

New Graduate Course Proposal

Form Procedure

To share the form with others prior to Submitting choose the **Save Progress** option at the bottom.

Create a PDF of the saved form go to Print and choose Save as PDF copy rather than print.

To access the saved form for editing or to finalize submission visit forms.fitchburgstate.edu to log in and view your Pending/Drafts under My Forms.

Course Title

Course Title:

* Comics and The Graphic Novel as Literature

Proposed Banner Abbreviation:

* Comics and Graphic Novel

Banner limit of 30 characters, including punctuation, spaces, and special characters.

Department/Committee Information

The main contact person for the Graduate Curriculum Committee should fill out this form.

Requestor Name:

* Heather Urbanski

Members of the Graduate
Curriculum Committee:

Ben Railton, DeMisty Bellinger-Delfeld, Aruna Kirshnamurthy, Lisa Gim

Department / Unit Developing:

* English Studies

Department Chair:

* Ben Railton

* brailton@fitchburgstate.edu

Academic Dean:

Becky Copper-Glenz

bcopperg@fitchburgstate.edu

Program Chair

The Program Chair for this request is among the people listed above.

- * ☒ Yes
☐ No

Graduate Program

* MA English Studies

The above program would be responsible for scheduling, staffing & assessing this course.

Course Information

Course Description

* This course will examine illustrated narrative and sequential storytelling as literature, considering the distinct narrative and visual elements of this particular form. We will primarily consider comic books and graphic novels, with specific focus on current texts from the late 20th and early 21st centuries. This course will combine theoretical analyses and close reading to examine texts across multiple genres including science fiction, memoir, and novel adaptations. Potential authors include Scott McCloud, G Willow Wilson, and John Lewis (with Andrew Aydin and Nate Powell).

Course Objectives

Rationale and expected outcomes of offering the Course

* This course has been offered as a topics class twice and run very successfully. Many of our graduate students are public school teachers and often, or would like to, teach graphic novels in their classrooms. The structure of this course provides them the opportunity not only to study comics and graphic novels as a distinct medium in and of itself but also to consider how to bring our work into their own classrooms.

This course will run on an irregular basis, no more than every other fall semester.

What are the Learning Outcomes for the Course?

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate the features and elements that distinguish comics as a medium.
- Evaluate and explain the differences among comics across various genres.
- Identify features of comics from multiple countries and cultures.
- Use concepts from visual rhetoric to closely read images within the comics medium.
- Place analysis of comics texts within the larger scholarly conversation via secondary research.

Number of Credits:

Discipline Prefix or Prefixes:

* ENGL

Brief rationale if more than one prefix:

Level of Course:

- * ☐ 7000
☐ 8000
☒ 9000

Brief rationale for level choice::

* This course provides students with in depth engagement in a specific narrative medium and thus it is in line with other 9000-level courses in our program.

The course will be:

- ☐ Requirement
☒ Elective

Elective or Requirement Note/Special:

Is there a similar undergraduate course?

- * ☒ Yes
☐ No

How does this graduate course differ from the undergraduate one?

Students in the graduate version of this course read more texts and have a much more robust research assignment than in the undergraduate course.

Does this course affect offerings in any other department or program? * ☐ Yes
☒ No

Course Enrollment

Expected Average Enrollment:

*

This course is a replacement for:

Course # / Name

Has the course been offered previously as a "Topics" course?

- * ☒ Yes
☐ No

How often / when was it offered as a Topics course?

Spring 2019 and Fall 2022

Is this an Extended Campus Course?

- * ☐ Yes
☒ No

Which semester will this course be offered for the first time?:

* Fall 2025

How often thereafter to be offered?:

* This course will run on an irregular basis, no more than every other fall semester.

Course Requirements

Prerequisite course(s) if any:

Additional Requirements

Laboratory Hours:

Fieldwork Hours:

Pre-Practicum Hours:

Practicum Hours:

Other Requirements (specify):

Syllabus Upload

New Course Syllabus Upload:

Comics_Graphic Novels Syllabus_F22.pdf

Signatures

Click on the **Submit Form** button at the bottom of the page after you have signed the form.
You should receive an email confirmation that your signature has been completed.

...3538363935

Heather Urbanski
Requester Signature

02/11/2025
Date

...3436303633

...3530333638

Becky Copper Glenz
Academic Dean Signature

02/28/2025
Date

...3935383237

Benjamin Raiton
Department Chair Approval

02/11/2025
Date

Becky Copper Glenz
SGOCE Dean Signature

02/28/2025
Date

Graduate Council

The Graduate Council Chair Signature indicates that the Council has discussed this proposal and has decided it should move forward.

Graduate Council Chair Signature Date

Notifications

Approval of the President

Date

SGOCE Dean Initials

Date

Reviewed by the Registrar:

Date

ENGL 9044: Comics and The Graphic Novel as Literature

Fall 2022 (On Synch)

Synchronous Sessions: Wednesday 5 to 7:30pm via [Google Meet](#)

Professor: Dr. Heather Urbanski (She/Her)

E-mail: hurbansk@fitchburgstate.edu

Student/Office Hours: Tuesdays, 9 to 10:15am ([remote](#)) & Wednesdays, 12:30 to 1:45 pm (in person); Others available by appointment

Office: Miller Hall 210

Phone: 978-665-3679

Course description

This course will examine illustrated narrative and sequential storytelling as literature, considering the distinct narrative and visual elements of this particular form. We will primarily consider comic books and graphic novels, with specific focus on current texts from the late 20th and early 21st centuries. This course will combine theoretical analyses and close reading to examine texts across multiple genres including science fiction, memoir, and novel adaptations. Potential authors include Scott McCloud, Gail Simone, John Lewis (and Andrew Aydin and Nate Powell), and Art Spiegelman.

Course goals and objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate the features and elements that distinguish comics as a medium.
- Evaluate and explain the differences among comics across various genres.
- Identify features of comics from multiple countries and cultures.
- Use concepts from visual rhetoric to closely read images within the comics medium.
- Place analysis of comics texts within the larger scholarly conversation via secondary research.

Analytical approach

Most of our work this semester will focus on how the texts employ the comics medium (as described by Scott McCloud in *Understanding Comics*) to tell their stories. We will be less concerned with more thematic-type questions that you might typically associate with a literature course. For example, for the most part, we won't be asking what "motivates" a character or attempting to psychoanalyze their actions. Those are the sorts of literary interpretation questions that you are already familiar with and so our task this semester is to push the boundaries into something new.

TL; DR: We want to go beyond the obvious, the familiar, and the cliché, to look deeper into how creators use the features of comics to tell stories.

Note: The online version of this document will be updated if needed as the semester progresses. Edits will be clearly marked.

Required books and materials

Text to purchase/rent in order assigned:

- *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (McCloud)
 - PDF scans of assigned chapters will be available through **September 21** to accommodate shipping delays, etc.
- *She and Her Cat* (Shinkai, Yamaguchi) [9/21]
- *Kindred* (Butler; Duffy, Jennings) [9/28]
- *March, Book 1* (Lewis, Aydin, Powell) [10/5]
- *They Called Us Enemy* (Takei, Eisinger, Scott, Becker) [10/12]
- *Dare to Disappoint. Growing Up in Turkey* (Samanci) [10/19]
- *Amazons, Abolitionists, and Activists: A Graphic History of Women's Fight for Their Rights* (Kendall, D'Amico) [10/26]
- *My Hero Academia*, Volume 1 (Horikoshi) [11/9]
- *Ms. Marvel: No Normal* (Wilson, Alphonso, Herring) [11/16]

Content Notice

Several of the texts we'll be reading and discussing this semester include depictions of violence, sexual abuse, suicide, racial discrimination and abuse, and other potentially disturbing content. Please contact me if you would like more details on a particular text ahead of reading it or about a specific area of concern. I know and believe that emotional triggers and sensitivities are very real and will do my best to support you in managing them this semester.

Course Content and Requirements

Assignment Breakdown

Page Analysis (weekly; Contract Basis)	20%
Video Presentation [due 11/6]	15%
Genre Analysis [due 12/4]	15%
Comparative Analysis Project	
Exploratory Analysis [due 11/13]	15%
Research Report [due 12/4]	15%
Final Paper [due 12/14]	20%

- * These assignments will be submitted via Google Drive and are due on Sundays by 11:59 pm, except for the Final Paper (which is due Wednesday, 12/14). The Video Presentation, Comparative Analysis Project, and Reflection: Webcomic versus Print assignments will be penalized a half-grade step for every day (24-hour clock) late, unless an exemption is arranged with me in advance.

Be sure to check out the “[Style Sheet](#)” file on Blackboard and Google Drive that details all of the specific guidelines that apply to all of your papers, including the headings, etc. Please review this file carefully before you turn in any assignment.

Final grade averages will be determined using the following values:

A = 4.0	B+ = 3.3	C+ = 2.3	D+ = 1.3
A- = 3.7	B = 3.0	C = 2.0	D = 1.0
A-/B+ = 3.5	B- = 2.7	C- = 1.7	
	B-/C+ = 2.5	C-/D+ = 1.5	

You will not be able to use Blackboard to calculate your grade. Instead, each student will have a dedicated Google Sheet document, visible to only themselves and the professor, that tracks and calculates the course grade over the semester.

Repeat: Do not rely on Blackboard to calculate your course grade.

Texts and Discussions

Assigned texts need to be read completely before the class meets. You should have access to either the book or a device that can access the day’s assigned texts during each session. This may mean you’ll need to work multiple devices so that you can participate in the discussion via Google Meet while also referencing the text.

As this is a literature course, the assigned texts provide the context for every assignment and you should practice “active” or “rhetorical” reading, taking notes on each text as you read. These notes should include a one- or two-sentence reaction to the story/chapter, a bulleted list of the most important 3-5 elements, and 2-3 responses to specific passages. Making this effort while you read will save you time later not only when you begin writing your papers but also for in-class analysis.

We will be using a [Jamboard](#) to collect our ideas and guide discussions during class sessions.

Page Analysis

These short (750-1000 word) posts to an individual Google Doc [updated as the semester goes along] provide a chance to begin working through your response to the assigned texts by selecting a single page from a book (or equivalent from webcomic) from the week and then analyzing it using the concepts from class discussion and assigned chapters in McCloud's *Understanding Comics*. Each post must include a reference to the page number and/or picture of the page being analyzed.

There will be nine opportunities for you to prepare a page analysis. You will receive course credit for these on a "grading contract" basis (see below). Each page analysis must demonstrate that you have considered the texts in a mature way, looking beyond superficial and initial reactions, and have assembled appropriate textual evidence and support for the preliminary conclusions.

	Post on time	Minimum 500 words	Clearly identified concept	Thoughtful response	Editing/ Proofreading	Contribution to Contract
PA#						
PA#						
PA#						
PA#						
Contract Total						

Each Page Analysis can earn a total of one point. Partial credit can be earned for late posts (see rubric above). The more points you accumulate, the higher your grade will be on this portion of the course according to the following chart.

Total points earned	Grade
8 or above	4.0 (A)
7	3.5 (A-/B+)
6	3.3 (B+)
5	3.0 (B)
4	2.5 (B-/C+)
3	2.0 (C)
2	1.0 (D)
1 or 0	0.0 (F)

Video Presentation of Outside Text

Because there are way too many comics and graphic novel texts out there, and more being published every week, this assignment will provide a look at some of the other comics/graphic novels texts that are not on the syllabus. Each student will choose a text that we haven't discussed in class, read/view it, and then record a five-minute video presentation for the class.

A list of possible texts will be made available for those students who need some ideas, though other stories can be proposed as well. Students will not be allowed to select a comics text they have read before or a later installment in a series that they have already started (e.g., *Scott Pilgrim* or *Monstress*).

These videos will serve as a useful resource for classmates considering which outside texts to include in their Comparative Analysis assignments at the end of the semester.

A rubric and other details will be provided in the third week of the semester. Final decisions regarding the outside text will be due at the beginning of October.

Genre Comparison Analysis

Since comics is a medium, not a genre, we will be reading texts that fit more or less nearly within familiar genres. In this assignment, you are to choose one of those genres from the list below and then write a 1,000-2,000 word analysis that explores how the features of the comics medium are employed to tell a genre story in a perhaps unfamiliar way.

The structure and focus of this assignment is fairly open but it is restricted to only texts we share as a class. No outside research can be used.

Fiction: *Vattu*, *She and Her Cat*, and *Kindred*

Memoir: *March*, *They Called Us Enemy*, and *Dare to Disappoint*

Superhero: *My Hero Academia* and *Ms. Marvel*

Nonfiction: *The Antibody*, *Discovery of Graphene*, and *Amazons, Abolitionists and Activists*

Comparative Analysis Project

This assignment is broken down into three parts that build upon each other over the semester.

1. Exploratory Analysis (minimum 1800 words; ~6 pages) [due 11/13]
 - o Explore the ways at least two of the texts we encounter as a class overlap and connect with each other, in response to McCloud's concepts.
2. Research Report [due 12/4]
 - o Identify and then summarize at least eight scholarly research articles that can be used to extend the Exploratory Analysis for the Final Paper.
3. Final Paper (minimum 4,500 words; ~15 pages) [due 12/14]
 - o Expansion of Exploratory Analysis adding in outside research and one additional comics text.

Note Regarding Written Assignments

Please remember that this is a graduate level literature course. You are expected to be able to develop an interesting and sophisticated thesis about the work(s) you examine and support it with textual evidence. In addition, you are expected to be able to employ the conventions of edited academic English correctly, and to be able to use primary and secondary sources with proper documentation and without plagiarizing. In other words, form AND content matter in ALL your written work.



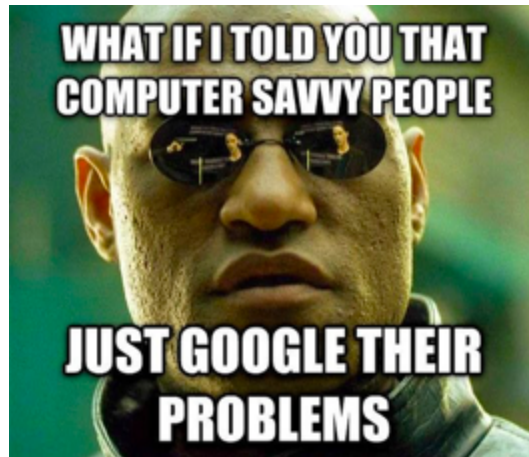
(Image description: Black and white bumper sticker that says "Always Proofread. You might have something out!")

Another note: My goal is to respond to major writing assignments within two weeks of submission and shorter ones within one week. However, I also prioritize grading based on which assignments have the most direct connection to upcoming work. Once you have read this syllabus to completion and any available Blackboard documents, please email me a meme or image related to a favorite pop culture text of yours.

Course Practices and Guidelines

Remote/Online Learning

Most of the work for this course will be completed independently by each student via the Google suite of applications (Blackboard will be used only as a communication and repository tool). Please familiarize yourself with these tools as well as online guides to help troubleshoot the inevitable glitches and issues. You can access online resources for remote learning on the FSU website at this [link](#) and, of course, there is always the traditional Google search (someone probably made a YouTube video that can solve your glitch).



(Image description: Meme with Morpheus character from Matrix films that says, "What if I told you that computer savvy people just Google their problems.")

Even those familiar with taking online courses are likely to run into problems, obstacles, and other snags this semester. Seek out assistance via online resources (both provided by this course and in other places), from other students, and from your instructor.

Similarly, the online version of this course is new and therefore glitches, typos, and unexpected difficulties are possible, probably likely. Be sure to ask me (via email, Google Chat, during Google Meets, etc.) if something looks "off" to you or seems to be missing. It might very well be.

There is no Attendance Policy for this course. We will decide on the first day of class if we want to have the Google Meet sessions recorded for those who may miss a class meeting to review. Regardless of that decision, however, the class slideshows and discussions via [Jamboard](#) will always be available Google Drive (and linked in Blackboard)

Deadlines and Extensions:

It is the nature of academic work that assignments build off of and connect to each other so unlimited extensions and/or open deadlines are not feasible for this course. For example, the weekly Page Analysis assignment is meant to capture your thoughts on one text before we move on to another. In addition, the Comparative Analysis assignments are directly linked so that the second and third cannot be completed without having done the first.

But if you are struggling with meeting a deadline or an emergency situation arises in your life (because these things do happen), send me an email and we'll figure out a solution. This could mean changing your approach to work around a roadblock or a modified deadline with check-in points added or some other solution to fit the situation.

Bottom line: reach out and we'll chat about it, in some form.

Academic Honesty policy

You are responsible for submitting original work and upholding honest academic practices. Sanctions can be taken for claiming others' work as your own, failing to cite sources properly, cheating, or facilitating cheating. Such sanctions can include failure on the assignment, failure of the course, or suspension or dismissal from Fitchburg State University. Please familiarize yourself with the Academic Integrity Policy in your Student Handbook and the Code of Conduct and Discipline Process Handbook both available at <https://www.fitchburgstate.edu/media/3871>.

Inclusion and Diversity Statement

I strive to create a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment for all of my students. This means, among other things:

- Representation matters.
- Accessibility matters.
- Gender is a constellation, not a binary.
- Humans are messy and mistakes are expected. How we react to those mistakes is key.
- Intent does not negate impact.
- Do not play the "Devil's Advocate"; the devil has enough advocates.



(Image description: box with gold background on top and green at the bottom that says, "Fitchburg State. Hate has no home here.")

Seeking Assistance: Campus Resources

Falcon Bazaar

Food insecurity is a growing issue and it certainly can affect student learning. The ability to have access to nutritious food is incredibly vital. The Falcon Bazaar, located in Hammond G 23, is stocked with food, basic necessities, and can provide meal swipes to support all Fitchburg State students experiencing food insecurity for a day or a semester. The Bazaar will be open from Monday through Friday from 9am to 4:30pm.

Accessibility

To support access and inclusion, Fitchburg State offers reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disabilities (e.g. psychical, learning, psychiatric, sensory, etc.). If you require accommodations for this class, please provide me with a copy of your Accommodation Agreement as soon as possible so that we can discuss your specific needs. Any information that you share with me will be held in the strictest confidence, unless you give me permission to do otherwise.

If you require academic accommodations but do not have an Accommodation Agreement, please contact Disability Services as soon as possible to establish your eligibility for services. For more information, or to schedule an appointment, please call 978.665.4020 (voice/relay). Their website is

<https://www.fitchburgstate.edu/student-support/disability-services>

Technology Services

The FSU website provides many online resources to assist with technology issues including help with

- [Google Suite applications](#)
- [Blackboard](#)
- A variety of other tools (click here for a [list of available resources](#))

Other technology assistance is available via the [Help Desk](#).

Other Online Resources

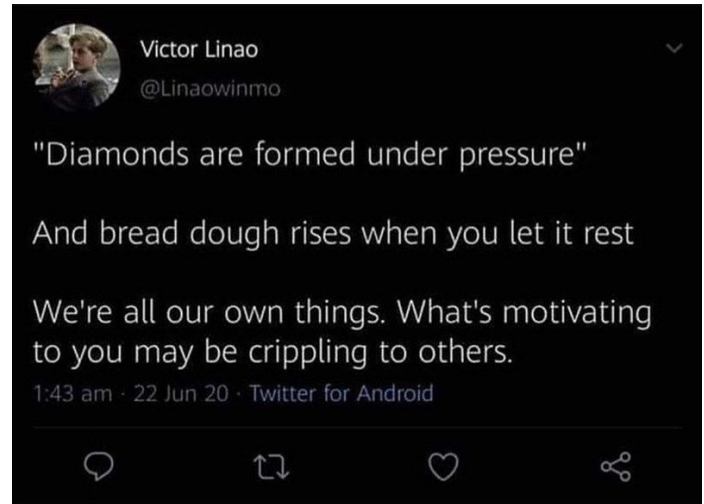
The FSU website includes many resources and much helpful information about such student needs as financial aid and advising. These resources can be accessed through a variety of ways but this [link](#) takes you to a page that collects the most commonly used ones.

Health and Wellness

The [Counseling Services Office](#) (Hammond 317) offers a range of services including individual, couples and group counseling, crisis intervention, psychoeducational programming, outreach workshops, and community referrals. Counseling services are confidential and are offered at no charge to all enrolled students. Staff at Counseling Services are also available for consultation to faculty, staff and students.

For the fall 2022 semester, the Counseling Services office intends to provide services both in-person (with appropriate precautions, including face coverings), and virtually. Office hours for Counseling Services run from Monday - Friday, 8:30am - 5pm (7pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays). Appointments to meet with a counselor can be made by calling 978-665-3152, or by sending an email to counselingscheduler@fitchburgstate.edu. In emergency situations, students should contact University Police at 978-665-3111, dial 911, or seek out emergency care at their local emergency room.

In addition, Counseling Services staff has assembled a number of resources that can be accessed remotely (e.g., self-care, mindfulness, relaxation, managing emotional balance during a pandemic). [Click here for this list of resources.](#)



(Image description: Meme with black background on top that says, “Diamonds are formed under pressure’ and bread dough rises when you let it rest. We’re all our own things. What’s motivating to you may be crippling to others.” and white background that says “There’s an old saying (I think it’s Russian): the same boiling water that softens the potato will harden the egg.”)

Students are also able to access a variety of medical services via a partnership with [Community Health Connections](#) (CHC), a health center that has two locations very close to campus. Medical services are provided from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday (8pm on Monday), and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday. The cost for accessing care will usually be determined by what type of insurance you have. [Click here for more information.](#)

Please also know that there is a National Suicide Prevention Lifeline that can be accessed by calling or texting 988 or chatting at 988lifeline.org. Reach out if you need help, please.

Class Schedule (as of 9/7/22)

<u>Wednesday, 9/7</u> Course introduction Syllabus highlights Demographic Survey “Discovery of Graphene” , Ottaviani [He] & Langridge [He] (webcomic) “The Antibody” , Naro [He] (webcomic) Discussion (via Jamboard): what are comics?	<u>Sunday, 9/11</u> Jamboard Introductions Demographic Survey
<u>Wednesday, 9/14</u> Vattu, Book 1 , Evan Dahm [He] (webcomic) McCloud [He], Ch. 1 Review Page Analysis assignment Syllabus Check-In	<u>Sunday, 9/18</u> Page Analysis #1 (<i>Vattu</i>)
<u>Wednesday, 9/21</u> <i>She and Her Cat</i> , ShinKai [He], Yamaguchi [She] McCloud [He], Ch. 2 Review Video Presentation assignment	<u>Sunday, 9/25</u> Page Analysis #2 (<i>She and Her Cat</i>)
<u>Wednesday 9/28</u> <i>Kindred</i> , Butler [She], Duffy [He], Jennings [He] McCloud [He], Ch. 3	<u>Sunday, 10/2</u> Page Analysis #3 (<i>Kindred</i>)
<u>Wednesday, 10/5</u> <i>March</i> , Lewis [He], Aydin [He], Powell [He] (complete); McCloud [He], Ch. 4 Outside Text selection	<u>Sunday, 10/9</u> Page Analysis #4 (<i>March</i>)

<u>Wednesday, 10/12</u> <i>They Called Us Enemy</i> , Takei [He], Eisinger [He], Scott [He], Becker [She] McCloud [He], Ch. 5 Introduce Comparative Analysis Review Exploratory Analysis	<u>Sunday, 10/16</u> Page Analysis #5 (<i>They Called Us Enemy</i>)
<u>Wednesday, 10/19</u> <i>Dare to Disappoint</i> , Samanci [She] How to pronounce Samanci McCloud [He], Ch. 8	<u>Sunday, 10/23</u> Page Analysis #6 (<i>Dare to Disappoint</i>)
<u>Wednesday, 10/26</u> <i>Amazons, Abolitionists, and Activists</i> , Kendall [She] and D'Amico [She] Introduce Genre Analysis	<u>Sunday, 10/30</u> Page Analysis #7 (<i>Amazons, Abolitionists, and Activists</i>)
<u>Wednesday, 11/2</u> <i>My Hero Academia</i> , Horikoshi [He]	<u>Sunday, 11/6</u> Outside Text Video Presentation Page Analysis #8 (<i>MHA</i>)
<u>Wednesday, 11/9</u> <i>Ms. Marvel</i> , Wilson [She], Alphona [He], Herring [He] Review Research Report assignment	<u>Sunday, 11/13</u> Page Analysis #7 (<i>Ms. Marvel</i>) Exploratory Analysis
<u>Wednesday, 11/16</u> Research Report workday (Backwards/Forwards Searching) Catch-up day	<u>Sunday, 11/20</u> Page Analysis catch-up

<u>Wednesday, 11/23</u> No class meeting	<u>Sunday, 11/27</u>
<u>Wednesday, 11/30</u> Genre discussion and semester wrap-up McCloud [He] review Review Final Paper	<u>Sunday, 12/4</u> Research Report
<u>Wednesday, 12/7</u> Synthesis discussion Final Paper workday	
<u>Wednesday, 12/14</u> Final Paper due	