

## Term Information

Effective Term Autumn 2019

## General Information

Course Bulletin Listing/Subject Area English  
Fiscal Unit/Academic Org English - D0537  
College/Academic Group Arts and Sciences  
Level/Career Undergraduate  
Course Number/Catalog 2464  
Course Title Introduction to Comics Studies  
Transcript Abbreviation IntroComicsStudies  
Course Description Study of sequential comics and graphic narrative and the formal elements of comics, how word and image compete and collaborate in comics to make meaning and how genre is activated and redeployed. Students analyze comics texts, articulate and defend interpretations of meaning and learn about archival research at OSU's Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum. No background in comics is required.  
Semester Credit Hours/Units Fixed: 3

## Offering Information

Length Of Course 14 Week, 12 Week, 8 Week, 7 Week, 6 Week, 4 Week  
Flexibly Scheduled Course Never  
Does any section of this course have a distance education component? No  
Grading Basis Letter Grade  
Repeatable No  
Course Components Lecture  
Grade Roster Component Lecture  
Credit Available by Exam No  
Admission Condition Course No  
Off Campus Never  
Campus of Offering Columbus, Lima, Mansfield, Marion, Newark

## Prerequisites and Exclusions

Prerequisites/Corequisites English 1110  
Exclusions  
Electronically Enforced Yes

## Cross-Listings

Cross-Listings

## Subject/CIP Code

Subject/CIP Code 23.0101  
Subsidy Level Baccalaureate Course  
Intended Rank Freshman, Sophomore, Junior

## Requirement/Elective Designation

General Education course:  
Visual and Performing Arts

## Course Details

### Course goals or learning objectives/outcomes

- Students demonstrate knowledge of the history of comics and understanding of the formal elements of sequential comics and graphic narrative. They articulate and defend, verbally and in writing, analyses of comics texts and their meanings

### Content Topic List

- History, forms, and study of comics
  - Storytelling that blends words and images
  - The grammar of comics and the terminology for how comics texts achieve their effects
  - Newspaper comic strips, comic books, graphic novels and memoirs, manga, web comics, and new experimental print forms
  - Comics' interventions in the politics of gender, sexuality, class, and race
- No

### Sought Concurrence

## Attachments

- Intro Comics Studies proposal.doc: New Course Proposal  
*(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Lowry, Debra Susan)*
- GE Rationale and Assessment Plan.docx: GE Rationale and Assessment Plan  
*(GEC Course Assessment Plan. Owner: Lowry, Debra Susan)*
- Intro to Comics sample syllabus.docx: Sample Syllabus  
*(Syllabus. Owner: Lowry, Debra Susan)*
- JRobb to Dean Heysel.pdf: Letter of Support  
*(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Lowry, Debra Susan)*
- Concurrence FRIT.docx: Concurrence  
*(Concurrence. Owner: Lowry, Debra Susan)*

## Comments

- With no disrespect to English whatsoever, there are other faculty and units who teach and publish on Comics so an indication of support from FRIT (Maggie Flinn) is one person who comes to mind. Also, I think that a letter of support from Billy Ireland Collection leadership/libraries is also a valuable document to attach to this proposal. *(by Heysel, Garrett Robert on 11/01/2018 08:58 PM)*
- Professors Gardner, Warhol, and Aldama area leading experts in comics studies, providing leadership in this field internationally along with colleagues at the forefront of Popular Culture Studies  
<https://popularculturestudies.osu.edu/comics>. *(by Lowry, Debra Susan on 11/01/2018 02:42 PM)*

**COURSE REQUEST**  
2464 - Status: PENDING

Last Updated: Heysel,Garett Robert  
11/17/2018

**Workflow Information**

Status	User(s)	Date/Time	Step
Submitted	Lowry,Debra Susan	11/01/2018 02:43 PM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	Lowry,Debra Susan	11/01/2018 02:43 PM	Unit Approval
Revision Requested	Heysel,Garett Robert	11/01/2018 08:58 PM	College Approval
Submitted	Lowry,Debra Susan	11/16/2018 01:03 PM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	Lowry,Debra Susan	11/16/2018 01:03 PM	Unit Approval
Approved	Heysel,Garett Robert	11/17/2018 08:16 PM	College Approval
Pending Approval	Nolen,Dawn Vankeerbergen,Bernadette Chantal Oldroyd,Shelby Quinn Hanlin,Deborah Kay Jenkins,Mary Ellen Bigler	11/17/2018 08:16 PM	ASCCAO Approval

## COURSE PROPOSAL

### English 2464: **Introduction to Comics Studies**

#### *A. Course Objectives*

This course will introduce students to a variety of approaches to the study of sequential comics and graphic narrative. Students will develop a sophisticated understanding of the formal elements of comics, for how word and image compete and collaborate in comics to make meaning, for how genre is activated and redeployed by the comics form, and be able to articulate—in public speaking, class discussion, and writing—analysis of comics text, and to defend an interpretation of its meaning(s). In addition, students will work closely with the staff and resources at OSU's Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum and learn about both the history of comics and archival research. No background comics is necessary for students entering the course.

#### *B. Course Rationale*

Currently the English department serves as the curricular hub for comics studies at Ohio State, with an advanced 5000-level (grad/undergrad) course in graphic narrative, currently taught by Prof. Robyn Warhol and Jared Gardner, and regular offerings by Prof. Frederick Aldama on comics and film (under the 3378 special topics number) and by Prof. Gardner on the history of comics (under the 3364 special topics number). At least three of our faculty have ongoing research agendas in comics studies, and thanks in part to our collaborations with the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum we have increasingly become a national center for comics studies, attracting top graduate students in this emerging field. What we do not have at this time is a lower-level gateway course for undergraduate students interested in the field to take for foundational knowledge about the medium and its unique attributes and history. Added with our 3000-level and 5000-level offerings, this course will provide a rounded course of study in what is proving one of the solid growth areas in our curriculum. In addition, this course will provide a welcome opportunity for teaching experience in their field our growing body of graduate students working in comics studies (in 2015/16 alone we had three graduate students enter with extensive research and teaching agendas in comics studies).

At its core, of course, this will be a graduate student taught course, and we will have graduate instructors lining up to teach it, but we also will need faculty for the 8903 training on a regular basis. In addition to the faculty in the field mentioned above, we have a several other faculty with interests and expertise in comics studies—including Profs. Merrill Kaplin and Elizabeth Hewitt—and through growing connections between comics and Narrative Theory, Medical Humanities, and Digital Media Studies (among other fields) the group of interested faculty will almost certainly grow over time.

Undergraduate student interest remains extremely strong, as we know from our current enrollments in classes on this topic. The class will serve as a popular elective in the popular culture studies minor, of course, and we are preliminary conversations with other units in Arts & Humanities about the development of an interdisciplinary and international program in comics studies, with English serving as a curricular hub.

### *C. Assessment Plan for Course*

This course will be assessed during its first five years by the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the English Department Course Director for Film & Popular Culture Studies, as follows:

- a. **course evaluations** (SEI and Discursive) will be evaluated to determine how well the class is fulfilling its goals in the eyes of the students. We will require a question on the Discursive Evaluation of every section of the course for the first five years, specifically asking students to consider how the course meets its goals of providing tools, methods and theory for focused study of video game studies.
- b. At year 3 and 5 of the assessment, we will conduct a sample **follow-up survey** of 25 randomly selected students who had taken English 2464 earlier in their careers to assess the long-term benefits of and satisfaction with the class.

### *D. Additional Details*

- Prereq: English 1110
- GE: Visual and Performing Arts
- The course will be non-repeatable (3 credits).

Sample Syllabus:

English 2464

Introduction to Comics Studies

Robyn Warhol, Arts & Humanities Distinguished Professor of English

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This class introduces students to the history, forms, and study of comics: storytelling that blends words and images. We will approach comics as a medium (just like film, television, or print narrative) which expresses stories and ideas across a wide range of genres. Beginning by learning the grammar of comics and the terminology for how comics texts achieve their effects, we will study the ways comics are produced by their author/artists and the ways they are received by multiple and diverse audiences. The range of texts will include newspaper comic strips, comic books, graphic novels and memoirs, manga, web comics, and new experimental print forms. Readings will include classic studies of comics form, as well. While we will attend to comics' interventions in the politics of gender, sexuality, class, and race, we will also pay close attention to what makes them funny. Students will make one in-class group presentation and will write two short papers, one on comics form and one on characterization.

#### EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE GENERAL EDUCATION:

This class fulfills GE credit under the Arts & Humanities/Visual & Performing Arts category. As with all GE courses in Arts & Humanities, this class will develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; interpretation and evaluation; critical listening, reading, seeing, thinking, and writing; and experiencing the arts and reflecting on that experience. Further, as a Visual & Performing Arts GE course, students in the class will develop abilities to analyze, appreciate, and interpret an important visual form of human thought and expression, as well as engage in informed observation and active participation in a discipline within a visual mode of communication and meaning making.

#### COURSE GOALS:

- Grasp basic formal elements of comics, to be able to account for how they make meaning.
- Comprehend the relationship of word to image in comics across different genres.
- Understand the concept of "genre" by studying how it has been embodied through the comics medium.
- Master the basic concept of narrative form as it has been expressed in comics.
- Know the general outline of the history of U.S. comics, and some of the differences in comics from other national traditions (principally Japan).

- Be able to articulate--in public speaking, class discussion, and writing—a close analysis of a comics text, and to defend an interpretation of its meaning(s).
- Become aware of the world-class research collections available at OSU’s Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum

#### REQUIRED READINGS:

Unless otherwise indicated, all texts will be made available through Barnes & Noble The Ohio State University Bookstore.

Allie Brosh, *Hyperbole and a Half* (<http://hyperboleandahalf.blogspot.com/>) [online]  
*Archie Comics* [selections on Carmen]  
 Lynda Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* (2002)  
 Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* (2005)  
 Will Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative* (2008) [selections on Carmen]  
 George Herriman, *Krazy & Ignatz, 1925-1926* (edited by Bill Blackbeard, 2002)  
 Matt Madden, *99 Ways to Tell a Story: Exercises in Style* (2005) [selections on Carmen]  
 Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1994)  
 Dwayne McDuffie & Denys Cowan, *Rocket* (edition TBA)  
 Toshiro Ono, *Pokemon, Vol. I: The Electric Tale of Pikachu* (1999)  
 Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (2004)  
 Charles Schulz, *More Peanuts (1952-1954)* [selections on Carmen]  
 Art Spiegelman, *Maus* (Vols. I and II) (2003)  
 James Sturm & Guy Davis, *Fantastic Four Legends: Unstable Molecules* (2003)  
 Chris Ware, *Building Stories* (2012)

#### GRADING:

Essay #1: 20 percent  
 Essay #2: 20 percent  
 Average of Weekly Page Analysis grades: 30 percent  
 Group presentation: 15 percent  
 Participation in discussion: 15 percent

#### ASSIGNMENTS:

##### Weekly Page Analysis

Each Friday you must complete an analysis (at least 250 words in length) of the form and content of one page from a comic we have read for that week, demonstrating at least one of the features of comics we discussed for that week. Photocopy the page you are analyzing, and attach it to your one-page analysis (this may be typed or handwritten), with annotations indicating points on the page that illustrate your

analysis. I will collect these at least four times during the semester--intermittently, at unannounced intervals--for grading, in lieu of quizzes. Your grade will depend on the level of detail you include in your analysis, the degree of comprehension of the week's lesson your analysis reflects, and the plausibility of your interpretation of how the page works.

#### Paper #1: Analysis of Form

Choose one of the comics artists we have studied so far in the course, and do a close analysis of that artist's style, drawing on what you have learned from reading McCloud and Eisner. Write a 2-3 page essay describing what constitute's your chosen artist's distinctive style, illustrating your points with specific reference to the text. Include photocopies of the panels you are discussing in the final version of your paper, and make very specific reference to examples that illustrate your argument.

#### Paper #2: Analysis of Character

Choose a character you like from any comic that we are not studying in this course, and write a 2-3 page essay describing the elements that have gone into creating that character. Consider drawing style, narrative arc, personality traits, relationships to other characters, dialogue, and any other elements you consider essential to defining that character. Has the character been written by more than one author/artist? If so, what are the traits that have stayed consistent throughout the character's history? If not, what kinds of changes have occurred in the character over time? Include photocopies of the panels you are discussing in the final version of your paper, and make very specific reference to examples that illustrate your argument.

#### Group Presentation:

To begin our discussion of each of our comics artist/authors, you will work in small groups on a "prolusion," or introductory exercise, to present in class. To prepare the prolusion, meet with your group to do a close analysis of a single page, considering all the elements (including form, genre, characterization, narrative, ideology, and style) of that particular artist/author's production as exemplified in the assigned comic. Your group will present the most interesting of your observations in a 10-15 minute talk at the beginning of class, ending the presentation with an open-ended question to set the direction of our discussion.

#### COURSE SCHEDULE:

##### Part I. Fundamentals of Comics

Week 1

Madden, *99 Ways to Tell a Story* [Carmen]

Week 2

McCloud, *Understanding Comics*



Herriman, *Krazy & Ignatz*

Week 3

McCloud, continued

*Archie Comics* [Carmen]

Week 4

Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative* [Carmen]

Schulz, *Peanuts* [Carmen]

Week 5

Eisner, continued

Sturm & Davis, *Fantastic Four Legends: Unstable Molecules*

Week 6

Eisner, continued

McDuffy & Cowan, *Rocket*

(ESSAY #1 DUE)

## Part II. The Personal is the Political

Week 7

Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!*

Week 8

Spiegelman, *Maus* (Vols. I & II)

Week 9

Satrapi, *Persepolis*

Week 10

Bechdel, *Fun Home*

## Part III. Beyond the Basics: Alternative Forms

Week 11 (Manga)

Ono, *The Electric Tale of Pikachu*

Week 12 (Comic in a box)

Ware, *Building Stories*

Week 13

Brosh, *Hyperbole and a Half* [online]

Week 14 (web comix)

TOUR of Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum behind the scenes

Week 15

Course conclusions

(ESSAY #2 DUE)

---

### **Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum**

One invaluable resource we have for the study of comics history here at Ohio State is the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum. The Cartoon Library can also provide you access to a broad range of materials for primary and secondary research, including Bio Files on hundreds of cartoonists, original art, and long runs of comic books.

The first time you go to the Cartoon Library you will need to register. It is a special collections library, so all pens and bags are left in the lockers outside. After you register you can call material to be brought to you using call slips, or email ahead and let them know you will be looking to use material on a particular date and time. Make sure you let them know you are a member of this class. Information about the library, including finding aids for searching the collection, are at <http://cartoons.osu.edu>

### **Academic honesty.**

Plagiarism is the representation of another's works 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 (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct at <http://studentconduct.osu.edu>.

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

**Students with disabilities.**

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu); 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

## Appendix: GE Rationale and Assessment Plan

### Introduction to Comics Studies: GE Rationale

#### ELO 1: Students analyze, appreciate, and interpret significant works of art.

- (1) After many generations of being regarded as the epitome of “low” culture, comics have arrived. Today comics are regularly featured in museums of art, and graphic storytelling is shaping visual culture as never before—including film, television and video games. And some of the most personal and powerful stories of our time are being written in this form, beginning with *Maus*, Art Spiegelman’s Pulitzer-prize winning account of his parents experiences in Auschwitz. Indeed, some of the most widely celebrated narratives of the last generation have been comics
- (2) By analyzing significant examples of the comic form, this class will develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; and interpretation and evaluation.
- (3) Studying the history and grammar of this unique visual-verbal hybrid will foster greater literacy and appreciation in new media forms that similarly bring text and image together in highly charged fields, preparing them to engage with a wide range of media works taking shape all around them.
- (4) Primary texts will include contemporary and historical masterpieces in graphic narrative

#### Examples of texts:

- Winsor McCay, *Little Nemo in Slumberland* (1905): a pioneering newspaper strip from the turn of the century that exploded the conventions of what could be done on the comics page and opened up new realms of fantasy in a form that had previously been largely dedicated to realism.
- Alan Moore & Dave Gibbons, *Watchmen* (1986): a pioneering graphic novel that sought to deconstruct the long history of superhero comics and to show at the same time the possibilities of the medium to tell ambitious and complicated narratives that require fierce attention and commitment on the part of its readers.
- Lynda Barry, *One Hundred Demons* (2002): originally published as a webcomic and later revised into book form, this is a powerful memoir of the cartoonist’s childhood growing up in Seattle in the 1960s in a Filipino family—exploring with bravery but also humor issues from racism, to abuse, to the complicated ways in which identity—like the comic form—presents itself in fragments and snapshots.
- Richard McGuire’s “Here” (1989): A groundbreaking work, recently expanded into a full-length graphic novel, which explores comics’ unique ability to represent multiple moments of time simultaneously, in space. This work would influence a whole new generation of cartoonists to explore the possibilities of the comics form in relation to representations of time.
- George Herriman, *Krazy Kat* (1913-44): the first comic to attract the attention of the literati, celebrating for its unique poetics and its exploration of personal and social identity, *Krazy Kat* is also important for being the first work created by an African American cartoonist in the U.S.
- Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (2000): Emerging from the rich Franco-Belgian comics tradition, *Persepolis* tells the story of the author’s life in

- revolutionary Iran and in Europe after her exile, weaving together national and personal history into a complex and inextricable tapestry.
- (5) Topics will cover the different grammatic elements, forms, styles, traditions, genres, and audiences of comics, exploring the ways in which comics work to engage readers in active meaning-making and collaboration.
  - (6) Written assignments include a close reading exercises (focusing on grammatical elements), group research presentations in conjunction with workshops at the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum, and a final research paper bringing together various components of the course of study.

**ELO 2: Students engage in informed observation and/or active participation in a discipline within the visual, spatial, and performing arts.**

- (1) This course focuses on informed and rigorous study and analysis of comics, or graphic narrative. Emphasis is on close reading across two often competing semantic modes (text and image), thinking, and writing; and experiencing the arts and reflecting on that experience collaboratively and in individual writing.
- (2) To ensure that students have an informed understanding of how to analyze graphic narrative, readings on comics theory and analysis will be assigned and a range of methods—drawing from a range of interdisciplinary approaches in visual and literary culture—will be included.

Reading list:

- Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (1993)
  - MK Czerwiec, et al., *Graphic Medicine Manifesto*
  - Will Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative* (2008)
  - Matt Madden, *99 Ways to Tell a Story: Exercises in Style* (2005)
  - Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester, eds., *A Comics Studies Reader* (2009)
- (3) Topics will discuss comics both as an historical form whose origins are as old as humanity *and* an evolving and emerging artistic and cultural form that is leading the way in terms of exploring new possibilities for the image as tool of complex storytelling.
  - (4) Students will be required to write regular responses on the background and primary readings and to produce a final research paper that must include either informed observation of, or research on, comics.
  - (5) Students will be encouraged make active use of Ohio State's Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum, the world-renowned institution devoted to the form, and the curators at the Billy Ireland will introduce our students to the challenges of building, maintaining and curating the world's largest collection of its kind. Further, students will have opportunities to attend regularly scheduled cartoonist talks and class visits from visiting cartoonists who will introduce them to the intricacies of the form from the perspective of the creator.

GE Expected Learning Outcomes	Methods of Assessment	Level of Student Achievement expected for the GE ELO	What is the process that will be used to review the data and potentially change the course to improve student learning of GE ELOS?
<p><b><u>ELO 1</u></b> Students analyze, appreciate, and interpret significant works of art.</p>	<p><b>Direct:</b> Students will write a close analysis of a comic, discussing its aesthetic, narrative, and cultural significance; students will analyze a wide range of comics in class discussion. <b>Indirect:</b> Students will complete both a discursive evaluation and be asked to rate to what extent the course met the ELO on a 5-point scale.</p>	<p><b>Direct:</b> At least 80% of the class scoring 80% or more on analysis assignments <b>Indirect:</b> an average score of at least 4.2 on a 5-point scale for ELO 1.</p>	<p>The Director of Undergraduate Studies and the Undergraduate Committee will review the data and make recommendations if change is warranted.</p>
<p><b><u>ELO 2</u></b> Students engage in informed observation and/or active participation in a discipline within the visual, spatial, and performing arts.</p>	<p><b>Direct:</b> Students will frame and complete a final project demonstrating their understanding of the comics art form through research, observation, and/or creativity. <b>Indirect:</b> Students will complete both a discursive evaluation and be</p>	<p><b>Direct:</b> At least 80% of the class scoring 80% or more on final research assignment. <b>Indirect:</b> an average score of at least 4.2 on a 5-point scale for ELO 2.</p>	<p>If multiple sections of the course are offered, a course director will review all course evaluations and ensure that first-time instructors' syllabi articulate how the ELOs will be achieved; classes will be observed.</p>

	asked to rate to what extent the course the course met the ELO on a 5-point scale.		
--	--	--	--



November 15, 2018

Dean Garrett Heysel  
Assistant Dean and Administrative Director,  
ASC Administration  
114 University Hall  
230 North Oval Mall  
Columbus, Ohio 43210

Dear Dean Heysel,

I am writing to express enthusiastic support for the adoption of an "Introduction to Comics Studies" course in the English Department. The Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum (BICLM), which contains the world's largest collection of cartoon and comics materials, is uniquely positioned to help provide a transformational educational experience for students who enroll in the course. BICLM's faculty librarians and public services staff look forward to leveraging our expertise, our collections and our exhibitions in support of the course's goals.

Comics Studies is a rapidly growing academic field, and comics courses at OSU and our peer institutions are becoming increasingly popular with faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students. I am delighted to see that this course is being considered!

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have.

Best regards,

Jenny E. Robb  
Curator and Associate Professor



Email concurrence form Professor Dana Renga, Chair, Department of French and Italian.

**Renga,** Dana

Reply all |

Tue 11/13/2018 3:18 PM

To:

Lowry, Debra

Inbox

Dear Debra,

FRIT is happy to grant concurrence. Looks like an amazing course! Dana