

FC345: The New French Graphic Novel

Instructors: Dr. Michael A. Johnson & Meredith Lehman (T.A.)

I. Course Description:

Called the “ninth art” in France, the comic strip has been considered a culturally relevant art form much longer in France than in the US. However, it is only in the past two decades that the comic-strip medium has moved beyond erstwhile adolescent and traditionally escapist comic book genres (fantasy, adventure, sci-fi) to encompass more reality-oriented genres such as autobiography, documentary, historical fiction, and travelogue, and to also address such serious and pressing questions as France’s colonial legacy, civil unrest in the French banlieu (suburban ghettos), immigration, and war. This course looks at works from the new wave of the French graphic novel with special emphasis on innovations with the comic strip medium. We will study a variety of works, themes, and graphic styles from the raw punk aesthetic of Julie Doucet’s autobiographical *New York Diary* to the childlike expressionism of David B.’s *Epileptic*, from Appollo’s & Lewis Trondheim’s faux-naïf use of animal characters to reimagine France’s colonial history to Didier Lefevre’s and Emmanuel Guibert’s experimentation with mixed-media in their stark testimony of war in Afghanistan. Our readings will be guided by a set of related questions: What is the expressive potential of the medium? What can the comic strip express that a painting, a novel or a film might not be able to? And which of these graphic works exploit most fully the expressive potential of the medium?

This course carries the Global Cultures flag. Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one non-U.S. cultural group, past or present.

II. Course Materials:

Required

David B., *Epileptic* (Pantheon, 2006)

Julie Doucet, *My New York Diary* (Drawn & Quarterly, 2004)

Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis* (Pantheon, 2004)

Jean-Pierre Stassen, *Deogratias: a Tale of Rwanda* (First Second, 2006)

Appollo & Lewis Trondheim, *Bourbon Island 1730* (First Second, 2008)

Manu Larcenet, *Ordinary Victories* (ComicsLit, 2005)

Marguerite Abouet, *Aya* (Drawn & Quarterly, 2007)

Joann Sfar, *The Rabbi’s Cat* (Pantheon, 2007)

Guy Delisle, *Burma Chronicles* (Drawn & Quarterly, 2008)

Emmanuel Guibert, *The Photographer: Into War-Torn Afghanistan with Doctors Without Borders* (First Second, 2009)

Christophe Blain, *Isaac the Pirate* (ComicsLit, 2003)

III. Course Work:

Grading Policy

3 short papers (45%)

1 final project (30%)

blog participation (10%)

presentation	(10%)
participation	(5%)

Course Requirements

•Course Blog:

Each week, two or three students will be assigned to moderate discussion of the work assigned on the course blog. Moderators can ask questions, discuss their aesthetic or ideological responses to each work, or post important historical or factual background information that may enrich their classmates' reading experience. Participation in the course blog counts for 10% of the final grade.

•Short Papers:

Students will write three short (3-4 pg.) papers, each worth 15% of the final grade. The first paper is a formal exercise that focuses specifically on learning and implementing the terminology for analyzing comics. Students can focus on one page or a two-page spread from any of the works assigned in the class. The second paper will focus on the representation self and others in any of the autobiographical or autofictional works (including reportage) assigned in the class. The third will ask students to focus on the representation of culture, history, and politics in any of the works assigned, whether fictional or non-fictional. Students are highly encouraged to post their papers, with illustrations, on the course blog.

•Final Project:

The final project may be creative or critical and may be done jointly or individually. Students must submit proposals for final projects by Monday, April 4, and must indicate at that point whether they intend to work individually or jointly. The final project is worth 30% of the final grade.

•Final Presentation:

Students will present their final projects to the class during the last two weeks of the semester in abbreviated five-minute presentations with visuals. The presentation is worth 10% of the final grade.

Important Deadlines:

•Feb 7	Paper 1 due
•March 7	Paper 2 due
•April 4	Proposals for final project due
•April 18	Paper 3 due
•April 25–May 6	Presentations will be scheduled
•May 6	Final project due

IV. Class and University Policies

Attendance Policy:

Daily attendance is an integral part of your participation grade (5%). Also please take note of UT's official policy regarding the observation of religious holy days:

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Use of Blackboard

In this class, I use Blackboard, a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://courses.utexas.edu>, to distribute some course materials. You can

find support in using Blackboard at the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., so plan accordingly.

Academic Integrity

University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code.

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, visit the Student Judicial Services web site

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>. This site offers excellent resources on how to cite sources and paraphrase. Copying materials from other people or from sources on the Internet, for example, or having your work edited by somebody else, constitutes a fraudulent submission. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work and will acknowledge others' work as appropriate (e.g., citing sources). Any plagiarized work will result in a failing course grade.

V. Other University Notices and Policies

Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students

It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at

<http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html>.

Documented Disability Statement

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you require special accommodations, you must obtain a letter that documents your disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to me at the beginning of the semester so we can discuss the accommodations you need. No later than five business days before an exam, you should remind me of any testing accommodations you will need. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

VI. Course Calendar:

Week 1: Introduction

WED (1/19) Introduction
FRI (1/21) Read: Ann Miller, *Reading Bande Dessinée*, Ch. 1&2 [Bb]

Week 2: History of French/Francophone Comics

MON (1/24) Read: Ann Miller, *Reading Bande Dessinée*, Ch. 3&4 [Bb]
WED (1/26) Read: Mark McKinney, *History and Politics in French-Language Comics and Graphic Novels*, Intro. [Bb]
FRI (1/28) Read: Joel E. Vessels, *Drawing France*, Ch. 2 [Bb]

Week 3: Semiotics of Comics, or, How to write about comics

MON (1/31) Read: McKinney “French-Language Comics Terminology and Referencing” [Bb]
Read: Ann Miller, *Reading Bande Dessinée*, Ch. 5 [Bb]
WED (2/2) Read: Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, Intro. & Ch. 1 [Bb]
FRI (2/4) Read: Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, Ch. 2 [Bb]

Week 4 Autobiography I

MON (2/7) Read: David B., *Epileptic*
•Paper 1 due 2/7
WED (2/9) Read: David B., *Epileptic*
FRI (2/11) Read: David B., *Epileptic*

Week 5: Autobiography II

MON (2/14) Read: Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis*
WED (2/16) Read: Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis*
FRI (2/18) Read: Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis*

Week 6: Autobiography III / Autofiction I

MON (2/21) Read: Julie Doucet, *My New York Diary*
WED (2/23) Read: Julie Doucet, *My New York Diary*
FRI (2/25) Read: Manu Larcenet, *Ordinary Victories*

Week 7: Autofiction II

MON (2/28) Read: Manu Larcenet, *Ordinary Victories*
WED (3/2) Read: Marguerite Abouet, *Aya*
FRI (3/4) Read: Marguerite Abouet, *Aya*

Week 8: Reportage I

MON (3/7) Read: Emmanuel Guibert, *The Photographer*
•Paper 2 due 3/7
WED (3/9) Read: Emmanuel Guibert, *The Photographer*
FRI (3/11) Read: Emmanuel Guibert, *The Photographer*

Week 9

SPRING BREAK

Week 10: Reportage II

MON (3/21) Read: Guy Delisle, *Burma Chronicles*
WED (3/23) Read: Guy Delisle, *Burma Chronicles*
FRI (3/25) Read: Guy Delisle, *Burma Chronicles*

Week 11: Reportage III

MON (3/28) Read: Jean-Pierre Stassen, *Deo gratias*
WED (3/30) Read: Jean-Pierre Stassen, *Deo gratias*
FRI (4/1) Read: Jean-Pierre Stassen, *Deo gratias*

Week 12: France's Colonial Legacy in Historical Fiction I

MON (4/4) Read: Christophe Blain, *Isaac the Pirate*
•Proposals for Final Project Due 4/4
WED (4/6) Read: Christophe Blain, *Isaac the Pirate*
FRI (4/8) Read: Christophe Blain, *Isaac the Pirate*

Week 13: France's Colonial Legacy in Historical Fiction II

MON (4/11) Read: Appollo & Lewis Trondheim, *Bourbon Island 1730*
WED (4/13) Read: Appollo & Lewis Trondheim, *Bourbon Island 1730*
FRI (4/15) Read: Appollo & Lewis Trondheim, *Bourbon Island 1730*

Week 14: France's Colonial Legacy in Historical Fiction III

MON (4/18) Read: Joann Sfar, *The Rabbi's Cat*
•Paper 3 due 4/18
WED (4/20) Read: Joann Sfar, *The Rabbi's Cat*
FRI (4/22) Read: Joann Sfar, *The Rabbi's Cat*

Week 15: Review & presentations

MON (4/25) Schedule TBA
WED (4/27) Schedule TBA
FRI (4/29) Schedule TBA

Week 16: Review & presentations

MON (5/2) Schedule TBA
WED (5/4) Schedule TBA
FRI (5/6) Schedule TBA
•Final project due 5/6

