SOC 410: Comics & Society
Portland State University
Course Information Sheet
Spring 2019

Course Meeting Info: MW 4:40-6:30pm in Karl Miller Center (KMC) 180
Instructor: Sasha Bassett, MS
Office: Cramer Hall 217W
E-mail: sbassett@pdx.edu
Office Hours: By appointment

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION:
The best way to reach me is via email at sbassett@pdx.edu. Please do not email me via D2L. You can expect a reply within 24-48 hours during business days. Response times may be longer on weekends or holidays. Students may come in anytime during office hours. If the scheduled times for office hours do not work with your schedule, please email me to set up an appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
Centering creative industries as a cornerstone of western culture, this course examines the ways in which comic books function as an institution that influences the norms, values, and identities held by members of society. Specifically focusing on the ways in which social identities and communities are constituted through the comics medium, this course will investigate and evaluate the production and distribution, narrative content, and public reception of comic books.

PREREQUISITES:
It is recommended (but not required) to have completed SOC 200 or ENG 410 (comics theory).

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:
Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Analyze components of culture, specifically comic books and sequential art
- Implement formal analysis to understand the structure of comic books (and other types of sequential art)
- Understand workplace dynamics that are present in the comic book industry
- Articulate issues of representation that are present in the comic book industry
- Understand how social norms influence and shape the media we consume
- Describe the culture associated with comic book fandom, and how it relates to broader society
COURSE EXPECTATIONS:
Each reading and each assignment in this class is specifically designed to meet these objectives and goals. I will make very clear which objective/goal each reading and assignment is meeting.

Faculty Obligations:
- You can expect me to be prepared and organized for each class.
- You can expect me to be available outside of class for consultation about this class or other issues.
- You can expect that changes may be made to the course schedule to accommodate time constraints.
- You can expect me to grade your work fairly and in a timely manner.
- You can expect that I will strive to accommodate different learning styles by using a variety of teaching and assessment techniques.

My philosophy is to try to be explicit, fair, and consistent when it comes to class policies. Therefore, I have described the "student obligations" of this course below. By remaining in this class, you are agreeing to these rules and accepting the consequences for breaking them.

Student Obligations:
- I expect you to arrive in the classroom and be prepared to begin on time.
- I expect you to stay for the entire class period.
- I expect you to turn off phones or switch to vibrate if you have a childcare or emergency situation. NO TEXTING IN CLASS.
- I expect you to abstain from reading other materials, sleeping, or carrying on side conversations during class.
- I expect you to attend class prepared to discuss readings and other course material.
- I expect you to critique ideas, not people, during class discussions.

COURSE POLICIES:

Late Work: All assignments must be handed in at the beginning of class. There may be some extremely good reason for missing the deadline; if you truly believe that your situation qualifies, we can talk about it. Things I consider good reasons for granting extensions are: a serious illness of self (with doctor’s note), of a close family member, or of your child, etc. There is no exception for last minute problems, including computer or printer-related problems. Don't wait until the last minute to write and print your work. LATE PAPERS WILL LOSE 10% EVERY DAY THEY ARE LATE and will not be accepted after 1 week.

Getting Assistance: I am available during office hours or by appointment to discuss readings, your work, the course, and college in general, or other issues with which you think I can be of some help. You can also pose questions or comments about readings, assignments, and class material by way of e-mail. While I check my email often, questions about assignments should be sent AT LEAST 24 HOURS before the assignment due date. If you’d like me to review a draft of your final paper, it must be turned in at least ONE WEEK before the due date.
**Special Accommodations:** I will respect any accommodations authorized by the DRC. Please tell me about these accommodations by the third week of class so that we can arrange for your continued participation in the course.

**Content Warning:** At times, we will be discussing “sensitive” subjects in class (ex: sexism, racism, homophobia, etc.), and it is extremely important to be respectful of each other when discussing these matters. Diverse opinions, even controversial ones, are welcome; incivility toward each other will not be tolerated. If you ever feel the need to step outside during one of these discussions, either for a short time or for the rest of the class session, you may always do so without academic penalty. You will, however, still be responsible for any material that you miss. If you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to this material, I welcome such discussion as an appropriate part of your course work.

**Plagiarism Policy:** Cheating is any form of intellectual dishonesty or misrepresentation of one's knowledge. Plagiarism, a form of cheating, consists of intentionally or unintentionally representing someone else's work as one's own. Information on avoiding plagiarism available at [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/]. **Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism shall not be considered a valid defense.** If students are uncertain as to what constitutes plagiarism for a particular assignment, they should consult the instructor for clarification. I will impose penalties for plagiarism and cheating ranging from a grade reduction on an assignment or exam to failure in the course; I will also report the offense to the Office of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts so that they may initiate additional action on behalf of the university.

**Grading:** You must complete all of the course requirements in order to pass this course. Your final grade will reflect the overall quality of your work in the class, including two major writing assignments, in-class activities, and your overall classroom participation. You will have the opportunity to earn up to 300 points, which will be distributed the following way:

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| Attendance and Participation | 100 pts.
| Midterm                      | 50 pts. |
| Group Presentations          | 50 pts. |
| Final                        | 100 pts. |

**TOTAL:** 300 pts.
MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS:

1. **Midterm: Graphic Memoir** (50 points / 15% of your grade). Create a comic that accurately describes/represents your identity. Students will be given guidelines for writing and presenting this paper no later than week two of the course. Late midterms will be docked 10% per day.

2. **Group Presentations** (50 points/15% of your grade). You will be assigned to one of three groups in week one in order to prepare two group presentations in week six of the course. Each group will be responsible for discussing their assigned mangas; presentations are worth 25 pts each. A detailed guideline for this will be distributed to the class in week one of the course.

3. **Final: Analysis paper** (100 points / 30% of grade). Analyze a comic book of your choosing. In evaluating your final, I will be looking for a basic understanding of formal analytical tools, as well as the successful application of sociological ideas or concepts in your discussion of the work you’ve selected. Students will be given guidelines for writing and presenting this paper no later than week five of the course. Late finals will not be accepted.

ADDITIONAL STUDENT RESOURCES:

**Disability Resource Center.** Any student with a physical, psychiatric/emotional, or learning disability is encouraged to contact the DRC to arrange academic accommodations to support your success in the course (503-725-4150, drc@pdx.edu). Students registered with the DRC can receive reasonable accommodations regarding the scheduled deadlines for this course.

**Writing Center.** The Writing Center at PSU offers a variety of resources, and students are strongly encouraged to utilize their services while working on the final paper. For more information (or to schedule an appointment), please visit [https://www.pdx.edu/writing-center/](https://www.pdx.edu/writing-center/).

**Sociology Department Advising.** The department of sociology offers a variety of academic advising services to undergraduate students. For more information on this, please visit [https://www.pdx.edu/sociology/undergraduate-advising](https://www.pdx.edu/sociology/undergraduate-advising).

**Veterans Resource Center.** The VRC serves as a baseline of support for student veterans, active duty service members and dependents in order to meet their unique academic, professional and personal needs. Please visit [https://www.pdx.edu/veterans/vrc/](https://www.pdx.edu/veterans/vrc/) for more information.

**Women’s Resource Center.** The PSU Women's Resource Center advocates for the best educational and campus experience by advancing social justice and by working towards a safe and healthy campus for all students. Please visit [https://www.pdx.edu/wrc/](https://www.pdx.edu/wrc/) for more information.

**Queer Resource Center.** The Queer Resource Center provides students along sexuality and gender spectra with the support they need to persist to graduation. For more information, please visit [https://www.pdx.edu/queer/](https://www.pdx.edu/queer/).

**Cultural Resource Centers.** The Cultural Resource Centers provide leadership, employment, and volunteer opportunities; resources such as computer labs, event, lounge and study spaces; and extensive programming. Cultural resource centers at PSU include: La Casa Unida Student Center, Multicultural Student Center, Native American Student & Community Center, Pan-African Commons, and Gathering Space. For more information about these spaces and the specific services they offer, please visit [https://www.pdx.edu/cultural-resource-centers/](https://www.pdx.edu/cultural-resource-centers/).
COURSE SCHEDULE:

TOPICS: HOW TO PREPARE:

Week 1: Welcome to Comics Studies
   Mon: Intro to the Course
   READ: Syllabus
   Wed: Why Comics?
   READ: Brienza – Producing Comics Culture...
   Zeisler – Feminism and Pop Culture
   Ndalianis – Why Comics Studies?

Week 2: Nuts and Bolts
   Mon: Comics Theory & Formal Analysis Tools
   READ: Selections from Understanding Comics (McCloud)
   Newspaper strips (Peanuts is on D2L)
   Wed: Comics History
   READ: Selections from Seduction of the Innocent
   The Comics Code of 1954
   Selections from Action Comics, Detective Comics, and Sensation Comics

Week 3: Comics Work
   Mon: The Business of Comics
   READ: Lefevre – Gatekeeping in Comics Publishing
   Deluliis – Gatekeeping Black Comics
   House – Marvel V. Kirby
   Wed: Labor in the Comics Industry
   READ: Ray Murray – Invisible Labor in Comics
   Brienza – Working from Home
   Gray and Wilkins – Collaboration in Comics

Week 4: Superheroes
   Mon: The Modern Gods
   READ: Saunders – Modern Gods
   Saunders – Power of Love
   Selections from X-Men, Avengers, and Justice League
   Wed: Heroes in Crisis
   READ: Squier – “So Long As They Grow Out Of It”
   Hawkeye #17 (Fraction)
   Hulk #1 (Tomaki)

DUE: MIDTERM (GRAPHIC MEMOIR)

**Dates are subject to change. Any changes to this document will be announced in class and via email**
Week 5: Moving Beyond Mainstream Comics
   Mon: Alternative Comics
      READ: “The Rise and Fall of EC Comics”
         1. EC Sci-Fi Comics
         2. EC Horror Comics
         3. EC Romance Comics

Wed: Indie Comics
      READ: CBR Review of Emily Carroll's Work
             Through the Woods (Carroll)
             The Worthington http://www.emcarroll.com/comics/worthington/
             Out of Skin http://www.emcarroll.com/comics/skin/

Week 6: Manga
   Mon: Shoujo Manga
      READ: Shamoon – Layering in Shoujo Manga
             “The Children of Sailor Moon” blog post
      DUE: GROUP PRESENTATIONS (DAY 1)
         1. Sailor Moon v.1 (Takeuchi)
         2. Magic Knight Rayearth v.1 (CLAMP)
         3. Goddess Mode 1-3 (Quinn)

Wed: Shonen Manga
      READ: Flis - Female Authors in Shonen Manga
             Unser-Shults – What Texts Tell You...
      DUE: GROUP PRESENTATIONS (DAY 2)
         1. Dragonball (Toriyama)
         2. Attack on Titan v1
         3. Crisis Girls v.1

Week 7: Comics as Social Commentary
   Mon: Political Comics
      READ: Prez Vol. 1 (Russell)
             Russel on Prez Article

Wed: Memoir
      READ: March, Book One (Lewis)
             NPR Review of March
             Al Jawad – Comics as Research

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Week 8: Feminist Comics
Mon: Feminist Comics (Part 1)
   READ: Tyree – *Contemporary Representations of Black Females in Newspaper Comics*
         *Bitch Planet Vol. 1* (DeConnick and DeLandro)

Wed: Feminist Comics (Part 2)
   READ: Calafel - *Monstrous Femininity*
         *Maneaters #1-4* (Cain)

Week 9: Comics as Transmedia Properties
Mon: Adaptations & Derivative Works
   READ: Weist – *Mass Media and Culture*

Wed: The Comic Book Movie
   READ: V for Vendetta (Moore)

Week 10: Reception and Appropriation
Mon: Fandom and Audiences
   READ: Landis - *Ms. Marvel and Disapora*
         *Ms. Marvel Vol. 1* (Wilson)

Wed: The Comics Community
   READ: Scott - *Hawkeye Initiative and Crossplay Art*
         Rahman – *Cosplay, Imaginative Self, and Performing Identity*
         Hunt – *Negotiating New Racism: It’s Not Racist or Sexist. It’s Just the Way It Is*.

FINALS: YOUR FINAL PAPER IS DUE VIA D2L BY 11:59PM ON MONDAY, JUNE 10th.

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