

San José State University
Department of English & Comparative Literature
English 20: The Graphic Novel, Section 01, Spring 2022

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Johnny Damm
Office Location:	FOB 118
Email:	john.damm@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	M/W 12:15-1:00 (Zoom)
Class Days/Time:	MW 10:30-11:45
Classroom:	Sweeney Hall 435
GE Category:	Letters C2

Course Learning Management and Messaging

Course materials such as syllabus, readings, handouts, notes, and assignment instructions can be found on the Canvas learning management system course website. Please set your Canvas notifications so that you receive announcements, which will be sent out periodically. You are responsible for monitoring Canvas and completing the weekly Canvas modules throughout the semester.

ENGL 20 Course Description

Due to three major superhero “crazes”—one occurring during the late thirties/early forties, one occurring during the sixties, and one occurring now—U.S. comics have become particularly associated with superheroes. For our class, however, we shall attempt to develop a wider view of the field, exploring U.S. comics as a medium rich in a wide variety of genres and forms and attracting a diverse readership. For the first half of the semester, we will trace the history of the comic book from its pulp origins to now. In the second half, we will read and analyze contemporary works. Throughout the semester, we will pay particular attention to the comic book’s long history of depicting immigrants and outsiders and the medium’s fraught relationship to notions of patriotism and citizenship.

English 20 GE Course Goals (GELO)

For the Department of English and Comparative Literature, students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature.
2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches.
3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, context, and nature of the subject.
4. Articulate relations among culture, history, and texts.

For General Education Area C2 (Letters), students shall be able to:

1. Recognize how significant works illuminate enduring human concerns.
2. Respond to such works by writing both research-based critical analyses and personal responses.
3. Write clearly and effectively.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO): Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Examine significant works of the human intellect and imagination
2. Understand the historical and cultural contexts in which such texts were created
3. Recognize the accomplishments and issues related to women and diverse cultures reflected in such texts

ENGL 20 Course Requirements and Assignments

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, you are expected to spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on.

Reading

You will be assigned reading before every class, whether online or in-person. These readings are the central component of our class, and it is absolutely essential that you keep up with them.

Assignments

Three Exams: In the first half of the semester, students will complete three exams delivered through Canvas. The exams will require students to demonstrate basic comprehension of U.S. comics history and key aspects of the form. They will include essay questions, requiring in-depth analysis of specific comics and genres.

Seminar Essay: At the end of the semester, students will write an essay analyzing the thematic and formal components of one comic book, considering its place in the larger history of U.S. comics.

Three Short Comics: **NO DRAWING ABILITY REQUIRED.** One of the best ways to understand the distinct language of comics is to experiment with the comics page. So, over the course of the semester, students will complete a comic strip, a one-page narrative comic, and a final exam comic of two to three pages. The comics can be made in a variety of ways, using digital tools, collage, and or drawing. Technical ability is not judged in the evaluation of these comics.

Module Participation: The last crucial element of this class is simply participation. Included in class modules will be required discussion board threads and sporadic short assignments. Students will receive 100 for participation when these required module elements are completed, and 0 when they are not.

Assignment Word Count and Learning Goals

Assignment	Word Count	GELO
Seminar Essay	1,500-1,750	GE 1,2,3 ED 1,2,3
3 Exams	Varies; Min. 750	GE 1,2,3 ED 1,2,3
3 comics	Varies	GE 2,3 ED 3
Module Discussion Responses	Varies	

Required Texts

The following texts can be purchased through the bookstore or any other bookseller:

The Complete Maus, Art Spiegelman; ISBN 9780679406419

Hot Comb, Ebony Flowers; ISBN 9781770463486

The Magic Fish, Trung Le Nguyen; ISBN 9781984851598

Students are also required to have and use a Hoopla account, provided free from the San Jose Public Library. We will be reading the following titles through Hoopla (free to checkout):

Ms Marvel Vol. 1: No Normal, G. Willow Wilson, Adrian Alphona; ebook in Hoopla

Excerpt from *The Girl from H.O.P.P.E.R.S.*, Jaime Hernandez; ebook in Hoopla

Excerpts from *Invisible Men: The Trailblazing Black Artists of Comic Books*, Ken Quatro; ebook in Hoopla

Excerpts from *Amazing Spider-Man Masterworks Vol.1*, Lee and Ditko; ebook in Hoopla

Excerpts from *The Complete Wimmen's Comix*; ebook in Hoopla

Other Readings

All other readings will provided as PDFs. These include a large variety of comics from the late 1930s to the 1960s and excerpts from:

Comic Book History of Comics, Fred Van Lente and Ryan Dunlavey (PDF)

Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art, Scott McCloud (PDF)

Pretty in Ink: North American Women Cartoonists, Trina Robbins (PDF)

American Comic Book Chronicles: The 1950s (PDF)

Persepolis, Marjane Satrapi (PDF)

Paying the Land, Joe Sacco (PDF)

Grading Policy

3 Exams 60%

Exam # 1 15%

Exam # 2 22%

Exam # 3 23%

Seminar Essay 15%

3 Comics 10%

Participation (Module Completion): 15%

A missed exam will result in a zero, and late papers or other assignments will be docked up to one full letter grade each day they are late.

About Grades

The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System"). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A= excellent; B= above average; C= average; D= below average; F= failure. Courses graded according to the A, B, C, No Credit system shall follow the same pattern, except that NC shall replace D or F. In such cases, NC shall also substitute for W (or Withdrawal) because neither grade (NC or W) affects students' GPA.

A (92-100); A- (90-91); B+ (88-89); B (82-87); B- (80-81); C+ (78-79); C (70-77); C- (70-71); D+ (68-69); D (62-67); D- (60-61); F (<60)

Academic Dishonesty

All students are responsible for knowing and observing University policies regarding academic dishonesty. See University policy: "[Academic Integrity](#)".

Classroom Protocol

You need to participate, complete the modules on time, and be courteous to your peers and to your teacher.

University Policies

The link below contains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc.:

<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/index.html>

ENGL 20: The Graphic Novel, Spring 2022

This schedule is subject to change with fair notice: you are responsible for any changes made in class or through email

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	Jan 26	ZOOM CLASS TOPIC: Myths of U.S. Comic Books; Introductions HOMEWORK: Read “Early Comic Strips” (PDF in Canvas); “CBHoC 1: Comic Strips” (PDF in Canvas); <i>Understanding Comics</i> (Chapter 1, pp. 1-23)
2	Jan 31	ZOOM CLASS TOPIC: Comic Strips HOMEWORK: Read <i>Action Comics</i> #1 (PDF); <i>Action Comics</i> #8 (first story; PDF) <i>Superman</i> #53 (first story; PDF); <i>CBHoC 2: Pulps</i> (PDF); <i>CHoC 3: First Comics/ Early Superheroes</i> (PDF)
2	Feb 2	ZOOM CLASS TOPIC: Early U.S. Comic Books, Superman HOMEWORK: Read <i>Detective Comics</i> #27 (first story; PDF); <i>Detective Comics</i> #33 (first story; PDF); <i>Sensation Comics</i> # 1 (first story; PDF); <i>Captain America Comics</i> # 1 (first story, PDF); <i>CBHoC 4: Early Comics Industry</i> (PDF)
3	Feb 7	ZOOM CLASS TOPIC: Early Superheroes and Pulp Heroes; look through <i>Mystery Men</i> as a class HOMEWORK: Read <i>Young Romance</i> #1 (PDF); <i>Teenage Romances</i> # 1 (PDF), <i>Invisible Men</i> (“Clarence Matthew Baker,” pp. 125-150, HOOPLA); <i>CBHoC 5: Romance Comics</i> (PDF)
3	Feb 9	ZOOM CLASS TOPIC: Romance Comics/ Educational Comics; look through <i>Classics Illustrated</i> as a class HOMEWORK: Read <i>Crime Does Not Pay</i> #59 (PDF), excerpt from <i>Pretty in Ink</i> (PDF); <i>CBHoC 6: Crime Comics</i> (PDF)
4	Feb 14	IN-PERSON CLASS TOPIC: Crime Comics

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
		HOMEWORK: Study for Exam
4	Feb 16	CLASS ACTIVITY: EXAM # 1 HOMEWORK: Read <i>Our Army At War</i> #1; <i>Two-Fisted Tales</i> #25; <i>Invisible Men</i> (“Alvin Carl Hollingsworth,” 150-173, HOOPLA)
5	Feb 21	CLASS TOPIC: War Comics HOMEWORK: Read <i>Vault of Horror</i> #30; <i>Tomb of Terror</i> #4); <i>CBHoC</i> 7: Horror Comics (PDF)
5	Feb 23	CLASS TOPIC: Horror HOMEWORK: Read <i>Invisible Men</i> (“Orrin C. Evans,” et al., 204-229); <i>CBHoC</i> 8: Senate Hearing to Comics Code (PDF); excerpt from <i>American Comic Book Chronicles: The 1950s</i> (PDF)
6	Feb 28	CLASS TOPIC: The Comics Code HOMEWORK: Read <i>Fantastic Four</i> # 1 (first story), <i>Fantastic Four</i> # 4, <i>X-Men</i> #1, <i>Avengers</i> # 4, <i>Understanding Comics</i> (Chapter 2, pp. 24-59); <i>CBHoC</i> : 9 Marvel Comics
6	Mar 2	CLASS TOPIC: Marvel in the Sixties; Jack Kirby HOMEWORK: Read <i>Amazing Spider-Man Masterworks Vol.1</i> (<i>Amazing Fantasy</i> #15, pp. 7-18; <i>The Amazing Spider-Man</i> #1, pp. 19-33; <i>The Amazing Spider-Man</i> #4, pp. 92-113; HOOPLA)
7	Mar 7	CLASS TOPIC: Marvel in the Sixties; Steve Ditko HOMEWORK: Read <i>Superman’s Girlfriend, Lois Lane</i> #106, <i>The Amazing Spider-Man</i> #96, <i>Green Lantern/ Green Arrow</i> #85 (main story only), <i>Green Lantern/ Green Arrow</i> # 86 (main story only)
7	Mar 9	CLASS TOPIC: Superheroes and Social Commentary. HOMEWORK: Read <i>X-Men: God Loves, Man Kills</i>
8	Mar 14	CLASS TOPIC: <i>X-Men</i> and (White) Anti-Racism HOMEWORK: Read <i>Ms. Marvel Vol. 1: No Normal</i> (HOOPLA)
8	Mar 16	CLASS TOPIC: Ms. Marvel and the 21 st Century Superhero HOMEWORK: Study for Exam
9	Mar 21	CLASS ACTIVITY: EXAM # 2 HOMEWORK: Read excerpt from <i>Zap</i> # 0 (CONTENT WARNING; PDF); <i>Binky</i>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
		<i>Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary</i> ; <i>Ebon</i> #1 (PDF); Make a COMIC STRIP
9	Mar 23	COMIC STRIP DUE CLASS TOPIC: Underground Comics HOMEWORK: Read <i>The Complete Wimmen's Comix</i> (Introduction: "babes and women," pp. 8-15; <i>Wimmen's Comix</i> # 1, pp. 53-88, HOOPLA); <i>Gay Comix</i> #1 (PDF)
	Mar 28-Apr 1	HOLIDAY
10	Apr 4	CLASS TOPIC: Feminist and Queer Comics HOMEWORK: Read excerpt <i>The Girl From H.O.P.P.E.R.S</i> (pp. 68-132, HOOPLA)
10	Apr 6	CLASS TOPIC: <i>The Girl From H.O.P.P.E.R.S</i> HOMEWORK: Read <i>Understanding Comics</i> (Chapters 3 & 4, PDF); Make A One-Page Comic
11	Apr 11	ONE-PAGE COMIC DUE CLASS TOPIC: <i>The Girl From H.O.P.P.E.R.S</i> . HOMEWORK: Read <i>The Complete Maus</i> (I: A Survivor's Tale, 1-161)
11	Apr 13	CLASS TOPIC: <i>The Complete Maus</i> ; Intro to Essay # 1 HOMEWORK: Read <i>The Complete Maus</i> (pp. 163-296)
12	Apr 18	CLASS TOPIC: <i>The Complete Maus</i> HOMEWORK: Read short excerpt from Marjane Satrapi's <i>Persepolis</i> and Joe Sacco's <i>Journalism</i> (PDF)
12	Apr 20	CLASS TOPIC: <i>The Complete Maus</i> HOMEWORK: Study for Exam
13	Apr 25	CLASS ACTIVITY: EXAM # 3 HOMEWORK: Read excerpts from Marjane Satrapi's <i>Persepolis</i> and Joe Sacco's <i>Paying the Land</i> (PDF)
13	Apr 27	CLASS ACTIVITY: Satrapi and Sacco HOMEWORK: Read <i>Hot Comb</i>
14	May 2	CLASS TOPIC: <i>Hot Comb</i>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
		HOMEWORK: Read <i>Hot Comb</i>
14	May 4	CLASS TOPIC: <i>Hot Comb</i> ; Essay Tips HOMEWORK: Read <i>The Magic Fish</i>
15	May 9	CLASS TOPIC: <i>The Magic Fish</i>
15	May 11	CLASS TOPIC: <i>The Magic Fish</i> HOMEWORK: Read <i>CBHoC</i> 10: Manga (PDF)
	May 16	SEMINAR ESSAY DUE CLASS TOPIC: Bringing it all Together
Final	May 19	FINAL EXAM COMIC DUE by 12:00 pm, Thursday, May 19