**Dyson College of Arts and Sciences**

**Pace University**

ENG 316: Course Syllabus

**Creating Comics & Graphic Novels**

**Instructor Information**

Prof. Paul Levitz  
*Office Hours:* by appointment

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**Course Information**

*Name:* Writing Comics and Graphic Novels

*Number:* ENG 3XX

*Meeting Room:* 1320, 161 William Street

*Meeting Time(s):* 10:35- 12:00 am Monday and Wednesday

**Required Materials**

*THE POWER OF COMICS by Duncan, Smith and Levitz*

*SANDMAN: DREAM COUNTRY by Neil Gaiman and various artists*

*UNDERSTANDING COMICS by Scott McCloud*

*SMILE by Raina Telgemier*

*AMERICAN BORN CHINESE by Gene Luen Yang*

**Course Description**

Explore the rapidly growing world of American graphic novels and comics while learning to write for this form.

**Course Overview**

This course will explore graphic storytelling (fiction and nonfiction) and develop their writing skills as they learn to express themselves in this form. Discussions will include a brief history of comics in America, the current state of the graphic novel and memoir, and the potential for the form. Students will do regular writing assignments and workshop their efforts.

**Course Goals**

This course will focus on developing students’ writing skills in ways that are applicable to a wide range of media forms, but with a specific concentration on the modern graphic novel.

**Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course students will have:

+ learned how comics evolved into the graphic novel form in America

+ how to format a script for comics and graphic novels

+ how to effectively communicate with an artist collaborator

+ the basic elements of plotting, dialoguing and setting a narrative voice for a graphic novel

+ how to further develop their skills independently through deconstruction of published work

+ acquired critical writing, critical reading, and critical thinking skills, while recognizing that these skills are continuously refined

**Approach to Teaching & Learning**

Weekly lectures will be followed by classroom discussion and writing assignments. Students will be required to write or revise their writing weekly, and to workshop their writing as often as time permits.

**Course Requirements**

Weekly assignments and readings will be available in Blackboard or in the assigned texts as listed on the syllabus – so even if a class is missed you will be able to get the homework assignment. If homework is due for the class you are missing, you can e-mail the professor a Word document no later than the day of the class on which it is due. If homework is assigned during a class you missed, students can get the assignment from Blackboard.

**Where the syllabus indicates “excerpts” it means all the items in that Blackboard file.**

Tardiness: Please endeavor to be on time. It is disruptive to come in late. Repeated tardiness will be reflected in your final grade.

Attendance: There are no excused absences. Therefore, missing class for any reason other than illness and obligation is not recommended. You can miss up to three classes without a grade penalty; missing 3 classes reduces your grade by a half grade level. If you miss six or more classes, you will fail the course. Please let me know if you are going to miss a class, but please don’t ask for “Permission.”

Classroom behavior: You are expected to attend class punctually and with proper decorum, and with required course materials and assignments. Not doing so will be grounds for a loss of credit in class participation. Particularly egregious behavior is subject to referral to either university or legal authorities. NO Cell phone or PDSA use. This means talking, text-messaging, or other uses are not permitted at any time in either a real or virtual classroom (this includes before and after class as well as during). Having your video on throughout the class when we’re on zoom is expected unless exceptionally disruptive personal circumstances or technological failure is involved.

Honor policies:  It is essential to clearly document your sources whether you are quoting directly, paraphrasing, or summarizing. Do not present the work of others as your own.  Plagiarism is not acceptable. If you plagiarize you will fail – either the assignment or the course, depending on the severity of the offense. If you are to continue in the course, you will be required to write a 3-page explanation of how and why you plagiarized. If you have any questions about this, please bring it up in class.

**Grading**

Classroom participation (includes, peer editing as well as attendance and class participation) counts for 35% of your grade; homework Assignments are another 35%. The final paper is another 30%.

**Pace University COVID-19 Safety:**

CDC guidelines and University policy require proper face covering use in all classrooms, conference rooms, hallways, elevators, and other common areas. Face coverings are required even if you are more than 6 feet from another individual in a common indoor area. We must work together to protect others and ourselves from the transmission of COVID-19. Any student entering a classroom without a face covering will be asked to: a) don a face covering or b) go to Security to obtain a face covering if the student does not have one. Students who do neither of these things will be asked to leave class and they will be marked absent for the session. Students are expected to be familiar with the current COVID-19 regulations, which are posted on the Return to Campus website. See also up to date policies and announcements and information on Pace’s website.

**Writing Center Support**

The Pace University Writing Center offers tutorial services in writing as well as handouts and reference materials on writing for student use in person or via the web at [www.pace.edu/dyson/writingcenter](http://www.pace.edu/dyson/writingcenter). The staff of instructor and student tutors can assist students in understanding writing assignments and criteria and can help students with any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming topics to revision of rough drafts. Students may be referred to the Writing Center as part of this course, or students may seek assistance with course writing on their own via web-based tutoring or by visiting the Writing Center in person (NY-Birnbaum Library, 2nd Floor, 346-1085; PLV-Mortola Library, 3rd Floor, 773-3942). Please refer to the Writing Center’s website for information about polices and hours of operation.

**Student Evaluation**

In order to improve our Dyson College courses we look to you, the students, for feedback. Near the end of the semester you will be asked to fill out an online evaluation form regarding your experience in this course. Dyson College is “going green” so we have made this a paperless process, but we need your help to make this eco-friendly solution a success. You will receive an email directing you to the IOTA course evaluation site http://paceevals.com where you will find the Dyson courses that you are enrolled in for the current semester. Your feedback is very important and your response will remain confidential. If you have any questions about the online evaluations, please contact Martina Blackwood at [mblackwood@pace.edu](mailto:mblackwood@pace.edu). Thank you for your participation in this important process.

**Academic Integrity**

Students in this course are required to adhere to Pace University's Academic Integrity Code.  The Academic Integrity Code supports honesty and ethical conduct in the educational process.  It educates students about what constitutes academic misconduct, helps to deter cheating and plagiarism, and provides a procedure for handling cases of academic misconduct.  Students are expected to be familiar with the Code, which can be found under "University Policies" in the Student Handbook:  <http://www.pace.edu/academicintegritycode>. Individual schools and programs may have additional standards of academic integrity.  Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the policies of the schools, programs, and courses in which they are enrolled.

Students can get help on how to use resources properly in their research and writing from many sources. This site (<http://www.pace.edu/library/pages/instruct/plaig.html>) provides links to useful information. The Library also offers an online tutorial on doing research for papers called "APOLLO." The tutorial is the first item under Student Resources at the link just presented.

**Students with Disabilities**

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

The University’s commitment to equal educational opportunities for students with disabilities includes providing reasonable accommodations for the needs of students with disabilities. To request an accommodation for a qualifying disability, a student must self-identify and register with the Student Accessibility Services for his or her campus. No one, including faculty, is authorized to evaluate the need and arrange for an accommodation except the Student Accessibility Services. Moreover, no one, including faculty, is authorized to contact the Student Accessibility Services on behalf of a student. For further information, please see *Resources for Students with Disabilities page.*

**Sex-based Misconduct Policy and Procedure:**

Pace University is committed to providing a safe environment for every member of is community and to ensuring that no student, faculty or staff member is excluded from participation in or denied the benefits of any University program or activity on the basis of sex. Accordingly, the University prohibits the following forms of Sex-Based Misconduct: sexual assault, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment, dating violence, sexual exploitation and stalking.

You should be aware that I am a **non-confidential** resource and have an obligation to report any information about sexual assault to the University’s Title IX/Affirmative Action Officer, Ms. Lisa Miles (163 Williams Street, Room 1017, 212-346-1310, [amiles@pace.edu](mailto:amiles@pace.edu)). The Title IX/Affirmative Action Office is responsible for investigating violations of the sexual misconduct policy. For more information about the Pace University sexual misconduct policy, see the Sex-Based Misconduct Policy and Procedure section on the Pace website.

Members of the University community who believe they have been subjected to Sex-Based Misconduct are encouraged to report such incidents to the University , and, where applicable, to local law enforcement. **Confidential** resources include the **University Counseling Centers, Offices of Sexual and Interpersonal Wellness** and **University Healthcare.** Contact information for those offices may be found on the Pace website.

**Self-Care:**

Your academic success in this course and throughout your educational career depends heavily on your personal health and well-being. Stress is a common part of the college experience, and it often can be compounded by unexpected life changes outside the classroom. The Pace Community strongly encourages you to take care of yourself throughout the term, before the demands of mid-terms and finals reach their peak. Please feel free to talk with me about any difficulty you may be having that may impact your performance in this course as soon as it occurs and before it becomes unmanageable. Please know there are a number of other support services on campus that stand ready to assist you. I strongly encourage you to contact them when needed.

**ENG 316 Course Calendar Fall 2022**

*\*\*\*Please note that the course calendar may change at the discretion of the professor.*

**September 7 INTRODUCTION**

Introduction to the course, structure and goals.

**September 12 & 14   HOW WE GOT HERE**

Brief history of the evolution of American cartooning and comics, from Thomas Nast through the comic strip, comic book and now the graphic novel.

Reading assignment: POWER OF COMICS, Chapters 1-3

**September 19 & 21 BUILDING BLOCKS**

The panel, the page and the elements that make up a script

Reading assignment: UNDERSTANDING COMICS, chapters 1-3

ON WRITING by Stephen King, excerpts

DOCTOR FATE, excerpts

**September 26 – NO CLASS**

**September 28 & October 3 DEVELOPING YOUR PLAN**

Considering goals for projects, worldbuilding, and evaluating opportunities in the publishing world for specific projects

Reading assignment: UNDERSTANDING COMICS, chapter 6

SAVE THE CAT, excerpts

“The Furies” by Roger Zelazny

FUN HOME, excerpts

CAN’T WE TALK ABOUT SOMETHING MORE PLEASANT, excerpts

**October 5 – NO CLASS**

**October 10 & 12 NON-FICTION**

Using comics to tell true stories

Reading assignment: POWER OF COMICS, chapter 8

AMERICAN SPLENDOR, excerpts

JOURNALISM, excerpts

THE FIFTH BEATLE, excerpt

**October 17 & 19 CHARACTER AND CONNECTIONS**

Developing a cast of characters and their connections

Reading assignment: STORY, excerpts

SMILE

**October 26 & 27 THE PLOT**

Tools for structuring plot outlines, including the Pixar Spline

Reading assignment: AMERICAN BORN CHINESE

***Mid-term assignments due***

**October 31 & November 2 COMMUNICATING WITH COLLABORATORS**

The art of art direction

Reading assignment: SANDMAN: DREAM COUNTRY, “Calliope” and its script

**November 7 & 9 THE WORDS**

Developing dialogue, speech patterns for characters, narrative voice and style

Reading assignment: SANDMAN: DREAM COUNTRY, “Dream of a Thousand Cats,” “A Midsummer’s Night Dream” and “Façade”

**November 14 & 16 GENRE & EDITING**

The purposes and nature of genre; discussion of tools for editing your work

Reading assignment: POWER OF COMICS, chapter 6

THE PORNOGRAPHY OF GENRE

**November 21, 28 & 30 LEARNING FROM THE MASTERS**

Class exercises in deconstruction to introduce the skill

Reading assignment: tbd

**November 23 – NO CLASS**

**December 5 & 7 FINDING THE ESSENCE**

Writing existing properties and finding their essential qualities

Reading assignment: BATMAN, excerpts

**December 12, 14, 19 & 21 WORKSHOP**

***Final assignments due December 21***