

## "US Ethnic Comic Books at an Interdisciplinary Crossroads"

Professor Frederick Luis Aldama

Winter 2007

Course credits: 2

Grading: Letter

This seminar will explore how the research and theories advanced in philosophy, rhetoric, cognitive science, cultural studies, education, development psychology and psychobiology, can enhance our understanding of what our minds and bodies do when we immerse ourselves in the invented visual/verbal worlds of Latino comic books.

Some questions we will ask during the course of the quarter will include: What makes Latino comic books different from other comic books? Can adult comic book authors/artists capture that sense of adolescent play and/or childhood make-believe? Can non-Latino readers participate in such comic book worlds--and why? Do we ever really leave the real world when we enter into the world of the comic book? How might psychobiology, evolutionary theory, and neuroscience shed light on a given comic book artist-author's heightening of our emotion in ways that might make us more susceptible for a radical reconceptualizing of mainstream scripts of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality? Can they help us understand better our capacity to step into and read from outward behavior other people's interior thoughts and feelings? How might they speak to different ways of knowing ourselves and the world? How might their use of humor, tragedy, or heroism shed light on human emotions? This course will expose you to a range of humanistic and scientific models of investigation that will be useful not only in understanding more deeply what you do when reading Latino comic books, but will offer some foundational models for future studies.

### **Texts:**

We will read comic books by **Jose Martinez (<http://www.chosencomics.com/>)** as well as by Los Bros Hernandez (available at the campus bookstore). Theoretical readings will be accessible via the world wide web and/or OSU's electronic reserves. Readings will not exceed 25 pages per week.

### **Course Policies:**

**Attendance.** To make for a productive seminar in which we will explore the class themes, I require that students attend all class meetings, read the assigned texts prior to the class, and facilitate a discussion on a chosen topic.

**Response journal.** I require that each student write a response to the assigned texts: 1 page (typed, double space, 12 point font, Times, 1" margins) that should discuss whether or not the argument and/or concepts presented enrich your understanding of the week's assigned short story, comic book, and/or film. You will bring your journal entry to the first class of the week where we will share entries with one another. They will be collected at the end of this class.

**Grading** (letter grades will be assigned):

Attendance, facilitation of discussion, participation: 35%

Journal entries (weekly): 40%

One short final essay (500 words): 25%

**Plagiarism.** As defined by University Rule 3335-31-02, plagiarism is the representation of another person's work or ideas as one's own; it includes the unacknowledged word for word use

and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

**Students with Disabilities.** Students who feel s/he may need an accommodation for a disability should contact me privately. Students should also know that the Office for Disability Services (150 Pomerene Hall; 292-3307) provides for students with documented disabilities.

## **Weekly Syllabus**

### **Week 1**

Cultural race studies and comic books (Jeffrey A. Brown "Comic Book Masculinity and the New Black Superhero. E-reserve).

### **Week 2**

The mind and body split as seen in the Western philosophy of Descartes (and <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes-epistemology/#4>)

### **Week 3**

Kant's embodied knowledge <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-judgment/>

### **Week 4**

Aristotle's narrative universals <http://www.archelogos.com/technosofia/> and <http://www.kent.ac.uk/secl/german/theory.html>.

### **Week 5**

Rituals of play, the making of the playful storyteller, and the formation of the ludic reader as seen through the lens of developmental psychology and evolutionary biology. (Matthew Gervais and David Sloan Wilson's "The Evolutions and Functions of Laughter and Humor: A Synthetic Approach. E-reserve.)

### **Week 6**

Literacy and bilingualism in recent theories of education. [http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/nabe/brj/v19/19\\_2\\_nanez.htm](http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/nabe/brj/v19/19_2_nanez.htm)

### **Weeks 7 & 8**

Cognitive science insights into our ability to read minds. (Lisa Zunshine *Introduction/Conclusion to Why We Read Fiction*. E-reserve.)

### **Weeks 9 & 10**

Cognitive science and questions of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. <http://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/malik/not-equal.htm> and [http://www.kenanmalik.com/lectures/race\\_oxford1.html](http://www.kenanmalik.com/lectures/race_oxford1.html)