**FRENCH 3110 – FRENCH COMICS AND GRAPHIC ARTS**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:**

This course explores the ways in which French comics, graphic arts and literature relate to each other. *La bande dessinée* is derived from the original description of the artform as "drawn strips". It is not insignificant that the French term contains no indication of subject matter, unlike the American terms "comics" and "funnies", which imply an art form not to be taken seriously. Indeed, the distinction of comics as the "ninth art" is prevalent in Francophone scholarship on the form (*le neuvième art*), as is the concept of comics criticism and scholarship itself. Knowing that France has a long tradition in comics and comic books, where they are known as BDs, an abbreviation of *bande dessinée* (literally *drawn strip*), this course will enable students to study selected major comics authors with attention to the different graphic styles, genres, themes, and characteristic thought together with an understanding of key cultural concepts, graphic design, and literary inspiration/influence. We will focus on how these artists are inventing new ways to think about their world or to see it from realistic comics that are often laboriously detailed, to the “comic-dynamic” style, which have very agitated drawings, often using lines of varying thickness to accent the drawings, and the comics using schematic drawings, which is a reduction of reality to easy, clear lines. Typical is the lack of shadows, the geometrical features, and the realistic proportions.

This course will also enable student to discover and understand a new art form. In [North America](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_America), the more serious, Franco-Belgian comics are often seen as equivalent to [graphic novels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graphic_novel), for various reasons, but whether they are long or short, bound or in magazine format, in [Francophone Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Francophone_Europe&action=edit&redlink=1) there is no need for a more sophisticated term, as the art's name does not itself imply something frivolous. The French-speaking market is the largest one in Europe and in terms of numbers, behind only that of Japan. Since everybody in Europe wants their books to be known, most artists and creators make it a point to be published in France first, before their own native countries. This course will thus offer a broad perspective of the most famous French comics from classics like Astérix to contemporary graphic novels by the likes of Moebius.

Objectives:

--to view and appreciate visual arts from different periods

--to analyze the different techniques used in painting and literature

--to consider literature and visual arts from a wide variety of periods and cultures

--to explore connections between the visual arts and the art of literature

--to consider the ways that art and literature often mirror the society in which

they are created

**Grading:**

Group Work and Participation ..........15%

Directed Essay No. 1..........15%

Directed Essay No. 2..........15%

Midterm..........15%

Take-Home Final Exam..........40%

**Syllabus:**

WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTION TO COMICS AND ART

WEEK 2 – HISTORY OF COMICS IN FRANCE AND EUROPE: THE BEGINNING

WEEK 3 – HISTORY OF COMICS IN FRANCE AND EUROPE: THE NEW GENERATIONS

WEEK 4 – COMICS VOCABULARY I

WEEK 5 – COMICS VOCABULARY II

WEEK 6 – COMICS CONVENTIONS

WEEK 7 – COMICS AND GRAPHIC DESIGN

WEEK 8 - COMICS AND “REALISTIC” STYLE

WEEK 9 – COMICS AND “COMIC-DYNAMIC” STYLE

WEEK 10 – COMICS AND “SCHEMATIC” STYLE

WEEK 11 – NOTABLE COMICS I

WEEK 12 – NOTABLE COMICS II

WEEK 13 - LITERATURE AND COMICS I

WEEK 14 – LITERATURE AND COMICS II

WEEK 15 - OVERVIEW – FINAL DISCUSION