

SFSU

CMX/HUM 625 SPRING 2020

ADVANCED READINGS IN COMICS

★ INFO ★

Nick Sausanis@sfsu.edu

M/W 2-3¹⁵ HUM 581

OFFICE HUM 581 → Comics LAB

HOURS M 12³⁰-1³⁰ W 10-11 or BY APPT

MATERIALS

- SKETCHBOOK(S)
- DRAWING TOOLS...

(some) THEMES WE WILL EXPLORE

Definitions
Form
Composition
Classification
GRIDS
Diagrams
TIME
IMAGE-TEXT
DRAWING
STYLES

COMICS READINGS

- Kevin Huizenga
the River at Night
- UNA Becoming Unbecoming
- + Moore + more TBD...

THEORISTS!

T. Groensteen

P. F. Davies

C. Hatfield

B. Postema

L. Konstantinov

B. Beatty

H. Chute

D. R. Cabero

K. Mikkonen

N. Cohn

R. Wilek

J. Meiersse

S. Baekens

P. Lete

J. Meiersse

S. Baekens

P. Lete

K. Kukkonen

N. Sausanis

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JIGSAW

there are more things to read than any of us can - so we will distribute readings across the class and depend on visual notes + responses from each other to put pieces together...

WORK

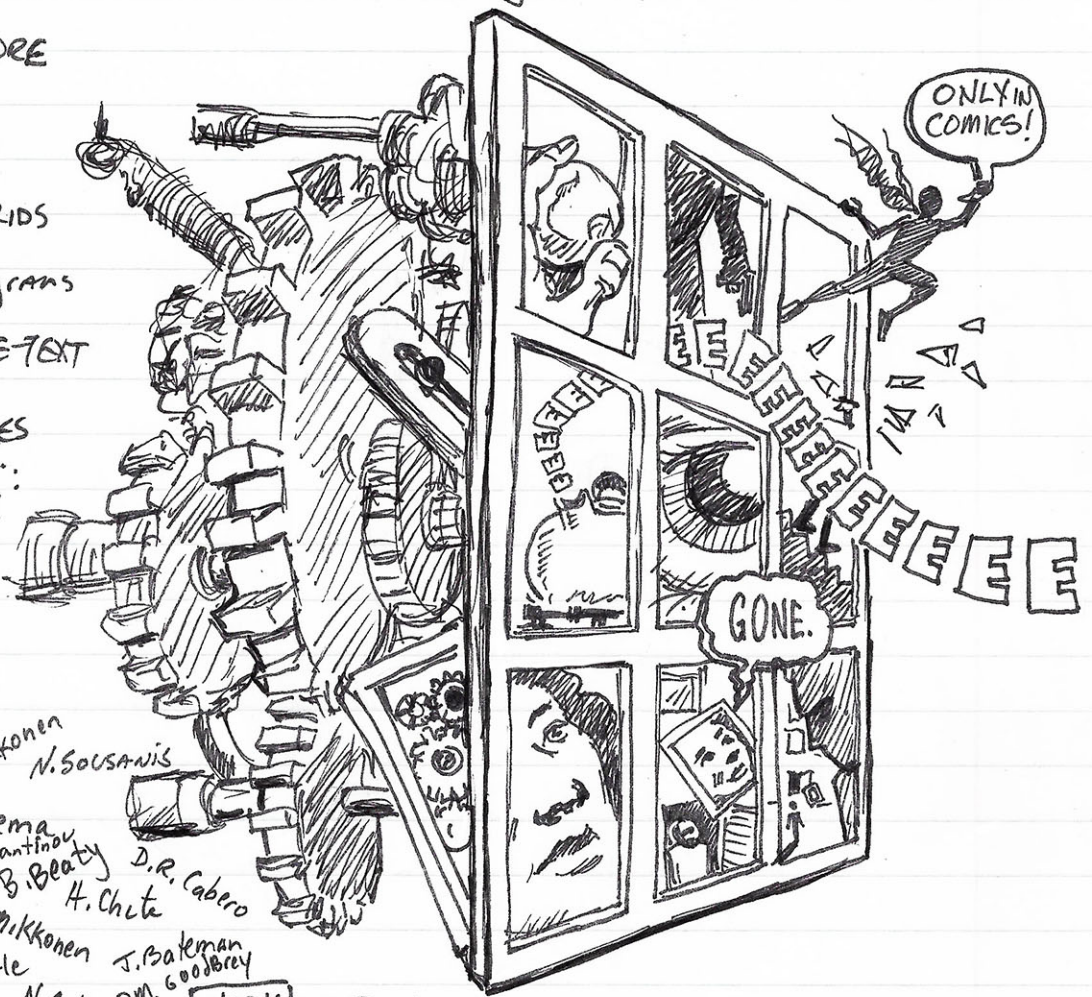
① Participation, Ongoing Assignments (40%): Class thrives if we all contribute!

② Review a Comic (15%): Write a review for Publication (text, podcast, video, ...)

③ Comics affordances Project (15%): Develop a small comic exploring a particular affordance of comics - part of a collection we create together.

④ FINAL (30%): Your theorizing on Comics in Comics. A piece of Scholarship demonstrating Comics' fitness as Scholarship.

We will Read Comics theorists, Read and Analyze comics, and leverage the distinct affordances comics offer to say things about comics through the form itself. This is a seminar course where we will all learn together and contribute to one another's learning. Responses to Readings will be in comics woven from visual metaphors, sketchnotes, visual annotations, + other image-text hybrids that we invent for the purpose of the course - and through them we will seek to explore the very way we conduct Scholarship - making comics as a means of inquiry.



wu.wu.spiriweaveandcut.com
TW @NSAUSANIS
Let me know if you don't want
me to share your work on web

San Francisco State University: Liberal Studies
CMX/HUM 625 Advanced Readings in Comics
Fall 2020

Class Meetings: M/W 2-3:15

Classroom: HUM 581

Instructor: Nick Sousanis sousanis@sfsu.edu

Office: HUM 581 Phone: 415-338-3166

Office Hours: Monday 12:30-1:30, Wednesday 10-11, or by appointment

This course focuses on the study of comics from a theoretical standpoint. Students will engage with a wide range of comics theorists and apply these ideas to a diverse set of complex, long form (and short) comics. It will be a discussion-based course, run seminar-style, with opportunities for students to delve deeply and critically into the different comics works we will explore together.

While it will be a theoretical course, students will expressly conduct their explorations of comics through visual methods – making responses and arguments in comics or other image-text hybrids that we invent for the purposes of the course. They will be able to lay bare what's going on in the comic through the application of their own visual analyses and perform intensive deconstruction of the works through their visual methods and applications of theory. This will in turn be an exploration of the very way we conduct scholarship – using the comics we study themselves as models for doing scholarship. As the course explores the affordances that the comics medium makes available, students will use those affordances to conduct their coursework in comics form. That does not make this a drawing course in the traditional way, only to explore the ways comics can serve as a form of critique and in what ways does that stretch our abilities to perform analysis?

The sorts of assignments could include: visual analysis on our readings performed in visual style; multiple types of annotation approaches; redrawing an excerpt from a comic we read in the style of another to see the effect of drawing style on meaning; redrawing passages from comics to explore the effect different formal choices have on reading; various practice-based exercises using techniques from the comics we read to tease out the theoretical aspects from our scholarly readings; short instances of translating academic research into visual form; a final project might consist of a research paper on comics done in the form of a comic to demonstrate what the comics form can offer a researcher. **[Prerequisites:** Upper division or graduate standing, CMX 325, or consent of the instructor.]

Comics Readings (available at *Comix Experience* for a discount for students who present the syllabus):

Kevin Huizenga *Ganges: The River At Night*

Una *Becoming Unbecoming* + more to be determined (many will be provided)

Comics Theory Readings – we'll read a ton of excerpts from these and more, all provided:

Thierry Groensteen *The System of Comics & Comics and Narration*

Barbara Postema *Narrative Structure in Comics*

Bart Beaty *Comics vs. Art*

Hillary Chute *Graphic Women*

Paul Fisher Davies *Comics as Communication*

Hannah Modriag *Comics and Language*

Charles Hatfield *Alternative Comics*

Frederik Köhlert *Serial Selves: Identity and Representation in Autobiographical Comics*

Ann Miller *Reading Bande Dessinée*

Neil Cohn *The Visual Language of Comics*

Nick Sousanis *Unflattening*

Karin Kukkonen *Contemporary Comics Storytelling*

Kai Mikkonen *The Narratology of Comic Art*

We will read far too many things to handle this semester – so some jigsawing will be required! That is, we'll distribute the reading across the class and depend on your visual notes to help us put all the pieces together!

Required Materials: Since we will regularly be drawing and making comics in this course, it goes without saying that you will need to have basic drawing materials. You will be responsible to build up your own tool set as you develop your particular approach to comics making, but I've listed the bare essentials here.

- Likely multiple notebooks/sketchbooks of your choosing
- Drawing tools of your choice (pen, pencil, brush pen, etc.) (Color options are nice too)

Assignments and Evaluation: (These particular assignments are open to revision, should the class in our work together determine a better path to move our work forward...)

Participation in Discussion, Ongoing Assignments and Exercises, Attendance (40%):

Ongoing responses to our theory and comics readings in the form of sketchnotes, visual annotations/analysis, comics constructed from visual metaphors, and more. This is a seminar class, so participating in discussion, keeping up with and creating visual notes and analysis to share on the readings is a must. The class will thrive if all contribute.

Review a Comic (15%): Write a review of a comic for publication (text, podcast, or video) – emphasis on the visual nature of comics and the form itself.

Comics Affordances Project (15%): Develop a small comic exploring a particular affordance of comics – this will be part of a collective work we create together.

Final Project (30%): Create a piece of theory on comics in the form itself. It should demonstrate the student's understanding of the affordances that the comics form makes available and leverage those to offer a clear argument.

Course Outline Our schedule will evolve as we explore and generate responses to course material together. I will keep you all apprised in class, via email, and iLearn of what's coming. To ensure we remain on the same page, you are expected to check *iLearn* and your **sfsu email** account regularly.

iLearn: We will be using the iLearn website for this class, in which you are automatically enrolled.

For assistance with iLearn, see the Academic Technology website: <http://at.sfsu.edu>

iLearn log-in page: <https://ilearn.sfsu.edu/login/index.php>

Student Learning Outcomes

1. become intimately familiar and well-versed in the different theoretical approaches to the study of comics and able to apply them to the analysis of comics works
2. identify significant formal features on the comics page and be able to address their contribution to meaning-making
3. perform in depth analysis in the form of visual annotation on a work of comics to delve into the mechanics of its construction and offer deep insight into the author's choices
4. create comics with the purpose of discussing comics that utilize the affordances of the comics medium and manifest them in both the discussion and the use of the form itself
5. produce scholarship in the field of comics studies and be able to do so in traditional text and comics form
6. discover ways working visually expands ability to do research
7. find your own method for visual practice that works most effectively to do the investigations you set out to do

Course Policies

Classroom approach: I consider learning as acquiring the tools to follow one's own curiosity, and thus teaching means providing a framework, establishing an environment for participants to explore and thrive. Rather than being out in front, I see my role as accompanying students on a journey we all make together – that is particularly true in this case. We all offer distinct vantage points and we want to draw on all of them – to expand the possibilities for what we can all learn as we each find our own way. Hence, **Class participation** is essential! We learn in community, gain from each other's perspective. Let's be here, on time, and respect one another's point of view and discover what we can learn together. We want this classroom to be a great learning environment for everyone, so we need to all take care of each other to make it so. Laptops and smart devices, if used well, can complement discussion and so are permitted. If they are being used in a way that detracts from the overall environment, the instructor will address that.

Attendance: This class will be conducted seminar-style. This means that everyone is expected to participate in ongoing discussions on the readings and topics, and that you come to class well-prepared to do so. Attendance and participation are critical components of this class and will be taken very seriously. In addition, repeatedly coming late to class is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Of course, sometimes obligations, illness, or other unforeseen events make attendance impossible. Let me know in advance of any such that will preclude your attendance, and we will make alternative arrangements.

Late Papers and Homework Assignments: An assignment is considered late if it is not turned in at the beginning of class on the day it is due. Assignments that are turned in on-time will be graded and returned in a timely fashion. Assignments that are turned in up to a week late will be marked accordingly, and receive a full-grade deduction. Medical or family emergencies are valid excuses and will be accepted with written documentation.

Contact and Feedback: You are encouraged to visit office hours or make an appointment to discuss issues in class, and to clarify any questions you may have about assignments and requirements. When sending emails to me, please use your "sfsu.edu" account when possible, and put "LS 304" followed by your subject in the subject line so I am sure to address it more quickly.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a form of cheating or fraud; it occurs when a student misrepresents the work of another as his or her own. Plagiarism may consist of using the ideas, sentences, paragraphs, or the whole text of another without appropriate acknowledgment, but it also includes employing or allowing another person to write or substantially alter work that a student then submits as his or her own. Any assignment found to be plagiarized will be given an "F" grade. All instances of plagiarism in LCA will be reported to the Dean of the College, and may be reported to the University Judicial Affairs Officer for further action.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor. The Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC) is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. The DPRC is located in the Student Service Building and can be reached by telephone (voice/TTY 415-338-2472) or by email dprc@sfsu.edu.

University Policy on Sexual Harassment & Violence: SF State fosters a campus free of sexual violence including sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or any form of sex or gender discrimination. If you disclose a personal experience as an SF State student, the course instructor is required to notify the Dean of Students. To disclose any such violence confidentially, contact:

The SAFE Place - (415) 338-2208; [SAFE Place website http://www.sfsu.edu/~safe_plc/](http://www.sfsu.edu/~safe_plc/)

Counseling and Psychological Services Center - (415) 338-2208; [Counseling and Psychological Services Center website http://psyservs.sfsu.edu](http://psyservs.sfsu.edu)

For more information on your rights and available resources see: [Title IX at SF State http://titleix.sfsu.edu](http://titleix.sfsu.edu)