ENG 1131-1802 (Class# 13536)
Writing through Media: Comics Adaptations and (Re)making // Fall 2019

Instructor Name: Charles Acheson
Course Meeting Times: Class: MWF 6 (12:50-1:40) // Viewing: M 9-11 (4:05-7:05)
Course Meeting Location: Architecture Building (ARCH) 0116 for both class and viewings
Office Location and Hours: Turlington Hall 4359 // Office Hours: MW 7 (2:00-3:00) & by appt.
Course Website: Canvas
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Course Description:
As the rise of the Marvel and DC cinematic universes bring into stark relief, comics-to-film adaptations about superheroes are immensely popular. Unsurprisingly, then, superhero narratives receive the greatest critical attention in both academic and popular settings. Yet, despite the publicity and box office numbers, these adaptations account for only a small number of comics-based adaptations across all media. This course seeks to ameliorate the discrepancy in attention by focusing primarily on non-superhero adaptations, though we will still attend to the superhero phenomenon. This leads us to three guiding questions for the semester: How does the comics medium lend itself to adaptation with special focus on the structure of the comics page? How do narratives change when they move from their original medium to another? As students of adaptation, how can we use the tenets of adaptation and remix to gain additional understanding of not only media, but also our local and global cultures as well?

During this course, we will explore a plentitude of answers to these guiding questions through various techniques both critical and creative. While we will examine *Spider-Man*—one of the longest running and most adapted superhero narratives ever—we will expand

our field of inquiry to include comics of numerous genres including fantasy, drama, and science fiction. Moreover, we will engage comics from three of the most vibrant national comics traditions: the United States, Japan, and Brazil. Finally, our discussions will include not only film adaptations, but also television, podcasts, soundtracks, prose, and digital mashups enabled by new media technologies. These discussions will spawn from daily class participation, brief journal assignments, and quarterly projects, which include both essay writing and creating comics.

Course Objectives:
- Students will learn about the architecture of comics, as well as the limits and potential of the medium.
- Students will learn how narratives shift and change as they move through various media.
- Students will gain knowledge as to how adaptation occurs in various cultures.
- Students will engage the media around them to interpret other pieces of media.
- Students will write, listen, and talk during each class meeting.
- Students will enhance their critical thinking abilities through both argumentative writing and creative making.

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:
The following texts must be acquired by students (any English-language edition is acceptable):
Akira, Vol 1 by Katsuhiro Otomo
Fun Home by Alison Bechdel
Marvel Masterworks: The Amazing Spider-Man Volume 1 by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko
The Adventure Zone: Here There Be Gerblins by Carey Pietsch, Clint McElroy, Justin McElroy, Travis McElroy, and Griffin McElroy
Two Brothers by Gabriel Bá and Fábio Moon
The Brothers by Milton Hatoum

The following texts/films/episodes will be made available through class viewings, Canvas, or ARES:
Akira (1988 film)
Bartkira, Vol 1 by James Harvey
Fun Home (Soundtrack of the 2015 musical)
Spider-Man: Into the Spider-verse (2018 film)
Selected episodes of *The Simpsons*
Selected episodes of *Spider-Man* 1967, 1994, and 2017 animated series
The Adventure Zone: Here There Be Gerblins (Podcast)
Understanding Comics by Scott McCloud
Remix Theory by Eduardo Navas

Assignments (see below for Grading Rubric):

Close Reading Project (50 pts) **–** 500 words
To start our assignments for the semester, we will begin with the basic skills of close reading comics and visual texts as a whole. Students will select one page (or a two-page sequence) from *Fun Home* and will articulate how Alison Bechdel constructs the page(s) and how the combination or word and image works in their selection.

Contrasting Form Project (150 pts) – 1,000 words
For this project, students will compare and contrast the different formal versions of one our course texts. Specifically, students will analyze how their chosen text approaches scenes differently in the different forms and what the effect is then for the reader. How does it change a specific scene? What is the effect? Students will articulate an argument about the changes made using both their original thinking and Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* for support.

Contrasting Themes Project (200 pts) – 1,200 words

For this project, students will compare and contrast the depiction of a certain theme and how it appears in the chosen texts. While not an explicitly form-focused project, discussions of form will be essential to developing a persuasive argument. Specifically, students will select a theme and compare and contrast how the comics and the adaption handle the chosen theme. Students will articulate an argument about the changes made from the comic to the film using both their original thinking and Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* for support.

Comics Adaptation of a Short Story (200 pts) – 1,300 words
Having read a prose-to-comics adaptation in *Two Brothers*, this project asks that students adapt a short story of their choosing into a brief four to six-page comic. Although students will not be citing Scott McCloud in the project, they must consider his theorizations on the medium and how they can incorporate his ideas to tell a more compelling narrative. As part of the assignment, students will provide a brief reflection essay explaining their goals for the comic and thought process for the creative decisions they made.

Critical Mashing Project (300 pts) – 2,000 words
Leading up to this final project, we will have read *Bartkira, Vol 1* (a mashup of *Akira* and *The Simpsons*). The *Bartkira* Project challenges readers to think about the themes and issues present in *The Simpsons* and *Akira* through the lens of the other. As a result, this mashup enables new understandings of both original texts, as well as what they mean. For this project, using texts from the course (one outside text is allowed with permission from instructor), students will produce their own mashup comic similar to *Bartkira*. In addition, students will write a brief essay about the project in which they critically examine how the mashup reveals new understandings of themes within each original piece. All previous assignments (especially weekly journal writings) build toward this final project.

Participation (100 pts)
Participation is expected in every class meeting. At any point of the semester, if the instructor feels that participation or class readiness is flagging, they may institute surprise graded quizzes. If quizzes are needed, their introduction into the course will be stated in class and on Canvas before any are administered.

Course Policies:
1. You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance:* Each student has three non-penalized absences; however, for each absence after the third, a student's final grade will be lowered by 10%. When a student reaches six absences, they automatically fail the course. Class meetings and viewings count equally toward this attendance policy.
3. *Late Arrivals:* Students that are more than ten minutes late to a meeting or viewing will be given a lateness check. Three checks equal an absence.
   https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx
4. *Classroom Behavior*: Students are expected to respect their peers, the instructor, and the classroom environment. When not used for activities, all phones need to be silenced and put away. Our classroom provides computers for every student, but

laptops or other learning technologies are welcome. During class and viewing times, all technology must be used for the activity at hand exclusively.

5. *UF's policy on Sexual Harassment*: The University of Florida is committed to providing a safe educational, working, and residential environment that is free from sexual harassment or misconduct directed towards any and all members of the community: https://titleix.ufl.edu/policy-statement/

6. *Project Format & Submission*: As this is an English course, all essays submitted for grading are expected to meet MLA 8th Edition guidelines. All projects are to be uploaded to the appropriate Canvas drop box before the due date listed. For creative projects, free-to-use scanners are available in the library.

7. *Late Projects*: Projects submitted late will incur a 10% penalty for each day overdue.

8. *Project Maintenance Responsibilities.* Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.

9. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism.* UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: 'On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.'" The Honor Code (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.
   A Student must not represent as the Student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:
   > a. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
   > b. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
   > c. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
   > d. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.

10. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor early in the semester.

11. *Students who are in distress* or who are in need of counseling or urgent help: please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to you. UF's Counseling and Wellness Center offers additional support: 352-392-1575, or contact them online: https://counseling.ufl.edu/

12. For information on UF Grading policies, see: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx

13. *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.

14. *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

15. Occasionally, our viewing periods will conclude after sunset. For safety, students should enter the following numbers into their phone and familiarize themselves with the services available from both resources:
    a. University of Florida Police Department: 352-392-1111 (for non-emergencies; for emergencies, call 9-1-1). http://www.police.ufl.edu/
    b. The Student Nighttime Auxiliary Patrol: 352-392-SNAP (7627). http://www.police.ufl.edu/community-services/student-nighttime-auxiliary-patrol-snap/
16. This syllabus is subject to change should a need arise.

Calendar
Listed below, you will find some general discussion topics we will address each day and due dates. All assignments are due on the listed day at class time unless otherwise specified.

Week 1: Welcome and *Fun Home*		Assignments Due:
W 8/21	WELCOME!	
F 8/23	Introduction: *Fun Home* / Taking Sides in Academic Writing	*Understanding Comics* Chapters 1-2

Week 2: *Fun Home*		Assignments Due:
M 8/26	The Form of *Fun Home* / Thesis Statements	*Fun Home* Chapters 1-2
Viewing	*Fun Home* Theatrical Soundtrack	
W 8/28	Discuss *Fun Home*	*Fun Home* Chapters 3-4
F 8/30	Artistic Style in *Fun Home*	*Understanding Comics* Chapters 3-4

Week 3: *Fun Home*		Assignments Due:
M 9/2	No Class – Labor Day	
Viewing	No Viewing – Labor Day	
W 9/4	Sketching ideas of themes and contrasting / Using Evidence	*Fun Home* Chapters 5-7
F 9/6	Theater Staging and the Comics Page	**Close Reading Project DUE by MIDNIGHT to CANVAS**

Week 4: *The Adventure Zone*		Assignments Due:
M 9/9	Intro: *The Adventure Zone*	*The Adventure Zone* Chapters 1-2
Viewing	Listen to Episodes 1-3 of *The Adventure Zone*	
W 9/11	Marginalized Identities in Comics: Visualizing Race and Queerness in the *TAZ comic*	*The Adventure Zone* Chapters 3-4
F 9/13	Semiotics of Comics / Incorporating Evidence	*Understanding Comics* Chapters 5-6

Week 5: *The Adventure Zone*		Assignments Due:
M 9/16	Discuss: Differences between *TAZ* versions / Outlining	*The Adventure Zone* Chapters 5-6
Viewing	Listen to Episodes 4-6 of *The Adventure Zone*	
W 9/18	Discuss *TAZ* and Thesis Statements	Complete Draft of Contrasting Themes Project for Workshop
F 9/20	Conclusion: TAZ / Free Work on Project	**Contrasting Form Project DUE at MIDNIGHT to CANVAS**

Week 6: *Spider-Man*		Assignments Due:
M 9/23	Discuss: *Marvel Masterwork: The Amazing Spider-Man* / Silver Age of Comics	*Marvel Masterwork: The Amazing Spider-Man* Issues 1-2
Viewing	*Spider-Man: Into the Spiderverse*	
W 9/25	Discussion of film version of *Spider-Man*, as well as compared against the original	*Marvel Masterwork: The Amazing Spider-Man* Issues 3-4
F 9/27	How Does this Spider-Man change from the present version?	*Marvel Masterwork: The Amazing Spider-Man* Issues 5-6

Week 7: *Spider-Man*		Assignments Due:
M 9/30	Class and *Spider-Man* / Developing Flow in Essays	*Marvel Masterwork: The Amazing Spider-Man* Issues 7-8
Viewing	*Spider-Man* Selected Television Episodes	
W 10/2	Discussion of difference between television series and comics	*Understanding Comics* Chapters 7-9
F 10/4	**No Class - Homecoming**	

Week 8: *Spider-Man*		Assignments Due:
M 10/7	Reboots and Relaunches / Conclusions	*Marvel Masterwork: The Amazing Spider-Man* Issues 9-10
Viewing	Composition Workshop	
W 10/9	Race and Ethnicity in the *Spider-Man* universe: Miles Morales	*Marvel Masterwork: The Amazing Spider-Man* Issues 11-12
F 10/11	Conclusion: *Spider-Man*	**Contrasting Theme Project DUE at MIDNIGHT to CANVAS**

Week 9: *Two Brothers*		Assignments Due:
M 10/14	Brazilian Comics	*Two Brothers* Chapters 1-3
Viewing	Use viewing period to read *The Brothers*	
W 10/16	How do Bá and Moon use the medium differently from Bechdel and Lee/Ditko?	*The Brothers* Chapters 1-3
F 10/18	The Uncanny Valley: Bodies in Comics	*Two Brothers* Chapters 4-6

Week 10: *Two Brothers*		Assignments Due:

M 10/21	What decisions do Bá and Moon make when adapting *The Brothers*?	*The Brothers* Chapters 4-6
Viewing	Comics Design workshop	
W 10/23	What does the visual component of comics add or take away from *The Brothers*?	*Two Brothers* Chapters 7-9
F 10/25	Small Group and Brainstorm: What short story are you using and how can you adapt it?	*The Brothers* Chapters 7-9

Week 11: *Two Brothers*		Assignments Due:
M 10/28	How would you change *Two Brothers* now having read a portion of *The Brothers*?	*Two Brothers* Chapters 10-Epilogue
Viewing	Making Your Comic workshop	
W 10/30	It's Black and White: How black and white comics approach moral grey areas	*The Brothers* Chapters 10-12
F 11/1	Introduce: *Akira, Vol 1* / Free Work on the Project	**Comics Adaptation of a Short Story DUE AT MIDNIGHT to CANVAS**

Week 12: *Akira*		Assignments Due:
M 11/4	No regular class meeting, instead we will have individual meetings with the instructor to discuss your Critical Mashing project.	
Viewing	*Akira* film	
W 11/6	Discuss *Akira* film	
F 11/8	Discuss *Akira, Vol 1*	*Akira, Vol 1* pp. 1-138

Week 13: *Akira*		Assignments Due:
M 11/11	**No Class for Veteran's Day**	
Viewing	**No Viewing for Veteran's Day**	
W 11/13	Discuss *Akira, Vol 1*	*Akira, Vol 1* pp. 139-230
F 11/15	Conclude: *Akira, Vol 1*	*Akira, Vol 1* pp. 231-363

Week 14: *Bartkira*		Assignments Due:
M 11/18	What are the effects of the *Bartkira* mashup?	*Bartkira, Vol 1*, pp. 1-138
Viewing	*The Simpsons* Selected Episodes	
W 11/20	Urbanity and "Lost Youth" in *Bartkira*	*Bartkira, Vol 1* pp. 139-230
F 11/22	Nuclear Power in *Bartkira*	*Bartkira, Vol 1* pp. 231-363

Week 15: *Bartkira*		Assignments Due:
M 11/25	Discuss *Bartkira* / What does *Bartkira* achieve?	**Critical Mashing Comics DUE AT MIDNIGHT to CANVAS**

Viewing	Using Your Comic in Your Essay workshop
W 11/27	**No Class for Thanksgiving**
F 11/29	**No Class for Thanksgiving**

Week 16: *Bartkira*		**Assignments Due:**
M 12/2	Conclusions and Final Thoughts: Media in Transit / Evaluations	
Viewing	Final Essay workshop	
W 12/4	Conclusions and Final Thoughts: Cultural Networks and Exchanges	**Critical Mashing Essay DUE at MIDNIGHT to CANVAS**

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
B	3.0	83-86	830-869
B-	2.67	80-82	800-829
C+	2.33	77-79	770-799

D+	1.33	67-69	670-699
D	1.0	63-66	630-669
D-	0.67	60-62	600-629
E	0.00	0-59	0-599