

COMM390 (461): Comm-ics Research

Dr. Knopf (Morey248: Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:30-1:30, Wednesdays 10:00-11:00)
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Course Description: This course uses the medium as comics to explore (rhetoric and media studies) theories and research methods in communication. As a rhetoric and public address offering, emphasis will be given to comics as rhetoric and visual rhetoric and to rhetorical analyses. Secondly, through critical consideration and discussion of particular comics and of the development of comics generally, the course will provide an overview of communication in popular culture, politics, economics, sociology, and history in general. Discussions will specifically look at concerns of representation in comics and to comics as a means of dissent, relevant to the course's designation as a "diverse voices" class and as a Women's and Gender Studies elective. As an Aesthetic-Critical (AC) course, it will explore the history and production of the comics medium in addition to exploring critical means of analyzing and discussing comics. To this end, a basic introduction of concerns and methods involved in the creation of comics will also be included.

Course Objectives: In taking this class, you will be able to:

- Through analyzing messages, understand the nature and significance of verbal & nonverbal communication, including signs and symbols.
- Demonstrate knowledge and application of contemporary communication theory, in both scholarship and practice, being able to describe the communication discipline and its central questions
- Read and understand contemporary communication scholarship about communication through comics
- Know the historical context for the art of rhetoric and comics, including its place within culture
- Understand and explain the roles of communication in society – the issues of marginalized voices.
- Be able to analyze communication of word and image,
- Recognize and explain the influences of new media technologies in the communication process.

Required Texts:

- *The Power of Comics: History, Form and Culture* by Duncan & Smith (2015)
- *Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories and Methods* by Smith & Duncan (2011)

You will also need the syllabus, Moodle and Internet access, and paper. Access to a digital photography device (camera, phone, or tablet) will also be beneficial.

Required Journal Articles (provided on Moodle):

- Benton, Bond. 2013. "Redemptive Anti-Americanism and the Death of Captain America." *Studies in Communication Sciences* 13:75-83.
- Cohn, Neil. 2013. "Beyond Speech Balloons and Thought Bubbles: The Integration of Text and Image." *Semiotica* 197: 35-63.
- Freeman, Matthew. 2015. "Up, Up and Across: Superman, the Second World War and the Historical Development of Transmedia Storytelling." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 35(2): 215-39.
- Jenkins, Henry. 2013. "'Super-Powered Fans': The Many Worlds of San Diego Comic-Con." *Boom: A Journal of California* 2 (2): 22-36.
- Kornfield, Sarah. 2011. "Cross-Cultural Cross-Dressing: Japanese Graphic Novels Perform Gender in U.S." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 28 (3): 213-29.
- McAllister, Matthew Paul. 1990. "Cultural Argument and Organizational Constraint in the Comic Book Industry." *Journal of Communication* 40 (1): 55-71.
- McGrath, Karen. "Gender, Race, and Latina Identity: An Examination of Marvel Comics' *Amazing Fantasy* and *Arana*." *Atlantic Journal of Communication* 15 (4): 268-83.
- Rao, Aruna. 1996. "Nymphs, Nawabs, and Nationalism: Myth and History in Indian Comics." *Journal of Asian*

- Pacific Communication* 7 (1&2): 31-44.
- Rockler, Naomi R. 2002. "Race, Whiteness, 'Lightness,' and Relevance: African American and European American Interpretations of *Jump Start* and *The Boondocks*." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19 (4): 398-418.
- Wanzo, Rebecca. 2009. "The Superhero: Meditations on Surveillance, Salvation, and Desire." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6 (1): 93-7.

Required (Web) Comics – linked on Moodle:

- "A Softer World" by e home & j comeau
- "As the Crow Flies" by Melanie Gillman
- "Bongcheon-Dong Ghost" by Horang
- "Evil Inc." by Brad Guigar
- "Girls With Slingshots" by Danielle Corsetto
- "Nwain" by Terrana Cliff
- "Some People" by Luke Pearson
- "Strong Female Protagonist" by Brennan Lee Mulligan and Molly Ostertag
- "The Adventures of Dr. McNinja" by Christopher Hastings
- "The Immortal Nadia Greene" by Jamal Campbell
- "Princess Love Pon" by Shauna J. Grant

**For ongoing or multi-chapter comics, you need to read only 1 chapter.*

Grading:

- Original Comic (midterm project) = 25 points
- Critical Analysis (final project) = 25 points
- Comics Safari (ongoing) = 25 points
- In-class Discussion & Writing Prompts = 25 points
- Comic Share = 10 bonus points

☆Full assignment descriptions & instructions are below. Use them. ☆

Final Grades are broken down **in this class** as follows:

- 4.0 = 94-100 ● 3.7 = 88-93 ● 3.3 = 82-87 ● 3.0 = 76-81 ● 2.7 = 70-75
- 2.3 = 64-69 ● 2.0 = 58-63 ● 1.7 = 52-57 ● 1.3 = 46-51 ● 1.0 = 40-45 ● (0.0 = 0-39)

☆ Course grades start at 0 points, with each completed assignment adding to that number. A 2.0 is a "satisfactory" grade that indicates the *minimum* has been achieved, or that the work is of an average acceptable quality. A 4.0 is attainable but will require much more than minimal effort. ☆

How to earn a minimum 2.3 in the course, guaranteed:

- Attend 26+/29 class sessions ● Arrive late/leave early ≤4 times ● Complete all work, on time
- You can still earn up to a 4.0 if you do these things, and if you don't or are unable to do these you can still earn a 2.3 or higher in the course. If, however, you are worried about passing, this is the basic route to success.*

Assignment Descriptions: All assignments and their due dates are established at the start of the semester. This way you know what to expect, and when. You can plan ahead, both for time management and learning strategies. All due dates are indicated on the course calendar at the end of this syllabus. Due dates are absolute and non-negotiable. Details, instructions, rationales, and grading criteria for all assignments are outlined in the Assignment Packet section that follows the calendar. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with that information.

Challenging a Grade: If you identify an error in grading, I am always willing to admit to a mistake and correct it.

If you want me to *reconsider* a grade, follow these steps:

- Write a 1-2 page explanation of why the grade should be reconsidered identifying what type of change you seek and providing a reasoned argument and evidence in support of that change. The burden of proof in any disagreement over evaluation of your performance rests with you.
- Resubmit the original work (complete with grade & comments) along with the rationale.

Extra Credit: Extra credit will **not** be available as an end-of-semester option to make-up-for or replace work that you did not do throughout the semester. It will never be given on an individual basis.

Due Dates/Late Work: **LATE ASSIGNMENTS ARE **NOT** ACCEPTED.**

✍️ If you know in advance you will not be in class when an assignment is due, turn it in early.

✍️ If you wake up sick when something is due, please email it by class time as a document or image file.

Attendance: This is a live, non-virtual, non-mediated, communication course. Being present on time (and AWAKE) is necessary. **If you cannot consistently be present, on time, for class, you should withdraw.**

Please note, on time attendance means that you, and not just your things, are in the classroom when it starts.

☆ You are solely responsible for catching up on work that you miss (always refer to the course calendar and to the potential kindness of classmates). Absences are not an excuse for late work or for being unaware of course expectations. Make-ups for assignments will only be granted in rare instances and usually only with documentation of an unavoidable emergency.

In the case of **college-sanctioned activities or religious observances**, arrangements should be made prior to/in advance of the absence. [Note: Grades that factor in attendance will be adjusted for such events as long as notice is given.]

Incompletes: Incompletes, or other arrangements for course completion, can be planned only in advance to the semester's end when there is an emergency that makes completing the course otherwise impossible.

Academic Integrity & Dishonesty: A pledge of academic honesty is made by all students at SUNY Potsdam, indicating that you understand & comply with the requirements set forth by instructors the Academic Honor Code. To plagiarize is to pass off ideas or words of someone else as your own without crediting the source, no matter what the source is or if you make some changes to the wording or add in some of your own words/ideas. ***In the event of plagiarism on an assignment in this course you will have 24 hours to correct or authenticate your work or receive a zero on the assignment. Other forms of academic dishonesty, such as cheating on an exam, or attempting to cheat, will result in a 33% lower grade on the work.***

Etiquette: The success of this course is directly related to the sense of community that we develop in the classroom. Any communication or behavior that potentially interferes with the learning environment of other students will not be tolerated. Disruptive behavior - even minor disruptions - may result in your being told to leave class.

Success, Assistance, and Accommodations: Assignments and policies have been developed in a way to help you succeed and to treat all students fairly and as responsible adults preparing for a career. Sometimes, though, life is particularly challenging. If you need particular course accommodations made for any situation, need assistance working through any problems, or have questions or concerns, please talk with me as soon as possible. You need to only provide enough information for me to provide or seek help.

Spring 2017 Calendar– KEEP TRACK OF DUE DATES!

	TUESDAY	THURSDAY
Wk1	1/24: (intro, art in relationship)	1/26: <i>A Softer World</i> & <i>Nwain</i>
Wk2 Medium & Form	1/31: PoC ch 1 & Cohn	2/2: CATc ch 1-2
Wk3 History	2/7: PoC 2-3 & <i>Bongcheon-Dong Ghost</i>	2/9: CATc 14 & Freeman
Wk4 Industry	2/14: PoC 4 & McAllister	2/16: CATc 10-12
Wk5 Production	2/21 – FEBRUARY RECESS	2/23: PoC 5, CATc 13, & <i>As the Crow Flies</i>
Wk6 Narrative Creation	2/28: PoC 6	3/2: CTc 5 & <i>Evil Inc</i>
Wk7 Narrative Experience	3/7: PoC 7 & CATc 4 <i>Original Comic due between now & 3/23</i>	3/9: CATc 18 & <i>Some People</i>
Wk8 Fandom	3/14: PoC 8, CATc 19 & Jenkins	3/16: CATc 20-21
Wk9 Comic Genres	3/21: PoC 9	3/23: CATc 8-9 <i>Last day to submit Original Comic</i>
Wk10	3/28 – SPRING RECESS	3/30 – SPRING RECESS
Wk11 Genres cont	4/4: PoC 10, Wanzo & <i>Strong Female Protagonist</i>	4/6: CATc 15 & <i>The Adventures of Dr. McNinja</i>
Wk12 Ideology	4/11: PoC 11 & Benton	4/13: CATc 7 & CATc 16
Wk13 Ideology cont.	4/18: CATc 17 & <i>Girls with Slingshots</i> <i>Critical Analysis due between now & 5/15</i>	4/20: McGrath, Rockler & <i>The Immortal Nadia Greene</i>
Wk14 Research	4/25: PoC 12	4/27: CATc 3 & CATc 6 <i>(collecting safari images ends)</i>
Wk15 Intercultural	5/2: PoC 13 & Rao	5/4: Kornfield & <i>Princess Love Pon</i>
Wk16 Recap	5/9: <i>Comic Safari presentations</i>	5/11: <i>Comic Safari presentations</i>
FINALS	Monday, 5/15, 2:45-4:45 <i>Last chance to submit Critical Analysis</i>	

Assignments are due at the start of class on the days specified.

Reminder, for ongoing or multi-chapter comics, you need to read only 1 chapter.

COMM-ICS "ASSIGNMENT PACKET"

Original Comic (midterm project):

Develop a 2-page comic that employs the 3 relationships (image-text, image-image, image-culture) introduced in the course and **that teaches something about the history or art form of comics.**

Artistic ability doesn't matter: drawings, stick figures, commissioned art (with artist credit), clipart, photos, stencils, Google Images (with acknowledgement) are all acceptable. How the visuals are developed matters less than the thought that goes into what the visuals should be.

Remember, the comic's content needs to teach some aspect of course content.

Grading:

Image-Text relationship used	
present	3 pts
accurate	2 pts
Image-Image relationship used	
present	3 pts
accurate	2 pts
Image-culture/content relationship used	
present	3 pts
accurate	2 pts
Course concept/content expressed	5 pts
Expressed course concept/content correctly explained	5 pts
*Individual expression of creativity employed	+5pts

Critical Analysis (final project): Using one of the methodologies presented in *Critical Approaches to Comics*, write a 5-7 page criticism of any comic of your choice. Your selected artifact should be equivalent to a minimum of 10 pages of content (a short comic book or 8-10 weeks' worth of strips, depending on panel numbers) to make sure you have enough material to work with.

Grading

Logical choice of methodology (it fits what you want to achieve)	5 pts
Accurate application of methodology (you used it correctly)	5 pts
Scholarly writing style	
Full sentences, with good grammar & correct spelling.	3 pts
Paragraphs constructed with a claim and evidence.	2 pts
Scholarly format	
Times New Roman, 12-pt, double-spaced, 1" margins.	5 pts
Analysis goes beyond a summary of plot points.	5 pts
*Analysis shows unique insight	+3pts

Comic Safari (semester-long activity & final presentation): Comics – stories told with images – are all around. Each week, photograph a real-life comic encountered in daily routines and regular activities. During finals week, these will be presented as slide-shows (using whatever digital format you want to use).

Grading

Creative selections	5 pts
Observant/aware selections	5 pts
Demonstrated regular participation	5 pts
Complete slide-show	5 pts
Prepared presentation	5 pts

Writing Prompts & Discussion groups (ongoing): Class time will be far more interesting if everyone does the reading. Writing prompts will be used to get discussions started, with small group discussions and class-wide discussions.

Grading

- Presence
- Written contribution

NOTE: If it becomes apparent that the class is not ready to engage with the reading material during course sessions, the instructor retains the right to replace discussion with regular quizzes or pop quizzes.

Comic Share: EXTRA CREDIT: Each class, someone will have an opportunity to share a comic that has made an impression on them. Days will be assigned in advance to ensure adequate time and coverage.

Grading

- Ready to present when assigned