

AML 2410—ISSUES IN AMERICAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE:

**Multicultural Graphic Novels: Retelling/Reimagining Myths**

**SECTION 3698 MWF 6, MAEB 229**

**INSTRUCTOR:** Anuja Madan ([anujamadan@ufl.edu](mailto:anujamadan@ufl.edu))

**OFFICE HOURS:** Turlington 4307, Fridays 2 pm to 3 pm and by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course discusses contemporary graphic narratives that have emerged from, and deal with a variety of religious, ethnic, and cultural contexts. Since a huge variety of graphic novels fall under the category of “multicultural graphic novels” (terms that will be investigated), we will focus on a certain sub-section of these: graphic novels that retell or reimagine myths. We will study texts that are inspired by the mythology of various cultures: Japanese, Chinese, Indian, and Native American. We will address the following questions in our analyses of texts: what impels artists and authors to recreate age-old myths across time periods, media and genres? What common tropes can we trace across myths from different cultures? How do the selected texts retell myths in order to make them relevant for a modern audience? In what ways do they reflect the philosophical and/or socio-historical concerns of the region and time period they emerge from? Are these stories resonant only for particular regions and communities or do they have a universal appeal?

The course will introduce students to theory on comics in order to provide them with a critical vocabulary to discuss the texts being discussed in class. Students will be trained in engaging with the visual and textual elements of graphic novels, and writing about them with attention to the image-text dissonances/interplay in the texts. The course will trace the connections between the graphic narratives, while simultaneously foregrounding the unique mythologies, histories and cultures, which the texts are shaped by, and in turn, represent.

**OBJECTIVES:** This course aims to train students in close reading and in-depth textual analysis. During the course of the semester, you will read, analyze, and construct arguments about visual texts and their contexts. You will enter into an academic conversation with scholarly sources on primary texts, learn how to do effective literary research, and produce papers which are well-written and well argued. Additional student learning outcomes for this course are detailed in the Undergraduate Catalog:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/1314/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx#description>

**REQUIRED TEXTS (Hard Copies required—all texts are available on Amazon in paperback):**

Gene Luen Yang, *American Born Chinese*. First Second Publishers; Reprint edition.  
ISBN:978-0312384487

Osama Tezuka, *Buddha, Vol. 2: The Four Encounters*. Vertical. ISBN-10: 1932234446

Osama Tezuka, *Buddha, Vol. 3: Devadatta*. Vertical Press. ISBN-10: 1932234586

Shyam Prakash and Sachin Nagar. *Sunderkaand— Hanuman*. Campfire Graphic Novels. **ISBN-10:** 9380741707

Samhita Arni and Moyna Chitrakar, *Sita's Ramayana*. TaraBooks and Greenwood Books. **ISBN-10:** 155498145X

*Native American Classics (Graphic Classics—Eureka Productions, Vol. 24)*. **ISBN-10:** 098256306X

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:**

**Quizzes** 220 points

Reading the texts before we discuss them in class is a must. Pop quizzes will be given on the readings that we are to discuss. The questions will be fairly simple; they are meant to test basic knowledge about the text and encourage you to think about its significant aspects. Multiple quizzes will be given on each graphic novel.

**3 x 600 word short close readings** 180 points

These will be close readings of any section of a text. There is no need to use secondary sources to write these responses. These are aimed to sharpen your rhetorical reading.

**One 1700-2000 word critical essay** 200 points

This paper entails a critical reading of any one graphic novel included in the syllabus. You would choose a theme to work on, and do an in-depth textual analysis, drawing upon evidence from the text to substantiate your argument.

**Participation** 50 points

This is a discussion-based class, and your participation is essential. Be prepared to contribute to all class discussions.

**Peer Review** 50 points

Peer reviewing is an important step in the process of drafting papers. Students will be given guidelines on how to peer review, so that they can provide useful feedback on their classmates' writing.

**One 2500-2700 word long, research-based critical paper** 300 points

The final research paper should demonstrate sophisticated argumentation on one or more texts in the syllabus, supported by scholarly research (3-4 sources). Suggested topics will be provided, but you will also be free to craft your own.

## GRADING SCALE:

A	4.0	93-100	930-1000	C	2.0	73-76	730-769
A-	3.67	90-92	900-929	C-	1.67	70-72	700-729
B+	3.33	87-89	870-899	D+	1.33	67-69	670-699
B	3.0	83-86	830-869	D	1.0	63-66	630-669
B-	2.67	80-82	800-829	D-	0.67	60-62	600-629
C+	2.33	77-79	770-799	E	0.00	0-59	0-599

## Grading Expectations for Essays:

**A-range essays** establish and sustain a complex and original argument that demonstrates sophisticated engagement with the course concerns and the unit's themes, contexts, and assigned readings. A-level essays provide attentive, rich, and original close reading to illuminate the complexities of language and theme in their chosen texts. They are well-organized, well-supported, well-developed, and written in an engaging and clear prose style.

**B-range essays** are competent and capable; they could be made stronger with **either** better organization, more complex development, more sustained examples, a stronger prose style, **or** less recurrent grammatical problems.

**C-range essays** are passable and often promising, but have **multiple** key areas that need considerable improvement: thesis strength, argument focus, level of analysis, development, organization, style, recurrent grammatical problems that interfere with clarity and ability to persuade.

**D-level essays** often hold promise, but are not yet "there" as far as narrowing down, organizing, and sustaining a viable idea in readable prose.

**F essays** fail to meet the basic criteria of argument, organization, and mechanics, or may be too off topic by failing to respond in any meaningful way to the assignment, or they contain passages that are plagiarized.

## Grading Expectations for Homeworks:

**A-range:** Homeworks marked excellent are thoughtful, careful, developed, and clearly presented. They show clear engagement with the unit's themes and contexts, strong comprehension of the text, and they offer sustained and original close reading that successfully illuminates the assignment.

**B-range:** Homeworks marked very good are competent and capable, but would benefit from **either** more complex development, fuller explanation or examples, increased risk-taking (including subtler or more original examples), or clearer presentation (structure, prose style, grammar).

**C-range:** Promising, but has **multiple** areas that require considerable improvement: more rigorous engagement with the assignment, stronger development of ideas, improved focus (in identifying the issue or guiding the reader through your analysis), fuller explanation of examples, increased risk-taking (including subtler or more original examples), and/or clearer presentation (structure, prose style, grammar).

**D or below:** Off track or inadequate, either because it is too brief, lacks comprehension, is carelessly composed, or presents a superficial response to the topic.

### **Grading expectations for Course Participation & Preparation:**

To earn an “A” for regular participation and preparation, the A level student is **consistently** prepared and engaged. They have their materials handy and are able to refer to specifics in their materials during class. They are able to make connections from the readings and/or build productive discussion from class discussion. They contribute to the ongoing discussion by responding thoughtfully to others and/or by asking questions that help build useful group understanding. They contribute regularly and are active listeners in small group work. They abide by the attendance policy. While they may not speak every session, if this person was not a member of the class, the quality of student discussion would diminish.

B range participants **mostly** meet the above criteria, C range participants **occasionally** meet the above criteria, D range participants **rarely** meet the above, F range participants **fail** to meet passable criteria.

NB: You must pass this course with a “C” or better to satisfy the CLAS requirement for Composition (C) and to receive the 6,000-word University Writing Requirement credit (E6). You must turn in all papers totaling 6,000 words to receive credit for writing 6,000 words.

PLEASE NOTE: a grade of “C-” will not confer credit for the University Writing Requirement or the CLAS Composition (C) requirement.

GRADE APPEALS: Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available in the English Department Offices. You will need to contact Carla Blount, Program Assistant to the Director of Writing Programs, for details if you wish to file an appeal.

### **GENERAL CLASSROOM POLICIES:**

*Attendance:* Attendance is required. You are allowed 3 absences. For every absence exceeding this, your final grade will drop by one letter. If you miss more than six classes, you will automatically fail the course. Exemptions from this policy will apply only for absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays. Absences related

to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor prior to the date that will be missed.

**IMPORTANT: If you are absent it is your responsibility to make yourself aware of all due dates and to turn in assignments on time. Please do not email me about what you have missed in class the day you were absent; find out from your classmate(s) instead.**

*Participation:* Please make it a point to have finished your assigned readings in time. This is a discussion-based course, and students need to take an active part of class discussions and activities.

*Electronics:* Cellphones and other electronic gadgets are not to be used in class (you will be asked to bring laptops on writing days if you so choose). Cellphones should be silenced before entering class. Students seen using their cellphones in class, or using laptops for anything other than class work, will be marked absent for the day and may be asked to leave.

*Tardiness:* If students enter class after roll call, they are late; this disrupts the entire class. **Three instances of tardiness count as one absence.**

*Classroom Behavior:* Please keep in mind that UF students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class.

*Assignments:*

Draft and final papers are to be submitted by the deadline. 15 points will be deducted from late papers for each day that they are late. Failure of technology is not an excuse.

All papers need to be submitted as MS Word (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) documents to E-learning **and** as hard copies. Final drafts should be polished and presented in a professional manner. All papers must be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins and pages numbered, and should follow the MLA style guide. **For submission on Canvas, the document's title should consist of the student's last name and the name of the assignment, in that order.**

*Email etiquette:* When writing to one's instructors, a subject line is a must, and a formal tone and format needs to be maintained. Emails should always be sent from students' official email ids. Please allow 24 hours for a response. Email me on my UF email id, rather than leaving messages on e-learning.

*Students with Disabilities:* The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

**Statement on sexual harassment:** UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more

about UF policies regarding harassment, see <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/policies-2/sexual-harassment/>

**Statement of Composition (C) and Humanities (H) credit** : This course can satisfy the General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities. For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/1314/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx#requirements>

**Statement of Writing requirement (WR):** This course can provide 6000 words toward fulfillment of the UF requirement for writing. For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/1314/advising/info/writing-and-math-requirement.aspx>

**Statement on academic honesty.** All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/student-honor-code.aspx>

### **SCHEDULE** (*Subject to Change*)

#### **Week 1: 8/24 to 8/28**

**M:** Syllabus Review, College Writing—Expectations

**W:** Writing Workshop: Active vs Passive Voice, Writing Directly

**F:** Background-- History of Chinese immigration and exclusionism in US; Myth of the Monkey King; Yang.

#### **Week 2: 8/31 to 9/4**

##### ***Module 1: Gene Luen Yang's American Born-Chinese***

**M:** Basic concepts of Comics Theory

**W:** Yang 7- 52

**F:** Yang, 55-106

#### **Week 3: 9/9 to 9/11**

**M:** **Holiday**

**W:** Yang, 109- 179; **1<sup>st</sup> CLOSE READING DUE**

**F:** Writing Workshop: Thesis Statements

#### **Week 4: 9/14 to 9/18**

**M:** Yang, 179-233

##### **Module 2: Campfire Graphic Novels' *Hanuman***

W: Context to *Ramayana*; Screening sections of *Hanuman* (2005)

F: Campfire's *Hanuman*, 8-40.

**Week 5: 9/21 to 9/25**

M: *Hanuman*, 40-68

**Module 3: Moyna Chitrakar and Samhita Arni's Sita's *Ramayana***

W: Background to *Patua* Folk Art; Female Retellings of the Epic; **2<sup>nd</sup> CLOSE READING DUE**

F: *Sita's Ramayana*, 1-40

**Week 6: 9/28 to 10/2**

M: *Sita's Ramayana* 40-90

W: *Sita's Ramayana* 90-150

F: Screening *Sita Sings the Blues*

**Week 7: 10/5 to 10/9**

**Module 4: Osama Tezuka's *Buddha*, Vol. 2**

M: Screening PBS Documentary, *Buddha*

W: Tezuka, *Buddha* pp. 9-60; **3<sup>rd</sup> CLOSE READING DUE**

F: *Buddha*, 60-120

**Week 8: 10/12 to 10/16**

M: *Buddha*, 120-180; **Bring Short Paper Topics to Class**

W: *Buddha*, 180-240

F: Writing Workshop: Structure and Topic Sentences

**Week 9: 10/19- 10/23**

M: *Buddha*, 240-300

W: *Buddha*, 300- 360

F: **Peer Review of Short Paper Drafts—Bring Hard Copies to Class**

**Week 10: 10/26- 10/30**

M: Writing Workshop: Introductions and Conclusions; Revisions

W: *Buddha*, 360-411; **Short Papers Due**

**Module 5: Osama Tezuka's *Buddha*, Vol. 3**

F: *Buddha*, Vol. 3, 1-50

**Week 11: 11/2 to 11/4**

M: *Buddha*, 50-100; **Bring Long Paper Topics to Class**

W: *Buddha*, 100-150

**F: Holiday—Homecoming**

**Week 12: 11/9 to 11/13**

M: *Buddha*, 150-200

**W: Holiday**

F: *Buddha*, 200-250

**Week 13: 11/16 to 11/20**

M: *Buddha*, 250-300

W: *Buddha*, 300- 328

**F: Writing Workshop: MLA Citations and Conversing with Secondary Sources; Bring 2 Secondary Sources to Class**

**Week 14: 11/23**

**Module 6: Tom Pomplun Ed., *Native American Classics***

M: Background—History of Native Americans; Present Status; Myths

**W: Thanksgiving Break**

**F: Thanksgiving Break**

**Week 15: 11/30- 12/4**

M: “The Story of Itsikamahidish and the Wild Potato”; “How the White Race Came to America”

W: “A Prehistoric Race”; “The Soft-Hearted Sioux”;

**F: Conferences on Final Papers —Bring Detailed Outlines of Final Papers to Conferences**

**Week 16: 12/7 to 12/9**

**M: Peer Review of Final Papers—Bring Semi-Final Drafts to Class**

**W: RESEARCH PAPERS DUE IN CLASS; Evaluations**