

MASTER CLASS in GRAPHIC FICTION
Prof. John Dermot Woods

Sa 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM
3/27/2021 - 5/8/2021 (Second Half)

In these master classes, we will make comics. We will read comics, discuss comics criticism, sketch, write, criticize, *experiment*, scan, argue, and color, all in an attempt to understand how the medium of comics works, and what techniques we can use to make comics that connect with our readers. We will study theory as much as practice. We will express our ideas about the works that we read, just as we will offer our insights into our peers' work. And, through it all, we will *draw*, with the hopes of becoming more comfortable with graphic expression, while, at the same time pushing the limits of our abilities. By the end of the course, every student will have created a finished work.

Required Texts:

Brunetti, Ivan. *Cartooning, Philosophy and Practice*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

Brunetti, Ivan, Ed. *An Anthology of Graphic Fiction, Cartoons, & True Stories, Vol. 1*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics*. New York: Harper Collins, 1993.

Other Supplies:

Pen
Paper
A Sketchbook

Sketchbook

The specific kind of book you choose is completely dependent on your own tastes and whims. But make sure you have some book full of blank paper to use as a sketchbook for this class. This is a place where you will capture and develop your ideas and concepts. It is where you will do all of your exercises, and it will serve as both a story resource, and a record of your progress. As with any kind of practice, making comics requires regular work: writing, drawing, doodling, musing, scribbling, etc. Do something in this sketchbook every day.

A Note on Photography

Photography is a wonderful medium. It is certainly a valid form of graphic expression, and many wonderful comics have been made using photos. But, for the purposes of this class, let's avoid photography. Having to draw your images allows you focus more on the fundamentals of graphic language and how it works. (Also, if possible, avoid looking at photos while drawing. We value expression above accuracy.)

March 27

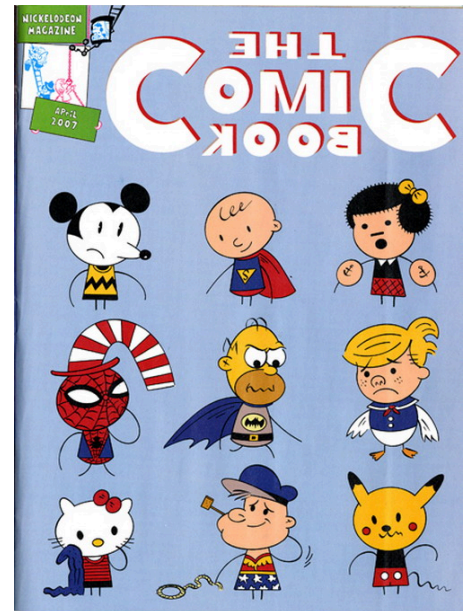
We meet. We draw. We share our understanding of the *vocabulary* and *grammar* of comics.

Readings: Understanding Comics, Chs. 1 and 2
from *Clumsy*, Jeffrey Brown; from *King Cat*, John Porcellino

April 3

A concrete discussion of how and why comics work.

Readings: Understanding Comics, Chs. 3 and 4



“Cecil and Jordan in New York,” Gabrielle Bell; excerpt from *Jimmy Corrigan*, Chris Ware, excerpt from *Building Stories*, Chris Ware

Exercises: Spontaneous drawing/Single-Panel Cartoons

April 10

We’ll consider the roles of space and time on the page.

Readings: Understanding Comics, Ch. 5

“Here,” Richard McGuire

Exercise: Four-Panel Strips

April 17

We’ll look at the strain and harmony that emerge from words and pictures working together.

Readings: Understanding Comics, Ch. 6

“A Little Story” by Gilbert Hernandez; “Flies on the Ceiling” by Jaime Hernandez

Exercise: A Simple Page

April 24

Looking at comics in the Aristotelian tradition. Looking at McClouds “Six Steps” and the formal construct of the page.

Readings: Understanding Comics, Ch. 7

“Smell,” Lynda Barry; “Visitors in the Night,” Debbie Drechsler

Exercises: The Democratic Grid and the Hierarchical Grid

May 1

We’ll consider history and aesthetic influence and workshop or stories-in-progress.

Readings: Understanding Comics, Chs. 8 and 9

Anthology pp. 32-41 (responses to *Peanuts*)

Exercise: Four-page comics thumbnail drafts.

May 8

This is it. The culmination of our class. We’ll share our finished six-page stories and discuss them all.

Reading: Graphic Novel, TBD (we’ll decide together)

Exercise: Finish our four-page comics.