INTD 101 Understanding Comics: Comics as Literature **Fall 2006 SYLLABUS**
Instructor: Kate Pitcher
W 5:30-6:20pm -- Milne 213

PURPOSE

What is a graphic novel? Can pictures tell a story? Are comics literature? Many comics are written for adults and a mainstream audience, addressing such socially diverse topics as feminism and racism, while "traditional" stories of superheroes and villains are still entertaining and engaging readers of all ages. We will look at comics as a format for appreciating art, literature, history and social issues through a vibrant visual storytelling medium and explore the concept of "sequential art" through readings, discussions, films, and class presentations. Cartoons, comic books, graphic novels and manga will be examined and students will be encouraged to do outside reading and bring in their own discoveries to class. Throughout the semester, our discussions will build a conceptual framework for what constitutes literature and how comics and graphic novels fit in this framework and reflect society at large.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

	Students will be able to…
1.	Understand the elements of literature and how comics and graphic novels use these elements to tell a story.
2.	Define the basic elements of a comic book and graphic novel.
3.	Understand the history of comic books and graphic novels.
4.	Analyze the different genres of literature used to tell stories through the medium of comics.
5.	Articulate reasons, both literary and social, for the use of comics as storytelling medium.
6.	Understand the cultural, historical, literary, and social significance of comics in the U.S.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available from Sundance Books or Amazon.com):

Understanding Comics, Scott McCloud (1993, Kitchen Sink Press/HarperPerennial)
Graphic Storytelling & Visual Narrative, Will Eisner (1996, Poorhouse Press)

SCHEDULE

Note: This schedule may change at any time according to class needs and demands. Class participants will be notified in class, via email or the information will be posted to the class blog.

Class Dates	Readings	Discussion	Assignments Due
Week 1 August 30		Introductions Syllabus	

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Week 2 September 6	**Eisner**, Chapters 1-5; 10 **ERes Reading:** Inge, from *Comics & Culture*, pp. xi-xxi	Elements of literature; What is a story? (plot, character, setting, style, theme)	Blog post
Week 3 September 13	**McCloud**, Chapters 1, 3, 4 **Reserve Reading:** Eisner, from *Comics & Sequential Art*, Chapters 1-3 & 6	Definition of comics: (panel transitions, closure, timing, frames, etc.)	Blog post
Week 4 September 20	**McCloud,** Chapters 2 **ERes Readings:** -Inge, from *Comics & Culture*, Chapter 2 "Comics and American Language" (pp.17-28) -Wright, from *Comic Book Nation*, Chapter 1 "Superheroes for the Common Man" (pp. 1-29) - Gordon, from *Comic Books & Consumer Culture*, ~~Chapter 6 &~~ Epilogue	Language & art of comics; History of comics	Blog post
Week 5 September 27	**Reserve Readings:** *The Sandman, Preludes & Nocturnes: Vol. I* Read the following stories: "The Sleep of the Just", "Imperfect Hosts", "Dream a Little Dream of Me" *The Sandman, Dream Country: Vol. III*, Read the following story: "A Midsummer Night's Dream", pp. 62-86 Read the following book chapters: Sanders, from *The Sandman Papers*, "The Origin of The Sandman" (pp. 3-21) and "Of Stories and Storytellers in Gaiman and Vess's A Midsummer Night's Dream" (pp. 25-39)	Forms of literature: mythology	**Book Review #1**
Week 6 October 4	**CLASS CANCELED**	---	Blog post
Week 7 October 11	**Eisner**, Chapters 6 & 8 **Reserve Reading:** *Bone: Out From Boneville*	Forms of literature: drama, epics	Blog post
Week 8 October 18	**Eisner**, Chapter 9 **McCloud**, Chapter 5 **Reserve Reading:** *Persepolis*	Forms of literature: biography, memoir	Blog post

Class Dates	Readings	Discussion	Assignments Due
Week 9 October 25	**McCloud**, Chapter 6 & 8 **Reserve Readings:** Selections from: *Watchmen, Black Hole, Batman: Dark Knight Returns*	Genre fiction (comics telling stories through horror, science fiction, mystery, western, fantasy, etc.)	**Book Review #2**
Week 10 November 1	**McCloud**, Chapter 7 **Reserve Readings:** *Maus, Part I* **ERes Reading Week 10:**	History/Current Events	Blog post
Week 11 November 8	**McCloud**, Chapter 9 **Reserve Reading:** Selections from: *Akira, Vol. I*	Pop culture (including Manga)	Blog post
Week 12 November 15	**Reserve Readings:** Selections from: Joe Sacco's *Palestine* and *Safe Area Gorazde*	Social issues	**Book Review #3**
Week 13 November 22		NO CLASS Happy Thanksgiving!	
Week 14 November 29	**Eisner**, Chapter 7 Selected readings from Alan Moore; DVD copy of "Ghost World" movie **ERes Reading Week 14:** Wright, from *Comic Book Nation*, "Spider-Man at Ground Zero" (pp. 287-293)	Comics into Films; clips from several films will be shown in class	Blog post
Week 15 December 6	**Eisner**, Chapter 12 **ERes Reading Week 15:** Wright, from *Comic Book Nation*, "Epilogue: the Death of Superman, or, Must There be a Comic Book Industry?" (pp.282-285)	Wrap-up	Final blog post
Week 16 December 13		Evaluations, hand in project	Final Project

ERes Readings:
Selected readings will be placed on Electronic Reserve (**ERes**), available through the Milne Library website: http://library.geneseo.edu and choose ERes →
Search by Course Instructor →

Choose Pitcher →
Look for this week's assigned reading → password will be **comiclit**

Reserve readings:

Readings from selected texts will be placed on the shelf at the Circulation/Reserve Desk in Milne Library. Ask for the title of the book you are looking for and the instructor's name. You will be able to check out titles for a short-term loan (4 hours, 1-day or 3-day)

Selected Titles on Reserve:

Comics and Sequential Art, Will Eisner
The Sandman Papers: an exploration of the mythology, edited by Joe Sanders
Bone: Out from Boneville, Jeff Smith
Gemma Bovery, Posy Simmonds
Identity Crisis, Brad Meltzer et. al.
Maus I: a survivor's tale: my father bleeds history, Art Spiegelman
Maus II: a survivor's tale: and here my troubles began, Art Spiegelman
La Perdida, Jessica Abel
Persepolis, Marjane Satrapi
Persepolis 2, Marjane Satrapi
Safe Area Gorazde, Joe Sacco
The Sandman: Volume 1: Preludes & Nocturnes, Neil Gaiman et. al.
The Sandman: Volume 3: Dream Country, Neil Gaiman et. al.
Watchmen, Alan Moore
V for Vendetta, Alan Moore
The 9/11 report: a graphic adaptation, Sid Jacobson et. al.

ASSIGNMENTS DUE

1) Blog postings

There will be required postings to the class blog at http://understandingcomics.blogspot.com
The instructor will invite each student to join the blog. Your participation is required! I will issue an invitation via your SUNY Geneseo email account. When you receive the invitation, click on the link and please join Blogger and accept your invitation. If you need help, let me know. One posting will be due by class meeting day, on a topic given by instructor.

Topics will be posted on the Thursday after our class meeting, which gives each student sufficient time to read the post, think about a response, and write a blog post before the next class.

2) Book Review

Three book reviews will be assigned throughout the semester to give students time to evaluate and critique three different comics. *Book reviews will be the student's own evaluation and critique of one piece from each of the following comic formats.* Instructions for the book reviews will be handed out at the next class meeting (September 6th).
*You will need prior approval from the course instructor if you want to select a title that is not on the following list.

Book Review #1 *will be a review of any one* **comic book** *from the following group:*		***Book Review #2*** *will be a review of any one* **graphic novel** *from the following group:*		***Book Review #3*** *will be a review of any one* **manga, comic book, or graphic novel** *title from the following group:*
American Splendor		*Persepolis 2*		*Akira*
Batman: The Dark Knight Returns		*Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: and here my troubles began*		*Astro Boy*
Identity Crisis		*Art School Confidential*		*Old Boy (volume 1)*
A Contract with God		*Ghost World*		*Barefoot Gen: a cartoon story of Hiroshima*
The Sandman (any volume)		*La Perdida*		*Buddha (volume 1)*
Sin City		*Gemma Bovery*		*Black Hole*
V for Vendetta		*Safe Area Gorazde*		*Epileptic*
Watchmen		*Blankets*		*Jimmy Corrigan*

3) Final Project

A final project will explore the different themes discussed during the semester, tying together the literary, cultural, historical and social significance of comics and graphic novels. Students will be required to consult with the instructor to find a topic that ties together these themes and uses comics as a storytelling medium. Suggested topics and guidelines for the project will be given out during class on October 25th. Final projects will not necessarily be a paper -- ALL mediums will be considered and discussed with the instructor. Possibilities include a multimedia presentation, webpage, film, comic book, etc.

GRADING

Item	Value
Blog posts	10%
Class Participation	15%
Book Review #1	15%
Book Review #2	15%
Book Review #3	15%
Final Project	30%
Total	100%

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

SUNY Geneseo makes reasonable accommodations for persons with documented physical, emotional or learning disabilities. Students in this situation should consult with the Director in the Office of Disability Services (Tabitha Buggie-Hunt, 105D Erwin, tbuggieh@geneseo.edu) and individual faculty regarding any needed accommodations as early as possible in the semester.