

Writing 101.07—Spring 2009 **Serious Comics: The Rhetoric of the Graphic Novel**

Course Meeting: TR 1:45 pm – 3:30 pm. Hauge Administration Building 211B

Professor Matthew Levy. Email: Levy@plu.edu. Office: Blomquist B2.

Office Hours: Please email to schedule an appointment. MW 10-12; 1-3.

Description and Course Objectives. This course helps students adjust to the expectations of the university in terms of reading, writing and critical thinking: how to get the most out of reading, how to participate in class discussions, and how to conceptualize your response to writing assignments. We will approach writing as a recursive process in which the writer assesses context, invents a purpose that meets the demands of the moment, considers audience, develops ideas, and fashions an appropriate structure, format, and style. By “recursive,” we mean that these steps do not always occur in the same order and some must be repeated before the piece is revised adequately and worthy of being called “finished.”

Our section has a thematic focus on serious uses of full-length comic books. While the men-in-tights-beat-each-other-up genre of comic books remains popular, comic artists have expanded their medium by taking on serious personal and public issues in many styles. Book-length comic books have earned the grown-up name of “graphic novel” or “graphic narrative” and, given the adult subject matter, “graphic” may refer to more than the fact they have pictures. We will read about the techniques and significance of comics and view films adapted from comics. We will write summary-response essays, personal essays, research and analysis. Drawing ability is not necessary, but we will also try our hand at writing comics.

Required Texts:

Graff and Birkenstein, *They Say / I Say*; McCloud, *Understanding Comics*; Moore and Gibbons, *Watchmen*; Satrapi, *Persepolis*; Spiegelman, *Maus I* and *Maus II*

Course Expectations. At the college level, more is demanded from students in terms of taking responsibility for one’s own education. While your instructor has every intention to help you thrive in this challenging new environment, your success depends on your willingness to keep up with the syllabus and assignments and seek help when you need it by asking questions and making and keeping student-teacher conference appointments.

You may find some of the material in this course disturbing. I do, and I tried to give adequate warning in the theme description available to you before you enrolled. In life, especially in our intellectual lives, it pays to examine the things that bother us. I would never assign any of these graphic novels to children; however, students at the college level are expected to have the maturity to read materials that may not be in line with their experiences and belief systems.

Writing is a social act, and you will be expected to share your writing with your peers on a regular basis. You can learn a lot by getting multiple perspectives on your work, seeing the work of peers, and witnessing the feedback they get.

Submitting Assignments. Papers must be written in MLA format in 12 pt. Times New Roman and are due at the beginning of class in a paper folder, with everything you did during that unit in preparation, including informal in-class writing and full drafts. If you arrive late on a due date, the paper is late. Late papers will be accepted within a reasonable time frame but will be penalized between 5% and 20%. You may revise one graded paper for a new grade; I will average the two grades.

Plagiarism and Re-Submissions. Information regarding academic dishonesty is available at <http://www.plu.edu/academics/integ.html>. Do not collude or submit work written by others, and do not submit work from any other course. Breaking this policy may result in **severe** disciplinary action (including failure and possible expulsion).

Attendance. Everyone is allowed two absences over the course of the term, no questions asked. Additional unexcused absences will result in your grade being reduced 5%. Excused absences must be *documented* as official university functions or true health or family emergencies *and approved by the instructor*.

Grade Breakdown.

Unit One: Literacy Autobiography (300)	15
Unit Two: Analysis and Application (<i>Watchmen</i>)	15
Unit Three: Research (<i>Persepolis</i>)	15
Unit Four: Thematic Essay (<i>Maus</i>)	15
Unit Five: Graphic Narrative (Your Comic)	15
Unit Six: Final Reflective Essay	15
Participation	10
Total	100

Assistance. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in the event of a building evacuation, please speak with me.