ENGL 217 – COMIC BOOKS AS LITERATURE

A. **TITLE:** Comic Books as Literature

B. **COURSE NUMBER:** ENGL 217

C. **CREDIT HOURS:** 3

D. **WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE (OPTIONAL):** As determined by the instructor for Liberal Studies and Support Services

E. **COURSE LENGTH:** 15 weeks per semester

F. **SEMESTER(S) OFFERED:** Spring/Fall

G. **HOURS OF LECTURE, LABORATORY, RECITATION, TUTORIAL, ACTIVITY:** 3 hours per week, combination of lecture, discussion, and in-class small group activities

H. **CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION:**

Comic books as literature? Certainly, skeptics will scoff at the idea. However, in recent years, comic books have become accepted as a respected form of literature by scholars, critics, and faculty alike. Students in this course examine the academic value of comic books and graphic novels through study of their history, similarity to other forms of literature, their own specialized literary and artistic techniques, and development as compelling narratives.

I. **PRE-REQUISITES/CO-COURSES:** Expository Writing or Oral and Written Expression or an accepted transferred writing course, or permission of the instructor.

J. **GOALS (STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES):**

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<th>Course Objective</th>
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<td>a. Evaluate, and discuss the process by which comic books are developed.</td>
<td>2. Crit. Thinking</td>
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<td>4. Inter-Intrapersonal Skills</td>
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<td>b. understand and apply specific literary and sequential art terms and techniques to assigned readings, thereby creating solid arguments about the literary nature of comic books.</td>
<td>1. Communication</td>
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<td>2. Crit. Thinking</td>
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<td>c. identify and compare the principles used in the process of writing and illustrating a comic book</td>
<td>2. Crit. Thinking</td>
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<td>d. evaluate which comics and graphic novels are truly literary, and analyze how they relate to their lives and the lives of others.</td>
<td>2. Crit. Thinking</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Inter-Intrapersonal Skills</td>
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K. **TEXTS:** The following titles and authors are highly recommended. The instructor may choose which are best suited for his or her approach to the course and its contents.

L. REFERENCES: The following texts, as well as updated ones, are recommended to be placed on reserve in Southworth Library.


M. EQUIPMENT: Overhead (ELMO) projector; laptop computer for Power Point presentations; DVD player for DVDs. Multimedia classroom preferred.

N. GRADING METHOD: A-F

O. MEASUREMENT CRITERIA/METHODS:

Learning Activities:

1. Lecture-discussion.
2. In-class writing exercises and/or quizzes.
3. Small-group discussions on analyses of comic book stories and chapters from graphic novels.
4. Small group discussions and/or written reports on assigned topics about writers/illustrators of comic books and graphic novels.

Evaluation:

Grades will be determined from the following course components:
Analytical paper 25%
Response papers 25%
In-class writing exercises and/or quizzes 25%
Journal/Class participation 25%

100%

P. **DETAILED TOPICAL OUTLINE**: Attached.
DETAILED TOPICAL OUTLINE FOR
ENGL 217 COMIC BOOKS AS LITERATURE

I. Introduction to course
   A. Syllabus: course description, course objectives, policies, grading, assignments.
   B. Questionnaire on students’ experiences with and knowledge of comic books.
   C. Small group examination of comic books and genres: funny animals, super heroes, romance, science fiction, war, western, etc.

II. History of Comic Books and Graphic Novels
   A. 19th-20th Centuries: The Platinum Age (1883-1933): newspaper strips
   B. 20th Century:
      1. The Pre-Golden Age (1933-1938): newspaper strips and first comic books
      2. The Golden Age (1938-1945): super heroes, World War II
      3. The Atom Age (1945-1956): postwar characters and genres
      5. The Bronze Age (1970-1984): rise of underground comics and relevant stories in mainstream comics
   C. The Comic Books Codes: regulation of content, 1954-present

III. Comic Book Terminology and Techniques
   A. Terminology: panel; border; gutter; balloons (dialogue, thought, special); caption box, splash page/panel
   B. Techniques: splash pages/panels; time & timing; flashbacks; transitions; motifs; lightning & shading; color; dialogue; sound effects; silent panels

IV. Influential Writers and Illustrators
   A. The Golden Age: Jerry Siegel & Joe Shuster; Bob Kane; Will Eisner; William Gaines; Jack Davis; Wally Wood; Al Feldstein; Harvey Kurtzman
   B. The Silver Age: Stan Lee & Steve Ditko; Jack Kirby; Carmine Infantino; Joe Kubert; John Buscema; Sam Glanzman
   C. The Bronze and Copper Ages: Frank Miller; John Romita, Jr.; Todd MacFarlane; Paul Chadwick; Alex Ross; Alan Moore; Dave Gibbons; Brian Bolland; Mike Mignola
V. Comic Books and Graphic Novels as Narratives
   A. Review of Literary Terms: traditional uses of character, plot, irony, imagery, figurative language
   B. Single Stories: sequential art narratives in 4-8 pages
   C. Extended Stories: sequential art narratives in two or more parts per issue, from 12-20 pages.
   D. Complete Graphic Novels: sequential art narratives in book form, compiled from a series of individual issues or written/illustrated as one work

VI. Determining Values of Non-Literary and Literary Comics and Graphic Novels
   A. Mainstream Comic Books: Entertainment at Face Value
   B. Comic Books as Literature: More Than Just a Pretty Picture

Q. LABORATORY OUTLINE: NA