

Syllabus Recommendations

Course Information

HON 300, #75008, Section 0003

Comic Books, Analysis, and Digital Scholarship

TuTh 9:30-10:45AM

Student Success Center 4041

Instructor Information

Brian C. Flota

Steven W. Holloway

Flota's office:

Holloway's office: Carrier 220C

Flota's contact:

Holloway contact:

568-5424

hollowsw@jmu.edu

Flota's office hours:

Holloway's office hours:

Mondays 10-12PM, and by appointment

Goals of the Course

Describe the goals you have established for the class. This should include the course objectives and learning outcomes. Include, if applicable, the goals the course is expected to meet in General Education (<http://www.jmu.edu/gened/index.shtml>), the major, minor or concentration.

Nature of Course Content

Course Description

Over the last decade, the motion picture and television industries have been dominated by properties with their origins in comic books and graphic novels. Given the seeming pervasiveness of comic books in our contemporary moment, many may wonder when comics emerged and how their style and content has changed over time. In this course, we will chart the rise of the modern comic book from the 1930s, its visual and textual structure, modes of production and distribution, and its relatively recent history of scholarly analysis. To facilitate a deeper understanding of these facets of the comic book, we will use emergent digital technologies, including enterprise artificial intelligence, to deepen and amplify questions we ask of these texts. Attention will be paid to how copyright policing by industry leaders such as Marvel and DC Comics limits academic research on the comic book, gender and diversity representation, and the limitations of tools like IBM Watson, Google, Bing and Yandex with humanities research. The course will consist of reading comic books, graphic novels, and secondary literature. These activities will be blended with lectures, visits to Carrier Library Special Collections, practicums on using online tools for digital research, student presentations on selected comic book-related topics, and a collaborative final project, which will use one or

more of the digital tools we demo in class. Each student will create a final class reflection using Comic Life software to craft a comic book presentation. There is no coding prerequisite -- if you can handle a spreadsheet, Word documents, and Google image searches, you have what it takes!

Include the catalog description, any prerequisites or corequisites, a course schedule and the method of instruction as applicable.

Assignments and Due Dates

Give a calendar of assignments, as appropriate, here. Include the date and time of the final exam. Indicate classes that you know in advance will be cancelled.

Assignments:

DH exercises culminating in web annotations using online comic books, spreadsheet data entry and hands-on work with enterprise search engines and selected AI services. One five-minute classroom presentation per student on a comic book, comic book series or comic book topic. A final collaborative project, and a final course reflection using Comic Life software.

Final Project Requirements:

Provide a coherent description of a project (which must include the topic you are researching and the expected outcome). Use one or more of the digital tools tested out in class in a non-trivial way. Use Comic Life to create a comic-book format for a final class reflection report – please export it as a PDF file.

Example Project 1: Captain Nemo and the Nautilus

Based on 1870 novel by Jules Verne, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, trace how these figures have been used in the comics industry. Hint: *Classics Illustrated #47* produced a comic book version of the Verne novel in 1948. British comic book writer Alan Moore created a series of comics in the late 1990s-mid 2000s, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, featuring Captain Nemo and the Nautilus. Perform a series of keyword image and reverse-image lookups using illustrations from these two sources. What other comic book titles have hosted the captain and his submarine? What is the relationship, if any, between these illustrations (derivative? totally unrelated?). What are the cultural contexts of these sources? Genre of comics? What conclusions do you draw about the popularity of this fictional figure and machine?

Example Project 2: Personality types in *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, vols. 1-2.

Using speech balloon text from the series, first write up character sketches for the main characters (Allan Quartermain, Captain Nemo, Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Hyde, Wilhemina Murray, Hawley Griffin [the Invisible Man], others). Then, run the speeches through IBM Watson Personality Insights demo (provided there are 600 or more words per character!) and critique Watson's performance. One aspect of this study could involve comparing the lead female character, Murray, with one or more of the male leads. Does the visual art support the word-defined character profiles or contradict them? Returning to your original character sketch, how has the exercise deepened your understanding of the art of characterization in *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*?

Example Project 3: Compare criminal slang from two different crime comic titles that are at least 40 years apart in publication date. Take the speech balloon text of either selected characters or composite characters, as appropriate, and generate word concordances using either TEI/XQuery, TAPoRware tools or Voyant tools. Then analyze the significant differences – the

slang terms, not the stop-word vocabulary like “the” “and” “but” and so forth. The Online Slang Dictionary can help you with the period-specific criminal slang and argot. You may need to return to the text captures to locate the slang phrases, something that the XQuery concordance tool will not do. Take the significant terms of the concordances and generate some statistical charts using spreadsheet or Google Charts for ease of visual inspection. What has changed over time? What is consistent? Using broad strokes, how does the ‘language’ (re)inforce the characterization of the crooks or make the action happen?

Requirements and Policies

Recommended and Required Texts

- Alaniz, Jose. “Standing Orders: Oracle, Disability, and Retconning,” in *Disability in Comic Books and Graphic Novels*, ed. Chris Foss, Jonathan W. Gray, and Zach Whalen (2016) pp. 59-79. PN6714 .D57 2016
- Beaty, Bart, and Benjamin Woo. *The Greatest Comic Book of all Time: Symbolic Capital and the Field of American Comic Books* (2016) PN6725 .B43 2016
- Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home* (any edition) PN6727.B3757 Z46 2007
- Clarke, M. J. “From Motion Line to Motion Blur: The Integration of Digital Coloring in the Superhero Comic Book,” in *Superhero Synergies: Comic Book Heroes Go Digital*, ed. James N. Gilmore and Matthias Sto (2014), pp. 57-75. ONLINE: <http://catalog.lib.jmu.edu/record=b3257765> PN6714 .S85 2014
- Cook, Roy T. “Underground and Alternative Comics,” in *The Routledge Companion to Comics*, ed. Frank Bramlett, Roy T. Cook, and Aaron Meskin (2016) pp. 34-43. ONLINE: <http://catalog.lib.jmu.edu/record=b3266289> PN6710 .R599 2016
- Fagan, Jody Condit and Bryan D. Fagan. *Comic Book Collections for Libraries* (2011) Z688.C64 F34 2011
- Garcia, Santiago. *On the Graphic Novel* (2015) ONLINE: <http://catalog.lib.jmu.edu/record=b3152405> PN6710 .N6813 2015
- Gray, Jonathan W. “‘Why Couldn’t You Let Me Die?’: Cyborg, Social Death, and Narratives of Black Disability,” in *Disability in Comic Books and Graphic Novels*, ed. Chris Foss, Jonathan W. Gray, and Zach Whalen (2016) pp. 125-139. PN6714 .D57 2016
- Horton, Owen R. and A. J. Shackelford. “Fantasy Elsewheres, Sutured Realities, and the End of Camp: Comics in Contemporary Film and Television,” in *The American Comic Book*, ed. Joseph Michael Sommers (2014), pp. 170-85. PN6725 .A46 2014
- Kimble, James J. and Trischia Goodnow. “Introduction,” in *The 10 Cent War: Comic Books, Propaganda, and World War II*, ed. Trischia Goodnow and James J. Kimble (2016) pp. 3-20. PN6725 .A13 2016
- Lepore, Jill. *The Secret History of Wonder Woman* (2014) PN6728.W6 L48 2014

- Lopes, Paul. *Demanding Respect: The Evolution of the American Comic Book* (2009) ONLINE:
<http://catalog.lib.jmu.edu/record=b2298699> PN6725 .L67 2009
- McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993) PN6710 .M335 1994
- Miller, Frank and Klaus Janson. *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (any edition). PN6728.B36 M545 2002
- Molotiu, Andrei. "Art Comics," in *The Routledge Companion to Comics*, ed. Frank Bramlett, Roy T. Cook, and Aaron Meskin (2016) pp. 119-27 ONLINE:
<http://catalog.lib.jmu.edu/record=b3266289> PN6710 .R599 2016
- Moore, Alan and David Lloyd. *V for Vendetta* (any edition) PN6737.V46 M66 1990
- O'Neill, Denny and Neal Adams. *Green Lantern, Green Arrow* (any edition). PN6728.G74 O48 2012
- Robbins, Trina and Catherine Yronwode. *Women and the Comics* (1985) PN6710 .R6 1985
- Smith, Matthew J. "Superhero Comics," in *The Routledge Companion to Comics*, ed. Frank Bramlett, Roy T. Cook, and Aaron Meskin (2016) pp. 128-36; ONLINE:
<http://catalog.lib.jmu.edu/record=b3266289> PN6710 .R599 2016
- Smith, Philip. "From the Page to the Tablet: Digital Media and the Comic Book," in *The American Comic Book*, ed. Joseph Michael Sommers (2014) PN6725 .A46 2014
- Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (any edition) D810.J4 S643 1986, DS135.P63 S68 1997

Required and recommended texts are available for purchase from JMU Bookstore, and copies will be placed on course reserve in Carrier Library. Several of the texts are available in electronic format, and links will be found above and in the weekly schedule.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to arrange meeting times outside of class for collaborative projects. Attendance will be taken. Any student who misses more than 4 class meetings without an acute medical crisis, with a letter signed by a physician, will be docked 5 points per missed class.

Participation

This course combines lectures, discussion, student-presentations, in-class exposure to a variety of online tools and affordances, and collaborative work on a variety of assignments, including a final project. 10% of the grade is based on classroom participation: asking questions, working productively in teams, demonstrating that the tools and assignments have been appropriately mastered.

Academic Honesty.

Making references to the work of others strengthens your own work by granting you greater authority and by showing that you are part of a discussion located within an intellectual community. When you make references to the ideas of others, it is essential to provide proper attribution and citation. Failing to do so is considered academically dishonest, as is copying or paraphrasing someone else's work. The consequences of such behavior will lead to consequences ranging from failure on an assignment to failure in the course to dismissal from

the university. Because the disciplines of the Humanities value collaborative work, you will be encouraged to share ideas and to include the ideas of others in our papers. Please ask if you are in doubt about the use of a citation. Honest mistakes can always be corrected or prevented. The JMU Honor Code is available from the Honor Council Web site:
<http://www.jmu.edu/honor/code.shtml>.

Adding/Dropping Classes

Include a statement regarding the add/drop requirements for the semester. Here is a sample statement:

Students are responsible for registering for classes and for verifying their class schedules on e-campus.

The deadline for adding a fall semester class through e-campus without instructor and academic unit head signatures is September 4, 2018. Between Month X, 2018 and Month XX, 2018, instructor and academic unit head signatures are required to add a class for fall semester 2018. No exceptions will be made to these deadlines.

Contacting the Instructor

Indicate how and when to contact you; indicate preferences or restrictions (e.g., no phone calls at home after 10 PM) if you have them.

Holloway can be contacted via email; please don't waste your time trying to telephone. You may email me anytime, but don't expect prompt replies after dark.

Disability Accommodations

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact the Office of Disability Services (Wilson Hall, Room 107, www.jmu.edu/ods, 540-568-6705) if you have not previously done so. Disability Services will provide you with an Access Plan Letter that will verify your need for services and make recommendations for accommodations to be used in the classroom. Once you have presented us with this letter, we will sit down and review the course requirements, your disability characteristics, and your requested accommodations to develop an individualized plan, appropriate for HON 300-0003.

Inclement Weather Policies

Decisions to close university operations will be made by the president or a designee. If the decision to close is made, announcements will be made on:

- JMU Weather Line 540/433-5300
- JMU radio station 1610AM
- JMU's website
- Area radio and television stations
- JMU's Emergency Notification System

When it is necessary to cancel classes due to weather or other emergency, faculty members have several options for making up missed instructional time:

- Hold class at the regularly scheduled time on the official university make-up day.
- Hold class at a time acceptable to all class members other than the regularly scheduled time or the official make-up day. Time and location will be arranged by the academic unit.
- Accommodate the missed instructional time within remaining class meeting time.
- Hold class through electronic means.

Since both instructors live in Staunton, severe road conditions may cause us to cancel class. If so, you will be notified in a timely fashion and makeup class will be scheduled.

Read JMU's cancellation policy for further details: <http://www.jmu.edu/JMUpolicy/1309.shtml>

Religious Observation Accommodations

All faculty are required to give reasonable and appropriate accommodations to students requesting them on grounds of religious observation. The faculty member determines what accommodations are appropriate for his/her course. Students should notify the faculty by no later than the end of the Drop-Add period the first week of the semester of potential scheduled absences and determine with the instructor if mutually acceptable alternative methods exist for completing the missed classroom time, lab or activity.

Methods of Evaluation

Detail the way student work will be evaluated during the course. Examples include:

Tests, Mid-term and Final Exam

Indicate make-up policy and how grades will factor in final grade.

Grading

Clarify the method that will be used in calculating the final grade. Include a weighting of all activities that will be considered when calculating the final grade.

Quizzes

Indicate grading policy for quizzes (how quizzes will be graded and how grades will factor in final grade). Indicate policy on making up quizzes.

Papers

Indicate number and length of papers to be assigned. Give due dates. Indicate policy on late papers. Provide expectations for content and presentation of papers and give guidelines on how papers will be evaluated and how grades will factor in final grade. Indicate the documentation and style to be used (e.g., MLA, Chicago).

Grading:

10% cumulative pop quiz (individual)

10% 5-minute presentations (individual)

10% classroom participation (individual)

10% spreadsheet entry of PL#17 (team)

10% DH assignments (1 point, 0.5 point, 0 point are the possibilities) (team and individual)

40% final project (team)

10% final course reflection (individual)