

ENG 309, FALL 2014
MW 10:00-10:50
COMPUTER SCIENCE BUILDING 104
OFFICE: MCCOSH B29

DAVID M. BALL
DBALL@PRINCETON.EDU
OFFICE HOURS: M 1:00-2:00, W 11:00-12:00
AND BY APPOINTMENT

AMERICAN COMICS

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This course will serve as an introduction to twentieth- and twenty-first-century American comics and graphic narrative. Beginning with a brief historical study of comics through the twentieth century, we will be examining a number of twenty-first-century graphic novels, as well as animated films and conventional authors who examine comics in their fiction. Among the questions we will be asking are: Can comics become literature? How does the grammar of comics function and how does its mode of simultaneous seeing and reading complicate conventional approaches to reading literature? In what ways does contemporary graphic narrative look back to the histories of American comics and literature? What relationships exist between comics, film, and other twenty-first-century narrative media? We will be assessing these questions against the larger landscape of contemporary American literature, with an eye toward developing the core skills of literary analysis, critical thinking, and argument-based writing. We will also be creating our own comics, and students at the end of the semester will submit a portfolio of their own work. Our primary goal for the course is to cultivate the skills of close reading, critical thinking, and argument-based writing.

SCHEDULE: [B]=READINGS AVAILABLE ONLINE THROUGH COURSE BLACKBOARD SITE

HISTORY, THEORY, PRACTICE

Getting Started

Sep 10th Introductions, syllabus, course policies and expectations
Chris Ware, "Thanksgiving" [B]

Week 1: How to Read a Comic / Comics History

Sep 15 Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*
Ware, cont.

Sep 17 Selection of Historical Comics [B]
McCloud, cont.

Week 2: Comics Now [Comic Response #1 due Sept. 21st]

Sep 22 Chris Ware (ed.), *McSweeney's* #13

Sep 24 *McSweeney's* cont.

****Friday, September 26th, 4:30 PM—Paper #1 due****

Sep 26 8:30 screening of “Fantasia” (Rocky-Mathey Theater)

COMICS AND/AS LITERATURE

Week 3: Adaptation and Interpretation

Sep 29 Walt Disney (prod.), “Fantasia” (1940)

Oct 1 Paul Auster, “City of Glass” in *New York Trilogy*

Paul Auster, Paul Karasik, and David Mazzucchelli, *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel*

Week 4: Hardboiled Comics

Oct 6 Auster, *et al.*, cont.

Oct 8 Auster, *et al.*, cont.

Week 5: Comics Memoir [Comic Response #2 due Oct. 12th]

Oct 13 Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home*

Oct 15 Bechdel, cont.

Week 6: Comics Masterpieces

Oct 20 R. Sikoryak, *Masterpiece Comics*

Oct 22 Sikoryak, cont.

Selections from Kate Beaton, *Hark! A Vagrant* and Michael Kupperman, *Mark Twain's Autobiography 1910-2010* [B]

****Friday, October 24th, 4:30 PM—Paper #2 due****

****Fall Recess****

SUPERHEROES

Week 7: The Golden Age

Nov 3 Michael Chabon, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*

Nov 5 Chabon, cont.

Week 8: The Pixar Age

Nov 10 Chabon, cont.

Nov 11 8:30 Screening of “The Incredibles” (Rocky-Mathey Theater)

Nov 12 Brad Bird (dir.), “The Incredibles”

Week 9: The Modern Age [Comic Response #3 due Nov. 16th]

Nov 17 Chris Ware, *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*

Nov 19 Ware, cont.

Week 10: Thanksgiving

Nov 24 Ware, cont.

**Thanksgiving Break*

COMING OF AGE

Week 11: Growing Strange

Dec 1 Charles Burns, *Black Hole*

Dec 3 Burns, cont.

Week 12: Arrested Development [Comic Response #4 due Dec 7th]

Dec 8 Adrian Tomine, *Shortcomings*

Dec 10 Tomine, cont.

****DEAN'S DATE: Tuesday January 13th, 4:30 PM [Paper #3 due]****

****TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM: TBD****

REQUIREMENTS:

- TIMELY AND THOUGHTFUL COMPLETION OF READING ASSIGNMENTS
- PUNCTUAL ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGED PARTICIPATION
- THREE PAPERS (DUE SEPT. 26TH, OCT. 24TH, AND JAN. 13TH)
- A PORTFOLIO OF FOUR SELF-CREATED COMIC STRIPS (SEPT. 21ST, OCT. 12TH, NOV. 16TH, DEC. 7TH)
- PAINLESS ONE-HOUR TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM

REQUIRED TEXTS: All available for purchase in Labyrinth Bookstore (if you purchase your books through other sources, please only buy the same editions)

Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (Harper Paperbacks, 1994) ISBN# 9780060976255

Chris Ware (ed.), *McSweeney's Quarterly Concern, No. 13: An Assorted Sampler of North American Comic Drawings, Strips, and Illustrated Stories* (McSweeney's, 2004) ISBN# 9781932416084 **N.B.: Copies of this text MUST include dust jacket**

Paul Auster, Paul Karasik and, David Mazzucchelli, *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel* (Picador, 1994) ISBN# 9780312423605

Paul Auster, *The New York Trilogy* (Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition, 2006) ISBN# 9780143039839 **N.B.: We will discuss the design of the deluxe edition as well as its contents.**

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* (Mariner Books, 2007) ISBN# 9780618871711

R. Sikoryak, *Masterpiece Comics* (Drawn & Quarterly, 2009) ISBN# 9781897299845

Michael Chabon, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (Picador, 2001) ISBN# 9780812983586

Chris Ware, *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth* (Pantheon, 2004)

ISBN# 9780375714542 / hardcover (Pantheon, 2000) ISBN# 9780375404535

N.B.: Hardcover copies of this text MUST include dust jacket

Charles Burns, *Black Hole* (Pantheon, 2008) ISBN# 9780375714726

Adrian Tomine, *Shortcomings* (Drawn & Quarterly, 2009) ISBN# 9781897299753

All course texts are on three-hour reserve in Firestone Library.

GRADING: WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS—55% (#1—5%, #2—15%, #3—35%), CLASS PARTICIPATION—20%, COMICS PORTFOLIO—15%, FINAL EXAM—10%

LATE PAPER POLICY: All papers and other assignments are due on the date indicated on the syllabus. With the extraordinary and rare exception for medical or emergency reasons, late papers will receive a failing grade. Failure to turn in all writing assignments by Dean's Date will result in a failing grade for the course.

COURSE ATTENDANCE POLICY: More than two unexcused absences in precept will result in a failing course participation grade. More than four unexcused absences will result in a failing course grade. Excused absences for non-academic or non-medical reasons (job interviews, significant extracurricular commitments, etc.) must be arranged with your preceptor well in advance of the scheduled date. Attendance is measured not only by your physical presence, but also by active contributions to course discussion; consistent, silent attendance will receive a "C."

LAPTOP/PHONE POLICY: While tremendous tools for learning, I have found that laptops in the lecture hall and seminar classroom inhibit rather than promote intellectual dialogue. Unless you have a documented need for a laptop for note taking, please print out all of the course readings and bring them to class, and please refrain from using any internet-enabled devices in the classroom.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Princeton's policies on academic conduct and the undergraduate honor system are admirably clear and available for review here: <http://www.princeton.edu/pub/rrr/index.xml> Your preceptors and I will be happy to discuss questions about academic honesty, permissible collaboration, and proper citation both during class time and privately during office hours.

RESEARCH AND WRITING RESOURCES: I strongly encourage students to take advantage of writing and research assistance that is available on campus. Located in Lauritzen Hall, the Writing Center (www.princeton.edu/writing/center) offers student writers free, one-on-one conferences with experienced fellow writers who are trained to consult on assignments in any discipline. Writing Center Fellows can help with any part of the writing process, from getting started to developing a thesis, structuring an argument, or revising a draft. The goal of each session is to teach writing strategies that will encourage you to become an astute reader of your own writing. Although the Writing Center is not an editing or proofreading service, Fellows can help you learn strategies for improving sentences and checking mechanics. I encourage you to make visits to the Writing Center a regular part of your writing process. Every writer—no matter how confident or experienced—can benefit enormously from the insights and suggestions an intelligent outside reader offers. To make an appointment, visit the Writing Center's web site at www.princeton.edu/writing/appt. Evening drop-in hours are also available, Sunday through Thursday. I have also arranged for our seminar to have Course Fellows, dedicated tutors who will be familiar with the assignments and expectations of our course. More details will be forthcoming as I have them.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES: In full support of Princeton University policy and equal access laws, your preceptor is available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be recommended for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities requesting academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ods@princeton.edu; 258-8840) for disability verification and determination of eligibility for reasonable academic accommodations. Requests for academic accommodations for this course need to be made at the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible for newly approved students, and again at least two weeks in advance of any needed accommodations in order to make arrangements to implement the accommodations. Please make an appointment to meet with me in order to maintain confidentiality in addressing your needs. No accommodations can be given without authorization from ODS, or without advance notice.