

## **B.A. (Honours) in Contemporary English Studies**

Course Title	: The Graphic Novel
Course Code	: ENG3304
Recommended Study Year	: 3 <sup>rd</sup> or 4 <sup>th</sup> Year
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Lecture-tutorial mode
Class Contact Hours	: 2-hour lecture per week 1-hour tutorial per week
Category	: Discipline Elective (Contemporary Literary Strand)
Prerequisite(s)	: Nil
Co-requisite(s)	: Nil
Exclusion(s)	: Nil
Exemption Requirement(s)	: Nil

### **Brief Course Description**

The course introduces students to the graphic novel (book-length comics) as a relatively "new" genre of contemporary literature. The course consists of a survey of key texts and provides students with the necessary critical toolkit used to analyze visual literatures. Over the course of the semester, we will focus on the "form" of the graphic novel and how it creates arguments about gender, class, sexuality and race. This course will also be an introduction to the critical methods and theories used to interpret the unique relationship between text and image.

### **Aims**

1. To provide and familiarize students with the critical tools used to analyze and critique visual literature;
2. To continue the development of students' critical and analytical skills via close-reading, textual and visual analysis begun in the core classes of the English major;
3. To emphasize writing as a process through short written responses that can be developed into a longer paper and to strengthen writing and revision skills through regular feedback and guidance from the professor and from peer review;
4. Through active participation in discussion and listening, students will gain the ability and language necessary to understand different possibilities and diverse perspectives both in the literature and amongst each other;
5. Students will write and speak in effective English.

## Learning Outcomes

After completing the course, students will be able to interpret, analyze, critique and discuss graphic novels using a range of critical terms and approaches.

1. Analyze and discuss graphic novels within a larger cultural context;
2. Display clear understanding of the relationship between form and content;
3. Demonstrate the skills of writing critically about graphic novels from a theoretical and practical perspective;
4. Demonstrate the skills of analysis required in the study of graphic novels.

## Indicative Contents

1. Introductory lecture to the history of graphic novels and comics in the West; its development into a serious genre of contemporary literature;
2. Choice of texts represent a survey of canonical graphic novels from a diverse range of authors;
3. The course will begin with an introduction to and application of Scott McCloud's "grammar of comics" in *Understanding Comics* in order to provide students with a toolkit of terms and strategies for analysis;
4. Each graphic novel will be accompanied by a critical essay that students can apply to and test against the text ie. an excerpt from Foucault's argument about the "panopticon" and Laura Mulvey's concept of the "gaze";
5. This course will satisfy students looking for more critical/theoretical approaches to contemporary literature;
6. Field trip to Comix Homebase in Wanchai, a museum and archive of Hong Kong comics.

## Teaching Method

This course will consist primarily of student-centered discussion; mini-lectures; writing workshops; student-led presentation and skills-based activities.

## Measurement of Learning Outcomes

- Close-reading paper (Outcomes 1, 3 & 5): 25%
- Critical essay (Outcomes 3, 4 & 5): 30%
- 4-5 blog post/response papers (Outcomes 1 & 2): 25%
- Participation (includes student-led presentations) (Outcomes 1, 2, 3 & 5): 20%

## Assessment

100% continuous assessment

## Readings may include

Art Spiegelman, *Maus: Part I* (1991)  
Posy Simmonds, *Tamara Drewe* (2005-7)  
Charles Burns, *Black Hole* (2005)

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* (2006)  
Alan Moore, *V For Vendetta* (1982-5)  
Nick Abadzis, *Laika* (2007)  
Adrian Tomina, *Shortcomings* (2007)

### **Sample of critical readings**

Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (1994)  
Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and narrative cinema”  
Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (excerpt)  
Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (excerpt)  
Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (excerpt)  
Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race* (excerpt)

### Important Notes:

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>.