

**AML 2410 - Topics in American Literature and Culture: Graphic Memoir (sec. 1616),  
Spring 2017**

**Instructor Name:** Charles Acheson

**Course meeting times & locations:** MWF Period 9 (9:35-10:25) - Matherly Hall (MAT) 0004

**Office Location and Hours:** Turlington Hall (TUR) 4307 - T Period 7-8 & by appt.

**Course website:** <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/334982>

**Instructor Email:** [cpacheson21@ufl.edu](mailto:cpacheson21@ufl.edu)

**Course Description:** This course addresses graphic memoir in American literature by analyzing the often idiosyncratic methods employed by comics creators when illustrating their personal memories. Graphic memoir allows for vibrant student engagement through the wide breadth of social issues covered within the genre, including disability, race, ethnicity, queerness, gender, climate change, and trauma. As such, this course places an emphasis on student analysis of each assigned text's formal properties while considering themes and issues. Throughout the course, students will produce weekly writings that engage comics theory and articulate what unique formal elements a creator uses in their memoir. For longer writing assignments, students will construct and sustain arguments that examine these formal elements as well as specific issues and comics criticism. In short, through writing and class discussion, students will answer the course's guiding question: what are the strengths, weaknesses, and possibilities of representing memoir through the comics medium?

**Course Outcomes**

Throughout the semester, students will:

- Write intensively while engaging comics theory and criticism in their analysis.
- Practice and understand the semiotics of the comics medium.
- Examine the intersection of comics and memoir broadly.
- Analyze diverse specific issues within the graphic memoir genre.

**General Education Objectives:**

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) *or* Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

**General Education Learning Outcomes:**

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

**Required Texts:**

Bariy, Lynda. *One Hundred Demons*.

Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*.

Derf. *My Friend Dahmer*.

Hart, Tom. *Rosalie Lightning*.

Lewis, John, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell. *March Book 1*.

Neufeld, Josh. *A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge*.

Tyler, Carol. *Soldier's Heart: The Campaign to Understand My WWII Veteran Father: A Daughter's Memoir (You'll Never Know)*

Yang, Gene Luen. *American Born Chinese*.

The following texts will be available on CANVAS or through ARES:

Fink, Jess. *We Can Fix It!*

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*.

Selected Critical Essays and Chapters.

Sharpe, Sam. *Viewotron #2*.

**Assignments** (see below for Grading Rubric):

**Key Concepts (8 total): 200 points (2400 words)**

Throughout the semester, you will need to write eight short (300-word) Key Concept essays that apply comics theory from Scott McCloud. Taking one of McCloud's Key Concepts, you will apply it to the week's primary text to analyze how the author engages specific elements of the comics medium. A complete list of Key Concepts will be posted to CANVAS. You may not repeat any Key Concepts, so each week you will need to apply a different Key Concept.

**Thematic Analysis Project: 200 points (1000 words)**

While the course focuses on the formal elements of the comics medium, a strong understanding of the themes within a text remains essential. For this project, you may choose any primary text on the reading list, not just the one's we have read up to this point. You will need to identify a key theme and analyze how the author incorporates that theme into their memoir. In addition to the analysis, you will evaluate how effectively the author addresses the theme in their memoir.

**Formal Analysis Project: 200 points (1000 words)**

At its core, the Formal Analysis Project is an extended version of a Key Concept essay. For this project, you may choose any primary text on the reading list, not just the one's we have read up to this point. You may expand a previously submitted Key Concept essay. Your Formal Analysis will identify a Key Concept and develop an argument about how your chosen author uses the Key Concept in their work. You will provide an extended analysis and evaluation for this project.

### **Alternative Theorist Project: 200 points (1000 words)**

Throughout the course, we've used McCloud as a tour guide to the comics medium. However, McCloud is not monolithic, and in many cases, disputed by other scholars and theorists. For this project, you will need to find a book chapter or article published that addresses one of our Key Concepts but written by someone else. In the essay, you will need to compare and contrast how McCloud and your alternative theorist address the Key Concept. Then, using one of our primary text as a case study, evaluate which theorist most effectively articulates how the Key Concept works.

### **Alternative Memoir Presentation and Reflection: 200 points (600 words)**

For the final project of the semester, you will need to read an additional American graphic memoir *not* on the reading list (a list of possible choices will be posted to CANVAS). The project comprises two parts. First, you will give a presentation to the class that argues whether or not your memoir should be added to the reading list. Second, you will provide a brief reflection essay that explains how you constructed the presentation.

### **Revision**

You may revise one of the first three Major Projects (Thematic Analysis, Formal Analysis, or Alternative Theorist) to earn UP TO half of the lost points. The revision will be due before midnight on Friday, April 21st to the appropriate CANVAS drop box. In order for your revision to be scored, you must attend to the following guidelines:

1. You submitted the original project on time (late projects are automatically ineligible for revision).
  2. You meet with the instructor for a one-on-one meeting to discuss my comments that I will return to you with your grade for the original draft.
  3. You must submit a 500-word or greater reflection essay that addresses how the changes improved the project.
- You'll submit the reflection essay at the same time as the revision.

### **Course Policies:**

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. Attendance: It is crucial that you not only attend class, but also participate to the best of your ability. I will be taking attendance every class. If you are more than 15 minutes late for class, you will be counted as absent. You are allowed 3 absences from class without penalty. Any absences after the third will negatively affect your final grade.
3. Paper Format & Submission: All assignments will be submitted to CANVAS in their corresponding drop box by deadline provided on the schedule below. All papers must be submitted in .DOCX or .RTF format only and follow MLA formatting guidelines.
4. Late Papers/Assignments: Late Key Concepts will not be accepted unless prior arraignments have been made with the instructor. Late projects will suffer a 20% loss of possible points for every day after the deadline. Students must still submit a project even after 5 days.
5. Paper Maintenance Responsibilities. Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
6. Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism. Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/secr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.
7. Students with disabilities who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.

8. For information on UF Grading policies, see:  
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
9. Grade Appeals. In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
10. Course Evaluations. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>
11. Students who face difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352) 392-1575, or contact them online: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>
12. Since you are required to fully participate in this course, which largely depends on class discussion, you will ONLY be allowed to use laptops or other computing devices for note-taking or class purposes. If you choose to use a computer during class, be prepared to show me your notes at any time. Anyone found using their laptops for purposes other than class activities will be asked to leave class and will forfeit their attendance points.
13. UF's policy on Harassment: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty:  
<http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equity-diversity/resources/harassment/>

## Schedule

### Week 1

W (1/4): Welcome!

F (1/6): *Viewotron #2*.

### Week 2

M (1/9): *We Can Fix It!*

W (1/11): *Understanding Comics*, Chapters 1-2.

F (1/13): Key Concept #1 due to CANVAS at class time.

### Week 3

M (1/16): *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*.

W (1/18): *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 3.

F (1/20): Key Concept #2 due to CANVAS at class time.

### Week 4

M (1/23): *One Hundred Demons*.

W (1/25): *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 4.

F (1/27): THEMATIC ANALYSIS PROJECT due to CANVAS by 11:59 PM.

### Week 5

M (1/30): *American Born Chinese*.

W (2/1): *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 5.

F (2/3): Key Concept #3 due to CANVAS at class time.

### Week 6

M (2/6) : *March Book 1*.

W (2/8): *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 6.

F (2/10): Key Concept #4 due to CANVAS at class time.

Week 7

M (2/13): *A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge*.

W (2/15): *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 7.

F (2/17): Key Concept #5 due to CANVAS at class time.

Week 8

M (2/20): *Rosalie Lightning*, Chapters 1-6.

W (2/22): *Understanding Comics*, Chapters 8-9.

F (2/24): FORMAL ANALYSIS PROJECT due to CANVAS by 11:59 PM.

Week 9

M (2/27): *Rosalie Lightning*, Chapters 7-12.

W (3/1): TBA: Selected Critical Text.

F (3/3): Key Concept #6 due to CANVAS at class time.

Week 10: SPRING BREAK

Week 11

M (3/13): *My Friend Dahmer*, Parts 1-2.

W (3/15): TBA: Selected Critical Text.

F (3/17): Key Concept #7 due to CANVAS at class time.

Week 12

M (3/20): *My Friend Dahmer*, Parts 3-Epilogue.

W (3/22): TBA: Selected Critical Text.

F (3/24): Key Concept #8 due to CANVAS at class time.

Week 13

M (3/27): *Soldier's Heart* Book 1

W (3/29): TBA: Selected Critical Text.

F (3/31): ALTERNATIVE THEORIST PROJECT due to CANVAS by 11:59 PM.

Week 14

M (4/3): *Soldier's Heart* Book 2

W (4/5): TBA: Selected Critical Text.

F (4/7): NO CLASS MEETING - COMICS CONFERENCE EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENT (posted on CANVAS).

Week 15

M (4/10): *Soldier's Heart* Book 3

W (4/12): TBA: Selected Critical Text.

F (4/14): Alternative Memoir Presentation Workshop

Week 16: ALTERNATIVE MEMOIR PRESENTATIONS

F (4/21): ALTERNATIVE MEMOIR REFLECTION ESSAY and PROJECT REVISION due to CANVAS by 11:59 PM.

## General Assessment Guidelines

A - You successfully completed the assignment at a high quality level, and your work shows originality and creativity. Your paper reveals that you have grappled deeply with the assignment's topic. Your paper is clearly structured, thoroughly supported, and persuasive. The assignment contains no errors in grammar, spelling, and/or syntax.

B - You successfully completed the assignment at a moderately high level. Your paper reveals that you have thought deeply about the assignment's topic and have developed a largely persuasive argument, although your work may need slight revisions in terms of structure and/or content. The assignment is almost completely without errors in grammar, spelling, and/or syntax.

C - While your paper reveals that you have given some thought to the assignment's topic, your paper seems more of a rough draft than a final version and requires substantial revisions, likely in terms of both structure and content, in order to persuade the reader. While your assignment may be readable, it contains some errors in grammar, spelling, and/or syntax.

D - You did what the assignment required of you at a poor quality level. Work in this range needs significant revision. The paper's main ideas are poorly supported, and an organizational structure is difficult to discern. Frequently, writing at this level may suffer from many problems in grammar, spelling, and/or syntax which are so serious as to render portions of the paper nearly unreadable.

E - Papers which earn E's fail to show that the writer has given any consideration to the assignment's topic. The paper offers slim to no support for its argument, and an organizational structure cannot be discerned. The paper contains an unsatisfactory number of errors in grammar, spelling, and/or syntax. Importantly, if any of the paper has been plagiarized, it will also receive a failing grade.

## Final Grade Scale

A	4.0	93-100	930-1000	C	2.0	73-76	730-769
A-	3.67	90-92	900-929	C-	1.67	70-72	700-729
B+	3.33	87-89	870-899	D+	1.33	67-69	670-699
B	3.0	83-86	830-869	D	1.0	63-66	630-669
B-	2.67	80-82	800-829	D-	0.67	60-62	600-629
c+	2.33	77-79	770-799	E	0.00	0-59	0-599