Introduction to Comics Studies  
COM 2023 / MMC 2023

Randy Duncan Office Hours

Arkansas Hall 213 MWF 10:00 - 11:00

230-5042 MF 2:00 – 3:00

duncanr@hsu.edu TR 11:00 – 12:00

**Course Objectives:** This course is designed to help the student

*Appreciate* the diversity and potential of the comic book/graphic novel medium;  *Understand* comic books/graphic novels as a unique medium of communication;

*Discover* the governing principles of comic books/graphic novels as an art form;

*Apply* knowledge of the medium to the creation of comic books/graphic novels;

*Analyze* the role of comic books/graphic novels in American society and culture;

*Evaluate* works of the comic book/graphic novel medium

**Grading:** Grades are determined on a 1000 point scale. The minimum points for each grade:   
A - 900; B - 800; C - 700; D - 600. The points will be distributed as follows:   
Tests (350 pts.); Analysis Papers (250 pts.); Exercises (230 pts.); Discussion of Comics (100 pts.);   
Auteur Report (50 pts.); Participation (20 pts.).

**Attendance:** You must have an excused absence to make-up a test. A test must be made up **before the graded test is handed back to the class**. Assignments turned in late will not receive full credit. Hopefully, there will be a great deal of discussion in this class. If you are not in class to take part in the discussion, your participation grade will be reduced. Henderson has a strict policy against bringing children to class. Some course content is inappropriate for minors. If you cannot get a sitter, please do not attend class that day.

**Required Text:** *The Power of Comics & Graphic Novels: Culture, Form and Context* 3nd ed. (2023)by Randy Duncan, Matthew J. Smith, and Paul Levitz

**Grievance Procedure:** If you wish to appeal a grade in this course you should schedule an appointment with the instructor and explain the reasons for your appeal. The instructor will explain the basis for the grade. If you are still not satisfied, you should see the chair of the Director of Arts & Humanities.

**ADA**: Anyone who feels he/she may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability (e.g.: sensory, learning, psychological, medical, mobility) should contact me to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs.  I rely on the Disability Resource Center for assistance in verifying your eligibility for academic accommodations related to your disability.  If you have not previously contacted the Disability Resource Center (Foster Hall first floor, 870-230-5475), I encourage you do so.  For more information, visit the DRC website at <http://www.hsu.edu/Provost/TRIO/Disability-resource-center.html>.

**Content Warning**

**Some of the readings in this course contain sexually explicit scenes or adult language. A few of the books might also contain offensive racist stereotypes and representations of physical and sexual abuse that may be painful for some students to read. Students who would prefer to substitute other readings for these works are welcome to do so and should consult with the instructor on suitable substitute texts. Students who require other modifications to the reading list, including adjustments because of reading ability or perceptual issues should see the instructor at the beginning of the course to discuss appropriate modifications.**

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 Introduction to the course / survey of background with comics

Reading: Introduction; Chapter 3 /   
 Ex. 1 – Paradigmatic Choices (10 pts.) [Chap. 3, Discussion #1]

Week 2 Chapter 3 continued / Ex. 2 – Encapsulation (10 pts.) [Chap. 5, Activity #2]

Reading: Chapter 4 / Ex. 3 – Inferences (10 pts.) [Chap. 4, Discussion #2]

Chapter 4 continued / Ex. 4 – Image Functions (20 pts.) [Chap. 4, Activity #2]

Week 3Discuss *Asterios Polyp* [on Canvas] (20 pts.)  
 Reading: Chapter 5

Ex. 5 – Sequential Dynamics (10 pts.) [Chap. 5, Discussion #1]  
 Ex. 6 – Dynamism & Iconostasis (10 pts.) [Chap. 5, Activity #1]  
 Ex. 7 – Layout Types (10 pts.) [Chap. 5, Activity #3]

Week 4 Test 1 (Chapters 3, 4, 5) (50 pts.)

Reading: Chapter 10 / Discuss comics precursors [on Canvas]

Discuss Topffer [on Canvas] / Discuss *Breakdowns* [on Canvas] (20 pts.)

Week 5 Chapter 10 continued / Ex. 8 – Comparing Eras (15 pts.)

Test 2 (Chapter 10, lecture notes, materials on Canvas) (50 pts.)

Week 6 Reading: Chapter 1 / Discuss Marvel comic [on Canvas] (20 pts.)

Discuss Crumb and *Raw* [on Canvas] (20 pts.)

Analysis Paper # 1 (50 pts.)

Week 7 Reading: Chapter 2 / Ex. 9 – Transmediation (10 pts.)  
 Ex. 10 – Fandom Ethnography (20 pts.)

Test 3 (Chapters 1, 2) (50 pts.)

Week 8 Reading: Chapter 6

Reading: Chapter 7 / Discuss memoir excerpts [on Canvas] (20 pts.)

Ex. 11 – Mini Memoir (25 pts.)

Week 9 Reading: Chapter 8 / discuss *Warlock* [on Canvas] (20 pts.)

Discuss superhero story [on Canvas]

Ex. 12 – Superhero Narrative (10 pts.)

Week 10 Reading: Chapter 9 / Ex. 13 – Journalism Ethics (10 pts.) [Chap. 9, Activity #1]  
 Ex. 14 – Genre Distinctions (10 pts.) [Chap. 9, Activity #2]

Week 11 Analysis Paper # 2 (50 pts.)

Test 4 (Chapters 6, 7, 8) (50 pts.)

Auteur Reports (50 pts.)

Week 12 Auteur Reports continued

Week 13 Auteur Reports continued / Reading: Chapter 11

Week 14 Reading: Chapter 12 / Analysis Paper # 3 (50 pts.)

Week 15 Ex. 15 – Adaptation (50 pts.)

Week 16 Test 5 (chapters 9, 11, 12, auteur reports) (50 pts.)

Analysis Paper # 4 (100 pts.) / review for final exam

Week 17 Final Exam (100 pts.).

How course objectives relate to the Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) of the Communication & Theatre Arts program (CTA), the Liberal Arts Core (LAC), and the University (HSU):

**Course Objective:** Appreciate the diversity and potential of the comic book/graphic novel medium;

CTA-SLO: Students will demonstrate an understanding of diverse methods of communicating

LAC-SLO: Student will appreciate the complexity and diversity of world cultures

**Course Objective:** Understand comic books/graphic novels as a unique medium of communication;

CTA-SLO: Students will demonstrate an understanding of diverse methods of communicating

**Course Objective:** Discover the governing principles of comic books/graphic novels as an art form;

CTA-SLO: Students will demonstrate an understanding of diverse methods of communicating  
 LAC-SLO: Students will develop their analytical and critical thinking skills

HSU-SLO: Student will think logically and critically

**Course Objective:** Apply knowledge of the medium to the creation of comic books/graphic novels;

CTA-SLO: Students will demonstrate the ability to use written, oral, and visual methods to communicate effectively

CTA-SLO: Students will demonstrate an understanding of diverse methods of communicating

**Course Objective:** Analyze the role of comic books/graphic novels in American society and culture;

LAC-SLO: Students will develop their analytical and critical thinking skills

HSU-SLO: Student will think logically and critically

**Course Objective:** Evaluate works of the comic book/graphic novel medium

LAC-SLO: Students will develop their analytical and critical thinking skills