

V55. 0700

*** Expressive Cultures: The Graphic Novel ***
Summer 2008 - Session II

MWTh 9:30-11:30
Silver 412

Prof. Eliot Borenstein
Russian & Slavic Studies
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Office Hours:
By appointment

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Course Description: This course examines the interplay between words and images in the graphic novel (comics), a hybrid medium with a system of communication reminiscent of prose fiction, animation, and film. What is the connection between text and art? How are internal psychology, time, and action conveyed in a static series of words and pictures? What can the graphic novel convey that other media cannot?

Blackboard and the Internet. Blackboard, which is accessible through the "Academics" tab of NYU Home, is an important part of course, facilitating announcements and the distribution of course materials.

Please keep in mind that, by default, Blackboard uses your NYU email account. Many of you may have other email accounts that you use. If so, it is a quite simple matter to arrange for your email from one account to be forwarded automatically to the other. I strongly urge you to do so. It is **your responsibility** to make sure that you are receiving official email sent to your NYU account.

Writing Assignments: There will be two short papers, a midterm paper (6-8 pages), and a final paper (10-12).

The *short analysis papers* may be no longer than *three* pages, and they can be about any of the works we are reading. These papers are a tool to help you think about an aspect of the text that interests you, and any ideas you generate in the course of these assignments would be welcome contributions to class discussion. You must turn in the short paper by the beginning of the last class during which the text is being discussed, and you must show up for that class. That is, if you want to write a short paper about *The Spirit*, you must turn this paper in no later than **July 10**. If we are only spending one class period on the work, then you must turn in the short paper at the beginning of that class. No late short papers will be accepted under any circumstances, nor will short paper be accepted from students who did not attend that day's class.

You may not wait until the end of June to turn in two short papers. The term has been divided into two parts, and you must write one short paper by each of these two deadlines. That is, your first short paper must be turned in no later than **July 16** and your second is due no later than **July 31**. Though you are not allowed to wait to do all the short papers until the end of the course, if you feel you would rather do your short papers earlier (turning two short papers during the first segment of the course), you are free to do so.

The topics of your *midterm paper* and *final paper* are yours to choose, but you must come talk to me about them in advance. It is hoped that the short papers will lead you toward topics for your longer papers. Both your mid-semester and your final papers can be based on two-page papers, as long as you are not tapping the same paper for both longer works.

The midterm paper is due on **July 21**, and the final must be turned by **August 7**.

I welcome full or partial drafts of any of these writing assignment. Drafts of the papers must be shown to me no later than one week before the due date..

Electronic submission of written assignments. You are welcome to submit hard copies of your short and long papers. However, I prefer to receive students' papers electronically. Blackboard has a "digital drop box" feature, but I have not found it to be particularly reliable. Therefore, please send me your assignments by email, as attachments. The preferred format is any version of Word (97 or above, any platform)--such documents usually take the ".doc" extension. Failing that, .rtf files (which can be generated by most word processing programs) are also fine. I can open most other formats as well, including Word Perfect (.wpd), but this requires some extra effort on my part. Please feel free to consult with me about file format questions.

When you submit a paper electronically, please give it a descriptive filename. I have dozens of students, and if all of you send me files called "Comics Assignment" or "Spiegelman Paper," this will be confusing and frustrating. After the first time you make this mistake, I will not accept another paper with an unidentifiable file name.

The preferred (but not required) format for file names is <Student last name> <Type of assignment> <Assignment number> <Topic >. Examples: if Bonnie Tyler has written a second short paper on Roberta Gregory, the file should be something like "Tyler Short Paper 2 (Gregory).doc". If Eric Roberts has written a midterm paper on Chris Ware then the file should be something like "Roberts Midterm (Ware).doc". A final paper on Charles Burnes by Scott Baio would be "Baio Final (Burnes).doc".

Finally, please note that I have two different email accounts (eb7@nyu.edu and eliotb@spymac.com). The NYU account automatically forwards mail to the spymac

account. Please do not send email to both accounts at once (“cc”); if you do, I will end up with three copies of your message.

Final Grade. Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Class participation:	20%
Two-page papers:	30%
Midterm paper:	20%
Final paper:	30%

Class participation. Most class periods will be a mix of lecture and discussion; only occasionally will I spend the entire class giving a lecture. Everyone is encouraged to participate in discussion, which will be facilitated by questions that I will be distributing in advance over electronic mail, and by the short papers.

Active and constructive class participation can significantly improve your final grade. Frequent absences can have a negative effect on your final grade.

Required Texts, Part One
(NYU Book Store)

Bechdel, Allison. *Fun Home*
Burnes, Charles. *Black Hole*.
Clowes, Daniel. *David Boring*.
DeMatteis, J. M. et al. *Moonshadow*.
Eisner, Will. *The Best of the Spirit*.
Gerber, Steve, et. al. *The Essential Howard the Duck*
Gregory, Roberta. *Life's a Bitch*.
Hernandez, Gilbert. *Hearbreak Soup*
McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics*
Miller, Frank. *The Dark Knight Returns*.
Moore, Alan and David Lloyd. *Watchmen*.
Morrison & Quitely, *We3*.
Spiegelman, Art. *In the Shadow of No Towers*.
Ware, Chris. *Jimmy Corrigan, The Smartest Kid on Earth*.

Required Texts , Part Two

Howard the Duck Assignment

The Essential Howard the Duck contains nearly every Howard story written by his creator, Steve Gerber, resulting in a volume that is over 500 pages. You're encouraged to read the entire thing, of course, but here's what you have to read for the purposes of our class:

Howard the Duck 5-15, 17-19, 24-27

This means skipping over Excerpts from *Fear 19/Man-Thing* 1
Giant Size Man-Thing 4-5, *Howard the Duck* 1-4, *Howard the Duck Treasury Edition* 1,
Howard the Duck Annual 1, *Howard the Duck* 16 (an interesting experiment with
prose, BTW), and *Howard the Duck* 20-23.

CLASS SCHEDULE

June 30(M) Introduction

▼ For Today:
 ☉Morrison & Quitely, *We3*

July 2 (W) How to
 ▼ For Today:
 ☉McCloud, *Understanding Comics*

July 28 (M) Human Diastrophism
 ▼ For Today:
 ☉Hernandez, *Hearbreak Soup*

July 3 (Th) NO CLASS

July 30 (W) Anger Management
 ▼ For Today:
 ☉Gregory, *Life's A Bitch*

July 7 (M) Songs of Innocence and Experience
 ▼ For Today:
 ☉DeMatteis, *Moonshadow*

July 31 (Th) Goth Tragedy
 ▼ For Today:
 ☉Gaiman, et. al *A Game of You*
Final Deadline for Second Short Paper

July 9 (W) Funny Animals (1)
 ▼ For Today:
 ☉Gerber, *The Essential Howard the Duck* (see assignment explanation)

August 4 (M) Awkward Ages
 ☉Burns, *Black Hole*

July 10 (Th) Paper Movies
 ▼ For Today:
 ☉Eisner, *The Best of the Spirit*

August 6 (W) Indy Anomie
 ▼ For Today:
 ☉Clowes, *David Boring*

July 14 (M) The Grim and the Gritty
 ▼ For Today:
 ☉Miller, *The Dark Knight Returns*

August 7 (Th) The Medium is the Message
 ▼ For Today:
 ☉Spiegelman, *In the Shadow of No Towers*
Final Paper Due

July 16 (W) Raw Sharks
 ▼ For Today:
 ☉Moore & Gibbons, *Watchmen*
Final Deadline for First Short Paper

July 17 (Th) Look! Up in the Sky
 ▼ For Today:
 ☉Siegel and Kristiansen, *It's a Bird*

July 21 (M) Art Objects
 ▼ For Today:
 ☉Ware, *Jimmy Corrigan*
Midterm Paper Due

June 23 (W) Personal Histories
 ▼ For Today:
 ☉Bechdel, *Fun Home*

July 24 (Th) Funny Animals (2)