

HUM 270 SYLLABUS, Seattle Central College

Comic Books, Manga and Graphic Novels

Spring, 2021

5 credits

Leonard Rifas (pronounced "WRY-fuss"; call me "Mr. Rifas" or "Leonard.")

Phone number: 206-985-9483 (home) I suggest that you confirm by email anything that you would like me to remember.

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Virtual office hours: Monday-Friday, 12:00-12:50, and by arrangement

Text: Reading packet posted under "Files."

Course Description:

In this class we will consider the history, achievements and problems of comic books, manga, and graphic novels. Comics, under one name or another, have been around for many years, but have achieved legitimacy relatively recently. We will study how they grew to become accepted and respected media.

By considering examples from different times and places, we will have opportunities to learn how comics have functioned as part of global system of cultural power and influence.

Creating and studying comics can contribute to the goals of the Humanities in several ways. These include by helping us to think more creatively and critically; to understand the world more widely and deeply; to communicate more clearly; and, by building empathy, to become more fully human.

Course Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. explain how comics, manga and graphic novels have evolved, as formats, as industries, and as means of expression
2. describe the works of some cartoonists from various times and places
3. apply the basic principles of cartooning to create an original and understandable work in comics format
4. research a question related to sequential art (comic books, manga, or graphic novels) and present your findings

Course Method:

The methods most frequently used in this class will include the instructor's illustrated lectures (recorded with Panopto); reading the assigned materials; writing assignments; and cartooning lessons.

Information about the Instructor:

My qualifications for teaching this course include having worked as an educational comic book publisher, as a cartoonist, as a cartooning instructor, and as a "pioneering" comics scholar.

My educational philosophy centers on coaching students to become competent investigators of their self-chosen questions, for their own benefit as

individuals, and to serve the larger society's needs for an intellectually capable citizenry in these extraordinary times.

Required Texts, Supplemental Readings, and Materials

I have collected the required readings in a Packet and will post them on this course's Canvas website under "Files". I will also assign materials found on the web.

Feedback and Evaluation

Course grades will be based on:

- quizzes (20% of course grade)
- participation in brief assignments (20%)
- weekly written assignments (20%)
- participation in a class-drawn comics project (20%)
- a final project (20% of course grade.)

The points for brief assignments, weekly assignments, and the class comic will be "credit" or "no credit." If you expect to miss a deadline by a few days, please let me know when to expect your work. The deadlines become inflexible at the end of the quarter.

You have the option of proposing an alternate formula for my evaluation of your performance in HUM 270. For example, you might like to write a scholarly article ("term paper") related to comic books, manga or graphic novels or to create a nonfiction comic book. I do not promise to accept any such proposals, but I do promise to consider them carefully. The deadline for such proposals is April 16.

No assignments that include plagiarized material will be accepted for credit.

Content Warning

Some of the imagery presented in this class, by the instructor or in student presentations, may be disturbing. Shocking images have not only been *present* in the history of comics, manga and graphic novels, but they have sometimes been *crucial* for understanding that history. The history of comics and cartoons has included graphic representations of violence, death and war; Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, anti-Christian and racist comics; proselytizing or propaganda comics; licentious or salacious images; and images of sexual violence or misogyny. If you would like further clarification or to express concerns (either before or after seeing the presented images), please write or call! I will try my best to create the conditions that will allow us to engage thoughtfully with difficult content. Remember that you can stop the Panopto recordings at any point and either come back to them later or contact me to share your concerns.

Here's a comic strip by M. Slade that explains the value of "Trigger Warnings" in the context of a face-to-face course:

<http://www.revelist.com/ideas/trigger-warnings-comic/5925> .

Course Schedule

I originally organized the course schedule around a two-day-a-week pattern, and taught it on Mondays and Wednesdays or Tuesdays and Thursdays, in 2 ½ hour blocks. On the next page, I have organized the course material on a Monday/Wednesday schedule, but now that the course has gone completely online, you may schedule your time as you wish. This course has **no scheduled meeting times**, other than the one-on-one meetings that I will schedule with you individually. Please keep up with the due dates for the assignments to keep the work from piling up.

I will announce any changes through the Canvas site.

Advice about watching the Panopto lectures

To get the most out of this class, I urge that you pay close attention to the lectures, rather than playing them while you are also reading unrelated materials or otherwise dividing your attention. I recognize that this can be “more easily said than done,” since I am easily distracted myself. I have two recommendations for things that have proven to work for me:

- 1) **Doodle.** As I will explain in the first lecture, doodling aids concentration and memory.
- 2) **Visual Note-taking.** I encourage you to experiment to find or develop a note-taking method that works for you. Doing an image search for “visual note-taking” can bring you to pages with appealing examples.

Seattle Central College Library

The Seattle Central College library has excellent resources and an excellent staff. To request a librarian’s help, start at: <http://libguides.seattlecentral.edu/library/ask>

Service Learning

If you would like to take Service Learning (or to find out about that program), see: <https://seattlecentral.edu/programs/alternate-programs/service-learning> . I offer Service learning as an *option* to HUM 270 students, but I do not require it. If interested, contact me for more details within the first two weeks of the course.

ADA Accommodations:

If you need course accommodations based on a documented disability, please make an appointment to speak with me about it as soon as possible.

Course Outline:

HUM 270 21S	Monday	Wednesday
Week One:	202104.05	202104.07
Introduction Defining Comics Property and Culture	Syllabus Pre-examination, Defining the field A history of comics as property and commons Introduction and Minute Writing	The term assignment <i>Cartooning lesson: Basics of Cartooning</i> Quiz One
Week Two:	202104.12	202104.14
Strips & Superheroes	A history of newspaper comics	Film: <i>Comic Book Superheroes Decoded</i> (82m) Quiz Two
Week Three:	202104.19	202104.21
Artworlds, Funny Animals	Comics Artworlds Comics and Materiality	Funny Animals <i>Cartooning lesson: Bodies</i> Quiz Three
Week Four:	202104.26	202104.28
Manga	Osamu Tezuka	Keiji Nakazawa Quiz Four
Week Five:	202105.03	202105.05
Comics and Colonialism	<i>Tintin in the Congo</i>	<i>Cartooning lesson: Storytelling</i> Quiz Five
Week Six:	202105.10	202105.12 (FACULTY DEV. DAY)
War Comics	Korean War Comics	(No class)
Week Seven:	202105.17	202105.19
Graphic Novels Terrorism	A survey of graphic novels	Cartoons and Terrorism
Week Eight:	202105.24	202105.26
Fredric Wertham and the anti-comics movement	Fredric Wertham and the anti-comics movement	Cartooning session
Week Nine:	202105.31 MEMORIAL DAY	202006.10
Underground Comix;	HOLIDAY	The "cultural revolution" in comix
Week Ten:	202106.07	202106.09
Presentations	The House Lights Go Up	Presentations
Week Eleven:	202106.14	202106.16
Presentations	Presentations	Presentations