



**Course Name:** History of Comics

**Course Number:** AH 3657 01

**Class Meets:** Tuesdays 6:30-9:00

**Classroom Location:** Room 416

**Faculty's Name:** Dr. John Pistelli

**MCAD Email Address:** jpistelli@mcad.edu

**MCAD Telephone Number, Academic Affairs:** 612-874-3694

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 5:30-6:30

**Office Location:** Room 308

**Faculty Biography:** John Pistelli holds a Ph.D. in English literature from the University of Minnesota. His academic interests include modern and contemporary fiction, literary theory and aesthetics, the graphic novel, and creative writing. His non-fiction has appeared in *Rain Taxi*, *Ragnarok*, *New Walk*, and *The Millions*, while his short fiction has been published in *Whole Beast Rag*, *Revolver*, *The Squawk Back*, *Winter Tangerine Review*, and elsewhere. He is also the author of *The Ecstasy of Michaela: a novella* (Valhalla Press, 2012).

**Course Description:** Although comics now include a vast collection of different articulations of image and text, their shared history reflects the movement from strictly pulp publications on cheap paper created by assembly line artists to complex stories with provocative images. This course follows the history of comic art from *The Yellow Kid* to global manifestations of the art form, such as Japanese manga and French BD. The development and range of image and textual forms, styles, and structures that differentiate the vast compendium of such work inform the discourse in class. Classes are primarily lecture with some discussion. Students take examinations and complete research assignments. Prerequisite: Introduction to Art and Design: History 2 (may be taken concurrently) or instructor permission

**Required Textbooks, Readings and Websites:**

Bob Callahan, ed. *The New Smithsonian Book of Comic Book Stories from Crumb to Clowes*.

Hergé. *The Adventures of Tintin*, vol. 1.

Osamu Tezuka. *Buddha*, vol 1.: Kapilavastu.

Marjane Satrapi. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*.

All other readings will be available on Blackboard.

**Library Reserve Information:**

Course textbooks are on two-hour reserve at the library

**Materials and Tools list:**

Please bring all materials to class on the appropriate day, including textbooks and online readings, either printed or on a device, and some tool with which to take notes.

**Blackboard:** The Blackboard site will be an integral part of the course and many readings will be offered there, so please be sure to check it regularly.

**Assignments/Deliverables:** There are three assignments in the course: a mid-term exam, a final exam, and a presentation. See below under grading procedure for details.

**Course Calendar:**

[This is subject to change, alteration, or expansion based on the pace of the class and student interests.]

(\*) indicates that the reading can be found on the course website. More texts, images, etc. than are listed may appear on Blackboard, so please be sure to check it regularly and to pay attention to assignments given in class. I expect you to read online selections with the care and attention you devote to the print textbooks and to bring them to class on the appropriate day.

01/20 – INTRODUCTION

- Introduction to the course

01/27 – THEORY

- Duncan and Smith, *The Power of Comics* chapters 1 and 2\*
- McCloud, from *Understanding Comics*\*
- Wolk, *Reading Comics* chapter 1\*

02/03 – EARLY COMIC STRIPS AND WOODCUT NOVELS

- Yellow Kid, Little Nemo, Krazy Kat, Pogo, Peanuts, etc. strips\*
- Cummings, "A Foreword to Krazy"\*
- Ward, God's Man\*
- Presentation 1

02/10 – GOLDEN AGE

- Superman, Batman, Plastic Man, Captain Marvel, Spirit excerpts\*
- Morrison, from Supergods\*
- Presentation 2

02/17 – E.C. COMICS AND MIDCENTURY GENRES

- E.C. excerpts and related material\*
- Little Lulu and Donald Duck excerpts\*
- Presentation 3

02/24 – SILVER AGE

- Smithsonian, part two: Silver Age of Superheroes
- Presentation 4

03/03 – UNDERGROUND COMIX

- Smithsonian, part one: The Undergrounds
- Wolk, Reading Comics chapter 2\*
- Presentation 5

03/10 – BANDES-DESSINÉES

- Hergé, Tintin
- Moebius excerpts\*
- Duncan and Smith, The Power of Comics chapter 13\*
- Presentation 6

03/17 – MIDTERM

- In-Class Exam

03/24 – MANGA

- Tezuka, Buddha
- Urushibara, Mushishi excerpts\*
- Schodt, from Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga\*
- Presentation 7

03/31 – SPRING BREAK

- No class

04/07 – DARK AGE

- Smithsonian, part four: Dark Fiction and Deep Fantasy
- Klock, "The Bat and the Watchmen"\*
- Presentation 8

04/14 – ART COMICS

- Smithsonian, part three: A Raw Generation
- Presentation 9

04/21 – INDEPENDENCE AND RESPECTABILITY

- Smithsonian, parts five and six: The Contemporary Edge and A Contemporary Feast
- Batuman, "Into the Eisenshpitz"\*
- Presentation 10

04/28 – AROUND THE WORLD AND AROUND THE WEB

- Satrapi, Persepolis
- Webcomics TBA\*
- Presentation 11

05/05 CATCH-UP/WILD CARD DAY

- Readings TBA
- Final review
- Presentation 12

05/12 – FINAL

- In-class exam

**Miscellaneous: None**

**Email Usage:** Email is used at MCAD as the official means of communicating with the student body. Official college announcements regarding policy, classes, registration, deadlines, etc. are delivered via email. Students are expected to check their MCAD email frequently and are held responsible for all official information communicated to them via the email system. Misuse or misrepresentation of official communications by students will result in disciplinary action.

**Attendance:** Attendance in classes is mandatory. There are no official excused absences. For classes that meet once a week two absences will result in one full grade deduction. Additional absences will result in the loss of one full letter grade. For classes that meet twice a week four absences will result in the loss of one full letter grade. Two additional absences will result in the loss of one additional letter grade. Repeated

tardiness will result in the loss of a letter grade. Note: Students will not be penalized for absences due to religious observance. However, students must inform the faculty member at the beginning of the semester of specific dates or times of these conflicts.

**Grading Policy:** Grades consider student performance of assignments listed on each course syllabus, participation in class, magnitude of improvement, attendance, level of project difficulty, timeliness of project completion, compliance with class policies, and effort/dedication.  
A = Excellent work, progress far beyond expectations of effort and outcomes, full participation  
B = Good work, course requirements completed, preparedness for more advanced study  
C = Average work, course requirements completed, preparedness for more advanced study  
D = Passing but below average work, some promise of improvement  
F = Work not acceptable, or course requirements not completed

**Grading Procedure / Criteria:** There will be three grading criteria, weighted as follows: 20% class participation (this includes being prepared for class, speaking in class, attending office hours, participating in online activities, and completing all other assignments); 30% presentation (each student will, in a group of two, present on a comic or creator not assigned in the course but related to the week's topic; the group's choice must have my approval, and the presentation must be supplemented by a report submitted to me the week the presentation is due); 50% exams (there will be in-class midterm and final exams, involving identifications, short answers, and essay responses). More detail will be provided about assignments as the course progresses.

**Academic Deficiencies:** MCAD notifies students of deficiencies in academic performance throughout the semester. Notices are placed in student mailboxes. Students are encouraged to contact the faculty member immediately and take steps to remedy the deficiency. If a student has two or more deficiencies at the mid-semester the student will be contacted by the Dean of Student Affairs. A subsequent meeting will be scheduled to help the student analyze the problem and make realistic plans to remedy the situation and succeed in school.

**Midterm Grade Notification:** All students will receive from their faculty member notification of current standing at the midpoint of the semester.

+++++  
This information is taken from the Student Handbook. You are expected to adhere to college policy.

A. THE LEARNING CENTER: The Learning Center provides interdisciplinary support for all MCAD students, including face-to-face and online tutoring, an online writing and learning lab (OWLL), small and large group workshops and in-class presentations, as well as academic accommodation services for students with disabilities. The Learning Center works with students to make them better learners and prioritizes equal access and opportunity for all students. Tutoring areas include writing, software and technical skills, time management, and study skills. For more information on the Learning Center's Hours, instructions for how to make an appointment, and access to the MCAD OWLL, visit [learningcenter.mcad.edu](http://learningcenter.mcad.edu) or call (612) 874-3671.

B. LYNDA.COM: Students can access a wide variety of online tutorials at Lynda.com using their MCAD login information: <https://intranet.mcad.edu/modules/lynda/>

C. COURSE EVALUATIONS: Course evaluations are an integral part of MCAD curriculum development. Student feedback on courses are instrumental in creating a vibrant, informed, and robust learning community at MCAD. For these, and many other reasons, students are encouraged at the end of the semester to provide extensive feedback on course evaluations.

D. CELL PHONE POLICY (optional): Cell phones should be put on mute or vibrate during class. Calls can be made during breaks, as well as before or after class.

E. CREDIT HOUR DEFINITION: In lecture/discussion courses requiring outside preparation, 1 hour of credit represents 50 minutes contact time each week in class, and 2 hours of work outside of class. Therefore, a 3-credit lecture course requires 2.5 hours in class per week and approximately 6 hours outside of class.

In studio/laboratory courses, 1 hour of credit requires a minimum of 1.5 hours contact hours each week in class and approximately 1.5 hours of work outside of class. Therefore, a 3-credit studio course represents a minimum of 4.5 contact hours in class and approximately 4.5 hours of work outside of class per week.

In online courses, 1 hour of credit requires approximately 3 hours of work per week for all activities (i.e., reading, viewing, making, scanning, responding to discussion threads, collaborating, etc.). Therefore, a 3-credit online course requires approximately 9 hours per week to complete the necessary activities.

F. ATTENDANCE (ONLINE COURSES): Registration for an online course presupposes that the student will attend/fully participate in all online activities. Each student is responsible for meeting all course requirements.

G. CLASSROOM LAPTOP USAGE POLICY: Participation in a classroom community has many benefits, but students will also find that along with those benefits come responsibilities:

+ Students are responsible for bringing laptops to class when scheduled to do so.

+ Student laptops should be in good working condition. If a student is experiencing problems with a laptop, it is the student's responsibility to go to Computer Support for help: <https://intranet.mcad.edu/modules/css/?css=1>. Technical difficulties such as problems printing, uploading, saving, or retrieving files do not excuse late or missing work.

+ During classroom discussion, demonstration, or lecture, students should not be connected to network resources unless students are specifically instructed to do so.

+ Chatting, using social media, or emailing is no more acceptable than talking on a cell phone during class time. Non-class related use of a laptop during

class time, including working on homework for other courses, may result in restriction of laptop use or a grade penalty.

+ Unless otherwise indicated, students should never use headphones during class time.

+ Students should always store copies of files in two backup locations. Students should never store the only copy of a paper/project on the student server space in case the server is down, and students are unable to access the paper/project.

H. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY / SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY: Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in MCAD courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action.

The MCAD Student Handbook defines academic dishonesty as follows: Submission of false records of academic achievement; cheating on assignments or examinations; altering, forging or misusing a College academic record, document or funds; taking, acquiring or using test materials without faculty permission; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records to obtain grades, honors, awards or professional endorsement in a dishonest manner; plagiarizing.

+ Plagiarizing: Quoting uncited materials, visual or written; presenting the work of others as your own; using work of other MCAD students without their express permission.

+ Using the Same Work in Different Courses: Students may not submit the same work for more than one class without the knowledge and consent of all faculty.

+ Consequences for plagiarizing and double submissions may include failing the assignment or the course, or academic probation.

Within this course, a student who is responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to an including an "F" for the course. If students have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, they should consult with their professor.

Using the Same Assignment in Different Courses: Studio projects are assigned and assessed according to the specific learning objectives for each course. Occasionally students may be assigned a project in one course that shares many of the learning objectives of an assignment given in a different course. While turning in the same assignment for two courses is not encouraged, students who wish to do so are required to first notify the faculty member of each course and get permission. Faculty may assign additional requirements. Failure to notify faculty can result in failure of the assignments in both courses.

I. Accessibility and Equal Access: Persons with disabilities have a right to equal opportunity as prescribed by law. MCAD is responsible for creating a barrier-free environment while empowering students to grow toward independence and self-assertion. It is the individual student's responsibility to make their needs known and request accommodation. First-time disclosures must be made via appointment with the Learning Center or via our Disability Disclosure Form. For more information, visit [learningcenter.mcad.edu](http://learningcenter.mcad.edu) or call [\(612\) 874-3671](tel:6128743671).

J. ARCHIVING YOUR WORK: All students must turn in images of their work from each class every semester. The image format should follow MCAD archiving standards, which are found at:

<http://kb.mcad.edu/index.php?category=64>

Images should be accompanied by a Word document containing relevant information, found at:

<http://kb.mcad.edu/index.php?article=166-Text-Listing>

Intranet.MCAD.edu

MCAD Knowledgebase

Computer support

Archiving Standards for Student work