
Graphic Novel and Manga

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Office Hours: MW—9:30 to 10:20 a.m., TTh—9:30 to 9:50 a.m. and by appointment

Class Webs: <http://www.boblyman.net/englt308/>
and the Los Rios Canvas website

English 308 critically examines graphic novels and manga. We will explore both the syntax (the spatial arrangement of elements—panels, frames, gutters, and word balloons) and the semantics (the way meaning is signified) of comics. There is no way that we can explore everyone's favorite text, and so the course looks at a representative collection of texts. We will discuss the social, cultural, and historical contexts reflected in these novels, and you will have an opportunity to apply these discussions to an analysis of your own. In addition to the course text and the five full-length works, I will provide supplement reading and background texts. By the end of the course, you should expect to be able to:

- differentiate between comics, graphic novels, and manga
- differentiate between icons, symbols, and metaphors
- evaluate the qualities of icons and analyze how those qualities affect the text and story
- evaluate graphic novels and manga for elements of narrative structure
- analyze the relationship of images to text and text to images
- compose essays and other written responses that evaluate and analyze graphic novels and manga

Required Texts:

Bechdel, A. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*. Mariner, 2006.

McCloud, S. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. Harper, 1993.

Miller, F. *The Dark Knight Returns*. DC Comics, 1997.

Mizuki, Shigeru. *Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths*. Trans. Jocelyne Allen.

Drawn & Quarterly, 2011.

Sacco, J. *Palestine*. Fantagraphics, 1993.

Venditti, Robert, and Brett Weldele. *The Surrogates*. Top Shelf, 2006.

Attendance and Class Etiquette:

I expect you to attend class. If you accumulate more than three (3) unexcused absences, you will most likely be dropped from the class, but excessive absences and tardies **WILL** affect your course grade. Absences may only be excused according to school policy; if you anticipate missing class, please speak to me in advance to make arrangements for any assignments due that day. I also expect you to show up on time for class; coming to class late is both rude and disruptive. I take attendance at the beginning of each class; if you are not present in the classroom when I take attendance, I will mark you absent. And if you miss a class, you are responsible for homework due on that day and for material covered in class—not I. Class assignments must be turned in the day they are due or before; **late homework assignments will not be accepted!** In addition, I expect students to behave appropriately in a college classroom. This means that we must **at all times** show respect for **everyone** in the class. Any disruptive behavior in the classroom may result in suspension with the possibility of being dropped from the course. For specific information refer to the official “Student Rights and Responsibilities” as established by the college.

Course Grade:

Your grade in the course will be determined by a combination of six reading responses, a midterm paper, and a final paper. The reading responses are already posted on the class Canvas site; you should plan to use notes from class and your reading to answer the question(s). These responses *must* be analytical—that is, you must support your claims with specific examples and then explain how or in what way the example(s) validate your claim(s). The essay assignments can be found online at the class website. We will spend time in class talking about my expectations for the papers. The breakdown of the course grade is as follows:

Points	Quizzes
300	Reading Responses (6 @ 50 pts)
	Papers
300	Midterm Paper
400	Final Paper—Independent Read
1000	Total

Help!

Finally, I would like to offer a short word of advice. You sacrifice a great deal to attend school—time, effort and money; make the most of what you invest and USE the time I have scheduled for office hours. If the times I have listed at the top of this syllabus are not convenient for you, please talk to me or email me about making an appointment. And don't wait to the end of the semester if you are having difficulties; a little time spent early in the semester may prevent a great many frustrations. I am ALWAYS available by email. So if you are just too busy to come to office hours, you can email me with questions.

EngL+ 308 Assignment Schedule—

Week	Monday	Wednesday
1	1-15 Holiday—No Classes	1-17 Intro to class Storytelling and Narrative
2	1-22 McCloud, chapter 1 (1 – 23) Will Eisner—Graphic Storytelling	1-24 Naifeh & Crane “The Wood”; Vess from <i>Book of Ballads</i> ; Tatsumi “Rash”; Hoshino from <i>2001 Nights</i>
3	1-29 McCloud, chapter 2 (24 – 59)	1-31 Reading response 1 due by 2/3
4	2-5 Miller, <i>Dark Knight Returns</i> —Complex Narrative	2-7 Miller, <i>Dark Knight Returns</i>
5	2-12 Braid, “Personal Narrative & Experiential Meaning”	2-14 McCloud, chapter 3 (60 – 93)
6	2-19 Holiday—No Classes	2-21 McCloud, chapter 4 (94 – 117) Reading response 2 due by 2/24
7	2-26 Bechdel, <i>Fun House</i> —Personal Narrative	2-28 Reading response 3 due by 3/3
8	3-5 McCloud, chapter 5 (118 – 137) Sacco, <i>Palestine</i> —Narrative of Documentary & History	3-7 Duncan and Smith, “Experiencing the Story”
9	3-12 Discuss Midterm papers	3-14 Reading response 4 due by 3/17
10	3-19 McCloud, chapter 6 (138 – 161)	3-21 Review of McCloud’s first six chapters Reading response 5 due by 3/24
11	3-26 Spring Break—No Classes	3-28 Spring Break—No Classes
12	4-2 Draft Workshop (bring two copies of draft to class)	4-4 Midterm papers due today Manga introduction
13	4-9 Manga, kami, and yokai	4-11 “The Enigma of Amigara Fault”
14	4-16 Mizuki, <i>Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths</i> —Manga	4-18 Mizuki, <i>Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths</i> Reading response 6 due by 4/21
15	4-23 Kouno, <i>Town of Evening Calm</i> —Manga	4-25 Kouno, <i>Town of Evening Calm</i>
16	4-30 McCloud, chapter 8 (185 – 192) Discuss final paper	5-2 Venditti & Weldele, <i>The Surrogates</i>
17	5-7 Venditti & Weldele, <i>The Surrogates</i>	5-9 Draft Workshop (bring two copies of draft to class)
18	5-14 Finals—No Classes	5-16 Course Final—10:15 – 12:15 pm

Midterm Paper—

Texts:

Any of the texts we have read thus far—

- the handouts,
- Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*,
- Bechdel's *Fun Home*, or
- Sacco's *Palestine*.

Essay Assignment:

For this essay, you will focus on our discussions of the first six chapters of Scott McCloud's text. Do not try to discuss *all* of the concepts, however; instead, find a single focus. You can, for instance, explore:

- distinctions between foreground and background images,
- use of transitions in the development of the story and the understanding of the reader,
- effects of framing on the reader's understanding, or
- the relationship between text and images.

You are free to include details from additional texts, but your paper **must** focus upon **one** of the texts we have studied in class, making parenthetical reference to it and using specific examples from it in your paper to develop your ideas. Your paper must also make use of and give parenthetical reference to the Braid handout.

The paper should be formatted following MLA conventions—including a works cited page; we will discuss MLA conventions, but having completed English 300, you should already be familiar with these. The library can also provide help with MLA.

And in answer to the first question that always gets asked with the assignment of an essay—How long does this paper have to be?—**at least four pages (1000 words)** and no longer than six (1500 words). The paper is due the day of the midterm. Please begin early and use me to help you set the paper up and develop it.

Final Paper, Independent Reading Assignment—

Texts—choose **ONE**:

- Alarcón, Daniel, and Sheila Alvarado. *City of Clowns*. Riverhead, 2015.
- Auster, Paul, Paul Karasik, and David Mazzucchelli. *City of Glass*. Picador, 2004.
- Ito, Junji. *Uzumaki*. Viz Media, 2013.
- Jepson, Duncan. *Darkness Outside the Night*. Tabella, 2012. (This is only available in digital format.)
- Kabi, Nagata. *My Lesbian Experience with Loneliness*. East P., 2016.
- Lemire, Jeff. *The Underwater Welder*. Top Shelf, 2012.
- MacLean, Andrew. *ApocalyptiGirl: An Aria for the End of Times*. Dark Horse, 2015.
- Mizuki, Shigeru. *NonNonBa*. Drawn and Quarterly, 2012.
- Tan, Shaun. *The Arrival*. Arthur A. Levine, 2007.
- Tamaki, Mariko, and Jillian Tamaki. *Skim*. Groundwood Book, 2008.
- Tezuka, Osamu. *Ayaka*. Vertical, 2010.

Final Essay Assignment:

For this second critical analysis paper, you can choose any title from the list above, but you will read this text independently and then compose an analytical response to the text. You can use any of the topics of our discussions to find a controlling focus; the approach you take is really up to you. However you focus your paper, it must incorporate an understanding of the issues of the course:

- explaining the social, cultural, historical contexts of the novel (*this will require research and documentation*—including parenthetical references and a work-cited page), and
- applying concepts from our semester’s discussion of Scott McCloud’s text or the other academic texts we have discussed, which will also require parenthetical references and a citation on the works-cited page.

The paper should be formatted following MLA conventions. We will discuss both the library databases and MLA format in class.

And in answer to the “How long does this paper have to be?” question—**at least** six pages (1500 words) and no longer than eight (2000 words). The paper is not due until the day of the final, so you can (and should) be working on it during the semester. Please begin early and use me to help you set the paper up and develop it.