

## English 3002: Graphic Fiction Workshop

Tues/Thurs 10:10-11:40, Richardson 303

Professor: John Woods

Office Hours: Tues. and Thurs., 11:40 a.m. - 12:40 p.m. (or by appointment)

Office: 7 University 106

### Course Description

In this course, we will make comics. We will read comics, discuss comics criticism, sketch, write, criticize, *experiment*, scan, argue, color, and photocopy, 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 and distributed a finished work.

### What I Expect

Commitment to your work and the work of your peers, willingness to share your work and to take risks, respect for ways of thinking and writing that are different from your own. Rather than critiquing your fellow students' work for its content, consider the quality of the work that is presented.

### 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.

Clowes, Daniel. *Wilson*. Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly, 2010.

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

### Other Supplies:

Pen

Paper

A Sketchbook



Illustration  
by Ivan Brunetti

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES**

### **Reading Presentations**

On a specific day, you will each be asked to pair up with another student to introduce a particular day's readings and to conduct our discussion of those comics. Your presentation should introduce the day's artists to the class, offer an analysis of the comic, identify themes and motifs within the work, connect the work to the concepts we've discussed in class, and offer insight into the work's role in a broader context. Consider other comics, works of fiction, film, music, art, historical events, etc. And, most importantly, bring questions that will help us look at the comics with new eyes. You may use audio/visual aids, although this is not required.

### **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.

### **Final Mini-Comic**

This is your culminating project. At the end of the semester, you will produce a finished mini-comic to be distributed to the class. It will be twelve-finished pages, plus outside/inside covers. You will have two workshop sessions devoted to this comic. In the first you will present a FULL ROUGH DRAFT of the work. In the second you will present the final draft in progress. This work should be revised carefully. I'll grade on skill level as well as responsiveness to feedback and overall progress.

### **Class Participation**

This class is an active workshop. With your complete readiness and eagerness to question, share, exclaim, to put your voices and your words out there, this workshop will work quite well. You will be evaluated not only on your efforts as reflected in your writing, but also, and equally importantly, on your commitment to our in-class discussions and undertakings.

### **Peer Critique**

While we can learn a great deal from other's responses to our work, the greatest benefits of the workshop come from being asked to judge and constructively communicate our ideas about others' work. The act of criticism is how we grow as artists. During our workshops you will be asked type up a critique of at least one page in response to each person's comic. You will bring TWO copies to class, one for the artist and one for me. The critique should explain on a basic level what you think the artist is trying to do with his or her comic. It should point out the work's strengths with examples. And, finally and most importantly, it should describe what aspects need improvement and your suggestions for exactly how to improve. If it helps, you can write these critiques as letters to your peers.

### **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.)

## COURSE SCHEDULE

1/15 (Th) Introduction/Jam Comic

1/20 (T) McCloud, Chapter One: Setting the Record Straight; Brunetti, Week One Exercise: Spontaneous Drawing

1/22 (Th) from *Clumsy*, Jeffrey Brown; from *King Cat*, John Porcellino/Jam Comic

1/27 (T) McCloud, Chapter Two: The Vocabulary of Comics; Brunetti, Week Two Exercise: Single-panel Cartoons

1/29 (Th) "Cecil and Jordan in New York," Gabrielle Bell; "Northern California," David Heatley/Copying *Archie*

2/3 (T) McCloud, Chapter Three: Blood in the Gutter; Brunetti, Week Three Exercise: Four-Panel Strips

2/5 (Th) excerpt from *Jimmy Corrigan*, Chris Ware/Haiku Comic

2/10 (T) McCloud, Chapter Four: Time Frames; Brunetti, Week Four Exercise: A Simple Page

### MIDSEMESTER BREAK

2/17 (T) "Here," Richard McGuire/Three Panels in Time

2/19 (Th) McCloud, Chapter Five: Living in Line; Brunetti, Week Five Exercise: The Democratic Grid

2/24 (T) "A Little Story" by Gilbert Hernandez; "Flies on the Ceiling" by Jaime Hernandez/Word Ladder Comic

2/26 (Th) McCloud, Chapter Six: Show and Tell; Brunetti, Week Six Exercise: The Hierarchical Grid

3/3 (T) McCloud, Chapter Seven: The Six Steps; Brunetti, Week Seven Exercise: Tools

3/5 (Th) "Smell," Lynda Barry; "Visitors in the Night," Debbie Drechsler/A Comic with No Pictures

3/10 (T) McCloud, Chapter Eight: A Word About Color; Brunetti, Week Eight Exercise: Style

3/12 (Th) *Wilson*, Daniel Clowes (second half)/Police Questioning

### SPRING BREAK

3/24 (T) McCloud, Chapter Nine: Putting It All Together; Brunetti, Week Nine Exercise: A Full-Color "Sunday" Page

3/26 (Th) *Wilson*, Daniel Clowes (second half)/Improvised Comic

3/31 (T) Rough Draft Workshop: Group A

4/2 (Th) Rough Draft Workshop: Group B

4/7 (T) Rough Draft Workshop: Group C

4/9 (Th) Open

4/14 (T) Rough Draft Workshop: Group D

4/16 (Th) In-Progress Workshop: Group A

4/21 (T) In-Progress Workshop: Group B

4/23 (Th) In-Progress Workshop: Group C

4/28 (T) In-Progress Workshop: Group D

4/30 (Th) Final Class Meeting: **FINAL MINI-COMICS due**