

ENGL1100: Literary Interpretation (Fall 2016)
“Introduction to Comics & Comics Theory”
Tuesday/Thursday 4:00-5:50 p.m. (Welborn Hall 1121)

Instructor: Michael Marberry

Office: Sprau Tower 813

Email: [INSERT]

Office Hours: T/R 2:00-3:30 p.m. (by appointment)

Required Materials:

- McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. [ISBN: 978-0-06-097625-5]
- Tan, Shaun. *The Arrival*. [ISBN: 978-0-439-89529-3]
- Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home: A Tragicomic*. [ISBN: 978-0-618-87171-1]
- Moore, Alan. *Watchmen*. [ISBN: 978-0-930289-23-2]
- McGuire, Richard. *Here*. [ISBN: 978-0-37540650-8]
- One book from the “Group Presentation” book-list provided in this syllabus (page 4).
- Various handouts and readings provided on eLearning for daily discussions.
- Notebook for note-taking and various in-class writing assignments.
- \$5.00 copy-fee card, available for purchase at WMU bookstore.

Course Description & Goals:

Literary Interpretation (ENGL1100) is a four credit-hour undergraduate English class designed to provide you with an introduction into studying literature, aimed at developing your abilities to read literature and write about it with skill, sensitivity, and care. We will read poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction and will be introduced to terms and methods of formal study of literature. This specific course is required for entry into most upper-level English courses.

For our course, we will be looking particularly at Comics & Comics Theory and the ways in which this particular form/mode of artistic expression is able to explore (and complicate) issues of poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and drama. Because comics are inherently “hybrid” texts of words and images, these texts will challenge you to develop both critical-reading and critical-viewing skills.

Course Requirements:

During this semester, you will complete assignments designed to challenge you both intellectually and creatively as you develop your reading, analytical, research, and writing skills. Regular quizzes will reinforce these skills, pushing you toward become a more knowledgeable and nuanced scholar. Readings will correspond with class discussions, while presentations will help you practice sharing your insights and your questions with peers, as you explore these authors and texts critically.

Assignment:	Due Date:	Percent:
Daily Work & Participation	Throughout Semester	10%
Reading & Review Quizzes	Throughout Semester	20%
Group Presentations	November 29 - December 6 (see sign-up sheet)	10%
In-Class Essay (2x)	October 18 & December 8 (by end of class)	10%
Midterm Exam	Thursday, October 20 (by end of class)	20%
Final Exam	Tuesday, December 13 (by end of exam time)	30%

Grade Scale:

Standard Percentage Value:		Standard GPA Value:	
A = 93-100	B/A = 88-92	A = 4.0	B/A = 3.5
B = 83-87	C/B = 78-82	B = 3.0	C/B = 2.5
C = 73-77	D/C = 68-72	C = 2.0	D/C = 1.5
D = 60-67	E = 0-59	D = 1.0	E = 0

Late Assignment Policy:

Work must be completed and submitted on time. Because of the importance of regular attendance and participation in the class, any in-class work (e.g. daily work, reading quizzes, presentations, etc.) missed cannot be made-up or submitted late. The midterm exam and final exam can be made-up only after requesting and then receiving approval from the teacher, though make-up exams will be essay format (rather than the regular exam). Students who know they will miss class on the day of the midterm exam or final exam must contact the instructor in advance and as soon as possible in order to arrange for an alternate test-taking day/time.

Attendance & Tardiness Policy:

Attendance is very important to the success of this class and to your development as a scholar. As such, you are expected to attend class regularly (and on time) and to participate fully. For this class, you are allowed to accumulate five (5) absences for any reason—i.e. this class does not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. Accumulating six (6) absences, for any reason, will result in automatic failure of the course. Because of this absence policy, I strongly suggest that you save your absences for actual instances of sickness and/or emergencies.

Tardiness is disruptive to the focused class environment, prevents full participation, and impairs the assimilation of class information. Any in-class work (e.g. quizzes) missed due to tardiness cannot be made-up. Arriving more than 15 minutes late or leaving more than 15 minutes early will result in an absence being recorded for you that day.

Class Cancellation & Late Instructor Instructions:

In the unlikely event of class cancellation, I will contact the class via email beforehand. If, for some unknown reason, I am late to class and haven’t notified anyone via email about my tardiness or class cancellation, please wait 15 minutes. If I still have not shown up or emailed the class by that point, please send someone to or call the English Office (Sprau Tower 6th Floor, 269-387-2572) to notify them that I am missing from class unexpectedly.

Academic Misconduct, Plagiarism, & Classroom Conduct:

Western Michigan University’s Office of Student Conduct lists the following values as those which every student, instructor, and staff-member should strive for: academic honesty, integrity, fairness, trustworthiness, personal responsibility, respect for others, and ethical conduct. These values foster, promote, and protect the core mission of the university. In the classroom, academic misconduct is any activity that tends to compromise the university’s academic integrity or subvert the educational process. Forms of academic misconduct include cheating, fabrication, falsification, forgery, multiple submitting, complicity, computer misuse, and plagiarism.

Western Michigan University defines *plagiarism* as the use of someone else’s language, ideas, and/or materials without making the sources evident in situations where there is a legitimate expectation of

original work. WMU defines *cheating* as intentionally using and/or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, notes, study-aids, or other devices/materials in an academic exercise, while *complicity* is intentionally or knowingly helping (or attempting to help) someone commit academic misconduct. These are all serious academic offenses and counterproductive to a course in which our goal is for students to create original intellectual work. More information about these acts of academic misconduct can be found here: <http://www.wmich.edu/conduct/honesty/definitions>

In addition to academic honesty, individuals are expected to behave respectfully toward others and avoid disruptive and obstructive behaviors. Such negative behavior includes (but is not limited to): physical abuse, verbal abuse, verbal and written threats, stalking, intimidation, harassment, hazing, possession of controlled substances, possession of alcoholic beverages, irresponsible computer use, cell phone use (including texting), etc. If there is an emergency situation that requires you to text during class, please let me know beforehand.

One of the best aspects of college life is that it brings together people with a wide array of different personal/cultural beliefs and experiences. Because of this, for our class to be successful, a modicum of trust, decorum, and respect must exist among all participants. Such empathy is especially crucial in a course like this one, where we will occasionally be reading and discussing difficult materials and potentially sensitive topics. Any act that compromises, endangers, and/or disrespects the instructor or your peers will absolutely not be tolerated.

Student Disabilities:

To ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), faculty members at Western Michigan University need to know how a disability will impact student participation and work in the course. Any student registered with Disability Services for Students who would like to discuss any accommodations for this class should contact the instructor of record in a timely manner. Students with documented disabilities who are not registered with DSS should call the office (269-387-2116) or visit the website (wmich.edu/disabilityservices). Students are not allowed to request any academic accommodations without scheduling an appointment and meeting with a DSS staff member. If the student does not register with DSS, their academic accommodations cannot be executed.

Counseling Services:

Students face many challenges in a myriad of personal and professional contexts. Western Michigan University is fully committed to providing its students with avenues for identifying and addressing any emotional, physical, and/or psychological difficulties that arise—including relationship conflicts, stress and anxiety, grief or loss, social and peer pressure, sexual-identity questions, trauma and post-traumatic stress, adjusting to college life, feelings of depression, body image or eating disorders, etc. If any of these difficulties occur during the semester, I encourage you to contact Counseling Services by visiting the Sindecuse Health Center or by making an appointment (269-387-1850). Discussions with Counseling Services are confidential.

WMU Writing Center:

The WMU Writing Center is a free consultation service for all WMU students, where experienced writing consultants help writers of all levels and all abilities. The consultants help writers determine strategies for effective communication and make academically responsible choices at any stage in the writing process and on assignments in any field of study. Both appointments and drop-in sessions are available. The Writing Center is located in 1343 Ellsworth Hall. More information can be found at the Writing Center website: <http://wmich.edu/writingcenter>

WMU eLearning:

We will use eLearning as an online hub for supplemental readings, handouts, assignment prompts, project submissions, weekly responses, etc. Please let me know if you have problems finding and accessing our eLearning page, and I will gladly help you.

In-Class Essays:

At two points in the semester (i.e. Tuesday, October 18th and Thursday, December 8th), you will be asked to compose an in-class essay in response to a writing prompt that I provide on the day of the in-class essay. For these in-class essays, you are allowed to use your class notes and course readings; however, all other materials (including outside research) will not be allowed. The goal of the in-class essays is to practice creating a sustained, persuasive, and effective argument regarding one (or more) of our comics texts. You will put the creative work(s), critical theory, and your own insights into a dialogue with one another to produce a reading/interpretation of comics for someone interested in the topic. More information will be provided as we get closer to these in-class essays.

Group Presentations:

Toward the end of the semester, each student will be asked to participate in a group presentation, focusing on an influential comic (from the list provided below) that we have not discussed during our class. Each presentation should last approximately 30-45 minutes. Presentations will include the following: (1) a formal lecture using PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.; (2) an original handout for your classmates on your group's comic; (3) an interactive component that actively engages the class; (4) some sort of critical or creative writing exercise. Everyone in the group must participate in some way toward the design and/or execution of the group presentation.

Group:	Text:	Author:	ISBN:
1	<i>Maus I & Maus II</i> (1991)	by Art Spiegelman	978-0679406419
2	<i>Persepolis</i> (2000)	by Marjane Satrapi	0-375-71457-X
3	<i>The Dark Knight Rises</i> (1986)	by Frank Miller	1-56389-342-8
4	<i>American Born Chinese</i> (2006)	by Gene Luen Yang	978-1-59643-152-2
5	<i>One Hundred Demons</i> (2002)	by Lynda Barry	978-1-57061-459-0
6	<i>Jimmy Corrigan</i> (1995-2005)	by Chris Ware	0-375-71454-5

Course Schedule

* This course schedule is subject to revision at my discretion.

** Be ready to read, to write, to think, and to talk each day in class.

*** Bring all relevant course readings/materials with you to class each day.

Week:	Date:	Readings DUE:	Projects DUE:
1	Tuesday, September 6 - Syllabus Review - Icebreakers		
	Thursday, September 8 - Introduction to Comics - Short-Form Comics - Comics Terms	- <i>Understanding Comics</i> (chaps. 1-3) - “Happy Hooligan” (eL) - “Dream of the Rarebit Fiend” (eL) - “Little Nemo...” (eL) - “Krazy Kat” (eL) - “Popeye” (eL)	- AMCC due by 4 pm
2	Tuesday, September 13 - Introduction to Comics - Short-Form Comics	- <i>Understanding Comics</i> (chaps. 4-6) - “Dick Tracy” (eL) - “Flash Gordon” (eL) - “Peanuts” (eL) - “Doonesbury” (eL) - “Cathy” (eL)	- \$5 Copy-Card due by 4 pm
	Thursday, September 15 - Introduction to Comics - Short-Form Comics	- <i>Understanding Comics</i> (chaps. 7-9) - “Garfield” (eL) - “The Far Side” (eL) - “Calvin and Hobbes” (eL) - “Dilbert” (eL) - “Hark! A Vagrant” (eL)	
3	Tuesday, September 20 - Long-Form Comics - Theory: Marxism	- <i>The Arrival</i> (chaps. 1-3) - “Marxism” (eL)	
	Thursday, September 22 - Long-Form Comics - Theory: Post-Colonialism	- <i>The Arrival</i> (chaps. 4-6) - “Post-Colonialism” (eL)	
4	Tuesday, September 27 - Poetry & Comics	- “Sonnet 18” (eL) - “The Chimney Sweeper” (eL) - “I Wandered Lonely...” (eL) - “Leaves of Grass” (eL) - “Because I Could Not...” (eL)	
	Thursday, September 29 - Poetry & Comics	- “The Love Song...” (eL) - “Dulce et Decorum Est” (eL) - “The Negro Speaks...” (eL) - “A Supermarket...” (eL) - “Belly Dancer” (eL)	
5	Tuesday, October 4 - Nonfiction & Comics	- “A Modest Proposal” (eL) - “Letter to the Royal...” (eL)	

		- "Vindication of the Rights..." (eL) - "Walden" (eL) - "Letters to a Young Poet" (eL)	
	Thursday, October 6 - Nonfiction & Comics - Theory: Feminism	- <i>Fun Home</i> (chaps. 1-2) - "Feminism" (eL)	
6	Tuesday, October 11 - Nonfiction & Comics - Theory: Queer Theory	- <i>Fun Home</i> (chaps. 3-5) - "Queer Theory" (eL)	
	Thursday, October 13 - Nonfiction & Comics	- <i>Fun Home</i> (chaps. 6-7)	
7	Tuesday, October 18 - In-Class Essay		- Essay due by end of class
	Thursday, October 20 - Midterm Exam		- Midterm Exam due by end of class
8	Tuesday, October 25 - Drama & Comics	- "Medea" (eL) - "Apu Ollantay" (eL) - "Hagoromo" (eL)	
	Thursday, October 27 - Drama & Comics	- "King Lear" (eL) - "Poker!" (eL) - "Waiting for Godot" (eL)	
9	Tuesday, November 1 - Fiction & Comics	- "An Occurrence at Owl..." (eL) - "The Awakening" (eL) - "The Metamorphosis" (eL) - "Ulysses" (eL) - "What We Talk About..." (eL)	
	Thursday, November 3 - Fiction & Comics - Theory: Psychoanalysis	- <i>Watchmen</i> (chaps. 1-3) - "Psychoanalysis" (eL)	
10	Tuesday, November 8 - Fiction & Comics - Theory: Post-Structuralism	- <i>Watchmen</i> (chaps. 4-6) - "Post-Structuralism" (eL)	
	Thursday, November 10 - Fiction & Comics	- <i>Watchmen</i> (chaps. 7-9)	
11	Tuesday, November 15 - Fiction & Comics	- <i>Watchmen</i> (chaps. 10-12)	
	Thursday, November 17 - Experimental Comics - Theory: Reader Response	- "Abstract Expressionist..." (eL) - "Stop Quibbling, Please" (eL) - "Kung Fu" (eL) - "Jim Jam Job" (eL) - "Inseparable but Apart" (eL) - "Because" (eL) - "Storms" (eL) - "Shapes" (eL) - "Untitled" (eL) - "Flying Chief" (eL) - "Reader Response" (eL)	

12	Tuesday, November 22 - Experimental Comics - Theory: Ecocriticism	- <i>Here</i> (entire book) - “Ecocriticism” (eL)	
	Thursday, November 24 - No Class! (Thanksgiving)		
13	Tuesday, November 29 - Group Presentations	- <i>Maus I & Maus II</i> (Group 1) - <i>Persepolis</i> (Group 2)	- Groups 1 & 2 due by 4 pm
	Thursday, December 1 - Group Presentations	- <i>Dark Knight Rises</i> (Group 3) - <i>American Born Chinese</i> (Group 4)	- Groups 3 & 4 due by 4 pm
14	Tuesday, December 6 - Group Presentations	- <i>One Hundred Demons</i> (Group 5) - <i>Jimmy Corrigan</i> (Group 6)	- Groups 5 & 6 due by 4 pm
	Thursday, December 8 - Course Evaluations - In-Class Essay		- Essay due by end of class
15	Tuesday, December 13 - Final Exam (5:00-7:00 pm)		- Final Exam due by end of class