

"Seeing is Believing? Comics Nonfiction" Section 19E7 Course Number 15858

Time: MWF 12:50-1:40pm **Place:** Matherly 0113

Instructor Name: Fi Stewart-Taylor **Email:** f.stewarttaylor@ufl.edu

Office: I'll let y'all know!

Office Hours: Wed., 11:30am-12:30pm; email for other times or to make an appointment.

Union statement: This course was prepared by and is taught by a member of UF-GAU. The syllabus was written during unpaid time over the summer.

Other Policies: See end of the syllabus for course policies, including policies required by UF.

Course Description: While "Graphic Novel" remains the foremost industry term for longer and more ambitious or serious, works in comics, what of all the comics that precisely are not novels- non-fiction? How does the visual register in comics impact the kind of nonfiction produced as comics, and how do the cultural, social, and economic associations attached to the comics form inflect these projects? We will consider these questions, and broader framing questions about creative nonfiction, literature, and how claims to truth are produced, read, and contested.

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Course Texts:

You may purchase or acquire required texts however you would like, in any format or edition. Additional course texts will be available for download as PDFs via Canvas or through online links posted on the syllabus and course website. Texts with an * are widely available in pdf.

- Kyle Baker, *Nat Turner*
- *Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*
- *Joe Sacco, *Palestine*
- Susie Cagle, *How To Understand Israel in 60 Days Or Less*
- Barajas, Henry, and J. Gonzo, *LA VOZ DE M.A.Y.O.: TATA RAMBO, VOL. 1*
- *Art Spiegelman, *Maus vol 1: My Father Bleeds History*
- *Rius, *Marx for Beginners*
- Lynda Barry, *Syllabus*
- Nathan Hale, *Nathan Hale's Hazardous Tales: Big Bad Iron Clad!*
- Robin Ha, *Almost American Girl*
- Kabi Nagata, *My Lesbian Experience With Loneliness*
- Julia Kaye, *Super Late Bloomer*
- Carta Monir, *Lara Croft Was My Family*
- Laura Lannes, *By Monday I'll Be Floating in the Hudson With the Other Garbage*
- Eleanor Davis, *You and a Bike and a Road*

Assignments:

□ Class Facilitation & Discussion Questions (one presentation, 30 points)

You will each sign up to facilitate a course period, which means arriving with a brief introduction to the text and a list of discussion questions. Up to two students may sign up for each course session, and students may work together if they choose. You will be responsible only for a 5 minute introduction, formatted however you would like, and writing 3-5 discussion questions. Depending on the number of students in the class, this assignment may be modified.

□ Short Papers: (4 papers, 700 words, 55 points each, 220 points total)

You will write four short papers, one per "unit" (journalism, history, education, autobiography), of about 600 words each. Each should perform a close reading of a text of your choice from the unit, and involve at least one secondary text. You may use any of the secondary texts assigned in that unit or the course, or an outside reading of your choice. The goal here is for you to make an argument about an effect of the text, grounded in specific details, visual, design, and/or textual, and to invoke and apply one or more of the theoretical concepts from a secondary reading, if applicable. If the secondary reading you choose is non-theoretical, the goal is to use the secondary reading to substantiate your argument about the effect of the comic.

While this may sound quite informal, I am asking you to use MLA format citations, and standard paragraphing, grammar, and argumentation, except when you find it necessary to do otherwise to make an argument about e.g., cultural literacies.

! Response Journal (15 texts, 5 points each, 75 points total):

I feel that documenting responses to texts as we read, or just after, helps us to be better readers and, perhaps more importantly, better rememberers when we sit down to write. Like many instructors, I am using grading, and a mandatory assignment, as a tool to "encourage" you all to try what I believe to be a useful strategy. Using a Canvas discussion forum, you will document initial reactions to a text, thoughts, questions, page numbers, etc. This will be graded only on completion, for 5 points per text- not per class session, eg, you need write only one for *Fun Home* even though discussion takes place over two days. You may skip any day for which you are absent, although you may choose to complete the journal even if you are absent.

! Longer Paper (One paper, 1,500 words, 200 points)

You will write one longer paper, of about 1,000 words, on any text from our course or a nonfiction comic of your choice. You will need to conduct research, using academic databases, and perform a longer, more sustained, reading, and create an original argument about the comic of your choice. This assignment is fundamentally similar to the

response papers, but longer and with the expectation that you will locate for yourself at least one secondary source which supports your argument or enhances your reading of the text. Your argument should not be identical to that of the secondary source.

! Self Evaluation (one self eval, ~600 words, 30 points):

At the end of the course, I will ask you to write a self evaluation, describing how you have worked on key course skills and how you have developed as a writer and thinker in this course. I will also ask you to elaborate on which assignments and texts were helpful towards these ends, and which less so. Ultimately you know much more about your learning than I do, and you are best placed and best suited to evaluate your work.

Grading Scale:

I use a ten point scale for all assignments & final grades.

A: 100-90 B: 90-80 C: 80-70 D: 70-60 E: 60 and below

Rubric:

This rubric applies to all written work not graded on completion.

A work: Will put forth a clear argument, develop it from specific, adequately cited, sources, critically engage with secondary sources, engage with the visual, rhetorical, and formal properties of the primary sources and course themes. A work uses language and style conventions deliberately, carefully and clearly to support arguments and readings.

B work: Will put forth an argument, support it with sources, reference the argument put forth by the secondary sources and engage with the visual, rhetorical, and formal properties of the primary sources and with course themes. B work will use language and style conventions clearly to support arguments and readings.

C work: Will have start of an argument, although it may not be clear in specifics or stakes, will reference course themes, and reference primary and secondary sources. In C work, use of language or style may slightly obscure argument or readings.

D work : May not yet have an argument, but will engage with primary and secondary sources and reference the visual, rhetorical, and formal properties of the primary sources as well as course themes. In D work, language use significantly obscures argument and readings.

E work: Work which does not engage at all with visual, rhetorical, or formal qualities of primary or secondary sources or course themes will receive an E. Work I cannot read because of language, style, or grammar use will receive an E.

Learning goals:

My goal for this class is that you develop your skill at reading and describing comics- the effect they have on you as a reader, or on an intended audience, and how their formal properties create those effects. I also hope that you will think about the genres which compose nonfiction, the claims to "truth" and authority which underlie these genres, and the "bigger" problems of knowledge production and communication which undergird the entire question of nonfiction. I also hope that these texts will introduce you to creators with different ideas about nonfiction, representation, honesty, and authority, and enable you to think about how you look for truth(s) in your own life. While this class is focussed on nonfiction within a Western epistemic context, and does not deal extensively with the colonial underpinnings of these knowledges, nor alternative ontologies or epistemologies, my hope is that developing a thoughtful engagement, sometimes a critique of, these categories will help you understand some of the ways knowledge is produced and consumed in both vernacular and academic contexts. If not, I hope you will enjoy the comics.

I encourage you to set your own learning goals at the start of this class, in terms of how our work together can serve your larger educational goals, whether in writing, reading, professionalization, discussion, exposure to new ideas or texts, or content mastery in a field of your choice.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1: Introductions

Monday, August 23rd:

In class: Picturing Climate Change exercise
Syllabus and community expectations

Wednesday, August 25th

Scott McCloud, ch 1-3 of *Understanding Comics*

Friday, August 27th

Heyne, Eric. "TOWARD A THEORY OF LITERARY NONFICTION." *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 33, no. 3, 1987, pp. 479-490. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26282388. Accessed 11 Aug. 2021.

WEEK 2: Comics Journalism

Monday, August 30th:

Sophie Yanow, "Gathering of the Tribes" on *The Nib* <https://thenib.com/gathering-of-the-tribes/>

Graphic Reporting project- storyboard your own reporting on an issue in Gainesville or your community. It must depict an event of some kind, rather than only information.

Wednesday, September 1st:

Palestine pt 1

Friday, September 3rd:

Palestine 2

Michael Ryan (2001) Journalistic Ethics, Objectivity, Existential Journalism, Standpoint Epistemology, and Public Journalism, Journal of Mass Media Ethics, 16:1, 3-22

WEEK 3: Comics Journalism

Monday, September 6th:

No class! Labor is entitled to all it creates, including this holiday.

Wednesday, September 8th:

How To Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less part 1

Friday, September 10th:

How To Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less part 2

"Comics as Memoir and Documentary: A Case Study of Sarah Glidden" by Johannes C.P. Schmid in *Documenting Trauma In Comics*

WEEK 4: Comics Journalism

Monday, September 13th:

Finish *How To Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less*

Abramson, Yehonatan. "Making a Homeland, Constructing a Diaspora: The Case of Taglit-Birthright Israel." *Political Geography*, vol. 58, May 2017, pp. 14-23.
doi:10.1016/j.polgeo.2017.01.002.

Wednesday, September 15th:

Comics from The Nib: https://thenib.com/series/from_the_pandemic_issue/

Kunert-Graf, Rachel. "Comics and Narratological Perspective: (Witnessing) Bias in Direct Experience." *ImageText*, vol 10, no. 1, 2018, n. pag. Dept of English, University of Florida. 16 August 2021. Web.

Friday, September 17th:

Lamb, Chris. "Drawing Power." *Journalism Studies*, vol. 8, no. 5, Oct. 2007, pp. 715-729. doi:10.1080/14616700701504666.

Selected editorial cartoons from LOC collection (*Punch*, *Herblock*, etc)

WEEK 5: History

Monday, September 20th:

Ben Passmore <https://thenib.com/mlk-vs-rfw/>

Short paper 1, on "journalism," due

Wednesday, September 22nd:

LA VOZ DE M.A.Y.O.: TATA RAMBO, VOL. 1, Barajas, Henry, and J. Gonzo pt 1

Friday, September 24th.

LA VOZ DE M.A.Y.O.: TATA RAMBO, VOL. 1, Barajas, Henry, and J. Gonzo pt 2

Miller, Mark E. "THE YAQUIS BECOME AMERICAN INDIANS: The Process of Federal Tribal Recognition." *The Journal of Arizona History*, vol. 35, no. 2, 1994, pp. 183-204. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41696088. Accessed 24 June 2021.

WEEK 6: History

Monday, September 27th:

Maus part 1

Wednesday, September 29th:

Maus part 2

Marianne Hirsch, "Family Pictures: Maus, Mourning, and Post-Memory," *Discourse*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1992)

Friday, October 1st:

Kate Beaton's Hark! A Vagrant: Rosalind Franklin, Courtly Love, Invasion of Canada, Katharine Sui Fun Cheung, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, Ida B. Wells

WEEK 7: History

Monday, October 4th

Nat Turner part 1

Wednesday, October 6th

Nat Turner part 2

"The Revolutionary Body: Nat Turner, King, and Frozen Subjection" in *The Content of Our Caricature*

□

Friday, October 8th:

No class, so-called "homecoming"

WEEK 8: Education

Monday, October 11th:

Short paper 2, on "history," due

MoMA Illustrated lives series comics

1. Jillian Tamaki on Rutha Asawa <https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/565>
2. Jeffrey Lewis on Keith Haring <https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/504>

Wednesday, October 13th.

Rius, *Marx for Beginners* pt 1

Educational Comics Project- storyboard an explanation of a subject of your choice "for beginners"

Friday, October 15th:

Rius, *Marx for Beginners* pt 2

Pedagogy of the Oppressed ch 2

WEEK 9: Education

Monday, October 18th.

Sequentials issue 2.1, Learning to Engage <https://www.sequentialsjournal.net/index.html>

Introduce longer paper

Wednesday, October 20th.

Not Your Mother's Meatloaf ch 3, "health"

Friday, October 22nd.

Oh Joy Sex Toy sex ed comics (on Canvas, not OJST website)

Boer, Sam. "Maybe I'll Make Something with It': Comics as Alternative Sex Education." *Studies in Comics*, vol. 11, no. 1, July 2020, pp. 87-107

WEEK 10: Education

Monday, October 25th:

Syllabus part 1

Exercises from Syllabus

Wednesday, October 27th:

Syllabus part 2

Kirtley, Susan. "Considering the Alternative in Composition Pedagogy: Teaching Invitational Rhetoric With Lynda Barry's What It Is." *Women's Studies in Communication*, vol. 37, no. 3, Sept. 2014, pp. 339-359

Friday, October 29th:

short paper on 'education' due; topic for longer paper due

Big Bad Iron Clad pt 1

WEEK 11: Autobiography (YA)

Monday, Nov 1:

Finish BBIC

Ofer Ashkenazi and "Comics as Historiography," *ImageText*

http://imagetext.english.ufl.edu/archives/v11_1/ashkenazi_dittmar/

Short paper on 'education' due

Wednesday, Nov 3:

Robin Ha, *Almost American Girl*

Friday, Nov 5:

Robin Ha, *Almost American Girl*

"Not By A White Man" in *The Greatest Comic Book Of All Time*

Bibliography for longer paper due

WEEK 12: Autobiography (Memory)

Monday, Nov 8th:

Fun Home pt 1

Wednesday, Nov 10th:

Fun Home pt 2

"A tool Kit: 24 Strategies for Reading Life Narratives" in *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narrative*

Friday, Nov 12th:

Carta Monir, *Lara Croft Was My Family/RIP Mom*

Tony Wei Ling "You Yourself Are an Obsolete Computer," *WWAC*, on canvas

WEEK 13: Autobiography (memoir):

Monday Nov 15th:

My Lesbian Experience With Loneliness pt 1

Wednesday, Nov 17th:

My Lesbian Experience With Loneliness pt 2

"Picturing Embodied Selves" from *Autobiographical Comics: Life Writing in Pictures* by Elizabeth El Refaie

Friday, Nov 19th:

By Monday I'll Be Floating in the Hudson With the Other Garbage, Laura Lannes

WEEK 14: Autobiography (Diary)

Monday, Nov 22nd:

Julia Kaye, Super Late Bloomer

Weds-Fri:

No class.

WEEK 15: Autobiography (Diary)

Monday, Nov 29th:

You and a Bike and a Road pt 1

Wednesday, Dec 1:

You and a Bike and a Road pt 2

Friday, Dec 3:

Bianca Xunise comics: <https://www.biancaxunise.com/comics>

WEEK 16: Social Media Comics

Monday Dec 6th:

Hyperbole and a Half comics, online

Wednesday Dec 8th:

The Lilly "explainer" comics:

- <https://www.thelily.com/being-transgender-isnt-just-about-suffering-dont-reduce-me-to-a-tragic-figure/>,
- <https://www.thelily.com/when-i-came-out-as-trans-i-knew-i-needed-a-new-name-but-would-i-ever-find-one-that-felt-right/>,
- <https://www.thelily.com/im-nonbinary-heres-what-that-means/>

Final short paper on 'autobiography' due

Fri: No class! Self evaluation due Monday, longer paper due Wednesday.

Course Policies

Assignments Format & Due Dates: Late work will be accepted only if you email me to set up a plan to submit assignments. Otherwise, I ask that you submit assignments through Canvas, and only in pdf or .doc/.docx format.

Academic Honesty & Definition of Plagiarism: UF has Student Conduct and Honor Codes which detail UF's definition of plagiarism:<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/students/student-conduct-code/>

For our purposes, I ask that you take this class, and our limited use of secondary sources, as a chance to practice reading independently, discussing collaboratively, and expressing your interpretations of texts clearly and individually. I do not use turnitin, because turnitin profits from your papers by selling access to the database containing your work to schools like UF, which is, ironically, stealing. However, if I find evidence of plagiarism, I will behave as I am required to by UF.

Grade Appeals: You may appeal your grade for this class by contacting Dr. Kenneth Kidd, English Department Undergrad Advisor, kbkidd@ufl.edu.

Accommodations: Any student requesting academic accommodations based on disability is required by UF to register with the Disability Resource Center 352-392-8565. More information can be found here:<https://disability.ufl.edu/>

All students are welcome to meet with me to discuss their teaching and learning needs and strategies; this classroom should be a space where students can have their access needs met, with or without official documentation. Accordingly, I ask that you meet with me to discuss strategies for success in this class if you would like to do so.

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: <https://titleix.ufl.edu/about/title-ix-rights/>

In practice, in our classroom, I will enforce anti-harassment rules stringently, first, by intervening on any inappropriate or harassing comments made within my earshot or during the course of class discussion, second, by following the policies outlined above. If members of our class behave in ways which make you feel unsafe, in or out of our classroom, I will make every effort to support you- and please know that I am a mandatory Title 9 reporter.

Counseling and Wellness: 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/>

For mental health emergencies, UF recommends U Matter We Care: <https://umatter.ufl.edu/> or 352.294.CARE(2273), or UMATTER@UFL.EDU

Otherwise, I consider mental health to be an essential component of health- because I'm not an asshole. If you need accommodations because of mental health needs, please proactively communicate with me as your needs arise.

Childcare policy: If you need to bring a child to class, please do so, and please let me know how we can best support your ongoing involvement in our class during times when childcare is inaccessible.

Course Evaluations: At the end of the semester, you will receive emails asking you to evaluate this course: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/>

Grading: Refer to the university grading policy for information: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

COVID Policy: In the event of another pandemic, or a vaccine-resistant outbreak, we will take care of ourselves and each other by pursuing alternative modes of instruction. Otherwise, I ask that you wear a mask if you are not vaccinated, and that you do not eat or drink in the classroom except when necessary.

Absence & Lateness Policy: UFL has an absence and lateness policy, which you can see here, if you would like to do so:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Otherwise, I ask that you approach this class in a spirit of collaboration, which means, to me, bringing some amount of trust and presence to the classroom, both bringing your attention to the texts and our discussions, and sharing your time and ideas with us. I will invite you to tell me on the first day of class what a collaborative classroom is like for you, and we'll take it from there. Covid-19 has given us the opportunity to rethink a lot of how we spend our time in classes. I don't know how COVID has changed my classroom teaching, but I would like us to find out together how we can change our classroom experience with the lessons of this past year- with increased care for each other and patience with the unexpected complications that life has to offer. If that sounds a little bit Hallmark Original Movie, please know that in practice it will mostly mean I'm trying to re-learn how to do a classroom after a year of zoom school, and I assume some of y'all might be, too. We'll figure it out!