

English 2303

Graphic Narrative as Trans-Cultural Documentary

Section 003: TTh 11-12:20 / **Section 008:** TTh 2-3:20

Room: Geoscience (GS) 104 ([Click here to see it on a campus map](#))
Instructor: Dr. Chris Kilgore
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Office: Social Work A Building, 201F ([Click here to see it on a campus map](#))
Office Hours: W (9-Noon, 1-3pm), and By Appointment

Course Description

When Art Spiegelman published *Maus* in 1986, he stirred an old controversy over the “appropriateness” of graphical style to subject matter. Could drawings featuring anthropomorphic mice, cats, and other animals convey the horror of the Holocaust? Today the consensus is that Spiegelman’s cartoon-style drawings, embedded in a father-and-son family drama, can do just that. In this course we will examine graphic-novel narratives that present themselves as accounts of cultural, national, and historical identities, often through memoir or a “documentary” style. These stories raise ethical and aesthetic questions: As students in a US-American university in 2012, to what extent can we say we have learned from such texts? How can we decide whether a portrayal is “accurate,” or at least “adequate”?

Course Objectives

Sophomore literature courses in the English Department should 1.) encourage students to see the value in literary studies, as students engage with ideas and beliefs in ways that extend beyond the English classroom; 2.) help students recognize that literature does not occur as isolated literary events, but as complex dialogue within cultural and historical contexts; 3.) develop students’ ability to read critically by studying a variety of literary elements such as form, structure, and style; 4.) enable students to demonstrate their understanding of and their ability to analyze literary texts both orally and in writing.

For the purposes of the present topic, by the end of the semester you should be able to...

- ...identify the unique properties and capabilities of the graphic novel medium.
- ...analyze how graphic novels (and other visual media) use elements of visual and verbal style to communicate ideas and evoke emotions.
- ...compare different styles and approaches to the graphic novel medium, as well as differences in subject matter and genre.
- ...evaluate the communicative and emotional impact of different styles and approaches.
- ...express your discoveries about all of the above in clear, logical, concise, and organized essays and oral presentations.
- ...find new insights into narratives, graphic novels, documentaries, and memoirs, wherever you may find them, at UTA and beyond!

Required Texts

- McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics*
- Spiegelman, Art. *Maus I & II*
- Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis I*
- Sacco, Joe. *Palestine*
- Dysart, Josh, et al., *Unknown Soldier Vol. 1*
- Dembicki, Matt, Ed. *Trickster: Native American Tales*
- Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home*
- Small, David. *Stitches*
- Any MLA style handbook

Note: Assorted supporting readings will be available via Blackboard, and we will also watch two films outside of class.

Additional Requirements

Communications: I will be using our Blackboard site and our UTA email to send important reminders, updates, and revisions to the syllabus as needed. It is **your responsibility** to maintain access to these resources and check them regularly.

Office Technology: You will need access to a word processing program that can create .doc, .docx, or .rtf files, and you will need to be able to print probably around 20 pages. Please do not leave printing to the same day as our class, as printers have a way of causing you trouble exactly when you don't need it.

Service Learning Component (VERY IMPORTANT): This course includes a Service Learning component, wherein you and a group of your colleagues will prepare an educational presentation on some of our subject matter to youth groups or schools in the greater Arlington-Fort Worth area. It will be my responsibility to arrange for these venues, but it will be **your responsibility** to make sure that this process works well with your schedule and transportation. If you have a severely limited schedule outside of our class, it is also **your responsibility to notify me within the first week of class.**

Attendance and Participation

Attendance: Because we will be discussing readings and assignments in detail in class, your attendance is very important! I allow **4 absences for any reason**, and I do not differentiate between "excused" and "unexcused." After the fourth absence, **your Overall Grade will drop 10% for each subsequent absence.** There will also be a number of **Participation Assignments** throughout the semester, so again, consistent attendance is important.

Participation: I will be reading and taking notes on all materials for the course, so I expect everyone to do the same. The course schedule lists reading assignments on the days when we'll be discussing them.

Etiquette / Netiquette: In class, we should all endeavor to contribute constructively to the conversation. I will silence and put away my cell phone when class begins, and I expect everyone to do the same. You may use a laptop on days when we read materials on Blackboard, or work on our presentations in class. In email communications, I will write in complete sentences, with a salutation, so I expect everyone to do the same ("k ty" is not an acceptable professional email message).

"The more we see the more we must be able to imagine; and the more we imagine, the more we must think we see." —Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1766).

Major Assignments

In addition to your Attendance and Participation, I will be expecting you to complete a number of **Major Assignments**. These will include written essays, an oral/visual presentation to a youth-oriented organization in the Arlington-Fort Worth area, and two exams (each with at least one essay question).

To pass the class, you must complete all of the following assignments:

- **Paper 1:** Form and Narrative (2 pages)
- **Paper 2:** Service Learning Preparation Paper (2 pages)
- **Paper 3:** Service Learning Reflection Paper (2 pages)
- **Midterm Exam** (includes 1 Essay Question)
- **Paper 4:** Style and Execution (4-5 pages)
- **Final Exam** (includes 2 Essay Questions)

Grade Breakdown:

Class Participation (includes Quick Essays, group work, etc.):	10%
Attendance (measured by sign-in sheets):	10%
Paper 1:	15%
Paper 2 (Service Learning Preparation):	7.5%
Service Learning Presentation:	5%
Paper 3 (Service Learning Reflection):	7.5%
Midterm Exam:	10%
Paper 4 (includes Topic Proposal):	20%
Final Exam:	15%

Grade Measurement:

A: 90-100%
B: 80-89%
C: 70-79%
D: 60-69%
F: Below 60%

Academic Dishonesty

It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University. "Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts." (Regents' Rules and Regulations, part One, Chapter VI, Sec. 3, Subsec. 3.2, Subdivision 3.22)

For writing assignments, plagiarism includes submitting as your own any work that was written or corrected, in whole or in part, by another person. For research papers, plagiarism includes using any source, whether in direct quotation or summary or paraphrase, without citing the source. A student who plagiarizes will automatically fail the course and may be subject to disciplinary action.

Disability Services

The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112--The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

As a faculty member, I am required by law to provide “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty of the need for accommodation and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels. Information regarding specific diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability. For more information, visit the Office for Students with Disabilities at University Hall 102 or call (817) 272-3364.

Student Support Services

The University of Texas at Arlington supports a variety of student success programs, including learning assistance, developmental education, advising and mentoring, admission and transition, and federally funded programs. Students requiring academic, personal, or social assistance should contact the Office of Student Success Programs at 817-272-6107 for more information and appropriate referrals.

“Would I had phrases that are not known, utterances that are strange, in new language that has not been used, free from repetition, not an utterance that has grown stale, which men of old have spoken.” (attributed to Khakheperresenb, c. 2000 BCE)

Course Schedule

"You never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough."

—William Blake

Note: This schedule is subject to revision at Dr. Kilgore's discretion. All revisions will be announced and explained in class, and also posted as announcements on our Blackboard site.

M = McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics*

BB = Readings Available via Blackboard (Look in the folder labeled with the Week #)

Week 1: What is a Graphic Narrative?

T 1/17 Introduction to the Course
William Blake vs. the Illustrated
Coleridge (Online, in class)

Th 1/12 M Chapter 1 (1-23)
BB Lessing, *Laocoön* Excerpt
Start reading Spiegelman, *Maus I*

Begin Scheduling Service Learning Presentations

NOTE: Some sessions begin very soon!

1/22 **Last day for Late Registration**

Week 2: Comics Vocabulary

T 1/24 M Chapter 2 (24-59)
Spiegelman, *Maus I* (1-69)

Th 1/26 Spiegelman, *Maus I* (70-Finish)

Week 3: Reader Participation

NOTE: Some Service Learning Presentations begin this week!

T 1/31 M Chapter 3 (60-93)
Spiegelman, *Maus II* (1-74)

Th 2/2 Spiegelman, *Maus II* (75-100)

Week 4: Temporality / Persepolis

T 2/7 M Chapter 4 (94-117)
Spiegelman, *Maus II* (101-Finish)

Th 2/9 Satrapi, *Persepolis* (Introduction, 1-46)

Week 5: Visual Idiom / Persepolis

T 2/14 M Chapter 5 (118-137)
Satrapi, *Persepolis* (47-110)

Th 2/16 Satrapi, *Persepolis* (111-153)

Week 6: Words and Pictures Work Together / Palestine

T 2/21 M Chapter 6 (138-161)
Sacco, *Palestine* (Intro, 1-113)

Th 2/23 Sacco, *Palestine* (114-177)

Week 7: Writing about Graphic Novels / Palestine

T 2/28 BB Supplemental Readings
Sacco, *Palestine* (179-285)

Th 3/1 PEER REVIEW of Paper 1
Bring to Class: 3 copies of your Paper 1 draft

Week 8: Midterm Time!

T 3/6 Discuss the Work So Far
Review for Midterm

Th 3/8 **MIDTERM EXAM**
TURN IN: Paper 1 Final Draft (via Blackboard)

NOTE: You will need to find time to watch *Spirited Away* before Tuesday, 3/20

3/12-3/16: **Spring Break – No Class**

Week 9: Drawing & Film / Spirited Away

T 3/20 BB Supplemental Readings
Discuss *Spirited Away*

Th 3/22 Discuss *Spirited Away*
Dembicki, Ed., *Trickster* (Origin Stories)

Week 10: Color / Trickster

T 3/27 M Chapter 8 (185-92)
Dembicki, Ed., *Trickster* (Exemplary Tales)

TURN IN: Paper 4 Topic Proposal

Th 3/29 Dembicki, Ed., *Trickster* (Origin/Exemplary Combinations)

3/30 **Last Day to Drop a Course**

Week 11: Ethics and the Docu-Drama / Unknown Soldier

T 4/3 BB: Supplemental Readings
Dysart, et al., *Unknown Soldier* (1-74)

Th 4/5 Dysart, et al., *Unknown Soldier* (75-143)

Week 12: Graphic Memoir / Fun Home

T 4/10 Bechdel, *Fun Home* (pages TBA)

Th 4/12 Bechdel, *Fun Home* (pages TBA)

Week 13: Graphic Memoir / *Stitches*

T 4/17 Small, *Stitches* (1-242... *I know, it looks long, but it's a fast, fun read*)

Th 4/19 Small, *Stitches* (as far as you can)

Week 14: Drawing & Film / *Waltz with Bashir*

T 4/24 Small, *Stitches* (Finish)

Th 4/26 Peer Review Session for Paper 4
Bring to Class: 3 Copies of a Complete Paper 4 Draft

NOTE: You will need to watch *Waltz with Bashir* before Thursday, 4/24

Week 15: Putting It All Together

T 5/1 Discuss Animation, *Waltz with Bashir*, and the Course
TURN IN: Paper 4 Final Draft (via Blackboard)

Th 5/3 Last Day of Class: Review and Evaluate, Prepare for Final

Su 5/6 **TURN IN:** Final deadline for Paper 2 and Paper 3 (via Blackboard)

FINAL EXAMS

Section 003: T 5/8, 11-1:30 PM

Section 008: T 5/8, 2-4:30 PM

Jack London's Credo

As the semester moves on, and you find that you have a great deal to read and to write for this class, I invite everyone to remember Jack London's Credo, and especially the last line...

*I would rather be ashes than dust!
I would rather that my spark should burn out
in a brilliant blaze than it should be stifled by dry-rot.
I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom
of me in magnificent glow, than a sleepy and permanent planet.
The function of man is to live, not to exist.
I shall not waste my days trying to prolong them.
I shall use my time.*

For further discussion, please see the excellent commentary by Clarice Stasz ([click here](#)).