Comics. Seriously

Fall 2010

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Comics and graphic novels are increasingly important — and popular — and like all important phenomena they can be studied seriously. Through inquiry, research, analysis, and practice we can learn about what part comics and graphic novels play in our lives and why and how they do it.

The goal of this course is to strengthen the abilities you need to study topics seriously at the college level. To achieve this goal, you will be doing a lot of reading, writing, and visual and oral presentation, as well as analysis and research. As is required in all sections of Perspectives, you will be doing readings from multiple disciplines, doing 40 pages of writing (including papers, responses, and exercises), working in the university library, and working in groups in and out of class.

Required Books

Kazu Kibuishi, ed., *Flight*, vol. 2
Scott McCloud, *Making Comics*
Hergé, *The Secret of the Unicorn*
Hergé, *Red Rackham’s Treasure*
Mark Millar, *Superman: Red Son*
Craig Thompson, *Blankets*
Marjane Satrapi, *The Complete Persepolis*

Required Work and Grading

**Comic project (40%)**: You will create and produce a comic of at least 30 panels. You may draw it by hand or use computer drawing(graphics programs, but not programs that create comics for you. The choice of topic, genre, and style is up to you. You will also write a 5-page paper (1,250 words) discussing your decisions in making the comic and what you learned in the process.

**Inquiry project (30%)**: You will write two 5-7 page papers (1,250-1,750 words) that persuasively answer a question about comics. You will do research with a group and individually that will help you answer the question.

**Responses to graphic novels (15%)**: Responses to the five graphic novels will be assigned and will be due on the day listed on the schedule.

**Daily work (15%)**: In addition to the work above, responses or exercises are assigned for most class sessions; see the schedule. This work will help you understand comics and graphic novels better and will help you complete the two course projects.
Succeeding in this course
You are most likely to achieve the goals of this course (and complete it with a good grade) if you attend all classes and turn in your work on time. Daily assignments prepare you for the work we will do in class, and they must be completed before you come to class in order to be useful to you.

Making use of the Michigan Tech Multiliteracies Center will also help you succeed, not only in this course but in all the courses you take at Michigan Tech: coaches in the center can help you brainstorm and develop ideas and arguments, discuss readings, rehearse oral presentations, design visual arguments, integrate sources into your papers, practice documentation and citation, and revise papers.

The Multiliteracies Center is located in Walker 107. You can schedule a weekly meeting with a coach anytime from 9 am to 5 pm Monday through Thursday and from 9 am to 4 pm on Friday, or you can find a coach to help you in walk-in hours from 11 am to 3 pm Monday through Friday.

ADA Policy
MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students (2312). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action Office (3310).

Two Important Notes:
All assignments must be completed to pass the course.
Always bring your class books to class with you.
UN 1001 Fall 2009 Comics, Seriously

Work Schedule

Aug 31
introduction

Sept 2
Respond to comics in Flight (see assignment below)

Sept 7
Read McCloud, pages 1-5, 58-79 (and notes on pages 122-24); do exercise 3 on page 127

Sept 9
Plot analysis of comic in Flight (see assignment below)

Sept 14
Read The Secret of the Unicorn and write a response (handout)

Sept 16
Read McCloud, pages 112-43; see assignment below

Sept 21
Library orientation; read Red Rackham’s Treasure and write a response (handout)

Sept 23
Read McCloud, pages 8-25 and notes on page 54; do assignments on Tintin and on your comic (handout)

Sept 28
Comic proposal due; proposal presentations begin

Sept 30
Read McCloud pages 80-121 and notes on pages 124-26; do assignments on your comic (handout); proposal presentations continue

Oct 5
Read Superman: Red Son and write a response (handout); proposal presentations continue

Oct 7
Read McCloud, pages 26-53 and notes on pages 54-56; do exercise 8 on page 57 using Superman: Red Son; proposal presentations continue

Oct 12
Inquiry group presentations

Oct 14
No class

Oct 19
Read McCloud, pages 158-69, 174-79 and notes on pages 180-83; draw an establishing shot panel or panels for your comic

Oct 21
Read McCloud, pages 174-79; do research on places or objects that will appear in your comic and draw 2-3 panels containing them

Oct 26
Comic layout due

Oct 28
Read McCloud, pages 170-73; do perspective exercise (handout)

Nov 2
Inquiry Paper 1 due

Nov 4
Read McCloud, pages 128-41 and notes on pages 154-55; do revision assignment on your comic (handout)

Nov 9
Read Blankets and write a response (handout)

Nov 11
Library work session

Nov 16
Read McCloud, pages 142-53 and notes on pages 155-57; do revision assignment on your comic (handout)

Nov 18
Draft of Inquiry Paper 2 due

Thanksgiving break
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 30</td>
<td>Read <em>The Complete Persepolis</em> and write a response (handout)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 2</td>
<td>Do revision assignment on your comic (handout)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 7</td>
<td>Inquiry Paper 2 final draft due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 9</td>
<td>Final comic due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 14</td>
<td>Comic paper due</td>
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**Assignment for September 2:**

Look through *Flight* and choose two comics you like. Read them carefully and write a response in which you answer these questions in detail:
- What do you like about each comic?
- What aspects of each comic do you admire most?
- What do the two comics you have chosen have in common?
- How do the two comics you have chosen differ?

**Assignment for September 9:**

Read two of the following comics in *Flight* and describe the plot of each. Be sure to indicate what the *complication* is (McCloud calls it the conflict on page 67: what the main character wants), and what the *resolution* is.

- *Jelly Fruit*, pages 48-53
- *The Robot and the Sparrow*, pages 55-64
- *Cellmates*, pages 220-31
- *The Ride*, pages 233-44
- *Wilford's Stroll*, pages 282-96
- *Impossible*, pages 298-302
- *Icarus*, pages 360-66
- *A Test for Cenri*, pages 368-80

**Assignment for September 16**

Describe the genre of each of the comics listed in the assignment for September 9 (see McCloud, pages 224-28). Be as specific as possible: none of these comics are simply comedy or tragedy or action & adventure. What expectations do audiences have of each of these genres? How are the expectations fulfilled in each of these comics?