

## FIRST YEAR SEMINAR COURSE PROPOSAL

UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON

Use this form to submit **FSEM 100 topics** courses for review **or any other existing course** that you wish to have designated to meet the first year seminar requirement.

<b>COURSE NUMBER:</b>	FSEM 100 TOPICS		
<b>COURSE TITLE:</b>	CULTURE WORK & THE GRAPHIC NOVEL		
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Clarence W. Tweedy III	<b>DATE:</b>	9/04/2009
<i>This course proposal has the department's approval. (Put a check in the box to the right.)</i>			

**NOTE:** Click on the link for “first year seminar” at [www.jtmorello.org/gened](http://www.jtmorello.org/gened) to see the criteria used to evaluate courses proposed to meet the first year seminar requirement. See the report entitled “General Education Curriculum as Approved by the Faculty Senate” for additional details.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION.** In the space below, provide a one to two sentence description of this class. The description will be entered in Banner, and will also be used in other publications about the first year seminar program (such as the “Eagle Essentials” booklet).

This course will focus on the unique demands graphic novels place on the reader, the writer/artist and the story as well as how a form first known for pulp science fiction and melodrama now engages in “culture work” by telling stories about race, gender, addiction, sexuality, censorship, and terrorism. We will read such authors as Max Ernst, Frank Miller, Art Spiegelman, David Jamie Gilbert, Hernandez, Mariane Satrapi, Alison Bechdel, Joseph Loeb

**RATIONALE.** Using only the space provided in the box below, **briefly** state why this course should be approved as a first year seminar course.

I've discovered that graphic novels effectively create a safe venue for students to explore cultural issues that otherwise they are reluctant to discuss in a traditional classroom setting. The course encourages students to think openly and critically about culture as well as the intervention/ intersection of the graphic novel with social/ national narratives. Also, students will investigate a genre of visual art and text that has largely been under represented in the academy but extremely influential in society at large. They will be encouraged to use outside critical analyses in their explorations of both text and society, while clearly mapping out how the graphic novel genre participates in relevant historical as well as socio-political themes of modern society.

**SYLLABUS.** Attach a course syllabus.

**SUBMIT** this form and attached syllabus **electronically as one document** to Maya Mathur ([mmathur@umw.edu](mailto:mmathur@umw.edu)). All submissions **must** be in electronic form.

# FSEM 100: Culture Work and the Graphic Novel

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## ***Required Texts***

*300*, Frank Miller and Lynn Varley

*In the Shadow of No Towers*, Art Spiegelman

*Fall son*, Joseph Loeb

*Superman: Red Son*, Mark Millar

*Persepolis 2*, Marjane Satrapi

*Invasion of the Dykes to Watch Out For*, Alison Bechdel

*New York*, Will Eisner

*Beyond Palomar: a Love and Rockets Book*, Gilbert Hernandez

*Palestine*, Joe Sacco

### **Films:**

1. "300"

2. "Return of Superman"

3. "Persepolis"

4. "Paradise Now"

### **Books on Hold at Library:**

*Comics & Ideology*, ed. McAllister, Sewell, and Gordon

*Comic Book Nation*, Bradford Wright

*Reading Comics*, Douglas Wolk

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This course will focus on the reading of the contemporary graphic novel, a form with a voice made from the juxtaposition of visual art and text. Readings will focus on the unique demands this voice places on the reader, the writer/ artist and the story as well as how a form first known for pulp science fiction and melodrama now engages in "culture work" by telling stories about race, gender, addiction, sexuality, censorship, and terrorism. We will read such authors as Max Ernst, Frank Miller, Art Spiegelman, David Jamie, Gilbert Hernandez, Marjane Satrapi, Alison Bechdel, Joseph Loeb, Mark Millar, and Joe Sacco.

Students will investigate a genre of visual art and text that has largely been under represented in the academy but extremely influential in society at large. You will be encouraged to use outside critical analyses in their explorations of both text and society, while clearly mapping out how the graphic novel genre participates in relevant historical as well as socio-political themes of modern society.

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### Course Objectives:

- To expose students to graphic novels that reflect socio-political issues race, gender, class, etc.
- To identify common issues of concern within a culturally specific context
- To help students understand the socio-political historical context of the graphic novel genre
- To identify and assess the use of theme, narrative structure, characterization and other literary devices in articulating these issues and concerns

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### Course Requirements:

- Class Participation 10 points
  - Journal 10 points
  - Group presentation 15 points
  - Midterm exam 15 points
  - Final graphic novel (8 panel min.) and group essay 5- 7 pages 50 points
- Total = 100 points

**Journal:** For this course, you will be required to keep a journal. Thus, for each text of the course, you are required to read at least one academic article either about the author or the text. Also, you must compose 1 critical analysis that discusses a topic that you have become interested in over the course of the semester. Then you must compose a **1 to 2 page critical analysis (double spaced)** that discusses how the article that you read changed your understanding of the text or enhanced your understanding of a specific issue or theme of the text. **Thus, your journal should be 5 critical writings (worth 2 pts each for a total of 10 pts final grade) and a minimum of 5 to 7 pages.**

**The grading criteria are as follows: Invention 50%—does your analysis demonstrate a well thought out logical argument based on a specific thesis, Style 50%—does your analysis use appropriate MLA citation while conforming to the grammatical rules of Standard American English.** Finally, you will turn in a copy of your critical analysis for each text the first day that we began discussing that text (see syllabus weekly schedule). **These will not be returned to you; however, failure to turn in copies of your critical analysis on due dates will result in a 1pt deduction (each time) off of your final journal grade. Your complete journal will be due at the end of the semester (see syllabus weekly schedule). Also, a complete journal that includes all 5 journal entries is due the last day of class with the final essay.**

**Group presentations:** These presentations should establish the socio-historical context of the text, while tracing a major theme(s) through the text. Also, be sure to ground your presentation within a theoretical framework. Finally, the group will be expected to lead class discussion for the entire period in which they are presenting; moreover, at a minimum the group will not to provide an in-class handout that clearly outlines there presentation.

**Mid-term and Final examinations:** The **mid-term examination** will only cover the material presenting up to that point, while the **final examination** will be a cumulative review and

synthesis of the materials explored during the semester. If you have done the required reading, taken careful notes on all readings and class discussions, attended each class session, completed, and invested intellect, time, and energy in your assignments, and participated in class discussions you should do well on the examinations.

**Midterm and Final Research Essay:** For this class, students will **develop their own topic for their essays**. However, ideas for final essays must be approved by me.

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**Format:** All essays must be in **12 point Times new Roman or 10pt Courier** with **one inch margins** as well as **correct MLA citation**. Be sure to **number the pages** of your final essay  
**Completion and submission of assignments:** Failure to submit preliminary drafts on schedule, to participate in scheduled peer evaluations, or to turn in all drafts and other materials that may be required with the final version of the essay, may result in significant grade reduction, even to the extent of a failing grade for the assignment.

**All drafts/ revisions/ final drafts must be typed!!!!**

**Grading Scale:** A = 100-93/ A- = 92-90/ B+ = 89-87/ B = 86-83/ B- = 82-80/ C+ = 79-77/ C = 76-73/ C- = 72-70/ D+ = 69-67/ D = 66-63/ D- = 62-60/ F = 59 and below.

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### Course Guidelines and Policies

**Due Dates:** Due dates will only be extended for excused absences only. No Exceptions!!!!

**Late Work:** Absolutely no late work will be accepted. All assignments are due at the beginning of class!!!

**Office Hours:** If you need to meet with me please sign up for my office hours. Each week a sheet will be posted outside of my office with available times. Meetings will be limited to 10 to 15 minutes only. Thus, make sure you come prepared.

**Return of Assignments:** Final versions of major assignments are returned within two weeks following the due date. Daily work is returned within a week. Students who miss classes when assignments are returned are responsible for collecting their own work during office my hours.

**Attendance:** Because English 378 relies on writing workshop methods, regular attendance is essential. Thus, I will be taking attendance. **If you miss 2 or more classes your final grade will be reduced by 1 letter grade and ½ a letter grade for each class missed after that point.**

**Grades for class participation** will be determined by the student's participation in completing in class focus questions, short writing assignments, attendance, and peer reviews, etc...

**Unsatisfactory on mid-semester reports:** Students with a grade average of **below 70 (C)** will receive an unsatisfactory grade report at the mid-term.

**Honor Pledge:** Write the honor pledge and your signature on the back page of work submitted for evaluation.

**Punctuality:** Students are expected to come to class on time and stay for the whole period.

**Food/Drinks/ Tobacco:** You may bring food or beverages into the class. However, remember that this is a privilege and will be taken away if you fail to clean up after yourselves. No tobacco products are allowed in class whatsoever.

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## Provisional Course Schedule

### Week 1

Mon—Course Intro; Film—“300”

Wed—Finish Film; **Lecture—the History of the Graphic Novel and Reading the Graphic novel**

Fri—Miller; Journal #1 Due.

### Week 2

Mon. —Miller; read Chap.1—“Superheroes for the Common Man” in *Comic Book Nation*;

Wed. —Miller; “What Comics Are and What They Aren’t” in *Reading Comics*.

Fri. —Eisner; Chap 5—“Pictures, Words, and the Space Between Them” in *Reading Comics*.

### Week 3

Mon. —Eisner; **Group Presentation 1; Journal 2 due**; Read: Chap. 10—“Coming out in Comic Books” and Chap. 11—“Queer Characters in Comic Strips” in *Comics & Ideology*

Wed. —Eisner; read Chap 2—“Race, Politics, and Propaganda” in *Comic Book Nation*

Fri.—Spiegelman; **Group Presentation 2**; read Chap 4—“Superheroes and Superreaders” in *Reading Comics*.

### Week 4

Mon.—Spiegelman; **Journal 3 due; Group Presentation 3**; read “Reds, Romance, and Renegades” in *Comic Book Nation*.

Wed.—Spiegelman

Fri.—Hernandez; Chap. 8—“Questioning Authority” and Chap. 9—“Direct to the Fans” in *Comic Book Nation*.

### Week 5

Mon.—Hernandez; **Group Presentation 4; Journal 4 due**.

Wed.—Hernandez

Fri.—Film; “Persepolis

### Week 6

Mon.—Film: “Persepolis”

Wed.—Satrapi; **Journal 5 Due**.

Fri.—Satrapi; **Group Presentation 5**.

Week 7

Mon.—Sacco

Wed.—Sacco; **Journal 6 due.**

Fri.—Sacco; **Group Presentation 6 due.**

Week 8

Mon.—**Midterm exam.**

Wed.—Film: “Paradise Now”

Fri.—Film: “Paradise Now”

Week 9

Mon.—Bechdel; **Journal 7 due.**

Wed.—Bechdel; **Group Presentation 7**

Fri.—Bechdel

Week 10

Mon.—Film: “The Ultimate Avengers”

Wed.—Film: “The Ultimate Avengers”

Fri.—Millar

Week 11

Mon.—Millar; **Journal 8 due.**

Wed.—Millar

Fri.—Millar; **Group Presentation 8**

Week 12

Mon.—Loeb; **Journal 9 due.**

Wed.—Loeb

Fri.—Loeb; **Group Presentation 9.**

Week 13

Mon.—Film: “Superman Returns”

Wed.—Film: “ \_\_\_\_\_ ”

Fri.—Discussion about Group Projects.

Week 14

Mon.—Group Project Cohort in class peer review.

Wed.—Group Project Cohort in class peer review.

Fri.—Group Project Cohort in class peer review.

Week 15

MWF—**Individual Groups will present final projects.**



# **Final Group Project:**

For this assignment, create your own comic strip that you would someday wish to turn into a full length graphic novel. Your comic strip should be a minimum of eight panels. The comic strip will be worth 25 points of your total grade.

Finally, the written part of the project should be 5 to 7 pages, while including a least 4 of the following categories:

1. **The relevance of sequential visual art, sequential static images, and your deliberate sequence of an event(s).**
2. **Character(s)—why did you create/ draw the characters of your comic strip the way you do? What do they suggest of issues race, gender, class, sexuality, economic or politics?**
3. **Language—explore and discuss the importance of words in your visual representation. How do they effectively transition from panel to panel? How do you use vernacular to further develop your character(s)?**
4. **How did the use of symbols of motion/ movement and other icons interact with and affect the narrative of your comic strip?**

The format for the written part should be in the form of a business proposal. Please include the following: first, title page; second, a one paragraph abstract of your project; third, a one page group letter (business letter format) that details and outlines group members participation as well as contributions (must be signed by entire group); and, finally, four distinct sections that address the aforementioned categories. Also, you are required to incorporate a minimum of three critical outside sources into the written part of your project.

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**Assessment:** I will assess you in three areas:

- Your ability to read and write critically
  - Your ability to summarize, compare, and analyze argumentative essays ultimately incorporating them into your essay
  - Your ability to form a logical argument in a written format
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**Grading Criteria: Content, Organization, & Style**

**Content—worth 70%**

- Does your paper have an ambitious, well worded, focused thesis statement that effectively introduces the coming body content, while answering both the assignment and your specific questions?
  - Does the body of your essay as a whole support the argumentative claim made by your thesis statement?
  - Does your supporting material in each paragraph contribute to the development of the topic presented in your thesis?
  - Does your paper fairly acknowledge and represent multiple viewpoints, particularly those opposed to your personal stance?
  - Does your paper effectively answer the questions posed by the assignment?
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### **Organization—worth 15%**

- Is your paper logically organized with each paragraph supporting the thesis statement?
  - Is each paragraph logically organized, beginning with a strong topic sentence that directly ties to the thesis or the preceding paragraph?
  - Does each paragraph then follow with organized support of that topic sentence?
  - Do your paragraphs and sentences flow with effective transitions between each?
  - Does your conclusion effectively and adequately wrap up the discussion presented by your paper, leaving a positive spin on your argument?
  - Does your paper begin with an effective and relevant introduction that leads to your thesis statement?
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### **Style—worth 15%**

- Does your overall style reflect a thoughtful, objective presentation of your argument?
- Does your paper contain a varying sentence structure, combining simple ideas where possible?
- Is your paper free of grammar mistakes, spelling mistakes, and unnecessary use of “to be” verbs?
- Does your paper smoothly integrate your source material using an appropriate mixture of quotation, paraphrase, and summary?
- Is that source material correctly cited within the paper and on a MLA formatted works-cited page

**Grading Criteria For Presentations:** You must submit this form with the presentation handout the due you present in class!!! Failure to do so will result in deduction of 10 pts from your final presentation grade.

- Invention—is your presentation logically organized around a central thesis/ argument that explores a central theme or idea of the text. 20%
- Does your handout effectively map out/ outline the central points of your argument? 20%
- Organization—Is your presentation clear and concise, while demonstrating mastery of your subject matter? 20%
- Does your presentation effectively incorporate outside sources that clearly support and further the argument presented in your overall presentation as well as uses the appropriate MLA citation? 20%
- Do the questions at the end of your presentation generate a classroom discourse that challenges your audience, while actively encouraging serious debate in regard to your subject matter? 20%

**Presentation Subject:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Group members:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Group Leader's email:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Comments:**

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**Final Grade: A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, F**  
(Attach handout(s) to form please.)