

**This Course Contains Graphic Language**  
GLS 102 S29 (SEM 58604) – Spring 2009

Tuesday: 11.20 – 1:20. Classroom: Melville N 3090

**Important information**

This syllabus gives an overview of the course goals, organization, and requirements, and provides a general plan of the material covered. Variations of the **weekly plan** will be discussed in class and will be available on the Blackboard site: <http://blackboard.sunysb.edu>. You are required to visit this site on a regular basis. If you have used Stony Brook's Blackboard system previously, your login information has not changed. If you have never used it, your initial password is your Solar ID# and your username is the same as your Stony Brook (sparky) username, which is generally your first initial and the first seven letters of your last name. For help and more information see: <http://www.sinc.sunysb.edu/helpdesk/docs/blackboard/bbstudent/php>. For problems logging in, go to the helpdesk in the Main Library SINC site or the Union SINC site. You may also call: (631) 632-9602, or email: [helpme@ic.sunysb.edu](mailto:helpme@ic.sunysb.edu)

If you have any questions, suggestions, requests, or would like to talk about your learning experience, please feel free to email, call me, or come to my office: in the afternoon, if not in the classroom, I am generally available.

**Course Description**

Do we read comics or do we watch them? How does the grammar of comics function? What is semiotics and what does it have to do with comics? How does this mode of simultaneous seeing and reading complicate conventional approaches to a text?

In this course we will examine a number of twenty- and twenty-first century graphic novels, as well as animated films, focusing on their depiction of gender, race and cultural otherness.

**Textbooks** (available at the bookstore and on Blackboard):

-Scott McCloud: *Understanding Comics*. New York: Harper, 2007

-Gene Luen Yang: *American Born Chinese*. New York and London: First Second, 2007

-Mat Johnson and Warren Pleece: *Incognegro*. New York: DC Comics, 2008.

-Alison Bechdel: *Fun Home, a Family Tragicomic*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007.

Additional texts will be available on Blackboard.

**Films:**

-*Persepolis* (Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud, France 2007)

-*The Incredibles* (Brad Bird for Pixar Studios, USA 2004)

## Requirements

1. **Attendance:** I miss you when you are not here! Which is why class attendance is mandatory. More than **one absence** will adversely influence the final grade. Serious illnesses and family emergencies must be documented and notified, possibly prior to class. Religious obligations, if notified in advance, are excused for the date of the religious holiday. Excessive absences will guarantee a lower final grade (minus 2 percentage points per absence). Three tardy arrivals (i.e., after the roll call, or after the classroom door is closed) will be considered as an absence; please schedule your commuting/travel plans accordingly.

2. **Participation:** I would really like to be able to engage everyone on the topic at hand, but I need your help, too. Please read all assignments before coming to class, be ready to discuss the texts and provide the class with your insightful comment. Not-so-insightful comments are welcome, too. Ideally, every student should come to class with one or more questions regarding the material of the day.

3. **Short Quizzes:** At the beginning of each class, I will distribute a short quiz including five yes/no question and one open-ended question on the material covered and on the reading for the day. The result of these quizzes and your participation in class will determine your final grade.

## Accommodations for Disabilities

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services at (631)632-6748 or <http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/dss/>. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to the following website: <http://www.sunysb.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities.shtml>

## Academic Integrity

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instance of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at <http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary>.

## Critical Incident Management

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, and/or inhibits students' ability to learn.

**The Course Outline is available on Blackboard. Please check the website before each class.**

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Office hours: Mo-Tue. 2.00-3.30 or by appointment

**Course outline:**

**Jan. 27:** Introduction: Semiotics *and* Comics.

**Feb. 3:** The social function of comics. Reading for this class: *Understanding Comics*, Chapters 1 to 5.

**Feb. 10: No class meeting.** Reading for the week: McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, Chapters 6 to 9.

**Feb. 17:** Superheroes with normal problems: *The Incredibles*. Reading for the class: *American Born Chinese*.

**Feb. 24:** Superheroes and society: Guest Lecturer, Professor Marco Arnaudo, Indiana University. Reading for the class: *Incognegro*.

**March 3:** Real comics for our real times: *Persepolis*, and the “Danish Cartoon War”. Reading for the class: *Fun Home*, part one; Art Spiegelman’s article, on Blackboard.

**March 10:** *Fun Home* and the visual of memory. Guest Lecturer, Professor David Ball, Dickinson College. Reading for the class: *Fun Home*, in its entirety.

**March 17:** Epilogue: Semiotics *of* Comics.