

SYLLABUS AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS
ENG 276: 01--THE 20TH CENTURY GRAPHIC NOVEL
SUMMER SEMESTER 2019
T-TH—10:30-12:00—MAY 21ST-JUNE 27TH
CL 103

Instructor:	Dr. Elizabeth Taryn Mason
Office and Mailbox:	ADM 11-C
Office Phone:	(513) 244-4415
Office Hours:	Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 9:00-10:00 AM; Tuesdays 9:00-10:50 AM; Thursdays 12:05-1:15 PM & by appointment
Email:	elizabeth.mason@msj.edu
Writing Center Location:	Seton Center
Writing Center Phone:	(513) 244-4514

What's the solution to America's crisis in science education? More comic books.

—Barry Harbaugh in Wired.com

What would you do if you could be invisible for a day? Or fly? Shrink down to ant-size, read minds, pull the world off its hinges? Superhero comics are all about those questions.

—Marc-Oliver Frisch

Sequential art is the new literacy.

—Will Eisner

...if you look at the generation now in power in the entertainment industry, they grew up with comics as serious stuff. The geeks have won.

—Ed Brubaker

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

ENG 276: The 20th-Century Graphic Novel, a three-credit hour course with no prerequisites, is a course devoted to none other than the comic book. As noted in the university catalog, "Since the term 'Graphic Novel' was first introduced as a label to describe a 'new' genre of fiction, what that term really means and whether or not 'books' that are written in such a format are really works of literature has been hotly contested. In this course we will look at graphic novels and a few film adaptations to reach a consensus about the form and to understand the freedoms and advantages of the artistic medium as well as its significance to the canon of contemporary fiction." Furthermore, we will examine graphic fiction with the same type of attention through which we examine any form of literature, working hard to recognize and establish what distinguishes graphic literature from other literary forms and also to recognize the techniques and narrative devices that the graphic novel shares with other forms of literature.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES:

The goals of this course are many. It is my hope that this class helps you to be an inquisitive scholar and strengthens your abilities to read critically, analyze materials thoughtfully, and develop your proficiency in written and oral communication. In addition to those global outcomes, this course is designed to challenge you to recognize, critique, and appreciate your understanding of the ways in which our current culture is reflected in the artistic medium of the graphic novel, in comics and in animation. Unlike television or film, two media that combine visual narratives with traditional storylines and plots, graphic novels are truly interdisciplinary in that it is difficult to lose yourself in a graphic narrative, given that you are being asked to read the literal, written text as well as to read and understand the visual components that complement the narrative itself. We will discuss at length, both issues of subject matter and issues of the techniques and methods that make comics the powerful media that they are. Ultimately and most importantly, I hope you'll find this course to strengthen your ability to read and interpret literary texts as aesthetic manifestations of what it means to be human and to enable you to better articulate your own understanding of the "invisible art" that we call by the name of comics, graphic fiction, or just good, old story telling. Your growth as a scholar of the graphic novel will be evaluated on the basis of your participation in class and your engagement with the materials covered, quizzes, a midterm essay and a final exam.

To learn more about Mount St. Joseph University's undergraduate learning outcomes and performance indicators, please visit the following web address:

<http://registrar.msj.edu/undergraduate-catalog/academic-information/learning-outcomes-performance-indicators/>

(See the chart below and on the following page).

Through your work in this course, you will be able to:	Baccalaureate Program Learning Outcome	The Learning Outcome will be assessed through the following specific assignments
Read and interpret literary texts as aesthetic manifestations of what it means to be human and better articulate your own understanding of the "invisible art" that we call by the name of comics, graphic fiction, or just plain old good story telling.	Critical Thinking: Problem Definition: Describe the complexities, factors, and scope of a problem.	Feedback on quizzes over each of the major texts and in class discussion, the midterm essay and final exam.
Recognize, appreciate and critique through writing, your understanding of the ways in which our current culture is reflected in the artistic medium of the graphic novel, in comics and in animation and note that graphic novels are truly interdisciplinary in that they require a reader to read the literal, written text as well as to read and understand the	Communication: Effective Language and Style: Write using language that is clear, fluent, and consistent with conventions of Standard English. Content Development: Develop compelling content to fulfill the assignment. Critical Thinking:	The midterm essay and answers to the essay questions on the final exam.

visual components that complement the narrative itself.	Problem Definition: Describe the complexities, factors, and scope of a problem.	
Further develop your proficiency in written communication through the use of secondary source material to underscore and more fully appreciate, recognize, and critique the ways in which our current culture is reflected in the artistic medium of the graphic novel, in comics and in animation and note that graphic novels are truly interdisciplinary.	Information Literacy: Use appropriate scholarly evidence to support a position. Synthesis: Formulate an opinion or draw a conclusion based on a questioning of assumptions, an analysis of relevant evidence, and a synthesis of scholarly perspectives.	The midterm paper.
Challenge your own sense of self as a citizen of the world and the manner in which one culture's behavior and attitudes are made "sense" of in an ever-shrinking globe. Understand and appreciate the values, beliefs, and assumptions of others, and consider how the graphic novel represents a multitude of cultural practices and a whole host of cultural attitudes as an international medium.	Cultural Competence: Articulate the norms and biases of one's own culture: Demonstrate an understanding of the values, beliefs, biases, and practices important to members of another culture. Global diversity: Contrast the diversity of history, values, politics, and economic conditions in developing and developed nations	Feedback during class discussions and in response to quizzes on each of the major texts.
Feel compassion for individuals we will never meet except through literature, and to ask questions with moral consequences as you read.	Ethics: Ethical Analysis: Recognize ethical issues within a complex context.	Feedback during class discussions and in response to quizzes on each of the major texts.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2006.

Fraction, Matt with David Aja and Javier Pulido (Illustrators). *Hawkeye Volume I: My Life as a Weapon*. New York: Disney Publishing Worldwide, 2012.

Greenberg, Isabel. *Encyclopedia of Early Earth*. New York: Little Brown & Co., 2013.

Jason. *Hey, Wait...* Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 1998.

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1993.

Mazzuccheli, David. *Asterios Polyp*. Paris: Pantheon, 2009.

Satrapa, Marjane. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*. Paris: Pantheon, 2003.

Stephenson, Eric. *Nowhere Men: Vol. 1 Fates Worse than Death*. New York: Image Comics,

2013.

Thompson, Craig. *Blankets*. Marietta, Georgia: Top Shelf Productions, 2004.

A Mount St. Joseph University email account and access to Blackboard. If I need to get in touch with you, I will contact you via email, so you need to make sure that you not only have a working MSJ email account, but that you check it on a regular basis. You will also need computer access in order to keep up with Blackboard, where all handouts and assignments will be distributed electronically (this saves paper and excuses, as you will never miss a handout or an assignment due to lateness or to absence). You will also submit your midterm paper and it will be evaluated through Blackboard. I recommend that you set up your Blackboard account to receive email notifications whenever I've posted an announcement on Blackboard and whenever I've entered a grade on your behalf. Ensure that you have access to MSJ email and to Blackboard now and let me know immediately if you have problems so that we can address any issues before our second class.

EXPECTATIONS:

As a group, we are all responsible for creating a climate of mutual respect and an environment conducive to learning. You must treat each member of this class with respect. We're going to be dealing with some fairly controversial issues and beliefs in this class. Derogatory remarks based on class, gender, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation will not be tolerated. Turn off your cell phone before you come into the classroom. Be courteous when your classmates are speaking and do not carry on extraneous conversations when someone else is addressing the class. Come to class prepared and with all necessary materials: books, assigned reading, paper, writing utensils etc. I expect that you will read the syllabus carefully throughout the semester, will consult the syllabus for daily assignments, complete additional reading disseminated through Blackboard and will complete all assigned work on time and with genuine effort.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

If you miss a class, you and your classmates miss a great deal. Of course, illnesses and emergencies do occur. If you know that you will have to miss class due to illness or any other conflict, you must let me know as soon as possible via email. Accelerated evening courses are particularly challenging as each class really counts for two weeks of a regular semester's work. We can usually work around a single absence, but you'll need to drop the class if you need to miss a second class.

When you are late to class, you also miss a great deal. Lateness will not go unnoticed. If your inability to make it to class on time is disruptive to the class or excessive, your grade for the semester will drop. In general, two substantially late arrivals are equal to one missed class. I may not say anything to you, but I will notice and your grade will suffer.

EMAIL POLICY:

Often, the quickest and easiest way to get in touch with me, ask a question or set up a conference or meeting with me is through email. However, it is imperative that you consider your audience when you contact me via email. I teach English and this is a course focused, in part, on helping you practice communicating effectively through writing, so I expect you to make every effort to actually communicate effectively with me through email. Do not email me as though you are texting a friend—use capitals and spell out whole words and use punctuation—and if you send an attachment (such as an essay or assignment), be sure that you also include a message explaining why you are emailing your work to me and letting me know what you expect me to do with it. Furthermore, please have a bit of compassion and know that my responsibilities to Mount St. Joseph University extend beyond this single class. I cannot always respond to an email immediately, but I will make every effort to return emails within 24 hours.

LATE WORK:

As a general rule, your work is due at the start of class on the dates specified on the academic calendar. I am aware that sometimes there are complications and extenuating circumstances. If for some reason you must miss a class when a quiz will be given, you will be given the opportunity to take a make-up quiz. However, if you begin to take advantage of this opportunity too often, you will no longer be eligible to make up quizzes. Furthermore, make-up quizzes must be scheduled and taken within a single week of the quiz date. Otherwise, you will fail the quiz. If for some reason you need additional time to complete an assignment you must ask for an extension prior to the date on which the assignment is due. Otherwise the assignment will be docked a letter grade for each class period it is late. After one week you will fail the assignment.

REVISION:

We all stumble once in a while as we work to achieve our goals and the skills you will hone and practice in this course are cumulative. Therefore, each student may choose to revise and resubmit the midterm essay for a higher grade once you've received my feedback. Students who choose to take advantage of this revision policy should note that they will not be penalized for doing extra work, but might find themselves handsomely rewarded for taking on that extra responsibility. If your grade improves, the new grade will replace the old grade. In the rare case that an essay (or project) gets worse rather than better, the grade will remain the same. In order to put your best foot forward, if you choose to revise your essay, you may want to meet with me to discuss how you might improve your essay before your resubmit it. Please submit all revisions within two weeks of receiving feedback from me, and be sure to attach the original draft with my advice and feedback to the new draft to be graded.

Keep in mind, however, that revision is NOT the same thing as editing. Revision does NOT simply mean what I call proofreading or editing, aka going back to your original work and “fixing” grammatical and spelling errors. It means literally what it says—“re-vision.” In order to revise your work successfully, you need to look at it with new eyes. You must re-imagine your work and consider the content and the success of your arguments, the organization, the style, etc. Once you have completed those changes, then go on to proofread and edit your essay.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

The work you do in this course is subject to the student responsibilities explained in the undergraduate catalog. Academic honesty is a commitment to the highest degree of ethical integrity in academic conduct, a commitment that, individually and collectively, the students of Mount St. Joseph University will not lie, cheat, or plagiarize to gain an academic advantage over fellow students or avoid academic requirements. For more information about Academic Honesty, visit the website devoted to Academic Policies available at:

<http://registrar.msje.edu/undergraduate-catalog/rights-policies/academic-policies/academic-honesty/>

Academic dishonesty on any major assignment could result in a failing grade for the entire course. Academic dishonesty on any other assignment could result in a substantial reduction of the course grade, and if the situation is substantial or repeated, it could result in a failing grade for the course.

Academic dishonesty includes:

1. taking, paraphrasing, or re-writing someone else's work, and submitting it for credit under your own name;
2. submitting the same work for more than one course without both professors' approval;
3. quoting, paraphrasing, or borrowing ideas from a source without fully citing that source.
4. allowing someone else to write any part of an assignment for you.

In working closely with the ideas and words of others, intellectual honesty demands that you distinguish between what you borrow—and therefore acknowledge in a citation—and what is your own. Please note that midterm essays will be submitted through TurnItIn in addition to being submitted through the regular Blackboard Assignment Dropbox.

DROPS & ADDS:

I am in no way, on this first day of class, with this first document handed out from me, encouraging you to drop this course and add another. Nor do I want to lose you as a student. However, there are some important dates when it comes to adding and dropping courses that I want to ensure that you have at your fingertips.

Weeks 1-2: No record of dropped class if dropped before the meeting day on the 2nd week.
Weeks 3-4: Grade of W for dropped class
Weeks 5-6: No drops accepted the day after the 4th week meeting day

INCOMPLETES:

A student may receive an "I" only in serious, documented circumstances (e.g. medical emergency), and only if he/she has already successfully completed the majority of the course work so that dropping the course would be unreasonable. Furthermore, an incomplete must be initiated by the student and must include a plan for completing the missing work. For more

information about Mount St. Joseph University's policy on incompletes, please visit the undergraduate catalog's discussion available at the following web address:

<http://registrar.msj.edu/undergraduate-catalog/rights-policies/academic-policies/incomplete-grades/>

DISABILITY POLICY:

Students with documented disabilities are encouraged to speak to course faculty at the beginning of the semester. In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Mount St. Joseph University provides academic adjustments and auxiliary aids for students with physical or mental impairments that substantially limit or restrict one or more of such major life activities as walking, seeing, hearing, or learning. Students with disabilities should contact Meghann Littrell, the Director of Academic Support, to present documentation and develop individualized accommodation plans (244-4524 meghann.littrell@msj.edu, The Learning Center, Room 156 Seton). Additional information can be found at <http://www.msj.edu/academics/disability-services/>

In short, in order for me to advocate for accommodations on your behalf and to better understand your needs, please feel free to approach me whenever necessary.

THE WRITING CENTER:

The Writing Center is an amazing service offered through Mount St. Joseph University. I will often suggest or require that a student attend The Writing Center (and when you attend the Writing Center, the staff will contact me on your behalf to let me know you've stopped in). I am, of course, available during my office hours and by appointment to assist you with your writing, but the Writing Center can often offer additional one-on-one services and assistance and unlike my office hours, which are shared by all of the students I teach, the Writing Center staff is entirely devoted to you during your consultation time. I cannot extol the virtues of the Writing Center enough. They will, of course, assist you with your writing, but they often also make you feel relieved or more relaxed about writing and you will often leave the Writing Center feeling immensely proud of your work.

The Writing Center focuses on the process of writing rather than the final product and the Writing Center staff helps nurture and guide writers through the intricacies and frustrations of writing. They provide individual consultation with students, no matter what stage of the writing process they may be in, and they are enthusiastic. When you visit the Writing Center expect close, individualized feedback, and go prepared to be an engaged and active participant in the whole process.

The Writing Center is NOT an editing and proofreading service. The staff is full of guides and teachers, who will help you develop your writing and learn strategies that will help you become a more effective writer. Rather than passively watching someone "fix" the mechanics of your work, you are more likely to find yourself at the receiving end of a lesson that will teach you how to do it yourself. In this way, they provide one of the most effective ways to improve your writing.

It is extremely important to note that while the Writing Center can be an invaluable resource for struggling writers and for students enrolled in English courses, the Writing Center is also a great sounding board for students who simply want feedback or students who would like to see an already successful essay take a leap forward. You can feel free to contact and schedule an appointment with the Writing Center for assistance with any writing you are assigned to do; that means you can seek their counsel for essays written for History classes, Psychology, Political Science, even Lab Reports. It's a free resource, so take advantage!

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Talking Points	15%
Quizzes	35%
Midterm Essay	25%
Take-home Final Exam	25%
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Total:	100%

TALKING POINTS (15% or 150 Points):

Last year, I joined my six-year-old son at school and I read a story to his class. After we finished the story, my son, Zack, folded his arms across his chest and said, "I think we should take time for comments and questions." His teacher agreed and the first graders in Mrs. Kurtz's class exploded into a tiny army of inquisitive young minds. Everyone had a question or a comment or an idea. Their hands shot up in the air. They waved their hands impatiently, hoping to be called on. I don't see that kind of enthusiasm for class discussion all that frequently, but I think we need it and, this semester, I will require it. We have a 6-week semester. You must earn 10 points a week by contributing insightfully to class discussion during each class period. Everyone begins the semester with 30 points to get your started. Note that if you miss a whole week of class, you will lose those points. If you come to class, having done the work, having read the book, but say nothing, you will lose the points. You cannot earn an A in this class without earning many of the talking points, so get ready to hear your own voice.

QUIZZES (35% or 350 POINTS (50 POINTS EACH):

I will give a quiz on each of the major texts assigned this semester (Please note that you will be quizzed on *Hawkeye: My Life as a Weapon* and *Nowhere Men* in the same quiz). Quizzes will test both your knowledge of the graphic novels we've read together as a group and may also measure whether or not you're making connections between the graphic novels and the comic art techniques explained and identified in Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*. Most of the time quiz questions will be open-ended, so that you'll write a short, informal essay in response. Please use the reading guides provided for you on each text to guide your hand as you read the texts for this course and be an active reader. Take notes, dovetail pages, highlight significant passages, and spend time thinking about how the art illuminates the story. All of these active skills will help you to be prepared for the quizzes.

MIDTERM ESSAY (25% or 250 POINTS):

The midterm essay asks you to look at the strengthening knowledge you'll have gained midway through the semester and to explore the texts you've examined over the first eight weeks. Additional guidelines and requirements will be expressly explained with an assignment sheet that you'll receive later in the semester. At the bare minimum, you'll be asked to discuss at least one of the texts we'll have examined by that point in the term in an essay organized around a central claim supported by examples from the text you've chosen to scrutinize in closer detail and further supported by evidence from at least three scholarly sources. This essay should be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on the top, bottom and sides in Times New Roman font and 12 pt. type. It should be carefully crafted, closely proofread and it should incorporate MLA citations when and wherever necessary. You are all welcome to conference with me about the paper, show me drafts and discuss your ideas prior to the deadline.

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM (25% or 250 POINTS):

We all learn in different ways, so you won't only be evaluated this semester based upon your writing. At the end of the semester there will be an exam on every text that we'll have discussed this semester to measure your cumulative knowledge. The exam will be multiple choice, followed by essay questions.

GRADE SCALE:

A = 900 or more points
B = 800 - 899 points
C = 700 - 799 points
D = 600-699 points
F = fewer than 600 points

ACADEMIC SCHEDULE

N.B. This Academic Calendar is both tentative and optimistic. We may fall behind. We may work ahead. I may juggle things around a bit here and there and I always reserve the right to distribute an unplanned reading assignment if I think it will help you to grow as a scholar.

PREASSIGNMENT:

Though this course is accelerated, there is no preassignment in the traditional sense of the word. Before the first day of class, be sure to purchase (or otherwise obtain) both Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* and Jason's *Hey, Wait...* Bring those two books with you to class. We will use them together and be forewarned that there will be a quiz on the first day of class, but it will be based upon work we will complete IN the classroom.

Week One:

T 5/21 Introductions.
 Group Work: Defining Comics.
 Discussion: *Understanding Comics*, introduction and chapter one.
 Assignment: Begin reading Douglas Wolk's "What Comics Are and What They

Aren't" (Posted on Blackboard under Handouts); chapters two & three: "The Vocabulary of Comics" and "Blood in the Gutter" in Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* and Bradford W. Wright's "Superheroes for the Common Man" (Posted on Blackboard under Handouts). Consult the Reader's Guide and begin reading Matt Fraction's *Hawkeye Volume I: My Life as a Weapon* and Eric Stephensen's *Nowhere Men: Volume 1: Fates Worse Than Death*. Finish this reading by Tuesday, May, 28th.

- TH 5/23** Read: *Hey Wait!...*, Quiz and Discussion.
Assignment: Begin reading Douglas Wolk's "What Comics Are and What They Aren't" (Posted on Blackboard under Handouts); chapters two & three: "The Vocabulary of Comics" and "Blood in the Gutter" in Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* and Bradford W. Wright's "Superheroes for the Common Man" (Posted on Blackboard under Handouts). Consult the Reader's Guide and begin reading Matt Fraction's *Hawkeye Volume I: My Life as a Weapon* and Eric Stephensen's *Nowhere Men: Volume 1: Fates Worse Than Death*. Finish this reading by Tuesday, May, 28th.

Week Two:

- T 5/28** QUIZ: *HAWKEYE AND NOWHERE MEN*
Discussion: "What Comics Are and What They Aren't"; "Superheroes for the Common Man"; "The Vocabulary of Comics"; "Blood in the Gutter"; *Hawkeye* and *Nowhere Men*.
Assignment: Read chapter four: "Time Frames" in Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*. Consult the Reader's Guide and read Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*. Read selected articles about Alison Bechdel and *Fun Home: The Musical*.
- TH 5/30** QUIZ: *FUNHOME*
Discussion: "Time Frames"; *Funhome*; *Funhome: The Musical*
Assignment: Read chapter five, "Living the Line" in Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*. Consult the Reader's Guide and read Isabel Greenberg's *Encyclopedia of Early Earth*. There will be a quiz on *The Encyclopedia of Early Earth* on Tuesday, June 4th.

Week Three:

- T 6/4** QUIZ: *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EARLY EARTH*
Discussion: "Living the Line"; *Encyclopedia of Early Earth*.
Introduction to the Midterm Essay due 6/13.
Assignment: Complete the Midterm Essay, due via Blackboard by the start of class on Thursday, 6/13. Read chapter six, "Show and Tell" in Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*. Consult the Reader's Guide and read Craig Thompson's *Blankets*.
- TH 6/6** Discussion: *Encyclopedia of Early Earth*

Assignment: Complete the Midterm Essay, due via Blackboard by the start of class on Thursday, 6/13. Read chapter six, “Show and Tell” in Scott McCloud’s *Understanding Comics*. Consult the Reader’s Guide and read Craig Thompson’s *Blankets*.

Week Four:

- T 6/11** QUIZ: *BLANKETS*
Discussion: “Show and Tell” and *Blankets*
Assignment: Read chapter seven, “The Six Steps” in Scott McCloud’s *Understanding Comics*. Consult the Reader’s Guide and read Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis*. There will be a quiz on Tuesday, 6/18.
- TH 6/13** MIDTERM ESSAYS ARE DUE BY THE START OF CLASS
Discussion: *Blankets*
Assignment: Read chapter seven, “The Six Steps” in Scott McCloud’s *Understanding Comics*. Consult the Reader’s Guide and read Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis*. There will be a quiz on Tuesday, 6/18.

Week Five:

- T 6/18** QUIZ: *PERSEPOLIS*
Discussion: “The Six Steps” and *Persepolis*
Assignment: Read chapter eight, “A Word About Color” in Scott McCloud’s *Understanding Comics*. Consult the Reader’s Guide and read David Mazzucchelli’s *Asterios Polyp*. There will be a quiz on Thursday, 6/20.
- TH 6/20** QUIZ: *ASTERIOS POLYP*
Discussion: *Asterios Polyp* “A World About Color” and The Take-Home Final
Assignment: Read Dylan Horrocks’ “Inventing Comics” (Handout available through Blackboard). Read chapter nine, “Putting It All Together” in Scott McCloud’s *Understanding Comics* and prepare for the final exam

Week Six:

- T 6/25** Discussion: “A Word About Color,” “Inventing Comics” and *Asterios Polyp*
Assignment: Complete the Take-Home Final
- TH 6/27** Discussion: “Inventing Comics” and “Putting It All Together.” Class photo.