

The Graphic Novel Section 01

ENGL 20

Fall 2024 3 Unit(s) 08/21/2024 to 12/09/2024 Modified 08/21/2024

Contact Information

Dr. Maite Urcalegui

maite.urcalegui@sjsu.edu

Course Information

English 20: The Graphic Novel is a C2 Humanities general education course that teaches students critical approaches to reading, analyzing, and responding to comic art. We will begin by exploring comics studies as an emerging and evolving field of study. We will read foundational theory, oftentimes thinking with and through the comics form, that will teach us how to understand and analyze how comics work and create meaning. Alongside these works of criticism and theory, we will read a variety of comic books and graphic novels that explore questions of identity and belonging, race and racism, religion, gender, and sexuality across genres. Students will develop their close reading (and viewing), critical thinking, and scholarly writing skills throughout the course and will showcase their learning through analytical writing as well as comics making.

Class Lecture/Discussion

Tuesday, Thursday, 10:30 AM to 11:45 AM, Boccardo Business Center 130

Office Hours

Tuesday, 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM, Faculty Offices Building 216

While I will be in my office in person, if you would rather meet via Zoom, please just let me know in advance to set that up.

If you are unable to attend my regularly scheduled office hours, don't hesitate to email me to set up an alternative appointment.

Course Description and Requisites

Approaching the graphic novel as a form of popular literature, students examine the narrative and textual aspects of the form including the function of the text, its integration with the graphics, and formal aspects of narrative such as plot, character, theme, and symbol.

GE Area(s): C2. Humanities

Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

Attendance

While attendance is not and cannot be graded per [University Policy F15-12](https://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf>), regular attendance is vital to your learning and success in the course. I encourage you to attend as regularly as possible. We don't want to miss out on the opportunity to learn from/with you! If you are sick, or are unable to make it to class for whatever reason, you can catch up on the material you missed on our course Canvas page, via a friend/peer, and/or in my office hours or by appointment.

Preparation & Participation

We all have a responsibility and an opportunity to be an active participant in our own learning and to contribute to knowledge that we'll create together in this class! Please come prepared to do so. This means that you've completed the assigned reading for the day in advance of class; you have access to those readings during our class discussion; and you have basic materials like pen/pencil and paper.

Devices

You are welcome to use your devices (phone, tablet, laptop) for your own learning throughout the class. However, I do ask that you be present and help create a respectful and distraction-free class by using your devices for class work only during our time together.

Engaging in Class Discussion & Building Community

Our class will require participation and collaboration and will take up complex issues, such as race and racism, religion, gender, sexuality, and gendered violence. I recognize that it can be challenging to discuss some of these topics in a public space like the classroom and that we all approach these topics and the texts we read from our own unique perspectives and experiences. I encourage you to engage in these discussions to the degree you feel comfortable, to connect what we read to your own life and to the world around you, and to listen to and learn from your peers with respect and care. We will continue to discuss our collective goals around engaging in class discussion and building community throughout the semester.

Course Communication & Emails

All course materials can be found on [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](#). Please check both our course Canvas and your email regularly to stay up to date. For help with using Canvas see [Canvas Student Resources page](#).

Please be aware that I do not respond to emails outside of traditional business hours, M-F 9-5. I encourage you to also maintain professional boundaries around email and step away from it when you can/need. Unless it is a weekend or I am sick or away for travel, I should respond to your message within 48 hours. If you worry that I haven't seen or responded to your email, please do not hesitate to send me a follow up. I would appreciate it in fact!

When you email me, I'd appreciate it if you included a specific subject that states the purpose of your email as well as a greeting, message, and your name.

Academic Originality, Honesty, and AI

The comics we will be reading and discussing are products of labor, care, creativity, and genius. I want you to do justice to that work by seriously engaging with it and developing your own original analysis of it. While you are welcome to collaborate with resources like Grammarly to edit your work, you should also ensure that you do your own round of editing to not only catch what those virtual tools might have missed but also to develop your own editorial eye. You should not at any stage of your process use generative AI like ChatGPT to generate ideas, outlines/writing structures, or language/sentences. If for whatever reason you decide to ignore this and use ChatGPT, you must properly cite and credit the information, ideas, and language that you pulled. The model that AI like ChatGPT uses to generate material is fundamentally derivative and is also known to be inaccurate/incomplete and to reproduce misinformation, biases, and stereotypes. I want to hear your original ideas, arguments, and writing that can only be achieved by engaging with the texts we're reading and the writing process! Additionally, we want to make sure that the scholars and authors whose ideas we engage with are properly cited and credited to not only recognize their labor/talents/insights but also to build our own credibility as a writer.

You should also be aware of SJSU's [Academic Integrity Policy](#), and know that, as a faculty member, I am required to report all violations of this policy to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. If I suspect that you have plagiarized material or generated content with AI, I will not grade your work and will contact you regarding future steps.

Please visit the [Student Conduct and Ethical Development](#) website for more information on academic integrity.

Program Information

Welcome to this General Education course.

SJSU's General Education Program establishes a strong foundation of versatile skills, fosters curiosity about the world, promotes ethical judgment, and prepares students to engage and contribute responsibly and cooperatively in a multicultural, information-rich society. General education classes integrate areas of study and encourage progressively more complex and creative analysis, expression, and problem solving.

The General Education Program has three goals:

Goal 1: To develop students' core competencies for academic, personal, creative, and professional pursuits.

Goal 2: To enact the university's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and justice by ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to serve and contribute to the well-being of local and global communities and the environment.

Goal 3: To offer students integrated, multidisciplinary, and innovative study in which they pose challenging questions, address complex issues, and develop cooperative and creative responses.

More information about the General Education Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) can be found on the [GE website \(https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php\)](https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php).

Course Goals

Throughout this semester, we will practice and showcase the following learning goals:

1. describe some of the foundational goals and insights of comics studies;
2. use comics theory to develop a critical vocabulary for discussing how comics work and how they create meaning;
3. discuss and analyze various forms and genres of comic art and use textual (both visual and verbal) evidence to support interpretation of texts; and
4. discuss how comics both creatively represent and critically comment on pressing social issues.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

GE Area C2: Humanities

Area C Arts and Humanities courses help students to respond subjectively as well as objectively to aesthetic experiences and to develop an understanding of the integrity of both emotional and intellectual responses. C2 Humanities courses encourage students to analyze and appreciate works of philosophical, historical, literary, aesthetic, and cultural importance.

GE Area C2 Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of a C2 course, students should be able to:

1. analyze and understand works of philosophical and humanistic importance, including their temporal and cultural dimensions;
2. explore and articulate their own subjective aesthetic and intellectual responses to such texts;
3. analyze and assess ideas of value, meaning, and knowledge, as produced within the humanistic disciplines; and
4. research and write effective analyses of works of the human intellect and imagination

Writing Practice: Students will write a minimum of 1500 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline.

Course Materials

I know from being a student and a fan that comics can be expensive! I have tried to assign a diverse range of comics while also being mindful of costs. I encourage you to access the texts in any format that is most affordable and accessible for you. All of these required texts are available to rent or purchase from the SJSU bookstore. I also encourage you to use the SJSU and SJPL library systems.

All other supplementary readings will be available on Canvas.

Making Comics

Author: Lynda Barry

ISBN: 9781770463691

Ms. Marvel: No Normal Vol. 1

Author: G. Willow Wilson and Adrian Alphona

ISBN: 9780785190219

Superman Smashes the Klan

Author: Gene Luen Yang

ISBN: 9781779504210

American Born Chinese

Author: Gene Luen Yang

ISBN: 9781250811899

One! Hundred! Demons!

Author: Lynda Barry

ISBN: 9781770462779

Library Support Staff

Peggy Cabrera (peggy.cabrera@sjsu.edu) is our subject librarian for English at the SJSU library and is incredibly knowledgeable and kind! She is there to support faculty and students in their research endeavors. If you would like additional research support for your writing assignments in this course (even if you're not an English major) or if you're interested in learning more about pursuing a career in library science, please email her!

Course Requirements and Assignments

Detailed assignment directions and grading rubrics will be available on Canvas and discussed in class in advance of due dates.

Class participation (15%): I encourage you to participate in class discussion not only by sharing your thoughts and asking questions but also by actively listening and creating space for others to share. I understand, however, that we all participate and process knowledge in different ways and that our level of comfort participating in the classroom may be influenced by our own relationships to power and privilege and by experiences of educational exclusion. *The graded portion of your participation will not be based on how much you talk in class but will be based on turning in your daily participation activity each class. Know that, if you miss class, you will miss this participation credit, unless you email me to work out a solution.*

Small Group Presentation (15%): The purpose of these presentations is to give you an opportunity to learn by becoming the teacher. You will take leadership over guiding your small group through your close reading/viewing and discussion of a meaningful moment from your assigned comic reading.

Making Comics Assignment (20%): Using Lynda Barry's *Making Comics* as a guide, you will complete two comics making exercises and then write a short reflection on your experience and what you learned.

Close Reading/Viewing Paper (25%): In this paper, you will respond to a prompt by developing your own original analysis and interpretation of a comic we've read in class. You will select textual evidence, both visual and verbal details, to support your ideas and will draw from theoretical and secondary sources discussed in class and found through your own research.

Final Project (25%): In the final project, you will create your own original short comic that responds to a course theme/question. You will also write a short introduction to your piece and your process.

✓ Grading Information

Assignment Alignment with GEALOs

GEALO 1: Analyze and understand works of philosophical and humanistic importance, including their temporal and cultural dimensions.	All course readings, lectures, discussions, and assignments will support this outcome. All of the comics we will read have philosophical, humanistic, and aesthetic importance that we will discuss.
GEALO 2: Explore and articulate their own subjective and intellectual responses to such texts	All course readings, lectures, discussions, and assignments will support this outcome. The small group presentation and the making comics assignment in particular will facilitate this goal.
GEALO 3: Analyze and assess ideas of value, meaning, and knowledge, as produced within the humanistic disciplines	Course readings, lectures, and discussions as well the close reading/viewing paper will support this outcome.

GEALO 4: Research and write effective analyses of works of human intellect and imagination.

The close reading/viewing paper and the final project will support this outcome.

Breakdown

Class participation (15%)

Small Group Presentation (15%)

Making Comics Assignment (20%)

Close Reading/Viewing Paper (25%)

Final Project (25%)

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Note that I may adjust readings, assignments, and deadlines in the best interest of the class and our learning together. Know that I will never add more work to this schedule, and all changes will be announced with advance notice.

When	Topic	Notes
Week1	Course Introductions	Thursday 8/22 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions• Review of syllabus

When	Topic	Notes
Week 2	Introduction to Comics Studies	<p>Tuesday 8/27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrique Del Rey Cabero, Michael Goodrum, and Josean Morlesín Mellado's <i>How to Study Comics & Graphic Novels: A Graphic Introduction to Comics Studies</i> <p>Thursday 8/29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scott McCloud's <i>Understanding Comics</i> Introduction and Chapter One
Week 3	Understanding Comics	<p>Tuesday 9/3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scott McCloud's <i>Understanding Comics</i> Chapter Two <p>Thursday 9/5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scott McCloud's <i>Understanding Comics</i> Chapter Three • Kate Polak's "Three Ideas" • Discuss Small Group Presentations
Week 4	Making Comics	<p>Tuesday 9/10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lynda Barry's <i>Making Comics</i> 1-52 • Discuss Making Comics Assignment <p>Thursday 9/12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lynda Barry's <i>Making Comics</i> 53-102 • Select an exercise of your choice to complete for the Making Comics Assignment
Week 5	Making Comics	<p>Tuesday 9/17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lynda Barry's <i>Making Comics</i> 103-151 • Select an exercise of your choice to complete for the Making Comics Assignment <p>Thursday 9/19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lynda Barry's <i>Making Comics</i> 103-151 • Complete reflection portion of Making Comics Assignment <p>Friday 9/20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Making Comics Assignment by 11:59 p.m. via Canvas

When	Topic	Notes
Week 6	Comic Books	<p>Tuesday 9/24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jared Gardner's "Comic Book" from <i>Keywords for Comics Studies</i> • Issue 1 of G. Willow Wilson and Adrian Alphona's <i>Marvel: No Normal</i> Vol. 1 <p>Thursday 9/26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues 2-3 of G. Willow Wilson and Adrian Alphona's <i>Ms. Marvel: No Normal</i> Vol. 1
Week 7	Comic Books	<p>Tuesday 10/1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues 4-5 of G. Willow Wilson and Adrian Alphona's <i>Marvel: No Normal</i> Vol. 1 <p>Thursday 10/3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch and discuss Season One Episode One "Generation Why" of <i>Ms. Marvel</i>/television show
Week 8	Comic Books	<p>Tuesday 10/8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benjamin Saunders' "Superhero" from <i>Keywords for Comics Studies</i> • Chapter One of Gene Luen Yang & Gurihiru's <i>Superman Smashes the Klan</i> <p>Thursday 10/10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter Two of Gene Luen Yang & Gurihiru's <i>Superman Smashes the Klan</i> • Discuss comics analysis paper
Week 9	Comic Books	<p>Tuesday 10/15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter Three of Gene Luen Yang & Gurihiru's <i>Superman Smashes the Klan</i> <p>Thursday 10/17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excerpt from Eleanor Ty's "Introduction" to <i>Beyond the Icon: Asian American Graphic Narratives</i>

When	Topic	Notes
Week 10	Race & Representation in Comics	<p>Tuesday 10/22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tahneer Oksman's "Graphic Novel" from <i>Keywords for Comics Studies</i> • Gene Luen Yang's <i>American Born Chinese</i> 1-52 <p>Thursday 10/24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gene Luen Yang's <i>American Born Chinese</i> 55-106 <p>Friday 10/25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra Credit Opportunity: Gene Luen Yang will speak at the Steinbeck Center (5th floor of the library) 3:30-5
Week 11	Race & Representation in Comics	<p>Tuesday 10/29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jonathan W. Gray's "Race" from <i>Keywords for Comics Studies</i> • Gene Luen Yang's <i>American Born Chinese</i> 106-160 <p>Thursday 10/31</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gene Luen Yang's <i>American Born Chinese</i> pp. 163-198
Week 12	Race & Representation in Comics and Television	<p>Tuesday 11/5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch and discuss Season One Episode One "What Guy Are You" of <i>American Born Chinese</i> television show <p>Thursday 11/7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional office hours for comics analysis paper on Zoom <p>Friday 11/8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comics analysis paper due by 11:59 p.m. via Canvas
Week 13	Gender and Sexuality in Graphic Memoir	<p>Tuesday 11/12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ian Blechschmidt's "Gender" from <i>Keywords for Comics Studies</i> • Lynda Barry's <i>One! Hundred! Demons!</i> 1-37 <p>Thursday 11/14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lynda Barry's <i>One! Hundred! Demons!</i> pp. 38-85

When	Topic	Notes
Week 14	Gender and Sexuality in Graphic Memoir	<p>Tuesday 11/19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joo Ok Kim's "Memoir" from <i>Keywords for Comics Studies</i> • Lynda Barry's <i>One! Hundred! Demons!</i> 86-121 <p>Thursday 11/21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lynda Barry's <i>One! Hundred! Demons!</i> pp. 122-169
Week 15	Gender and Sexuality in Graphic Memoir	<p>Tuesday 11/26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lynda Barry's <i>One! Hundred! Demons!</i> 170-216 <p>Thursday 11/28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No class due to Thanksgiving holiday
Week 16	Final Reflections & Preparations	<p>Tuesday 12/3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final project workshop & peer review <p>Thursday 12/5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final reflections & course evaluations
Finals Week	Final Project	<p>Monday 12/16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final project due by 11:59 p.m. via Canvas