University of Florida  
School of Art & Art History  
Spring 2013  
Course Number: ART 2936c  
Course Title: Non Majors Comics/Sequential Art  
Day/Period: MW 8-9, FAD 115  
Instructor: Tom Hart  
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718-687-7434 text

*Office Hours  
Online and or at The Sequential Artists Workshop most days after 2:00 pm  
*Subject to change—email or contact instructor

This class will look at comics and cartooning as a powerful medium for all kinds of creative storytelling and idea exploration, from self-discovery and drama to social commentary and personal expression. Beginning with a focus on the basics and mechanics of panel, page and scene composition, we’ll emphasize keeping sketchbooks, organized notes, stories and studies as the basis for generating later work. We will emphasize becoming articulate in our medium, learning all aspects of refining our work. We will cover the basic tools of visual and narrative arts, including juxtaposition of images, narrative transitions, composition, clarity, rhythm and the psychology of drawn images and cartoons. A wide variety of cartooning and sequential art will be examined and studied.

Recommended Reading:  
McCloud, Scott; *Understanding Comics*

Further suggested Readings:  
Mamet, David; *On Directing Film*  
Eisner, Will; *Comics and Sequential Art*  
Janson, Klaus: *The DC Guide to Penciling Comics*  
Madden, Matt and Abel, Jessica: *Drawing Words and Writing Pictures*

An extensive variety of comics to be shown to class from private collection.

Course Goals:

This course is designed to extend each student’s understanding of and relationship with graphic storytelling. Upon completing this class you will:

- Have a sense of the history of the medium, both in America and worldwide
- Be able to manipulate comics’ particular tools, such as static transitions and page compositions, as well as be able to incorporate tools familiar with other media such as picture composition and narrative structure
- Be able to create stories that are meaningful and communicate clearly
- Have sense of stylistic options and have improved abilities in exploring those options
- Have a sense of the many narrative options that go into a single story and have improved abilities in exploring those options
- Understand the many ways in which our narrative needs control our options as storytellers and picture-maker, or conversely, the way our picture-making alters our narrative.
Our guiding question: *What makes for good control of the medium?*
And maybe secondly: *What can we do with our medium?*

**Methods of the Course:**

This course involves lectures, studio demonstrations, class discussions, critiques and individual consultations. Furthermore, this course will demand that you work in the studio as well as do research outside the class.

**Materials:**

A separate materials list will be furnished. Materials should be acquired by the second week of class.

**GRADING:**

You will be graded on:

- QUALITY OF WORK
- QUALITY OF EFFORT
- PARTICIPATION IN CLASS
- IMPROVEMENT AND COMPREHENSION
- RISK TAKING AND A DESIRE TO MOVE BEYOND YOUR KNOWN UNDERSTANDING

The final grade is a cumulative grade based on how well you accomplished course objectives and requirements.

**Finished Projects 60%**

- Pages and stories that are submitted for critique

**Class Participation 20%**

- You are expected to speak during critiques, to ask questions at any time, and to engage with the material the instructor and your fellow students. Absences, late arrivals, and early departures do impact the final course grade negatively.

**Project Process 20%**

- The well-tended process of every piece, from ideas to notes to sketches and drafts to finished pieces will be a part of your grade.

If you don’t finish your assignments, you damage your grade and bring the class down. Please finish your work. (However, showing up for class with no work is better than skipping class because you didn’t finish. All classes will have valuable discussions, critiques, and chances to further your learning. Please show up for class.)

**Letter Grade % Equivalency**

- A 4.0
- A- 3.67
- B+ 3.33
- B 3.00
- B- 2.67
- C+ 2.33
- C 2.00
- C- 1.67
- D+ 1.33
- D 1.00
- D- .67

**Attendance Policy**

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

*Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.*
Syllabus and schedule

The following is subject to change and will almost certainly be altered as students work and abilities are assessed.

Each week will feature at least one graphic novel to examine as a class and discuss.

Week 1 – Jan 7, Jan 9

INTRODUCTION
- Introduction to tools, skills and applications of comic and sequential art. Look at multitude of styles and solutions in professional work. Assessment of student skills.
- Exercises: 2 panel warm-ups from random panels. 4 panel development from warm-up., personal experience.
- Presentation: Silent stories, diary comics
- Homework: Six silent 4 panel scenes in sketchbook.

Week 2 - Jan 14, Jan 16

TRANSITIONS
- Begin panel transitions from McCloud.
- Exercise: creating stories from varied transitions. Revisiting old work and expanding with new technique Exercise: Larding Milt Caniff, Segar.
- Reading – McCloud chapter 2
- Homework- Expand one story from previous week’s homework into 25 panel story.

Week 3 - Jan 21, Jan 23

PANEL COMPOSITION
- Master cartoonist : PETER ARNO.
- Exercise- revisit old panels and drawings using new and varied compositions.
- Homework- take 20 panel comic and recompose two complete times for a total of three complete 20 panel stories. Prepare to discuss and revise.

Week 4 - Jan 28, Jan 30

PAGE COMPOSITION
- Exercise – revisiting old work using new techniques- different
- Master story- Bone  Jeff Smith.
- Two complete rough drafts of previous story

Week 5 – Feb 4, Feb 6

PENCILLING AND INKING
- Inking Demonstration. Steel nibs, brushes.
- Presentation: line, ink line, texture, form, value-
- Exercises- inking
- Homework- Fully pencil story above

Week 6 – Feb 11, Feb 13

IN CLASS WORK TIME, DISCUSSION AND PRESENTATION OF LETTERING AS NARRATIVE AND STYLISTIC DEVICE
- Presentation of master works

Week 7 - Feb 18, Feb 20

STORY STRUCTURE LECTURE, PLUS IN CLASS WORK TIME PLUS, IN-CLASS WORK TIME
- Personal consultations as we prepare our first finished work.

Week 8 Feb 25, Feb 27
CRITIQUE, DISCUSSION; FIRST-HALF WRAP-UP AND SECOND HALF PREP

- Presentation on creating characters, stories from personal ideas.
- Homework: prepare rough draft for 6-week semi-open assignment

MARCH 4-8, SPRING BREAK

THE FOLLOWING 6 WEEKS ARE DEVOTED TO REFINING OUR PRACTICE AND ABILITIES, AND TO FINISHING OUR FINAL ASSIGNMENT. PERSONAL DISCUSSIONS WILL HAPPEN IN EACH CLASS, AND LECTURES AND GROUP DISCUSSIONS WILL BE LEAD WHERE NECESSARY.

Week 9 – March 11, March 13

CRITIQUE OF ROUGHS, DISCUSSION AND PLAN FOR REMAINING WEEKS.

Week 11 – March 18, March 20

IN-CLASS WORK TIME AND PERSONAL DISCUSSIONS

Week 12 – March 25, March 27

IN-CLASS WORK TIME AND PERSONAL DISCUSSIONS

Week 13 – April 1, April 3

IN-CLASS WORK TIME AND PERSONAL DISCUSSIONS

Week 14 – April 8, April 10

IN-CLASS WORK TIME AND PERSONAL DISCUSSIONS

Week 15 – April 15, April 17

FINAL CRITIQUE, DISCUSSION AND EDITS

- Discussion of future of comics as medium, as industry and as populist communication tool.
SYNOPSIS – Refers to paragraph or two of text that describes the action to be depicted on the page. A reader should not need a synopsis to understand what is going on in your pages however.

THUMBNAILS – This refers to initial drawings of complete pages in reduced format, to think through ideas of how to compose a page and tell a story. Do thumbnails for this class in your sketchbook or small on 8 1/2 x 11 paper.

ROUGH – Refers to larger sketched versions of page before penciling. Still searching for solutions and storytelling ideas/composition ideas, etc. Some people use “thumbnails” and “roughs” interchangeably. Roughs for this class are on 8 1/2 x 11 paper. (You can rough on your final boards if you like, though I don’t recommend it.)

LOOSE PENCILS- Somewhere in between roughs and tight pencils (see below.)

TIGHT PENCILS- Refers to full-size, on Bristol board penciled version of your page.

INKS – Refers to finished work, with lettering, of above page.

Some other glossary terms:

• STORY – Usually refers to whatever your final work is. I prefer “PIECE” to describe the work you hand in. “Story” to me, describes the underlying narrative “arc” that is the raw material you are working with in your piece. For instance, you may be telling the story of a man’s life, birth to death, but your piece is only 10 panels long. Thus, you must make lots of choices in how to work with your “story”, to create a piece of work from it.

SOME APHORISMS TO KEEP IN MIND:

• FINISHING IS BETTER THAN ABORTING A LESS THAN PERFECT PROJECT
  o You always learn more by completing a project, rather than failing to finish something because it is less than perfect.

• DON’T LET THE PERFECT GET IN THE WAY OF THE GOOD.
  o If you get caught up on making something perfect, you may fail to realize that it is working well enough for our goals.

• STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE ANYWAY
  o Strive for perfect, settle for good, and move on.

• LEARN TO DRAW BY DRAWING.
  o Bernie Wrightson, who created Swamp Thing used to say that you could become a good artist only after you’ve drawn 1000 pages (or a stack of pages as tall as you- I forget which.) Thus, we need to create in order to improve.

• COPYING OTHER DRAWINGS IN YOUR SKETCHBOOK OR IN YOUR PRACTICING TIME IS GOOD. COPYING TECHNIQUES ON YOUR FINAL PAGES IS ESSENTIAL.
  o Learn to LOOK at professional artwork for techniques, solutions, thoughts and decisions beneath the surface. Copying other work will help do this. You can then implement similar solutions or thinking in your own work later. Style emerges when you make informed decisions within your own conscious and unconscious limitations.

• CONCENTRATE ON THE MOMENT, AND THE EPIC WILL UNFOLD.
  o I am only interested in your epic story if the individual passages are good and complete. This is true of any reader. No unfinished sections of large stories will be allowed. You will be forced to find a way to complete the story (this can always be done, by thinking of story in new ways.)
DRAWING AREA RULES
All users of the studio classrooms are expected to follow studio area rules at all times. If you have any questions, ask your instructor.

- Follow all SA+AH Health and Safety handbook guidelines (the handbook should be reviewed by your instructor and can be found at: www.arts.ufl.edu/art/healthandsafety)
- Follow the SA+AH Satellite Waste Management Chart in the classroom and other health & safety guidelines posted for your media.
- In case of emergency, call campus police at 392-1111
- File an incident report (forms may be found in the SAAH H&S handbook, the SAAH faculty handbook and in the main office. Turn completed forms into the SAAH Director of Operations within 48 hours of the event.
- Do not prop classroom doors. Doors are to remain closed to ensure the building HVAC and ventilation systems work properly.
- Practice best practices for material handling. If you have questions about a material, ask your instructor for guidance.
- Familiarize yourself with the closest eyewash unit.
- Do not spray any aerosols in any SAAH classroom/studio/doorway or exterior wall/door. A spray booth is located in FAC room 211A.
- Wear nitrile gloves when handling hazardous materials. These are provided in your classroom studios.
- Remove all trash that does not fit in trashcans to the dumpster on the south side of FAC. Any trash that does not fit in the trash can must be immediately taken to the dumpster. All oversized trash (has any length that exceeds 4 feet in any direction) must be taken to the dumpster on the south side of FAC and placed beside the dumpster in the area designated for oversized trash. Broken glass must be packed inside paper and labeled on the outside as broken glass and walked to the dumpster. Glass with hazardous materials must be wrapped, labeled with a filled out yellow hazardous waste labels and placed in the blue bin at the SWMA. The trash guidelines are to ensure the safety of anyone encountering the trash. Liquids, medical waste, yard waste, appliances and pallets are prohibited from disposal in the dumpster.
- No eating, consumption of alcohol or smoking is permitted in the studios.
- Clean up after yourself- wipe down surfaces (easles, drawing boards, stools with a wet towel).
- Do not block doorways or block access to lights.
- Do not remove furniture from rooms or borrow furniture from rooms without permission from the area coordinators.
- Do not create “daisy chains” with multiple electric cords.
- All hazardous materials down sinks.
- Store all flammables in the flammable cabinet. Keep flammable cabinet closed at all times.
- Clean up after yourself.
- First aid kits are found in each studio. Notify your instructor if supplies are low.
- Report any safety issues IMMEDIATELY to your instructor.
- All courses must engage in an end of the semester clean up.
- Follow the SA+AH CONTAINER POLICY (see policy below)

There are 2 types of labels used in the SA+AH— yellow and white. Both labels are found at the red MSDS box and are supplied by the SA+AH. Each is used for a different purpose.

White:
All new and or used product in containers (hazardous or what might be perceived as hazardous -i.e. watered down gesso, graphite solutions, satellite containers of solvents, powders, spray paints, fixatives, oils, solvents, etc...) must be labeled within the SA+AH to identify their contents. Labels can be found at the MSDS box in each studio and work area. All containers must be marked with your name, contents and date opened. All secondary/satellite containers for hazardous materials must be marked with content, your name and the date opened. All unmarked containers will be disposed of with no notice.

Yellow:
WHEN HAZARDOUS ITEMS ARE DESIGNATED AS WASTE.
All containers must have a yellow label identifying the contents that are designated as trash for weekly EHS pick up.
- Flammable solid containers (red flip top) must have a yellow hazardous waste label on the outside (top).
- 5 gallon jugs must have a yellow hazardous waste label on the outside.
- Fibrous containers must have a yellow hazardous waste label on the outside (top).
- Each item in the blue bin must have a yellow hazardous waste label.

Note: Hazardous Waste labels should include all constituents in the waste mixture as well as an approximate percentage of the total for that item and must add up to 100%. Labels should also include the Bldg and room number of the shop generating the waste along with the Waste Manager for your area, this is located on the SWMA sign posted at the sink or at the Waste Management Area.