E1102: Reading Beyond the Superhero: Comics and Sequential Art in Contemporary U.S. Culture

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ENGLISH 1102 OVERVIEW:

English 1102 is a writing-intensive composition course that aims to develop students’  
1. written and oral communication skills through a variety of formal and informal writing and presentation assignments  
2. critical reading of literary and film texts, practices, and material objects through a cultural studies perspective  
3. expertise in conducting research through sustained semester-long research projects  
4. proficiency in electronic writing environments.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

From the publication of the first Superman comic strip in 1938, comics have been an indelible part of American culture. Despite their popularity, however, comic books have only recently been considered worthy of scholarly attention. With the rise of cultural studies and the increased attention given to popular culture as a valid site of academic interest, scholars have come to realize that comic books can tell us as much about our culture as more traditionally "worthy" cultural forms such as the novel or the play. Beginning from the assumption that the comic book is a valid and vital American art form, this course will both examine the history of the comic book as a representational form and engage in the cultural analysis of the comic book. We will examine a number of types of texts—comic books, graphic novels, literary novels, and films—through which we will engage issues such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity in the contemporary United States. Examining both mainstream and alternative comics; traditional, film, and electronic comic art; superheroes comics and prose narratives, the course will allow students an opportunity to develop essential critical reading, writing, and analytical practices. Students should expect to write and think extensively about the nature of the comic book and its icons in American culture. During the course of the semester we will focus our attention on what comic books have to tell us about ourselves and our culture.
TEXTS:

1. READINGS ON COURSE WEBSITE: A number of the primary and secondary sources for the course will be available online through our course website (www.lcc.gatech.edu/~hcarroll/e1102). These readings are listed as "WEB" on the syllabus.

2. REQUIRED BOOKS: The following books are available at the Georgia Tech Bookstore:

   MIKE PALMQUIST: **THE BEDFORD RESEARCHER**
   SCOTT MCCLOUD: **UNDERSTANDING COMICS: THE INVISIBLE ART**
   BRADFORD W. WRIGHT: **COMIC BOOK NATION: THE TRANSFORMATION OF YOUTH CULTURE IN AMERICA**
   JONATHAN LETHEM: **THE FORTRRESS OF SOLITUDE**
   FRANK MILLER: **BATMAN: THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS**
   DWAYNE MCDUFFIE: **STATIC SHOCK: TRIAL BY FIRE**
   STEVE DARNALL & ALEX ROSS: **UNCLE SAM**
   DANIEL CLOWES: **GHOSTWORLD**

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING: Do not ask me to give you your final grade individually. I will not tell you your final grade over the phone or by e-mail (which is against university regulations anyway). DO NOT ASK FOR EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENTS AT THE END OF THE SEMESTER--THERE ARE NONE. The point breakdown for the semester is as follows:

Assignments:
- Comic Critical Analysis Paper: 15%
- Research Paper Proposal: 5%
- Annotated Bibliography: 15%
- Group Oral Presentation: 20%
- Research Paper: 30%
- Homework Portfolio/Participation: 15%
- Total: 100%

LATE WORK: All papers will be collected at the beginning of class on the day they are due. Papers submitted late will lose 1/3rd of a letter grade for each day they are late. I will not accept papers at anytime except for class time or office hours.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: I expect you to come to every class on time with your reading and writing assignments completed, prepared to participate in class discussions and group work. **You are allowed up to three unexcused absences over the course of the semester.** After that, each absence will cause you to lose one third of a letter grade from your final grade for the class. Every three tardies will count as an unexcused absence. If you have a legitimate excuse for not coming to class (i.e. you are the victim of an emergency or a serious illness), please remain in contact with me by e-mail. If you miss class, you must assume responsibility for all missed materials, lecture notes, in-class activities, etc. I expect regular attendance, cooperation, and an indication of interest and effort. Also, it is VERY important that you do your readings before class; teaching a class for which no one is prepared is both excruciating and a waste of time for all of us.

OFFICE HOURS & COMMUNICATION: Please meet with me during my office hours or make an appointment to discuss your work in progress or any aspect of the course. I hold regular office hours every week (see times at top of first page) and encourage you to come and see me. Students who visit with me during my office hours to discuss their work and concerns almost always get more from the course than those who don't. If you have a scheduling conflict and cannot meet me during my scheduled office hours, **you can always make an appointment to see me at another time.** If you have any concerns about anything at all, please contact me right away. I can't help you if I don't know there's a problem. I check my e-mail several times a day. This is the best way to contact me. If you want me to call you back, just be sure to include your telephone number.

SOFTWARE/COMPUTING RESOURCES & REQUIREMENTS: We will meet regularly this quarter in a multimedia computer lab, and we will make frequent use of Internet applications in the lab and from remote locations (i.e. your home or dorm room). I assume all students enrolled this quarter will meet the technology requirements for incoming freshmen at GT. **You must have access to your own computer with Internet capabilities to complete the work in this class.** We will use e-mail applications, Web browsers, and 3 online conferencing applications (Web Crossing, CoWeb, and AIM) as a means of communicating both in- and out-of-class. These tools will enable you to meet with classmates in "chat" rooms (AIM), to engage in electronic "bulletin board" discussions (Web Crossing), and to participate in collaborative hypertext discussions (CoWeb) to complete coursework. You will receive detailed instructions within the first few weeks about how to download and access these applications, if necessary, on your personal computer. Previous knowledge of
Internet research, e-mail, and conferencing software is not a prerequisite for this course, but those students who have had exposure to at least some of these technologies may have an advantage over those who are completely new to the Internet and/or to electronic forms of communication. If you have doubts about your abilities, consult with me ASAP.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** All work you turn in for this class must be your own work, with all outside reference sources properly cited and acknowledged. All written assignments for this course will be turned in through the anti-plagiarism program “Turn It In” (http://www.turnitin.com).

The "Student Conduct Code of the Rules and Regulations" (Georgia Institute of Technology General Catalog, Section XIX) states, "Academic misconduct is an act that does or could improperly distort student grades or other student academic records" and offers the following descriptive list:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or verbal information in the preparation of any essay, laboratory report, examination, or other assignment included in an academic course;
- Substitution for, or unauthorized collaboration with, a student in the commission of academic requirements;
- Submission of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another person or persons, without adequate credit notations indicating authorship (plagiarism);
- False claims of performance or work that has been submitted by the claimant;
- Alteration or insertion of any academic grade or rating so as to obtain unearned academic credit;
- Forgery, alteration, or misuse of any institute document relating to the academic status of the student.

The Code continues, "While these acts constitute assured instances of academic misconduct, other acts of academic misconduct may be defined by the professor." Consult the Honor Code online at "http://www.honor.gatech.edu/" or in the General Catalog to remember your primary commitment to academic honesty. Students who engage in academic dishonesty may receive a 0.0 on the assignment or fail the course. In addition, the instance will be reported to the Dean of Students who may take further action.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** Any student who feels that he/she may need an accommodation for any sort of disability, please make an appointment to see the instructor during office hours. Students with disabilities should also contact Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students (ADAPTS) to discuss reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a counselor call (404) 894-2564 (voice) / (404) 894-1664 (voice/TDD) or visit Suite 210 in the Smithgall Student Services Building. For more information visit the following website: http://www.adapts.gatech.edu/.

**SYLLABUS:** Click here for a week-by-week guide to the work we will be doing throughout the semester. Readings and assignments are to be completed in advance for discussion on the dates on which they are listed.

[HOME] [POLICIES] [SYLLABUS] [READINGS]