules and penalties of the university. Cheating in any part of the course may lead to failing the course and suspension or dismissal from the university. If in doubt, please consult me or visit the UC Santa Cruz Academic Integrity web pages at http://www.ucsc.edu/academics/academic_integrity/undergraduate_students/resources.html

Religious Observance: It is the official policy of the University of California, Santa Cruz, to accommodate, without penalty, requests for alternate examination times in cases where the scheduled time for the examination violates a student’s religious creed. Requests for accommodation for religious observance must be made directly to the faculty member in charge of the course within the first two weeks of the term or as soon as possible after an examination date is announced.

Conduct & Classroom Behavior: Intelligent discussion can be heated discussion—from Marvel vs. DC to race in comics. I expect everyone to conduct themselves in a manner respectful of their peers, instructors, guest speakers, and of the community at-large. The UC Code of Conduct is found online at: http://deanofstudents.ucsc.edu/student-conduct/student-handbook.html

Writing Assistance: If you are having problems with an assignment or just need help honing down or talking through your argument, please make an appointment with the instructor or TA for one-on-one assistance.

Accommodations: Students with disabilities who require accommodations are requested to contact me during the first week of the quarter via email, before or after class, during office hours, or by appointment. The Disability Resource Center serves students with both permanent disabilities and some temporary medical conditions (e.g. a broken arm). For more information, please visit the DRC website at http://drc.ucsc.edu/index.html, 146 Hahn Student Services, 831-459-2089, drc@ucsc.edu.

Mental health resources:  
UCSC Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides a wide range of short-term and long-term mental health services. Counseling services are confidential and free of charge to all UCSC students. For more information, contact CAPS at 831-459-2628 or visit http://caps.ucsc.edu/.

Academic Advising  
Academic advising is offered all summer; hours will vary by college. Students can contact their colleges to find out when advising is being offered or visiting advising.ucsc.edu.

Session 2 Dates: July 31 – September 1 http://summer.ucsc.edu
  Drop Deadline – August 7 (refund)  
  Drop/Add/Withdraw – August 18 (no refund)  
  Change Grade option – August 11  
  Grades Due –  
  Grades Post – Sept 7
LIT 61F: Reading the Graphic Novel - Summer Session

This syllabus is subject to change to meet time constraints of the 5-week summer session
Bring texts to class. If there are multiple books being discussed, I’ll tell you ahead of time which one.

Week 1 – Welcome
Tu, Aug 1  Welcome to the course: resources overview & introductions.
What is a comic? What is at stake in comics? Who is a critic?
Who is a fan? What’s the difference? Intertextualities or how do comics speak back to and across each other, to the self and of the world? Using critical theory. Comics terminology and brief history. Close read: Bechdel page 99 of Fun Home
In-class reading: Syllabus. “How to Read Nancy”

At-Home: Read 1-2 comic strips on Canvas from: Herriman, Ormes, Adams, Watterson, McCruder. Listen to Podcasts:
Cultural Appropriation: http://www.stufftoblowyourmind.com/podcasts/cultural-appropriation.htm
Code Switch: http://one.npr.org/?sharedMediaId=536049556:537978004

Explore Basecamp, Web Toon, Comixology.com. Post a class intro under “Welcome” in Basecamp, please upload a selfie as your icon. Please do this by August 7th.

Th, Aug 3  Culturing “culture”: Genres, Tropes, and Caricature – Who gets to do what?
Green Lantern #76, close reading time and space in black & white; close reading emotion and plot in color. EC Comics Weird Adventure #18 “Judgment Day” (7pp); EC cover art & history. Discuss comics censorship & Comics Code of Authority & Frederic Wertham.
In-class reading: “Critical Race Theory” (Lavender), small group close-reading of either: Herriman, Ware, Sacco, Spiegelman, Ormes, Eisner, Luen, Hernandez, Love, and Smith
In-class Exercise: “Magical Negro” by Nnedi Okorofo-Mbachu or “Taco Bell...” by Doug Kearney

At-home: My Hero (Jones); Fantastic Four #52, #53; Black Panther 1 (2016)
Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art (chap. 3-4, 8), “Drawing Blood” Spiegelman, Will Eisner interview excerpts; from Routledge Companion to Science Fiction: “Golden Age of Comics” p63-69 (Wasielewski), “Silver Age of Comics” p123-127 then skim to end (Casey); “Cultural History” bottom p194 to middle p198, middle p200 to end (Yaszek).

Optional: George Herriman letter; Gilbert Seldes on Herriman. “Alternative History” (Hellekson)

BASECAMP #1 Short Text Observation: Read Hawkeye #11 and using any particular terminology/idea introduced by McCloud to explain the composition as well as events of the panel in context of the page and narrative. Single out the panel on that page and answer: what is gained or lost in visual representation? What is gained or lost in textual representation?
REQUIRED: Post due by 11:55pm Sunday, August 6. 150 words.

Week 2 – Critique and the Close Read
Tu, Aug 8  Key Terms Overview
In-Class: My Hero (Jones) and reviews of book
In-Class Exercise: Review short text observation in small groups. From general discussion, discover something new about the panel or single image from Basecamp #1.
**At-home:** re-read *My Hero; America* #1 (online); *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (chap. 5); from *Routledge Companion to Science Fiction* “Queer Theory” 298-299, 303-307 (Gaye), “Feminisms” 214-215, 220-223 (Donawerth).

**Thu, Aug 10**

**VISIT TO McHENRY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**
1:00 pm - 2:00 pm: Luisa Haddad and staff will give you access to Marvel and alternative commix. Only half the class can be in library at a time. While one half waits, you will be given your copy of *Bitch Planet* #1 (30pp) including back matter, to read. We will head back to class by 2:30PM.

**In-Class:** *My Hero, America, Bitch Planet*, other title you read in special collections.

**At-home:** *The Killing Joke* (Moore), “Psychoanalysis” 288-289 (Butler), excerpt on carnivalesque. *Saga* #1 (and #23 is optional, has spoilers); SKIM from *Routledge Companion to Science Fiction* : “Ethics and Alterity” (Easterbrook) “Animal Studies” (Gordon).

**Optional:** Read from *Routledge Companion to Science Fiction* : “Space Opera” (Sawyer), “Language and Linguistics” (Bould). View season 1/episode 1 of Joss Whedon’s *Firefly* (Hulu, Amazon Prime)

**BASECAMP #2** What are the implications of visual caricature? OR How is caricature and metaphor key to world-building (building a believable and layered culture) in sf? Please post an example of an image to explain your answer; for what audience; for what affect and effect.

**Post due by 11:55pm Sunday, August 13th. 150-500 words.**

**Week 3 – Trigger Happy: history, memory, & trauma...laughter?**

**Tu, Aug 15**

**Transgressive Bodies as villain and hero**

**In-Class:** *The Killing Joke* and reviews of it, *Saga*

**In-Class exercise:** Close reading a page. Working with citation

**At-home:** Review pre-essay assignment for in-class group work in Week 4. Read or re-read ONE Routledge chapter on Canvas relevant to your final project.

**Th, Aug 17**

**VISIT TO ATLANTIS FANTASYWORLD @1020 Cedar St, Santa Cruz 95060**

1:30 pm-3:30pm: Joe Ferrera will talk to the class for 30-40 minutes, then for the better part of an hour you’ll participate in a scavenger hunt that ties in key terms and past lectures.

You will also purchase your $1 comic book that gets traded beginning this week.

**At-home:** *Becoming UnBecoming*, 5-7 comic strips from a free press newspaper.

**BASECAMP #3** 150-500 words. Use in-line citation and works cited. Insert an image. Engage a critical lens (CRT, queer theory, feminism, etc.) AND either a figurative term (metaphor, pun, etc.) OR a narrative term (foreshadow, etc.) to discuss any of the following topics:

- The Joker as a transgressive character
- The Batman as a transgressive character
- *What Saga, America or Bitch Planet* is engaging and extrapolating from our own culture.
- Power dynamics in the comic based on what TWO things you notice happening (recurring) on the page.

**Post due by 11:55pm Tuesday, August 22nd. 150-500 words with citation, in-line and works cited.**
**Week 4 – Graphic Girls & Boys**

**Tu, Aug 22**  Gender, Sexuality & Violence

*In-Class:* *Becoming Unbecoming* and reviews of book

*In-Class exercise:* Pre-essay worksheet and sharing final assignment comic

*At-home:* *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (pp. 178-184) but specifically these pages in “Animating the Archive” pp 175-178, 218-17

**Th, July 24**  Race, color and other graphic assemblages

*In-Class:* *Becoming Unbecoming.*

Discuss black and white versus color pages. Review previous reading.

**SKYPE:** Stephen Graham Jones (*My Hero*)

**GUEST LECTURE:** Conner Bassett (TBA)


**BASECAMP #4** How does Una, Jones, and Moore use intertextuality to plot unique stories about “common” traumas. Intertextuality can be any other following: allusion, pastiche, parody, visual or textual imitation.

*Post due by 11:55pm Sunday, August 27th. 150-500 words with citation, in-line and works cited.*

**BASECAMP #5** Make-up ONE UNEXCUSED ABSENCE, choose one

1. Create an annotated bibliography of *My Hero, Becoming Unbecoming, The Killing Joke* and seven other texts from class. This may include specific chapters from Routledge, McCloud, and single comic books.

2. Write a 500 to 1000-word book review of *My Hero, Becoming Unbecoming or Killing Joke.* Post to Basecamp AND Post to an online resource such as Goodreads.com or Amazon.com

*Post due by 11:55pm Thursday, August 31st.*

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![Image](image.png)

**Week 5 – The staying and saying power of image-text**

**Tu, July 29**  Politics and Poetry of the page


Continue sharing your final assignment comic ideas.

**SKYPE:** Michael Galvan (*Carrot & Peas*), Juliana “Jewels” Smith (*Hafrocenteric*)
At-home: re-read the primary text on which you will be writing; re-read the critical text that you use to support your final paper; skim from *Routledge Companion to Science Fiction* “Fan Studies” (Reid); read 1954 Comics Code (2pp, eCommons); Frederic Wertham, “What Parents don’t know about comic books”

**Thu July 31**  
**DUE Final assignment, 1 comic and a 5-6pp paper, not including works cited page.**  
*Hard copy in-class AND electronic version uploaded to CANVAS*  
*In-class:* Zines, manga, and Web Toon comics. Continue discussion from Tuesday.  
*In-class exercise:* Revisit a previous assignment with new eyes: Small group close-reading of either: Herriman, Ware, Sacco, Speigelman, Ormes, Eisner, Luen, Hernandez, Love, & Smith. How are the comics read over this course in conversation with each other or other media, social discourses, or ideas? What did the CCA do to the comics after the Golden Age? How did trading comics change your reading and writing habits, if at all?  

Continue sharing your final assignment comic ideas.

“Jeopardy” course review & Dirty White Elephant game (bring nothing but your anticipation)

**EXTENDED** deadline for final paper: Thursday, August 31st. Hardcopy is hand-delivered to Cathy’s office in Humanities 1, room 234 between 7-8pm

**IMPORTANT INFO/DATES:**

**Final Paper Topic:**

Comic/Graphic Novel

Theory/ theories/ secondary text

**Class trips**

Thursday, August 10th 1PM meet at McHenry Special Collections on 3rd floor

Thursday, August 17th 1:30PM meet at Atlantic Fantasyworld, 1020 Cedar Street. We will organize rides on Tuesday, Aug 15th.

**Discussion-review groups. You only need to attend ONE. sign-up for in class on August 3rd.**

Wednesday, August 9th, 1-2 pm, Humanities 1 room 210 (Cathy)  
Tuesday, August 15th, 11am – 12pm, Humanities 1, room 210 (Conner)  
Wednesday, August 23rd, 1-2 pm, Humanities 1, room 210 (Cathy)  
Tuesday, August 29th, 11am – 12 pm, Humanities 1, room 210 (Conner)

**Images:** Green Lantern, Patty Jo n Ginger, Xkcd.com., Saga, Krazy Kat. George Herriman (1934)
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August 2017