

ENGLISH 4730F: Graphically Canadian  
Brescia University College  
University of Western Ontario

Instructor: Dr. Dominick Grace  
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Mon 8:30-11:30 BR 302

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### Course Description

Though dominated in North America by American artists and publishing companies, the comics industry has seen more than its fair share of successful and influential Canadian cartoonists and graphic novelists. Rand Holmes offered a rare Canadian voice in the underground movement; figures such as Richard Comely and George Freeman revived the possibility of the Canadian superhero (after a brief flowering of domestic genre comics during the WWII years), laying the foundations for the emergence of later Canadian mainstream cartoonists such as John Byrne and Todd McFarlane; figures such as David Boswell, Seth and Chester Brown were and remain major figures in the alternative comics movement; Dave Sim helped redefine the possibilities of comics with his complex and ambitious series *Cerebus*; and recently emerging figures such as Jeff Lemire, Bryan Lee O'Malley, and Kate Beaton are opening up new pathways, such as the melding of alternate and mainstream represented by Lemire's career, the influence of manga on O'Malley, and the exploitation of the internet as represented by Beaton's on-line strip *Hark, a Vagrant*. This course will study selected works by some of these creators. The course will cover a minimum of eight graphic novels or equivalents as well as selected secondary reading.

### Assigned Texts

Beaton, Kate. *Hark, a Vagrant*  
Boswell, David. *Reid Fleming, World's Toughest Milkman*  
Brown, Chester. *Ed the Happy Clown*  
---. *Louis Riel: Tenth Anniversary Edition*  
Lemire, Jeff. *Essex County*  
O'Malley, Bryan Lee. *Scott Pilgrim Vol. 1*  
Seth. *It's a Good Life, If You Don't Weaken*  
Sim, Dave. *Jaka's Story*  
Diana Tamblyn. *From the Earth to Babylon: Gerald Bull and the Supergun*

### Evaluation methods

Class participation: 15%

Critical review (short paper on a secondary resource): 10%

Short paper (1500 words): 15%

Seminar (including written report): 25%

Major essay (3000 words): 35%

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, the successful student will

1. have a basic understanding of the history and development of Canadian comics;
2. have a basic understanding of various comics media and genres
3. be able to read correctly and critically a graphic narrative sequence;
4. be able to analyze how graphic novelists use the devices of their medium;
5. be able to apply secondary materials to their understanding of graphic novels;
5. be able to write at a high level of accomplishment, with grammatical accuracy, logical structure, and deep analytical content

## CLASS SCHEDULE

Seminars MAY begin as early as Sept. 16, if someone wants to tackle *Scott Pilgrim*; otherwise, they will begin on Sept. 23. Enrolment dictates that in most weeks, there will be two presentations, but there will be no more than two. Ideally, each presenter will lead the class for half of the class time (i.e. one and a half hours), but NOT by presenting a 1.5 hour seminar. The formal presentation should allow room for, even encourage, discussion.

Sept. 9	Introduction
Sept. 16	<i>Scott Pilgrim</i> Vol. 1
Sept. 23	<i>Essex County</i>
Sept. 30	<i>Essex County; Reid Fleming, World's Toughest Milkman</i>
Oct. 7	<i>Reid Fleming, World's Toughest Milkman</i>
Oct. 21	<i>It's a Good Life, If You Don't Weaken</i>
	<b>Short essay due</b>
Oct. 28	<i>Ed the Happy Clown</i>
Nov. 4	<i>Ed the Happy Clown; Louis Riel</i>
Nov. 11	<i>Louis Riel; Jaka's Story</i>
Nov. 18	<i>Jaka's Story</i>
Nov. 25	Tamblyn
Dec. 2	<i>Hark, a Vagrant</i>
	<b>Major essay due</b>