

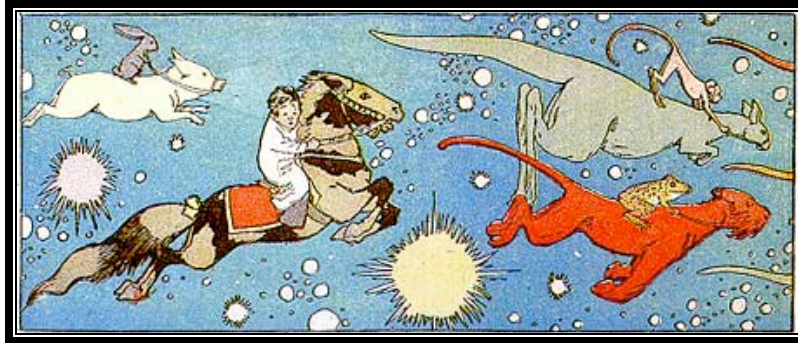
Introduction to Narrative: Graphic Novel

Professor Laura Leibman

3:10-4:30 pm MW ETC 208

Eng201-f01@lists.reed.edu

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In this course we will consider the historical development of the genre and techniques of the Graphic Novel in America. Our reading of the graphic novel will be contextualized within postmodernism and the changes in the notions of childhood, heroism, and evil in twentieth- and twenty-first-century American culture. This course is designed to introduce students to the fundamental elements of narrative and will include analysis of genre, panels, framing devices, layout, speech, plot, and characterization. The course will emphasize close reading of the texts, and there will be frequent writing assignments.

Required Texts (All books are on reserve in the library):

AUSTER	<i>City of Glass</i>
BARRY	<i>One Hundred Demons</i>
CHABON	<i>The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay</i>
CHABON	<i>The Escapist</i>
CLOWES	<i>Ice Haven</i>
CRUMB	<i>Complete Crumb Comics, Vol. 1</i>
EISNER	<i>Contract with God</i>
KIYAMA	<i>Four Immigrants Manga</i>
MCCAY	<i>Little Nemo</i>
MCCLOUD	<i>Understanding Comics</i>
MILLER	<i>Batman: Dark Knight Returns</i>
NAKAZAWA	<i>Barefoot Gen</i>
SATRAPI	<i>Persepolis</i>
SPIEGELMAN	<i>In the Shadow of No Towers</i>
SPIEGELMAN	<i>Maus I</i>
WARD	<i>God's Man</i>
WARE	<i>Jimmy Corrigan</i>
YANG	<i>American Born Chinese</i>

Recommended Texts (All books are on reserve in the library):

CHINN	<i>Writing & Illustrating Graphic Novel</i>
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Schedule of Readings

Week 1

M 8/27 McCloud, Chapter 1, *Understanding Comics*, 2-23
On Reserve: Charles Hatfield, "An Art of Tensions," *Alternative Comics*, 32-67

W 8/29

Little Nemo

Chinn, *Writing & Illustrating Graphic Novel*, 20-31

First Paper Due for All Groups. Close reading of one page or one frame of *Little Nemo*. Please make sure you clearly indicate which page you are discussing. Please refer to the detailed description of the "close reading" assignment below for more detail.

Week 2

M 9/3

Labor Day no class

McCloud, Chapter 2, *Understanding Comics*, 24-59

W 9/5

Kiyama, *Four Immigrants Manga*

Cloud, Chapters 2 and 3, *Understanding Comics*, 24-59 and 60-93

Group A: Close Reading Essay

Week 3

M 9/10

Kiyama, *Four Immigrants Manga* (continued)

McCloud, "Chapter 4," *Understanding Comics*, 94-117

Group B: Close Reading Essay

W 9/12

Ward, *God's Man: A Novel in Woodcuts*

McCloud, Chapter 5, *Understanding Comics*, 118-137

Group C: Close Reading Essay

Week 4

M 9/17

Chabon, *The Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*, 1-161

Group D: Close Reading Essay

W 9/19

Chabon, *The Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*, 163-288

Reserve: Bradford W. Wright, "Superheroes for the Common Man: the Birth of the Comic Book Industry, 1933-1941," *Comic Book Nation*, 1-29

Group A: Critical Article Synopsis

Week 5

M 9/24

Chabon, *The Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*, 289-468

Chabon, *The Escapist*

Group B: Close Reading Essay

W 9/26

The Adventures of Kavalier & Clay, 471-636

Reserve: Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent*, 1-16, 147-171, 173-193.

Group C: Close Reading Essay

Week 6

M 10/1

Crumb, *Complete Crumb Comics, Vol. I*

Reserve: Charles Hatfield, "Comix, Comic Shops, and the Rise of Alternative Comics," *Alternative Comics*, 3-31. Group B Critical Article Synopsis.

- W 10/3 Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen*
Group D: Close Reading Essay
- Week 7**
M 10/8 Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen*
McCloud, "Chapter 6," *Understanding Comics*, 138-161
Group A: Close Reading Essay
- W 10/10 Eisner, *A Contract With God*
Group C: Close Reading Essay
- 10/13-21 **Fall Break**
- Week 8**
M 10/22 Spiegelman, *Maus I*
Group D: Close Reading Essay
- W 10/24 Spiegelman, *Maus I*
Reserve: Please read **one** article from *Considering Maus: Approaches to Art Spiegelman's "Survivor's Tale" of the Holocaust*, ed. Deborah R. Geis
Group C: Critical Article Synopsis
- Week 9**
M 10/29 Miller, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*
McCloud, "Chapter 8," *Understanding Comics*, 185-92
Group A: Close Reading Essay
- W 10/31 Miller, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*
Reserve: Bradford W. Wright, "Direct to The Fans: The Comic Book Industry, 190-1992," *Comic Book Nation*, 254-281
Group D: Critical Article Synopsis
- Week 10**
M 11/5 Ware, *Jimmy Corrigan: or, the Smartest Kid on Earth*
Group B: Close Reading Essay
- W 11/7 Ware, *Jimmy Corrigan: or, the Smartest Kid on Earth*
James Gilbert, "First City," *Perfect Cities*, 75-29
Group C: Close Reading Essay
- Week 11**
M 11/12 Satrapi, *Persepolis*
Group D: Close Reading Essay
- W 11/14 Satrapi, *Persepolis*
Group A: Close Reading Essay
- Week 12**
M 11/19 Clowes, *Ice Haven*
Group B: Close Reading Essay
- W 11/21 Auster, *City of Glass*. Group C: Close Reading Essay

(R 11/22 Thanksgiving)

Week 13

M 11/26 Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!*
Group A: Close Reading Essay

W 11/28 Yang, *American Born Chinese*
Group D: Close Reading Essay

Week 14

M 12/3 Religion and the Political Right in Comics
Reserve: Please choose one book from either the Mahrwood Press Series (*Shmuel HaNagid*, *Rambam*), *Liberality for All*, or *Left Behind*.
Group B: Close Reading Essay

W 12/5 Spiegelman, *In the Shadow of No Towers*
Questions for take-home essay exam will be handed out in class.

Assignments

Written assignments for this course include six papers (1 page) and a take-home timed final.

Final Exam: Please choose one book from the books on reserve. Read it and prepare ahead of time to write a take-home, two-part, three-hour timed essay exam. Turn in your exam on Monday 12/10.

Papers: In addition to the take-home essay exam, there are six 1-page papers, due approximately every other week. Since these papers are intended to enhance class discussion as well as to hone your writing and analysis skills, you will be asked to turn in the papers on the readings for the specific days and to post them to the class via email at Eng201-f01@lists.reed.edu. Please see below for when your papers are due. You will be assigned a Group the first day of class. You will notice there are seven due dates. The first paper and the "Critical Article Synopsis" are required. Please choose four of the other five to do.

Five of the six short papers should consist of a close reading of the graphic novel assigned for the day. This close reading should focus on a short section of work (one page or one panel maximum). Please choose one aspect of technique from Mike Chinn's *Writing and Illustrating Graphic Novels* (e.g. panels, framing devices, speech and captions, characterization, scene changing) and address that **one** aspect in your paper. Please see the detailed description of the close reading assignment below for more information.

One of the six short papers should be a "Critical Article Synopsis." These are on days indicated as "Critical Article Synopsis." This review **MUST** include both a short paragraph summarizing the argument of the article and a long paragraph discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the argument. This is a crucial skill to learn in this course and you must complete this assignment. Please see the detailed description of the "Critical Article Synopsis" assignment below for more information.

All papers (excluding the first which you should bring to class on 8/29) are due AT LEAST 24 hours before dates given below (e.g. If you have been assigned to cover the readings for class on Monday 11/15 your paper is due 3 pm Sunday 11/14. All papers must be

distributed to the class via the class email list. DO NOT send the paper as an enclosure, but paste it into the body of the email. Late papers will not be accepted. Other members of the class should read at least two of the discussion papers before class begins. **Please note:** the following list the due date for each group's one-page papers, followed by the date your paper will be discussed in class and the readings it will cover.

Group A		
Due date	Class Discussion Date	Type Assignment
W 8/29	W 8/29	Close Reading
T 9/4	W 9/5	Close Reading
T 9/18	W 9/19	Critical Article Synopsis
S 10/7	M 10/8	Close Reading
S 10/28	M 10/29	Close Reading
T 11/13	W 11/14	Close Reading
S 11/25	M 11/26	Close Reading

Group B		
Due date	Class Discussion Date	Type Assignment
W 8/29	W 8/29	Close Reading
S 9/9	M 9/10	Close Reading
S 9/23	M 9/24	Close Reading
S 9/30	M 10/1	Critical Article Synopsis
S 11/4	M 11/5	Close Reading
S 11/18	M 11/19	Close Reading
S 12/2	M 12/3	Close Reading

Group C		
Due date	Class Discussion Date	Type Assignment
W 8/29	W 8/29	Close Reading
T 9/11	W 9/12	Close Reading
T 9/25	W 9/26	Close Reading
T 10/9	W 10/10	Close Reading
T 10/23	W 10/24	Critical Article Synopsis
T 11/6	W 11/7	Close Reading
T 11/20	W 11/21	Close Reading

Group D		
Due date	Class Discussion Date	Type Assignment
W 8/29	W 8/29	Close Reading
S 9/16	M 9/17	Close Reading
T 10/2	W 10/3	Close Reading
S 10/21	M 10/22	Close Reading
T 10/30	W 10/31	Critical Article Synopsis
S 11/11	M 11/12	Close Reading
T 11/27	W 11/28	Close Reading

Detailed Descriptions of Assignments

1. Close Reading Assignment

On days you are assigned to do a “close reading” please choose either one frame or one page from the graphic novel (or book) assigned for that day. Next, choose what aspect of the work you will be examining by turning to Mike Chin’s *Writing and Illustrating the Graphic Novel* (in the bookstore and on reserve). For example, you may want to consider panels, framing devices, speech and captions, characterization, pace, scene changing, setting, use of color, or style of the artwork, to name a few. Please focus on only one element and make sure to refer explicitly to what Chinn says about this element. **For each of your close reading papers, please choose a *different* element of the work upon which to focus.** (I.e. if your first paper is on characterization, your other papers should not be on this element.)

A Close Reading (or *Explication de texte*) operates on the premise that any artistic creation “will be more fully understood and appreciated to the extent that the nature and interrelations of its parts are perceived, and that that understanding will take the form of insight into the theme of the work in question. This kind of work must be done before you can begin to appropriate any theoretical or specific ... approach.”¹

To explicate comes from the Latin *explicare*, to unfold, to fold out, or to make clear the meaning of. A close reading is thus in some ways the literary equivalent of what art historians call “formal analysis.” When you close read, you observe facts and details about the text. Your aim may be to notice all striking features of the text, including rhetorical features, structural elements, cultural references or allusions. A close reading should be more than a list of devices, though. The essay should move from observation of particular facts and details to a conclusion, or interpretation, based on those observations. What do these data add up to mean?²

That is to say, the purpose of examining the elements in the page or frame is to construct an argument: how do those elements come together to form a whole? As writer Diane Hacker points out, division--like classification--should be made “according to some principle”: she notes, “to divide a tree into roots, trunk, branches, and leaves makes sense; to list its components as branches, wood, water, and sap does not, for the categories overlap” (and seem random and disconnected).³ Your essay should reveal how the parts of the passage or frame, like the parts of a tree, relate and form a totality.

Please make sure that it is clear which page or frame you are analyzing.

Requirements: What does a Close Reading Essay Usually Have?

1. A thesis that is an assertion about the meaning and function of the text. It must be something you can argue for and prove in your essay.
2. Evidence from the text. What specific words or phrases led you to have the ideas you express? Quote them.
3. Analysis of that evidence. If the work were self-evident you could just turn in the book or image as your proof. Literally thousands of people have had thousands of different ideas about the words or details you mention. Explain how *you* arrived at your ideas.

¹ The Literary Link. Ed. Janice E. Patten. June 2, 1998. San Jose State University Web Site. 17 Sept. 2003. <<http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/patten/index.html>>.

² Patricia Kain, “How to Do a Close Reading,” 1998. Harvard University Writing Center Web Site. 17 Sept. 2003. <<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/documents/CloseReading.html>>.

³ Diane Hacker. *The Bedford Handbook for Writers*, 3rd. ed. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1991. 91.

Need More Help?

A. Edgar Roberts' Tips on Close Readings of Passages⁴

Edgar Roberts provides the following useful questions for close readings of passages based on their location in a narrative. You might want to pick one passage and apply this strategy:

***For an Early Passage:** Does the passages occur early in the work? If it does, you may reasonably expect that the author is using the passage to set things in motion. Thus you should try to determine how ideas, themes, characterizations, and arguments that you find in the passage are related to these matters as they appear later in the work. You may assume that everything in the passage is there for a purpose. Try to find that purpose.

***For a Later, Midpoint Passage:** Does the passage come later in the work, at a time that you might characterize as a "pivot" or "turning point"? In such a passage a character's fortunes take either an expected or unexpected turn. If the change is expected, you should explain how the passage focuses the various themes or ideas and then propels them toward the climax. If the change is unexpected, however, it is necessary to show how the contrast is made in the passage. It may be that the work is one that features surprises, and that the passage thus is read one way at first but on second reading may be seen to have a double meaning. Or it may be that the speaker has had one set of assumptions while the readers have had others, and that the passage marks a point of increasing self-awareness on the part of the speaker. Many of the part of works are not what they seem at first reading, and it is your task here to determine how the passage is affected by events at or near the end of the work.

***For a Concluding Passage:** If the passage occurs at or near the end of the work, you may assume that it is designed to solve problems or to be a focal point or climax for all the situations and ideas that have been building up in the work. You may need to show how the passage brings together all themes, ideas, and details. What is happening? Is any action described in the passage a major action, or a step leading to the major action? Has everything in the passage been prepared for earlier in the work?

2. Critical Article Synopsis Assignment ("Précis")

Your précis must include both a short paragraph summarizing the argument of the article and a long paragraph discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the argument. Here are some more suggestions to get you started:

A. Summarizing

Before writing your summary of the article, you should decide what the author's main claims are, prioritize and summarize them, and mention some of the most important evidence the author offers to prove his or her main claims.

Pay attention to topic sentences and repetition, and try to determine when the author is introducing a new argument, and when she is simply providing examples or explaining the evidence she has offered. Your summary should be as "objective" as possible. That is, you should try your best to represent the argument as you think the author would and reserve your commentary for the critique section of the paper.

One of the most common mistakes I find in student Précis is that a student has read the opening of the essay carefully and then skimmed the rest of it. While in some disciplines, you might be lucky enough to find a summary of the argument (an abstract) at the beginning of the

⁴ Edgar Roberts. *Writing Themes About Literature*, 5th ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1983: 187-88.

article, opening abstracts are unusual (unfortunately) in Literary Criticism articles. Often, the summary of the argument is at the end of the article. A second trick to remember is that authors often justify their article's existence at the opening by explaining how it fits into a critical debate. You should take note of what the author thinks is the larger significance of his or her work.

As Joseph Williams pointed out in his recent visit to Reed, most academic arguments have at least these four basic components:

- (1) **Common Ground:** What is the context that the author intends to qualify or question. This may be either a commonly held belief (some people...) or an argument made by a specific critic.
- (2) **But...:** Introduces a question about something key that is not known, fully understood, or contradicts this common ground.
- (3) **So What?** States the significance of the question raised.
- (4) **Thesis:** the answer to problem/question. States the author's main claim.

You should make sure that you have looked for these aspects of the argument. If they are in your article identify them.

B. Writing a Critique

This is your chance to express your opinion about what you have read and to show off your analytical abilities. In your response you might consider some of the following. Remember to use specifics to back your claims:

- What did you find particularly interesting or useful about the critique?
- Is this a valid/good/bad way to approach the readings for the day?
- How might the scholar's arguments help us in our previous discussions?
- How does this piece relate to others we have read?
- Is the author's argument logically sound?
- Did the author use evidence persuasively to support this argument?
- Who do you think was the original audience for this article? How do you know? If you (or students like you) are not the intended audience are there any specialized terms that you did not know that you will need to define for your readers?
- Is there any information or evidence that you wish had been included in the article that wasn't there?

One of the most common mistakes I find in students' analyses of arguments is that people assume if they didn't understand the argument the first time they read it, it is either poorly written or uninteresting. Since articles are mostly written for specialists in the field, you can assume that they will be difficult and will require at least a second reading. It is also highly likely that they will contain specialized language that is unfamiliar to you, but is part of the common knowledge of specialists. You will want to keep a dictionary or a dictionary of literary terms on hand to help you as you read the work (e.g. *The Oxford Companion to American Literature* at www.oxfordreference.com). Similarly, the author probably assumes that almost all of her readers will have a Ph.D. in English or American literature and hence she will most likely make reference to works you have not read. You may find it useful to look up allusions as you are reading if you feel that the argument requires it (again the *Oxford Companion* is a good resource).

Sample Précis: "The Politics of Embodied Poetics: A Critical Synopsis of Michael Bibby's 'The Territory Colonizes': Sitting the Body in Women's Liberation Poetry.'"

In the third chapter of his *Hearts and Minds: Bodies, Poetry, and Resistance in the Vietnam Era*, Michael Bibby examines the centrality of the female body in the language and imagery of Vietnam-era feminist poetry and attempts to contextualize this poetics of corporeality in relationship to other contemporary cultural discourses of protest and liberation. The chapter focuses on the larger historical and discursive context of Vietnam-era feminism, and here Bibby

argues that this articulation of feminism was chronologically and conceptually subsequent to the discourses of black nationalism and Third World liberation. Specifically, Bibby states that the essentialist nationalism of these movements was the inspiration for an analogous development in Women's Liberation, the difference being that biological gender rather than skin color (in the case of black nationalism) came to be seen as both the fundamental subject of historical and political struggle and the mark that, across all other categories, unified those engaged in *the* struggle against oppression. The Women's Liberationist poets of the Vietnam era, argues Bibby, re-appropriated the power to see inside themselves, to diagnose, to represent their own bodies, and they did so precisely by emphasizing the female body in their poetry.

Though sometimes repetitive, Bibby's chapter is written with exemplary lucidity, a strength one does not generally associate with works that cite Sartre and Gramsci within the first few pages. Bibby uses the technical terminology current in the larger academic conversation about the politics of discourse, but he doesn't confine himself to those terms, nor does he attempt, in contrast to many other participants in this conversation, to make a virtue out of obscurity. His efforts to illuminate the complex relationships between a variety of liberationist discourses are generally successful, and the excerpts of poems, essays and manifestos that he provides in the text are consistently instructive and well chosen. The major weakness of his chapter, at least for our purposes, is that he more concerned with the *politics* of corporeality than with the *poetics* of corporeality in Women's Liberationist poetry. Thus, while he provides ample political context for this emphasis on the female body in this poetry, he does not engage at all with questions of a literary-historical nature. As poets identifying the struggle against patriarchy as their fundamental praxis, one would think that these writers would be responding to patriarchy not simply in terms of the larger society, but also in the poetic tradition itself. Bibby does not, though, give any space to discussing how the poetics of the gendered body in Vietnam-era feminist poetry stands in relation to the image of the female body in the broader poetic tradition.

Exemplary Summary Paragraph: "There's no place like a Tomb: The Paradox of Freedom in Structure." (Please note that this does not include the second paragraph on analysis that your paper will need!!)

Some critics claim that Emily Dickinson's lyric style is extremely formal and closed, while others see her work as drastically open. In "Emily Dickinson's Fairer Houses," Lesley Wheeler explores this contradiction, positing the paradoxical nature of a "poetic of enclosure" (15) to enable the understanding of Dickinson's work as both in a sense "open" and "closed." According to Wheeler, Dickinson "uses the limited space of the lyric, which she often depicts as a kind of house, to mimic and subvert qualities of modesty and reserve typically associated with femininity"(22). She utilizes "the house" as a metaphor for lyric poetry, highlighting its nature as an "enclosure" and comparing it to societal beliefs regarding femininity/domesticity; she further compares the experience of being in "the house" to the suffocating "constriction" of a tomb. This motif of death, tombs, graves, etc., appears often in Dickinson's work, presented as a sort of welcome "escape from a culture" (15) that limits the acceptable activities of women. The idea of "enclosure" surmounts that of a simple house and becomes elevated to the status of life itself, as if gender, society, possessing a body at all, become so restrictive that death becomes a welcome release, that "the narrowness of the tomb yields a paradoxical freedom"(15). And yet, according to Wheeler, Dickinson keeps to a narrow, perhaps suffocating form. In this way, Dickinson shows how "confinement may be positively transformed, as domestic enclosures yield to poetic escapes" (34).