

Graphic Novels: Image and Text

Spring 2020 Course Syllabus & Policies

Teacher: Mr. Michael Dean

Office: A136A

Contact: (630) 907 – 5057 **Email:** mdean@imsa.edu

Office hours: Walk-ins on Thursday (C-Day) 1:20 to 3:00 or by appointment (email me to arrange).

Course Description:



Since the 1980s, the so-called graphic novel, or long-form comic, has become a popular and accomplished literary and artistic form. Transcending its origins in pulp fantasy and adolescent entertainment, this evolving and hybrid medium represents, in the words of author and artist Eddie Campbell, “an emerging new literature of our times in which word, picture, and typography interact meaningfully and which is in tune with the complexity of modern life...”

This course offers a survey of some of the best graphic novels of the last thirty years, and it provides the skills for reading comics critically in terms of what they say and how they say it.

Meeting Days/Times

Time	Room	Schedule
9:00 – 9:55 am	A113	A, C, D
12:20 – 1:15 pm	A110	A, B, D

Required Materials

Textbooks

Ivan Brunetti, *Cartooning: Philosophy and Practice* (2011)

Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (1993)

Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, *Watchmen* (1987)

Mark Newgarden and Paul Karasik, "How to Read Nancy" (1988)

Hollis Margaret Rudiger, "Reading Lessons: Graphic Novels 101" (2006)

Marjane Satrapi, *The Complete Persepolis* (2004)

Art Spiegelman, *Maus I-II* (1986, 1991)

Shaun Tan, *The Arrival* (2007)

Other readings to be determined.

Additional Materials

Additional readings and supplementary texts will be provided electronically through Moodle and as printed handouts.

SSLs and Outcomes

- Students will understand techniques and conventions of comics as a medium and be able to explain their uses and effects [SSL IV.A-D].
- Students will develop new skills in reading and creating multimodal works [SSL IV.B, D].
- Students will evaluate the influence of historical context on form, style, and point of view [SSL II.A].
- Students will apply knowledge gained from comics as a means of understanding contemporary and historical economic, social, and political issues and perspectives [SSL III.B].
- Students will work collaboratively to come to an understanding of readings [SSL I.A-B].

- Students will develop greater autonomy as readers by generating and responding to their own substantive questions about authors and literary works [SSL I.B].
- Students will make and support informed judgments about issues of literary and aesthetic value [SSL IV.A-D].

Instructional Design and Approach



In order to understand the ways in which comics create and manipulate meaning, we will be concerning ourselves (especially in the first few weeks of class) with questions about comics' formal practice. Here, we will take our cue (when possible) from Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*. As the semester progresses, you will develop habits and skills of active reading that will help you to be aware of meaning in comics and of what authors and artists have done to create or suggest what you understand. Your own readers' questions will help to guide our discussions.

Moreover, this is a course in writing critically: in building an argument, in gathering and organizing evidence, and in engaging your audience. Although I will give you sample writing topics, one of the most important skills we'll practice in this course is that of finding an interesting topic, one that will satisfy both you and your readers. Class discussions may provide a starting point, but your papers should bring something new to the table.

Finally, I will ask you to use shared inquiry, creative writing, and your visual imagination to inform and even to entertain us. Your insights into our readings will expand our understanding of the graphic novel movement of the last few decades. Cartooning exercises will help to prepare you for your final project, a narrative comic with a written self-reflection.

Student Expectations

Participation and Attendance

One of your primary responsibilities as a student is being present and prepared for class. Not only does your presence in class give you the opportunity to engage and explore the class material, but it also allows your fellow classmates to benefit from your thoughts on our readings and their artistic work. As such, you are expected to participate in class discussions, to offer compelling insights, and to ask difficult questions depending on the circumstances. Students will also seek out help during office hours on major projects and essay assignments.

Academic Honesty Policy

Please refer to the Academic Behavior Code on page 10 of the Student/Parent Handbook.

Laptops

The default position for your laptop in this class is closed. This means, from the moment class starts, unless I ask you to use it, I don't expect to see it open. We will use the laptops frequently for in-class work and research and even for online readings, but to the greatest extent possible, this will be a laptop-free class.

If you have a special need that requires accommodation in this area, please see me.

This policy likewise extends to all electronic devices such as phones, tricorders, telegraphs, etc.

Artistic Effort

Not everyone is a gifted artist, but we all have stories to tell. Some of the best and most successful graphic artists use rudimentary drawings to tell compelling stories. A large component of this class will involve drawing, composition, and creative expression. In all cases, your effort in trying and your effort to improve will be taken into account. Don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone.

Book Returns

During this course, you will be given a number of texts from the English Department's collection. It is your responsibility to treat these books carefully and to make sure they are returned when asked to do so. Late returns or lost textbooks will result in a penalty to your participation grade, and you will be expected to replace lost or damaged textbooks.

Assessment Practices, Procedure, and Processes

Assignment Descriptions

ESSAYS

During our class, you will be responsible for completing four essays (a formal document typically between 3 to 5 pages in length). Each essay will have a different focus and will cover material from the class. It is my expectation that final submissions are essays that have gone through more than one draft and are not a product of procrastination.

All final essays will be submitted through Google Classroom. Additionally, you are required to draft your essay in Google Docs, meaning that I will be able to

see historical changes to your draft that demonstrate your effort to create multiple drafts before submission. Essays that are not submitted using Google Docs without a draft history will receive reduced credit.

HOMEWORK

“Homework” refers to non-essay assignments completed in and out of class, such as assigned reflections. All homework must be completed by the date assigned. A homework assignment can be submitted late for half credit, but after three days, the assignment will not earn any credit.

PRESENTATIONS & PROJECTS

Occasionally, we will have special projects and presentations. These assignments will typically ask you to radically change your thinking or to engage with your peers through public speaking. More detailed information will be provided in future handouts.

ONLINE REFLECTIONS

For most class periods, you will be asked to respond to a question posted in our Google Classroom. These responses are informal and reflective and typically encourage you to consider some of the ideas we’ve discussed or read about. Some online responses will be required and will be worth homework points. Others will not be directly graded, but will be a strong factor of your participation grade for the quarter. More detailed information about reflections will be provided in another document.

PARTICIPATION

A participation grade will be awarded at the end of each quarter. I will take into account many factors when considering your participation grade. Having meaningful contributions in class helps, but sometimes participation also involves asking questions or seeking out extra help when it’s needed.

Grade Scale

Your grade will be weighted as follows:

Essays	60%
Homework / Daily Work	5%
Final Project	15%
Participation	10%
Presentations and Projects	10%

English Department Grading Guide

A = Exceeds course requirements (90-100%)

B = Meets course requirements (80-89%)

C = Credit awarded but needs improvement (70-79%)

D = Does not meet course requirements: no Academy credit awarded

Essay Revision Policy

After submitting an essay assignment, you may have the option to revise that essay for an improved grade. Any essay that was submitted *on time* and earned *lower than an A* will be eligible for revision.

To revise an essay, a student must arrange for a tutoring session at the Writing Center. After attending this session, students will make significant changes to their draft then resubmit their essay with proof of the tutoring session. Along with a writing center slip, you will submit with your new essay a "changes memo" that describes the work that you've done to improve your document. Information about what should appear on that memo can be found on Moodle.

A student who earns a C or lower on an essay **must** revise that essay and **must** also meet with me during office hours or by appointment to discuss the

assignment. The conference with me must take place within one week of receiving the graded paper. Avoiding a required revision will strongly impact a quarter participation grade.

Once a student has revised and resubmitted their essay, the original grade of the assignment will be averaged with the grade of the revised draft. Students have one week once their essay has been returned to complete a revision.

Late papers cannot be revised.

Late Work Policy

“Homework” can be submitted late for half credit up to three days after the due date. In some instances, homework assignments are necessary for a class activity or are entirely dependent on the timely submission of the work. In those few instances, the assignment will not be eligible for late credit.

Major essay assignments are always submitted electronically. Consequently, the electronic submission method will determine whether an essay is late. It is your responsibility to make sure that an essay is submitted on time. Technological mishaps, faulty hard drives, viruses, and other events will not be considered valid excuses. Keep in mind that if an assignment is due at 12:00 am and you submit it after that exact point, **the electronic submission platform will flag it as late and it will be counted as late.** Please avoid potential mishap and submit your essays with plenty of time to spare. Screenshots, computer logs, witness testimony will not prevent the paper from being late.

The first day an essay is late you will lose the opportunity to revise it. For each day after the first, your essay will lose a letter grade. After five days, the essay will receive a “zero.”

Grade “Bumping”

Officially, the English Department does not round or “bump” quarter or

semester grades, and I adhere to this policy. Please do not contact me at the midterm or near the end of the semester with requests to increase a grade.

Response Time on Assignments

It is my intent to return all assignments that receive a grade within two weeks of their submission date.

Policies and Expectations

Winning Strategies for Students

CONSISTENT ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

All students should be prepared and on time for class. The most effective students will use their enrollment as an opportunity to expand their knowledge about a variety of skills and to improve their ability to write.

RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR

This is a learning environment, and the class is made up of your peers and colleagues. As such, you will always treat your classmates with the utmost respect and courtesy. Likewise, I expect to receive the same consideration. While it is common to refer to a class by a teacher's last name, when speaking to me directly, please call me "**Mr.** Dean." I won't respond to anything else.

TIMELINESS AND HONESTY

As mentioned above, you are expected to complete your assignments on time and on your own. Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course. Likewise, essays that are written shortly before a deadline will likely not be as successful as drafts that have gone through more revision.

Faculty Expectations

GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

I'm here to help you, and yes, I want you to do well in my class. Never be afraid to ask questions or approach me for advice or extra help. Email is a fantastic way to contact me outside of class and you can always make an appointment to see me during my office hours. But remember, I expect you to take ownership of your education. If you're confused, talk to me. If you need clarification on an assignment, ask.

FLEXIBILITY AND RESPECT

Just as I expect you to treat each other with interest, compassion, and civility, I strive to do the same for you.

HIGH STANDARDS

Grades in my class are not "given," they are **earned**. At IMSA a "B" means that you have met expectations for a class. A "C" grade means that you did not meet expectations, and an "A" grade means you exceeded expectations. I am happy to spend time with you helping you improve your performance and meet the standards you set for yourself.

