

LIT4305: Comics and Animation

Fall 2014 | Section 6465

Instructor: Casey Wilson
Email: kubrtm@ufl.edu

Course Description

In this course, we will explore the history and form of comic strips, comic books, and animated films. Although the class will take up texts diverse in content, form, and origin, we will emphasize late twentieth and early twenty-first century U.S. productions. In particular, we will interrogate how the Internet and the use of digital media in the production of still and moving images have influenced the development of comics and animation in recent years.

To that end, our class will consist of four general units. In our first unit, we will establish a basic vocabulary of terms for critically discussing comics and animation, with Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* and its film adaptation as our primary case study. Our second and third units will survey two of the most influential corporations in comics and animation: Disney and Marvel. We will trace the ways that each of these companies – currently united under the same corporate umbrella – has responded to historical, social, and technological developments through their products. In our final unit, we will turn our attention to works being produced online and through independent studios to see how – or if – the Internet has begun to change the rules for the creation of these kinds of image-based texts.

Required Texts

Please purchase these versions of the following texts, as other versions – specifically ebooks – are often missing some of the required material. All other readings will be made available either via Sakai or Course Reserves. Texts listed in order of class use.

Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art by Scott McCloud; William Morrow Paperbacks 1994; ISBN: 006097625X

The Complete Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi; Pantheon 2007; ISBN: 0375714839

Captain America Comics #1 by Jack Kirby and Joe Simon; Available as a digital issue at: http://marvel.com/comics/issue/7849/captain_america_comics_1941_1

The Mighty Thor, Vol. 1 (Marvel Masterworks) by Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, et. al.; Marvel 2010; ISBN: 0785145680

Thor: The Mighty Avenger: The Complete Collection by Rodger Langridge and Chris Samnee; Marvel 2013; ISBN: 0785183817

Ms. Marvel Vol. 1: No Normal by G. Willow Wilson and Adrian Alphona; Marvel 2014; ISBN: 078519021X**

Pretty Deadly Volume 1 by Kelly Sue DeConnick and Emma Rios; Image Comics 2014; ISBN: 1607069628

**Book releases on October 28.

Assignments

Response Papers: Throughout the semester, you will write brief response papers that take up a theme, argument, or other point of interest from the day's assigned reading. These responses are meant to generate both class discussion and potential ideas for your final paper. You will have eight opportunities to submit response papers; you must write four. (2-3 pages, 15%)

Original Comic or Animation: You will design and produce a brief comic or animation based on your own original idea. Previous experience or artistic skill is not required to do well on this assignment; you will use your comic or animation to demonstrate your understanding of the structure and technique of your chosen form. (10%)

Midterm Exam: The midterm exam will be given in class approximately halfway through the semester. It will consist of some combination of true/false, multiple choice, matching, short answer, and essay questions, all of which will be based on our readings and in-class discussions. (25%)

Final Paper: You will submit a research paper at the end of the semester that takes up one or more texts or themes from our course. We will discuss possible approaches to the final paper throughout the semester; you should include relevant secondary sources to support your ideas. You will also submit a one-page paper proposal a few weeks before the paper due date for review and feedback by the instructor. (Paper: 10-12 pages, 35%; Proposal: 1 page; 5%)

Participation: The participation component of your grade will include in-class discussion, reading quizzes, and general preparedness for each day's class session. The rubric for grading participation will be posted on the class website and available for reference throughout the semester. (10%)

Course Schedule

The following schedule is tentative and subject to change throughout the semester. All assignments, viewings, and readings are due the day they are listed. Check your email and Sakai daily for announcements and updates.

Unit One: A Brief Introduction to Comics and Animation

Week One

8/25/14: Syllabus; Course Introduction

8/27/14: What are comics?

Read: "Mr. Griffith, Meet Windsor McCay" by John Fell

8/29/14: What is animation?

Read: “Thinking about Animated Films” by Paul Wells

Week Two

9/1/14: NO CLASS

9/3/14: Discuss *Understanding Comics*

Read: *Understanding Comics*

9/5/14: How Comics Work

Read: “Comic Art: Characteristics and Potentialities of a Narrative Medium” by Lawrence Abbott; “Comics and How to Read Them” by Wolfgang Max Faust

Week Three

9/8/14: Picture Books/Illustrated Books/Graphic Novels

Read: “Comic Art, Children’s Literature, and the New Comics Studies” by Charles Hatfield

9/10/14: Screening and Discussion: Different Forms of Animation

Read: “Animation Techniques” by Anand Sagar Dash

9/12/14: Discuss *Persepolis*

Read: *Persepolis*

Due: Response Paper 1

Week Four

9/15/14: Screening: *Persepolis*

9/17/14: Discuss *Persepolis*

Read: “Graphic Ethics: Theorizing the Face in Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis*” by Joseph Darda and “Frames and Mirrors in Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis*” by Babak Elahi

Due: Response Paper 2

9/19/14: Workshop: Finding Ideas

Unit Two: The World of Disney

Week Five

9/22/14: Screening and Discussion: Selected Disney Shorts

Read: “Graphic Narrative: 1928” by Norman M. Klein; “The Stereoscopic Mickey: Space, Animation, and the Mouse” by J.P. Telotte

Due: Response Paper 3

9/24/14: Screening and Discussion: Selected Disney Shorts

Read: ~~Selection from *Of Mice and Magic* by Leonard Maltin~~

9/26/14: Workshop: Original Comic or Animation

Week Six

9/29/14: Screening: *Sleeping Beauty*

Due: Original Comic or Animation

10/1/14: Discuss *Sleeping Beauty*

Read: “Romancing the Tale: Walt Disney’s Adaptation of the Grimms’ ‘Snow White’” by Terri Martin Wright

10/3/14: The Politics of Disney

Read: “Walt Disney’s Song of the South and the Politics of Animation” by M. Thomas Inge

Week Seven

10/6/14: Screening and Discussion: Selected Disney Movie Clips

Read: “NeoDisney: Recent Developments in Disney Feature Animation” by Chris Pallant

10/8/14: Screening: *Frozen*

10/10/14: Discuss *Frozen*

Read: “How ‘Frozen’ Took Over the World” by Maria Konnikova and “The Triumph of *Frozen*, the First Disney Princess Movie About Girls Rather Than for Them” by Nick Schager

Due: Response Paper 4

Week Eight

10/13/14: Conferences

10/15/14: Midterm Exam

10/17/14: NO CLASS

Week Nine

10/20/14: Screening and Discussion: Selected Pixar Shorts

Read: Selection from *Moving Innovation: A History of Computer Animation*

Due: Response Paper 5

10/22/14: Screening and Discussion: Pixar Film Clips

10/24/14: Workshop: Paper Topics

Unit Three: The Marvel Universe

Week Ten

10/27/14: The Golden Age of Comics

Read: *Captain America Comics #1*

10/29/14: Screening and Discussion: Selected Episodes of *The Marvel Super Heroes*

10/31/14: Comics and the Moral Threat

Read: “Seducing the Innocent: Fredric Wertham and the Falsifications that Helped Condemn Comics” by Carol Tilley

Due: Response Paper 6

Week Eleven

11/3/14: Thor: Then and Now

Read: *The Mighty Thor, Vol. 1, Thor: The Mightiest Avenger*, and “The Pros (And Potential Cons) of a Female Thor” by Laura Genn

11/5/14: Screening and Discussion: Clips from the Marvel Cinematic Universe

Read: “Cinematic Destiny: Marvel Studios and the Trade Stories of Industrial Convergence” by Derek Johnson

Due: Response Paper 7

11/7/14: Workshop: Paper Proposals

Week Twelve

11/10/14: Screening and Discussion: Selected Episodes of *Avengers Assemble*

Due: Paper Proposal

11/12/14: Discuss *Ms. Marvel*

Read: *Ms. Marvel Vol. 1*

Due: Response Paper 8

11/14/14: Marvel's Diversity Initiative

Read: "Marvel and Diversity: Don't Piss on My Head and Tell Me It's Raining" by David F. Walker, "DC Comics' Diversity Crisis: Why the Status Quo Rules" by Liz Watson, and "Female Thor, Black Cap, & Marvel's History of 'Shock' Changes" by Rob Leane

Unit Four: Independents and the Internet

Week Thirteen

11/17/14: Creator-Owned Comics

Read: *Pretty Deadly*

Read: "Surveying the World of Contemporary Comics Scholarship: A Conversation" by Greg M. Smith and ~~"Women and Mainstream Comic Books" by Jill Katz~~

11/19/14: Independent Web Comics

Read: *Nimona*

Read: "Webcomics: The Influence and Continuation of the Comix Revolution" by The UF Visual Rhetoric Research Group

11/21/14: Playing with Form on the Internet

Read: Selected Thrillbent Comic; Selected XKCD and other web comics

Read: "How to Be a Theory Dinosaur" by Jordan Alexander Stein

Week Fourteen

11/24/14: Screening and Discussion: *Homestar Runner*

Read: "How Homestar Runner Changed Web Series for the Better" by Todd VanDerWerff

11/26/14: NO CLASS

11/28/14: NO CLASS

Week Fifteen

12/1/14: Screening and Discussion: *Annoying Orange* and *Marcel the Shell*

Read: "Viral Hit 'Annoying Orange' Moves from YouTube to TV" by Jefferson Graham and "The Couple Who Marcel the Shell's Together" by Joe Berkowitz

12/3/14: Conferences

12/5/14: Conferences

Week Sixteen

12/8/14: Paper Workshop

12/10/14: Wrapping Up

Due: Final Papers