

**College of San Mateo  
Official Course Outline**

1. **COURSE ID:** LIT. 155    **TITLE:** Comics and the Graphic Novel  
**Units:** 3.0 units    **Hours/Semester:** 48.0-54.0 Lecture hours; 96.0-108.0 Homework hours; 144.0-162.0 Total Student Learning hours  
**Method of Grading:** Letter Grade Only  
**Prerequisite:** Eligibility for ENGL 100 or ENGL 105
  
2. **COURSE DESIGNATION:**  
**Degree Credit**  
**Transfer credit:** CSU; UC  
**AA/AS Degree Requirements:**  
    CSM - GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS: E5c. Humanities  
**CSU GE:**  
    CSU GE Area C: ARTS AND HUMANITIES: C2 - Humanities (Literature, Philosophy, Languages Other than English)  
**IGETC:**  
    IGETC Area 3: ARTS AND HUMANITIES: B: Humanities
  
3. **COURSE DESCRIPTIONS:**  
**Catalog Description:**  
    Study of representative works from the genre of comics and graphic novels with an emphasis on the unique tools inherent to the genre, their influence on English language literature, and thought and on a broad range of creative media. Reading, discussion, and analysis.
  
4. **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME(S) (SLO'S):**  
    Upon successful completion of this course, a student will meet the following outcomes:
  1. Demonstrate familiarity with a variety representative works from comics and graphic novels, identifying major literary, cultural, and historical themes.
  2. Present a critical, independent analysis of themes in one or more comic or graphic novel in the form of a project, paper, or presentation.
  
5. **SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:**  
    Upon successful completion of this course, a student will be able to:
  1. Identify and analyze major themes across a range of representative texts from the genre of graphic novels and comics.
  2. Understand narrative techniques that are specific to the comic or graphic novel, and interpret the visual presentation of ideas as they stand in contrast to solely word based forms of narrative.
  3. Develop independent critical responses to one or more comic or graphic novel.
  4. Explain the role of comics and graphic novels within the range of English language and literature and its influence on a broad range of media, art, and cultural works.
  5. Place comics and graphic novels within a historical and literary context.
  
6. **COURSE CONTENT:**  
**Lecture Content:**  
**Lecture Content:** The course covers a representative sample of comics and graphic novels and complimentary secondary resources:
  - A. Representative works from within the genre
  - B. Presentation and discussion of narrative and rhetorical tools unique to the genre
  - C. Critical texts addressing the specific definitions, techniques, tropes, and reader expectations of the genre
  - D. Works of “Main Stream” Literature (and other creative media) that contribute to the techniques and tropes of comics and graphic novels
  - E. Works of “Main Stream” Literature (and other creative media) that are influenced by or that borrow from the techniques and tropes of comics and graphic novels
  - F. Writing of critical papers
  
7. **REPRESENTATIVE METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:**

Typical methods of instruction may include:

- A. Lecture
- B. Discussion
- C. Other (Specify): Lectures: Instructor gives oral presentation to introduce students to the genre and significant authors, works, or periods. Guided readings: Students are assigned part of a work to read in advance and present or discuss in class. Journal work: Students write journal entries in response to specific questions on the text. Student discussions: Student-led oral discussions based on journal reading; structured group interaction.

## 8. REPRESENTATIVE ASSIGNMENTS

Representative assignments in this course may include, but are not limited to the following:

### **Writing Assignments:**

Writing: Critical analysis papers; metacognitive assignments (difficulty papers, reading difficulty logs)

### **Reading Assignments:**

Reading: Guided reading (in-class): Students annotate comics for both content and stylistic choices in concert with projections of specific texts; students scrutinize texts for examples of specific rhetorical or narrative techniques in concert with instructor led presentations; students work together to find and analyze details from the text and infer meaning; students read quietly, record reactions and interpretations, especially of ambiguous texts, and share with each other (read, think, pair, share); students compare graphic novel and comic texts to purely alphabetic texts to examine how genre shapes meaning

### **Other Outside Assignments:**

Research topics: Students might independently research, specific topics related to the influence or relationship between comics and graphic novels and twentieth-century cultural and political dialogues or topics related to the segregation or secondary status of comics and graphic novels through the lens of race, class, gender, and sexuality or in agreement with/opposition to traditional arbiters of literary merit.

Research will serve as material for in-class presentations and/or background for critical analysis papers.

## 9. REPRESENTATIVE METHODS OF EVALUATION

Representative methods of evaluation may include:

- A. Class Participation
- B. Exams/Tests
- C. Group Projects
- D. Homework
- E. Oral Presentation
- F. Papers
- G. Portfolios
- H. Projects
- I. Quizzes
- J. Research Projects
- K. Written examination

## 10. REPRESENTATIVE TEXT(S):

Possible textbooks include:

- A. Smith, M., J. Duncan, R.. *Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories and Methods*, 1 ed. New York: Routledge, 2011
- B. Speigelman, A.. *Maus*, ed. New York: Pantheon, 1986
- C. Bechdel, A.. *Fun Home*, 1 ed. New York: Mariner Books, 2005
- D. Cohn, Neil. *The Visual Language of Comics*, 1st ed. London: Bloomsberg Academic, 2014
- E. Moore, A., Gibbons, D.. *Watchmen*, ed. New York: DC Comics, 2011
- F. McCloud, S.. *Understanding Comics*, ed. New York: William Morrow Paperbacks, 1994
- G. Burns, C.. *Black Hole*, ed. New York: Pantheon, 2008
- H. Guibert, E., Lefevre, D. and Lemercier, F.. *The Photographer: Into War Torn Afghanistan with Doctors Without Borders*, ed. First Second, 2009

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**Effective Term:** Fall 2024

**Course Originator:** Chris Dowling