

**Queens College**  
**City University of New York**  
**LBSCI 790: Exploring and Understanding Comics in Libraries**

**Dr. Lucia Cedeira Serantes**

**A. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The goal of this course is to introduce students to comics within the framework of their potential use in libraries. Therefore, the study and evaluation of comics will be a major component of the course. The selected works will attempt to represent major trends, creators, and publishers and, although we will focus on the North American market, we will also discuss the European and Asian markets. We will evaluate these materials, reflect about emerging issues and their role, in the context of different information environments: public, school, and academic libraries. .

**Bulletin Description: N/A**

**B. COURSE LEARNING GOALS & GSLIS PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

Student Learning Outcomes	Assignments	Student Learning Objectives (text appears on next page)									
		A.1	A.2	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	
Situate and understand the past and present of comics as a reading material, their readers, and its controversial relationship with libraries and librarians	Participation Seminar and report			X			X				
Recognize the extensive and diverse production of graphic materials, especially major publishing markets, specific canonical and popular works, and key authors	Participation Pathfinder Visit	X	X								
Select and evaluate comics that specifically connect with the library's community and mission	Pathfinder Visit		X				X	X			
Critically reflect on the qualities and benefits of the form in lieu of the frequent challenges and stereotypes about these materials.	Seminar and report Comics page			X	X						

## **GSLIS Program Objectives Stated as Student Learning Outcomes:**

Program and course requirements in the GSLIS are designed to ensure that graduates have met the following Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). These SLOs (A-H) state that graduates will have the ability to:

- A. Assist users in gaining access to information and knowledge, including its creation, acquisition, organization and management, storage and retrieval, by demonstrating that they can:
  - 1. Identify, acquire, create, organize, process, store and provide access to information in all its forms for libraries, cultural institutions and other information organizations in a global environment.
  - 2. Identify, retrieve, evaluate and use general and specialized resources to address current and future information needs and provide related services to diverse user communities.
- B. Articulate the role and importance of ethics, values, and advocacy within the legal and historical frameworks underlying the practice of librarianship and the information professions
- C. Apply the appropriate practices and policies of established Library and Information Science professional standards in various specializations
- D. Find, analyze, assess, apply, and conduct research in Library and Information Science and other disciplines in response to gaps in knowledge and practice
- E. Contribute to a diverse, global society—including the role of addressing the needs of underserved groups--through exemplary Library and Information Science practice and research
- F. Identify, evaluate and implement current and emerging technologies and services to meet the evolving information needs of diverse user communities in an increasingly interconnected environment
- G. Demonstrate understanding of the importance of continuing professional development in LIS; articulate and apply principles, theories and measures underlying the role of the library in supporting lifelong learning within the community
- H. Explain and apply principles of effective management and leadership in the library and related information institutions

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

---

- This course does not have a required textbook. We will be studying comics from different perspectives that will require you to read texts from different disciplines. However, there are three texts that I recommend you to use as core for the relationship between comics and libraries:
  - Cornog, M., & Perper, T. 2009. *Graphic novels beyond the basics: Insights and issues for libraries*. Santa Barbara, Calif: Libraries Unlimited/ABC-CLIO.
  - Goldsmith, F. 2010. *The readers' advisory guide to graphic novels*. ALA readers' advisory series. Chicago: American Library Association.
  - Weiner, Robert G. 2010. *Graphic novels and comics in libraries and archives: Essays on readers, research, history and cataloging*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co. Publishing.

## **SUPPORT TEXTS**

---

- Booker, M. K. 2010. *Encyclopedia of comic books and graphic novels*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Greenwood.
- Brenner, Robin E. 2007. *Understanding manga and anime*. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited
- Duncan, R., and M. J. Smith. 2009. *The power of comics: History, form and culture*. New York: Continuum.
- Eisner, W. 2005. *Comics and Sequential Art*. Tamarac, FL: Poorhouse Press
- Eisner, W. 2008. *Graphic storytelling*. New York : W.W. Norton.

- Gordon, I.; M. Jancovich; and M. P. McAllister. 2007. *Film and comic books*. 1st ed. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.
- Gravett, Paul. 2005. *Graphic novels: Stories to change your life*. London: Aurum.
- Kalen, E. 2012. *Mostly manga: A genre guide to popular manga, manhwa, manhwa, and anime*. Santa Barbara, Calif: Libraries Unlimited.
- Karp, J. (2012). *Graphic novels in your school library*. Chicago: American Library Association.
- McCloud, S. 1994 *Understanding comics*. New York, NY : HarperPerennial
- Pawuk, Michael. 2007. *Graphic novels: A genre guide to comic books, manga, and more*. Genreflecting advisory series. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited.
- Petersen, R.S. 2011. *Comics, manga, and graphic novels: A history of graphic narratives*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger.
- Robins, Scott & Snow Wildsmith. 2012. *The Grown-Up Guide to Kids' Comics: Choosing Titles Your Kids Will Love*. Iola, WI: Krause Pub.
- Sabin, R. 1996. *Comics, comix, and graphic novels*. London: Phaidon
- Serchay, D. 2010. *The librarian's guide to graphic novels for adults*. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers.
- Versaci, Rocco. 2007. *This book contains graphic language: Comics as literature*. New York: Continuum.
- Wolk, Douglas. 2007. *Reading comics: How graphic novels work and what they mean*. New York, NY: Da Capo Press

### C. COURSE TOPICS/UNITS/READINGS AND DATES WEEKLY TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1	Introduction: our stories with comics
WEEK 2	Defining the medium (I): Graphic storytelling basics
Required readings	Eisner, W. (2005) <i>Comics and Sequential Art</i> . Tamarac, FL : Poorhouse Press (p.7-12; p.38-99); Eisner, W. (2008) <i>Graphic storytelling</i> . New York : W.W. Norton, (p.7-45) McCloud, S. (1994) <i>Understanding comics</i> . New York, NY : HarperPerennial (p. 2-23)
Assignment	WEEKLY RESPONSE BOOKSTORE/LIBRARY
WEEK 3	Defining the medium (II): a brief history of comics and libraries
Readings	Ellis, Allen W., and Doug Highsmith. 2000. About face: Comic books in library literature. <i>Serials Review</i> 26 (2): 21-43. Sabin, R. (1996) <i>Comics, Comix, and Graphic Novels</i> . London: Phaidon (p.10-26)
Assignment	WEEKLY RESPONSE

WEEK 4	Comics portray everyday life: The “slice of life” story
Readings	Eisner, Will. <i>Contract with God</i> . Lemire, Jeff. <i>Essex County</i> . Seth. <i>It's a good life, if you don't weaken: [a picture novella]</i> . Tamaki, Mariko; Tamaki, Jillian. <i>This One Summer</i>
Assignment	WEEKLY RESPONSE GROUP
WEEK 5	Escaping to other worlds: Fantasy and Adventure
Readings	Gaiman, Neil. <i>The absolute Sandman</i> . (vol.1) Mignola, Mike. <i>Hellboy: seed of destruction</i> Moore, Alan. <i>V for Vendetta</i> Willingham, Bill. <i>Fables</i> (vol.1)
Assignment	WEEKLY RESPONSE GROUP PRESENTATION
WEEK 6	Non-fiction comics: Authors examine the present and the past
Readings	Abadzis, Nick. <i>Laika</i> Delisle, Guy. <i>Pyongyang</i> Schultz & Cannon & Cannon. <i>The stuff of life</i> Sacco, Joe. <i>Palestine</i> Winnick, Judd. <i>Pedro and me</i>
Assignment	WEEKLY RESPONSE GROUP PRESENTATION
WEEK 7	Comics and Librarianship: Acquisition, collection management, and classification.
Readings	Cornog, M. & Perper, T. (2009). <i>Graphic novels beyond the basics</i> . Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited. (p.xx-xxv) Lyga, A & Lyga, B. (2004). <i>Graphic novels in your media center</i> . Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited. (p.1-14) Serchay, D. (2008) <i>The librarian's guide to graphic novels for children and tweens</i> . New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers. (p.107-144)
Assignment	WEEKLY RESPONSE GROUP
WEEK 8	Batman vs. Spiderman: Capes and Crusaders in comics
Readings	Bendis, Brian Michael. <i>Ultimate Spiderman</i> . (vol.1) Claremont, Chris. <i>X-Men Phoenix Saga</i> Ellis, Warren. <i>The Authority</i> (vol.1) Miller, Frank. <i>Dark Knight Returns</i> Moore, Alan. <i>Watchmen</i>
Assignment	WEEKLY RESPONSE GROUP PRESENTATION

WEEK 9	Autobiographical comics: The story of my life.
Readings	Bechdel, Allison. <i>Fun Home</i> Spiegelman, Art. <i>Maus</i> . (vol.1 & 2) Satrapi, Marjane. <i>Persepolis</i> . (vol.1 & 2) Thompson, Craig. <i>Blankets</i> .
Assignment	WEEKLY RESPONSE GROUP PRESENTATION
WEEK 10	Manga and Manhwa: examples from Japanese and Korean markets
Readings	Takahashi, Rumiko. <i>Ranma ½</i> . (vol.1 & 2) Tayaka, Natsuki. <i>Fruits Basket</i> . (Vol.1-4) Taniguchi, Jiro. <i>Walking man</i> . Tatsumi, Yoshihiro. <i>Good-bye</i> . Byun, Byung Jun. <i>Run, Bong-Gu, Run!</i> Kim Dong Hwa. <i>The color of Earth</i>
Assignment	WEEKLY RESPONSE
WEEK 11	Graphic novels are still funny: Humour
Readings	Moore, Terry. <i>Strangers in Paradise</i> O'Malley, Bryan. <i>Scott Pilgrim</i> . (vol.1 & 2) Smith, Jeff. <i>Bone</i> .
Assignment	WEEKLY RESPONSE GROUP PRESENTATION
WEEK 12	BD, historietas,tegniserier: Some European comics that crossed the ocean
Readings	Herge. <i>Tintin and the broken ear; the black island; King Ottokar's sceptre</i> . Gipi. <i>Notes for a War</i> Canales & Guarnido. <i>Blacksad</i> Tardi, Jacques. <i>It Was the War of the Trenches</i> . Pedrosa, Cyril. <i>Three Shadows</i> .
Assignment	WEEKLY RESPONSE GROUP PRESENTATION
WEEK 13	Intellectual freedom: Comics, censorship and challenges
	Comic Book Legal Defense Fund- Resources section <a href="http://cbldef.org/resources/">http://cbldef.org/resources/</a> Critshfield, R. & Powell, D. M. (2012) Well-Intentioned Censorship Is Still Censorship: The Challenge of Public Library Employees. In <i>True stories of censorship battles in America's libraries</i> , Nye, V., & Barco, K (eds), pp 8-13. Chicago: American Library Association.
Assignment	

WEEK 14	Are there any comics left for kids?: Graphic novels for a younger audience (9-12 year old)
	Davis, Eleanor. <i>Stinky: a toon book</i> Gownley, Jimmy. <i>Amelia Rules: The whole world's crazy.</i> Guibert, Emmanuel. <i>Sardine in outer space</i> Runton, Andy. <i>Owly</i> . (vol.1) <i>Toon Books</i> selection
Assignment	WEEKLY RESPONSE GROUP PRESENTATION PAGE ANALYSIS
WEEK 15	Film adaptations: Mainstream // Alternative comics become movies
	Gordon, Ian, Mark Jancovich, and Matthew P. McAllister. 2007. <i>Film and comic books</i> . 1st ed. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. Booker, M. Keith. 2007. <i>"May contain graphic material": Comic books, graphic novels, and film</i> . Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.  Tentative primary readings/movies: Pekar, Harvey. <i>New American Splendor Anthology</i> . Simmons, Possy. <i>Tamara Drewe</i> .

#### D. ASSIGNMENTS, DUE DATES AND GRADING PLAN

More specific instructions will be given in class verbally and in written handouts.

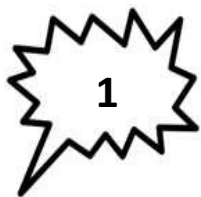
1. Participation, preparation, and 10 weekly reading responses (at least 5 before week 8) (20%)
2. Visit to a comics bookstore, a general bookstore or a library and reflection (15%)
3. A print or electronic pathfinder of an author, theme, or genre (20%)
4. Seminar and report (30%)
5. Comics page analysis and reflection (15%)

#### Overall Course Grades

Evaluation will be on a percentage system as detailed above. Grade assignment will follow the scholastic standards in the *Queens College Graduate Bulletin*

[http://www.qc.cuny.edu/Academics/Documents/Adm\\_GradBulletin\\_2014\\_15.pdf](http://www.qc.cuny.edu/Academics/Documents/Adm_GradBulletin_2014_15.pdf)

A +	97-100	B -	80-82
A	93-96	C +	77-79
A -	90-92	C	73-76
B +	87-89	C -	70-72
B	83-86	F	0-69



### **Participation and preparation for class (20%)**

**Due date:**

**Length:** 300-400 words

**Purpose:** Since most of the class time will be dedicated to the evaluation of reading materials, preparation and participation for the class will be an essential part of your grade.

**Recommendations:** In pairs, you will be required to choose one comic from the weekly selection that provoked a positive or negative reaction in you. You do not need to read this comic in full, but simply discuss with the class what aspect provoked your reaction.

**Reading diary:** you are required to submit ten short reading reports. The report should include the bibliographic information of the reading/s as well as a brief commentary about it. The weeks that include just primary materials, your entry should focus on ONE of the following questions; you are expected to clearly identify the question you are addressing:

- a. What happened to me as I read?
- b. Which features of this book caused my responses?
- c. What does this book ask of readers if they are to enjoy what it offers?
- d. Why is this book worth my own and the reader's attention?
- e. Which would be the most appropriate way of introducing this book to the reader I have in mind?
- f. What do I know of the background of this book – about its author, how it came to be written, or the place where it is set, and so on – that might interest the reader and stimulate their desire to read?
- g. Are there other books by the same author, or by other authors, which relate to this one and which the readers have already read or perhaps ought to read before reading this one? And are there books that follow on from this one? Are there any other media that might complement or expand the reading experience?

If you are interested in knowing more about these questions, they are based on Aidan Chambers blueprint (Chambers, A. 1983. *Introducing books to children*. Boston: Horn Book, pp.174-193)

**Opt-out:** You will be able to choose one week where you will not submit the report. You will still be responsible for doing the readings on this week.

**Submission and style:** you will post your response in the BB forum, in the folder for the respective week.



### **Visit and reflection on a visit to a comic bookstore, a general bookstore or a library (15%)**

**Due date:**

**Length:** 2-3 double spaced pages

**Purpose:** To give you an opportunity to reflect about accessing comic books and graphic novels, both as a reader and as a librarian.

#### **What you need to do:**

1. Choose between visiting a comic bookstore, a general bookstore, or a library. If you are already familiar with the titles and organization of any of these three sites, choose a new one. For example, if you are a frequent visitor a comic book store, choose a library or a general bookstore. If you want to visit two sites and build your assignment as a comparison, you are encouraged to do it.

2. There are two main activities to accomplish during the visit:
  - a. Find the comic book collection and reflect about issues of accessibility, organization, marketing, signage, ...
  - b. Think of a reader advisory question that you would like to ask at the site you are visiting. Try not to invent a question but choose something that is of interest for you. If you are new to comics, maybe you can ask for guidance for your first readings; if you are already a reader, maybe you can ask for something to read that is similar to what you like or something new. It will be interesting also to recollect specific information about how the place you are visiting promotes the collection or their business.
  - c. Do **not** indicate that you are a LIS student or that you are doing this for a class assignment and do **not**, under any circumstances, record the interaction.
2. The report should reflect the following aspects:
  - a. Feelings, challenges, facilities when entering the physical space
  - b. Locating comics and/or finding your way around the space
  - c. Report your question/scenario and as much as you can about the interaction with the librarian or the bookstore staff: helpful, comfortable, courteous, respectful, physical language... I am especially interested in how you felt during the interaction.
  - d. The conclusion should summarize your experience and point to, at least, one strength and one weakness of the experience.



### **Author, theme or genre pathfinder**

**Due date:** Depending on your seminar date and the term break

**Length:** There are no specific length requirements for this assignment since you can choose to do it in electronic or print form.

**Purpose:** A library pathfinder is a document that compiles useful materials on a *specific* topic, usually in a *particular* library. In this case, your pathfinder will be a reader's advisory tool

and its main function will be to serve as a starting point for a specific comics authors, genres, or themes. You have to choose a library or library system to base your project.

### **What you need to do:**

1. Scope: the pathfinder topic is clearly defined and described and the purpose is clearly stated.
2. Audience: the intended audience is specified and described.
3. Sources: identify, evaluate, and choose appropriate print (fiction & nonfiction) and electronic resources. The approach should be selective, not comprehensive. Also, you must provide a brief annotation and complete citations.
4. Organization and style: you should be aware of the importance of the organization and style (suitable format and categories, attractiveness, usability, clarity)
5. In a separate page, provide the sources you consulted to develop the pathfinder.



### **Seminar and report**

**Due date:** Various dates, to do in pairs.

**Purpose:** This assignment gives you the opportunity to explore a topic that expands and complements the information and discussions already present in the course. The presentation should include a meaningful discussion about the selected topic, including the suggested readings and/or some of the issues analyzed in the presentation. Attempt to be



creative in your presentation and mix approaches: lecturing, discussion, inclusion of other media, hands-on exercises...The 5 page report creates a space for you to reflect about the topic, summarize the main issues and maybe present that you did not address in your presentation. Every student should be in a group and should have selected a topic by the second class.

**What you need to do:**

1. At least one week before the presentation, you should meet with me to discuss the group's plan of action for the presentation.
2. A 45 minutes presentation about one of the suggested topics or one of your choice.
3. One week prior to your seminar date, you must provide by email one significant reading that you want the rest of us to read.
4. For the instructor to deliver in class: a copy of your slides (if you decide to use PPT) or your handout if you do not use PPT. For the instructor to deliver through BB: the bibliography you selected to prepare the topic, and a 5 page report where you reflect about the topic (consider your report to be an opportunity to share what matters about your topic with someone who is avidly interested in the topic but who knows very little about it, someone who was unable to attend). For the class: one page handout to post in BB.

Your grade will be based on the content, the documentation you provide and the delivery. You will be evaluated on the following:

- Relevance, comprehensibility, and clarity of your presentation for an audience of library science students
- Delivery, style and ability to engage the class with the main issues of the topic
- Coverage of relevant content in the presentation and the documentation provided
- Significance and appropriateness of selected readings and other materials discussed
- Professional quality of your delivery, both presentation and documents

Although examples of topics are provided, I am open to accept topics that you feel inclined to do; this is a space to pursue a topic of your interest. However, the only requirement is to meet with me to check that the topic is appropriate and relevant for the class. These are some examples:

- Comics and awards: how do they serve the medium and the library work
- Comics and visual literacy
- Comic strips: great comics in four panels or less
- Digital technologies and the comics: webcomics, e-readers, and the iPad.
- Educational comics: past and present of this publishing trend
- The comics publishing market in North America
- Specifics issues of comics in academic libraries
- Specifics issues of comics in school libraries
- Women and comics: authors, publishers and readers



**Analysis of a comics page**

**Due date:**

**Length:** one single-spaced page + scanned document of the comics page

**Purpose:** The idea behind this assignment is to bring together all the knowledge from the course through the analysis of a page of one work. You are required to choose one page or a double spread from one of the works we have read in class and to provide an analysis and a

reflection of that page at different levels:

- Construction of the page: explain how the page is built at the panel level, page structure and in comparison with the rest of the work.
- Style and aesthetics: colour, b&w, use of shadows, drawing style, situate the work in comparison with other works with similar themes, from the same author, or from the same publisher.
- Theme: how this page contributes to the transmission of the issues or main themes in the graphic novel
- Affect: as a reader, note what is interesting/moving/attractive in this page; as a librarian, note how you would use this page to promote the work or the collection
- Personal reflection: reasons for choosing this page (thematic, stylistic, affective...)

#### **E. CUNY POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

---

The Policy on Academic Integrity, as adopted by the Board is available to all candidates. Academic Dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. This policy and others related to candidates' issues are available to you at:

<http://www.qc.cuny.edu/about/administration/Provost/Policies/Pages/default.aspx>

#### **F. USE OF CANDIDATE WORK**

---

All programs in New York State undergo periodic reviews by accreditation agencies. For these purposes, samples of candidates' work are made available to those professionals conducting the review. Candidate anonymity is assured under these circumstances. If you do not wish to have your work made available for these purposes, please let the professor know before the start of the second class. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

#### **G. REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES**

---

Candidates with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: 1) register with and provide documentation to the Special Services Office, Kiely 171; 2) bring a letter to me indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. For more information about services available to Queens College candidates, contact: Special Service Office; 171 Kiely Hall; 718-997-5870 (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.). More information at:

<http://www.qc.cuny.edu/StudentLife/services/specialserv/Pages/default.aspx?>

#### **H. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

---

##### **Late assignments and incomplete grades**

Assignments are **due BEFORE or at the beginning of class on the due date. If you are going to be absent or late to class, you must make arrangements with the instructor for the paper to be delivered in time.** Late papers are not accepted and will receive a zero (0) unless you have legitimate

and documented grounds for an extension based on compassionate or medical reasons. This is non-negotiable so please do not ask for extensions. Incomplete assignments will be given a lesser grade based on the assumption that by submitting an assignment after others, the student gains certain advantages. Please note that incompletes are given at the discretion of the professor. They are not automatically assigned.

### **Attendance**

Students are expected to attend every class and notify their professor by phone or email when they will not be or have not been there. Missing three classes or more will result in a failing grade, or with legitimate reasons, assignment of a grade of "incomplete." Missing a scheduled guest speaker will count as two absences.

### **Use of Electronic Devices**

Electronic devices for pedagogical and learning purpose are encouraged. However, any other use that might interrupt or disturb the classroom environment is not permitted and will certainly affect the participation grade.

### **Communication**

All student emails should include 711 in the subject line (NB: if you do not include it, it may take days for me to see it because I filter the messages using this term). I read and respond to email during set blocks of time so do not expect an immediate reply.

I may not be able to answer questions that are about assignments less than 72 hours before a deadline, so please plan ahead. The best way to talk to me about assignments or anything else to do with the course is through face-to-face meetings during my office hours. I am also happy to make individual face-to-face appointments at other mutually convenient times.

### **Courtesy**

Please put your phones and other personal communication devices on vibration or silent mode before class. Students found browsing or texting during class will be penalized. If you need to take a call, arrive late or have to leave early, be unobtrusive in doing so. Be patient with fellow students who may not understand something as quickly as you do and ask questions if you are confused.

### **Writing**

All papers submitted should be in a Sans Serif font and 10-12 pts with one inch margins, a cover sheet, and a reference list. Papers should be written in competent, grammatically correct American English, using the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* style for organization, content, and citation format. Papers that do not meet these criteria will not be graded. Students should keep copies of all assignments submitted until they have been graded. All electronic documents should be delivered in pdf format and specific instruction will be discussed in class.

**Plagiarism**

Copying the work of another author regardless of source, or the work of another student, is automatically grounds for failing the course. Using all or part of your own paper in multiple classes without prior permission is considered a form of plagiarism. This also includes asking people on professional Internet lists or working as professionals in the field to do your work for you.

**Course Evaluations**

Towards the end of the semester, access to online course evaluation will be enabled. Please remember to participate in the college online course evaluations. Your comments are highly valued, and these evaluations are an important service to fellow students and to the institution. Please also note that all responses are completely anonymous; no identifying information is retained once the evaluation has been submitted.