HON344: Illustrating History and the World: The Graphic Novel/Memoir/Reportage

Fall 2021

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**Professor: Justine K. Van Meter**

**Office:** Zoom Room! https://chapman.zoom.us/j/4996939117

**Office Hours:** T4:30-6:30pm **and** by appointment/at your convenience

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**Course Objectives/Outcomes:**

In this course, we will explore the possibilities of knowing and understanding “otherness” and “the self” (and the similarities and/or differences between the two) through visual texts, such as graphic memoirs and graphic reportage. Topics covered include the history and development of the genre; the collision between fact and fiction in these particular visual texts; the ways in which the disciplines of literature and art are not only combined within this form but redefined; the validity or efficacy of representing historical and personal events and experiences in “comic” form and the potential outcomes – in terms of understanding other people, other histories, ourselves, and our own histories – of this kind of representation. Major categories – as seen in the organization of course content below – are representing **(Graphic) Witnessing, “Autographix,” Graphic/Comics Journalism/Reportage,** and **Hybridity.**

**Major Topics Covered:**

1. Art and illustration as “text”
2. “Autographix” – combining autobiography, history, and illustration
3. Psychoanalytic, cultural, historical, and feminist interpretations/approaches to texts
4. Past, present, and future in storytelling
5. The “Self,” the “Other,” and the “in-between”

**Required Texts:**

Sacco, *Palestine*

--. *Safe Area Gorazde: the War in Eastern Bosnia*

Satrapi, *Persepolis: the Story of a Childhood*

--. *Persepolis II: The Story of a Return*

Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale: My Father Bleeds History*

--. Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began

Handouts (on Canvas)

**Requirements:**

1. Readings and informal writing assignments: as you will notice on the syllabus, there are many materials that will be posted on Canvas. When discussing these in class, it’s acceptable to use your computer (BUT…use the computer for ONLY this reason!). As we proceed, there will also be writing or research assignments **(sometimes not listed on the syllabus)** that will be used for discussion purposes; if it’s clear that you have not prepared for these, there will be a **deduction in your overall grade** at the end of the semester **(25 points per assignment).** So, though these writing assignments are not formally graded, they are **required**!
2. Midterm (150 points)
3. Presentation (100 points): More information will be distributed as this assignment approaches.
4. Essay (400 points): Each of you will complete a research paper during the semester (and the presentation will be based on this essay). **No late papers accepted!**
5. Final (250 points): The final will be cumulative and will involve a choice of essays. More on this later!
6. Participation/Attendance(100 points): It is more than likely that, at this point in the syllabus, you are aware that your active participation in this class is necessary. We are in this together, to critically explore and examine a variety of texts, images and ideas; as such, all of our voices must be heard!

With regard to attendance, excessive unexcused absence (meaning any absence that is not cleared with me **prior** to class and that is not legitimized by either a doctor’s/coach’s/dean’s note or by other satisfactory reason) or excessive tardiness will result in a reduction in your final grade according to the table shown below:

Absence #3 20 point deduction

 Absence #4-5 50 point deduction

 Absence #6 and beyond Failure in the class

Tardies 3 Tardies=1 Unexcused Absence

**Academic Integrity:** I am assuming that you are all extremely bright and eager students; as such, you are expected to be fully aware and respectful of Chapman’s Academic Integrity policy (as described in your Student Handbook). We will discuss guidelines regarding citation throughout the semester, but if you have any questions or doubts at any time, please put your mind (and writing) at ease and discuss them with me.

**Chapman University’s Students with Disabilities Policy:** In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. The University, through the Disability Services Office, will work with the appropriate faculty member who is asked to provide the accommodations for a student in determining what accommodations are suitable based on the documentation and the individual student needs. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

**Special Notes:**

\*We are required to wear a mask in the classroom! We all know that this is uncomfortable, but we also know that our community is everything and we want to ensure safety and health for everyone!

\*Be sure to check in with the Daily Covid screening email each day before class. If you are not cleared, please do not attend class. Be prepared to show verification of your “Clear” status at any time.

\*Be sure to submit your vaccination documentation or declination!

\*If you need to discuss accommodations, please contact Disability Services (ds@chapman.edu) right away.

\*Please do not use laptops/cell phones during class time! If there is an emergency or circumstance in which one or both of these is required, please let me know before class begins.

**Grades:** I am painfully aware of the emphasis that we all place on the grades that we receive. Although I have listed below the point values/percentages assigned to the various course requirements, I would like to remind you to please keep in mind as we proceed that *learning* is a process, one which points and percentages are very often incapable of measuring (corny, but true). Enjoy the process!

**Assignments** **Grade Scale:**

Midterm 150 points A 950-1000

Essay 400 points A- 910-949

 B+ 880-909

 B 840-879

Final Exam 250 points B- 810-839

Presentation 100 points C+ 780-809

Participation 100 points C 740-779

C- 710-739

 D+ 680-709

 D 640-679

 D- 610-639

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**TOTAL 1000 points**

Schedule of Classes

\*I reserve the right to alter the syllabus as needed throughout the semester!

**Week 1:**

 T 08/31 Review of syllabus/Introduction to the Course

Th 09/02 **Be sure to review the syllabus, consistently know what’s**

**ahead, and refer to it often!**

Please write 1-2 informal (handwritten or typed) pages on the following and bring them to class today for discussion:

\*What is a graphic novel or memoir? What are the possibilities and/or the limitations (for readers, for researchers, for students, for writers, etc.) of the graphic form? What are your personal and/or academic interests in this material?

**Week 2:**

T 09/07 Chapter 6 from Scott McCloud’s *Understanding Comics* (on

Canvas)

Th 09/09  **(Graphic) Witnessing**

Representing the Holocaust: read “History of the Holocaust”

(on Canvas); Paul Celan, “Todesfuge/Death Fugue” (on Canvas); and Sylvia Plath’s “Daddy” (on Canvas)

Answer the following in an informal response (1-2 pages, handwritten or typed) for discussion in today’s class: what is the “proper” way to represent traumatic, historical events like this?

**Week 3:**

T 09/14 *Imaginary Witness* (documentary) – just come to class (no

reading)!

Th 09/16 Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale: My Father Bleeds*

*History*

Bring at least two questions on the text into class to ask your colleagues.

**Week 4:**

T 09/21 Spiegelman, *Maus II: A Survivor’s Tale: And Here My*

*Troubles Began*

Bring at least two questions on the text into class to ask your colleagues.

Th 09/23 **Autographix/Autographics.** Please write 1-2 informal

pages (HANDWRITTEN OR TYPED) on the following for today’s discussion: What are some of the complications with writing and reading autobiographies?

**Week 5:**

T 09/28 Minear/Keiji, “Hiroshima: The Autobiography of *Barefoot*

*Gen”*  (handout on Canvas)

Th 09/30 **No Class** ☹

**Week 6:**

T 10/05 Satrapi, *Persepolis I: The Story of Childhood*

Bring at least two questions on the text into class to ask your

colleagues.

Th 10/07 Satrapi, *Persepolis II: The Story of A Return*

Bring at least two questions on the text into class to ask your colleagues.

**Week 7:**

T 10/12 **Midterm**

Th 10/14 **Graphic/Comics Journalism/Reportage**

Research this form and write 1-2 pages on what you’ve

found for today’s discussion. Some issues to consider: what is its purpose? How does it differ from conventional forms and is it more effective (why or why not)?

**Week 8:**

T 10/19 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (video/interview on Canvas, under

“Additional Required Readings”)

Th 10/21 Sacco, *Palestine*

Bring at least two questions on the text into class to ask your colleagues.

**Week 9:**

T 10/26 Sacco, *Palestine* (cont.)

Bring at least two questions on the text into class to ask your colleagues.

Th 10/28 Palestine/Israel Through Animation (just come to class – no

reading for this day)

**Week 10:**

T 11/02 *Safe Area Gorazde*

 Bring at least two questions!

Th 11/04 Sacco, *Safe Area Gorazde* (cont.)

 Bring at least two questions!

**Week 11:**

T 11/09 **Hybridity**

Amerdeep Singh, “Mimicry and Hybridity” (on Canvas); Benjamin Graves, “Homi Bhabha” (on Canvas)

Th 11/11 Baloup, *Vietnamese Memories: Leaving Saigon*

(review/excerpt on Canvas)

Burton, *Algeria is Beautiful Like America* (review/excerpt on Canvas)

**Week 12:**

T 11/16 Sattouf, “Between Two Worlds” (on Canvas) and Satouff,

*The Arab of the Future* (excerpts on Canvas)

El-Rassi, “On Being Muslim (on Canvas)

Review of El-Rassi, *Arab in America* (excerpts on Canvas)

Th 11/18 Obata, *Just So Happens,* interview (on Canvas)

Henin, interview (on Canvas)

**Essay Due by 11:00pm on Canvas (no late papers accepted)!**

**Week 13:**

 T 11/23

No Classes (Thanksgiving)

 Th 11/25

**Week 14:**

 T 11/30 Presentations

Th 12/02 Presentations

**Week 15:**

 T 12/07 Presentations

 Th 12/09 Presentations

**Final Exam: Friday 12/17 (1:30-4:00pm)**