

**PALOMAR COLLEGE**  
**COURSE OUTLINE OF RECORD FOR**  
**DEGREE CREDIT COURSE**

X Transfer Course X A.A. Degree applicable course  
(check all that apply)

**COURSE NUMBER AND TITLE:** ENG 290 Comic Books As Literature

**UNIT VALUE:** 3

**MINIMUM NUMBER OF SEMESTER HOURS:** 48

**BASIC SKILLS REQUIREMENTS:** Appropriate Language Skills

**ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS**

**PREREQUISITE:** Eligibility for ENG 100

**COREQUISITE:** NONE

**RECOMMENDED PREPARATION:** NONE

**SCOPE OF COURSE:**

An analysis of the comic book in terms of its unique poetics (the complicated interplay of word and image); the themes that are suggested in various works; the history and development of the form and its subgenres; and the expectations of comic book readers. Examines the influence of history, culture, and economics on comic book artists and writers. Explores definitions of "literature," how these definitions apply to comic books, and the tensions that arise from such applications.

**SPECIFIC COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

The successful student will:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the unique poetics of comic books and how that poetics differs from other media, such as prose and film.
2. Analyze representative works in order to interpret their styles, themes, and audience expectations, and compare and contrast the styles, themes, and audience expectations of works by several different artists/writers.
3. Demonstrate knowledge about the history and development of the comic book as an artistic, narrative form.
4. Demonstrate knowledge about the characteristics of and developments in the various subgenres of comic books (e.g., war comics, horror comics, superhero comics, underground comics).
5. Identify important historical, cultural, and economic factors that have influenced comic book artists/writers.
6. Think critically about how literary value is defined and accorded to artistic works.

## CONTENT IN TERMS OF SPECIFIC BODY OF KNOWLEDGE:

- I. The study of how words and pictures work together to produce meaning in comic book narrative.
  - A. Principle of "closure" in comics
  - B. Panel composition
  - C. Page layout
  - C. Visual aspects – similarities to and differences from film and painting
  - D. Narrative aspects – similarities to and differences from other media
  - E. Artistic/narrative options available to the comic book artist/writer
  - F. Unity of artistic style and narrative content
  
- II. The study of differences in style and theme among comic book artists/writers and the ways in which these differences contribute to the medium as a whole.
  
- III. The study of various subgenres of comic books and how they have developed over time.
  - A. War comics
  - B. Horror comics
  - C. Humor comics
  - D. Romance comics
  - E. Superhero comics
  - F. Underground/independent comics
  - G. Autobiographical comics
  - H. The "graphic novel"
  - I. Influence and impact of EC Comics and MAD Magazine
  
- IV. The study of how specific historical, cultural, and economic forces have both restricted and enabled comic book writers and artists.
  - A. World War II, The Korean War, and The Vietnam War
  - B. McCarthyism
  - C. Fredric Wertham, Seduction of the Innocent, Congressional Hearings on Juvenile Delinquency, and the creation of the Comics Code
  - D. Political unrest in the 1960's
  - E. Women's Liberation Movement
  - F. Expansion of the direct market in the 1980's
  - G. First Amendment violations and protection
  - H. The proliferation of collectors
  - I. The proliferation of corporate media culture
  
- V. The study of what constitutes "literature," canon formation, and how these debates apply to comic books.
  
- VI. The study of comic book writers and artists such as:
  - A. Winsor McCay
  - B. George Herriman
  - C. Walt Kelly
  - D. Carl Barks
  - E. Will Eisner
  - F. Jack Cole
  - G. Harvey Kurtzman
  - H. Stan Lee
  - I. Jack Kirby
  - J. Bernie Krigstein
  - K. Hergé
  - L. Robert Crumb
  - M. Jack Jackson
  - N. Roberta Gregory
  - O. Spain Rodriguez
  - P. art spiegelman
  - Q. Alan Moore
  - R. Frank Miller
  - S. Neil Gaiman

T. Jaime & Gilbert Hernandez  
U. Dan Clowes  
V. Chris Ware  
W. Joe Sacco  
X. Lynda Barry  
Y. Debbie Drechsler  
Z. Dori Seda  
AA. Peter Milligan

## **REQUIRED READING:**

A selection of five to ten texts appropriate for the course, such as the following:

Anderson, Ho Che. King, Volume 1. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 1993.

---. King, Volume 2. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 2002.

Barry, Lynda. The! Greatest! of! Marlys! Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 2000.

---. One Hundred Demons. Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 2002.

Baru. Road to America. Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly Press, 2002.

Briggs, Raymond. Ethel & Ernest. New York: Pantheon Books, 1998.

Brown, Chester. I Never Liked You. Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly Press, 1994.

Burns, Charles. Skin Deep. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2001.

Cole, Jack. The Plastic Man Archives, Volume 3. New York: DC Comics, 2001.

Collier, David. Portraits from Life. Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly Press, 2001.

Clowes, Dan. Caricature. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 1998.

---. David Boring. New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 2000.

---. Ghost World. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 1997.

---. Like a Velvet Glove Cast in Iron. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 1998.

Crumb, Robert. My Troubles With Women. San Francisco: Last Gasp Books, 1992.

---. R. Crumb Draws the Blues. San Francisco: Last Gasp Books, 1993.

---. Introducing Kafka. New York: Totem Books, 1993.

Cruse, Howard. Stuck Rubber Baby. New York: Time Warner Books, 1995.

Doherty, Catherine. Can of Worms. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2000.

Doucet, Julie. My New York Diary. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly Press, 1999.

Drechsler, Debbie. Daddy's Girl. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 1996.

Eisner, Will. A Contract with God. New York: DC Comics, Inc., 2000.

---. To the Heart of the Storm. New York: DC Comics, Inc., 2000.

---. Last Day in Vietnam. Milwaukie, OR: Dark Horse Comics, 2000.

Fleener, Mary. Life of the Party. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 1996.

Frontline Combat Annual (multiple volumes). West Plains, MO: Gemstone Publishing, 1997.

Gaiman, Neil. Sandman: Preludes and Nocturnes. New York: DC Comics, 1991.

---. Sandman: Doll's House. New York: DC Comics, 1990.

---. Sandman: Dream Country. New York: DC Comics, 1991.

---. Sandman: Season of Mists. New York: DC Comics, 1992.

---. Sandman: A Game of You. New York: DC Comics, 1993.

---. Sandman: Fables and Reflections. New York: DC Comics, 1993.

---. Sandman: Brief Lives. New York: DC Comics, Inc., 1994.

---. Sandman: World's End. New York: DC Comics, Inc., 1994.

---. Sandman: The Kindly Ones. New York: DC Comics, Inc., 1996.

---. Sandman: The Wake. New York: DC Comics, Inc., 1997.

Green, Justin. The Binky Brown Sampler. San Francisco: Last Gasp Books, 1995.

Gregory, Roberta. A Bitch is Born. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 1994.

Haunt of Fear Annual (multiple volumes). West Plains, MO: Gemstone Publishing, 1997.

---. Bitchy's College Daze. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 1997.

Herge. Tintin in Tibet. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1975.

Hernandez, Gilbert. Blood of Palomar. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 1989.

---. Love and Rockets X. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 1993.

---. Poison River. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 1994.

Hernandez, Jaime. The Death of Speedy. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 1989.

---. Wig Wam Bam. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 1994.

---. Chester Square. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 1996.

---. Locas in Love. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 2000.

Hernandez, Los Bros. Flies on the Ceiling. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 1991.

Herriman, George. Krazy & Ignatz: 1925 – 1926. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2002.

Jackson, Jack. God's Bosom. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 1995.

---. Indian Lover: Sam Houston and the Cherokees. Dripping Springs, TX: Mojo Press, 1999.

---. Lost Cause. Northampton, MA: Kitchen Sink Press, 1998.

Kalesniko, Mark. Mail Order Bride. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2001.

Katchor, Ben. The Jew of New York. New York: Pantheon Books, 1998.

Kelly, Walt. Pogo Volume 10. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 1998.

Kirby, Jack. Jack Kirby's New Gods. New York: DC Comics, 1998.

---. Jack Kirby's Forever People. New York: DC Comics, 1999.

---. Jack Kirby's Mr. Miracle. New York: DC Comics, 1998.

Kirby, Jack and Joe Simon. Captain America: The Classic Years, Volume 2. New York: Marvel Comics, 2000.

Kirby, Jack and Stan Lee. Marvel Masterworks Presents the Fantastic Four, Nos. 51 – 60. New York: Marvel Comics, 2000.

Kubert, Joe. Fax from Sarajevo. Milwaukie, OR: Dark Horse Books, 1996.

Loeb, Jeph and Tim Sale. Batman: The Long Halloween. New York: DC Comics, Inc., 1997.

---. A Superman for All Seasons. New York: DC Comics, Inc., 1999.

Lutes, Jason. Berlin, Book 1. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly Press, 2001.

McCay, Winsor. The Complete Little Nemo in Slumberland, Vol. 2. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 1989.

McCloud, Scott. Understanding Comics. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1994.

---. Reinventing Comics. New York: HarperCollins, Inc., 2000.

Miller, Frank. The Dark Knight Returns. New York: DC Comics, 1986.

---. Batman: Year One. New York: DC Comics, Inc., 1988.

---. Daredevil: Born Again. New York: Marvel Comics, 1990.

Moore, Alan. From Hell. Marietta, GA: Top Shelf Comics, 1999.

---. Saga of the Swamp Thing. New York: DC Comics, 1987.

---. Swamp Thing: Love and Death. New York: DC Comics, 1990.

---. Swamp Thing: The Curse. New York: DC Comics, 2000.

---. Swamp Thing: A Murder of Crows. New York: DC Comics, 2001.

---. Swamp Thing: Earth to Earth. New York: DC Comics, 2002.

---. Watchmen. New York: DC Comics, 1986.

Milligan, Peter. X-Force. New York: Marvel Comics, 2001.

---. Human Target: Final Cut. New York: DC Comics, 2002.

Pekar, Harvey. Our Cancer Year. New York: Four Walls/Eight Windows, 1994.

---. The New American Splendor Anthology. New York: Four Walls/Eight Windows, 1991.

Sacco, Joe. Safe Area Gorazde. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2000.

---. Palestine. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2001.

Seda, Dori. Dori Stories. San Francisco: Last Gasp Books, 1999.

Seth. It's a Good Life, If You Don't Weaken. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly Press, 1996.

Shock Suspenstories Annual (multiple volumes). West Plains, MO: Gemstone Publishing, 1995.

Spain. My True Story. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 1994.

Spiegelman, Art. Maus I: My Father Bleeds History. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986.

---. Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began. New York: Pantheon Books, 1991.

Sturm, James. The Golem's Mighty Swing. Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly Press, 2001.

Tomine, Adrian. Sleepwalk and Other Stories. Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly Press, 1998.

Two-Fisted Tales Annual (multiple volumes). West Plains, MO: Gemstone Publishing, 1992.

Ware, Chris. Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth. New York: Pantheon Books, 2000.

Weird Science Annual (multiple volumes). West Plains, MO: Gemstone Publishing, 1995.

### **SUGGESTED READING:**

Texts appropriate for the course, such as the following:

Bender, Hy. The Sandman Companion. New York: DC Comics, 1999.

Benton, Mike. The Comic Book in America. Dallas: The Taylor Publishing Company, 1993.

Brown, Jeffrey A. Black Superheroes, Milestone Comics, and Their Fans. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2001.

Eisner, Will. Comics and Sequential Art. Tamarac, FL: Poorhouse Press, 1985.

---. Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative. Tamarac, FL: Poorhouse Press, 1996.

Estren, Mark James. A History of Underground Comics. Berkeley: Ronin Publishing, 1993.

Harvey, R. C. The Art of the Comic Book: An Aesthetic History. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1996.

Horn, Maurice. Women in the Comics. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1977.

Inge, M. Thomas. Comics As Culture. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1990.

Nyberg, Amy Kyste. Seal of Approval: The History of the Comics Code. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1998.

Pearson, Roberta E. and William Uricchio (eds). The Many Lives of the Batman: Critical Approaches to a Superhero and His Media. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Pustz, Matthew J. Comic Book Culture: Fanboys and True Believers. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1999.

Reidelbach, Maria. Completely Mad: A History of the Comic Book and Magazine. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991.

Robbins, Trina. A Century of Women Cartoonists. Northampton, MA: Kitchen Sink Press, 1993.

Sabin, Roger. Adult Comics. New York: Routledge, 1993.

---. Comics, Comix, and Graphic Novels. London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1996.

spiegelman, art. Jack Cole and Plastic Man: Forms Stretched to Their Limits! New York: DC Comics, 2001.

Thompson, Don and Dick Lupoff (eds). The Comic-Book Book. 1973. New York: Krause Publications, 1998.

Witek, Joseph. Comic Books As History. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1989.

Wright, Bradford W. Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

**REQUIRED WRITING:**

A minimum of 10 to 15 typed pages of written work primarily based on the readings (subjects to be discussed with the instructor).

**OUTSIDE ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Students are expected to spend a minimum of three hours per unit per week in class and on outside assignments, prorated for short-term classes.**

Outside work may involve reading the texts, preparing for exams, researching and writing the papers, and preparing projects.

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY:**

**Check all that apply:**

- lecture
- laboratory
- lecture-laboratory combination
- directed study

**DISTANCE LEARNING:**

**This course may be offered as a distance learning course and meets Title 5 regulations 55370, 55372, 55374, 55376, 55378, and 55380.**

Yes  No

**If yes, check all that apply:**

- Television Course (Video one-way, e.g. ITV, video cassette, etc.)
- Online Course (Text one-way, e.g. newspaper, correspondence, electronic file, etc.)
- Two-Way Video Conferencing (Two-way interactive video and audio)
- One-Way Video Conferencing (One-way interactive video and two-way interactive audio)
- Computer Assisted Instruction (A specialized form of mediated instruction relying primarily on student access to information and prepared lessons or teaching materials through a computer terminal, but not under immediate supervision of a qualified instructor.)

**GRADING POLICY AND STANDARDS** (include methods of determining whether the stated objectives have been met by students):

Papers	40 – 70%
Exams	20 – 50%
Projects	up to 40%
Homework	up to 20%
Class Participation	up to 10%

**IS COURSE REPEATABLE FOR REASON(S) OTHER THAN DEFICIENT GRADE?**

Yes \_\_\_\_ No X Number of times course may be taken for credit: 1

If yes, identify specific provision of Title 5 Division 2 section(s), 55761-55763 and 58161 which qualifies course as repeatable:

**CONTACT PERSON:** Dr. Rocco Versaci, ext. 2971

**SIGNATURES ON FILE**