

# Why Comics? Contemporary Graphic Narrative: English 330-A01

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## Course description:

This course explores developments in graphic narrative since Spiegelman's *Maus*, focusing on 21<sup>st</sup>-century comics from Canada, the US and the UK. Comics are often likened to short stories and novels, or even animated films, but they are also a kind of poetry: in the words of one critic "an incantation beckoning us to enter their world." Their seeming simplicity and concision can reveal surprising density, layers, and multivalence. The first goal of the course, then, is to build a vocabulary for discussing how comics mean: how page and panel, lettered text and graphic image interact. The course also aims to sample the diversity of a flourishing comics culture: to develop appreciation of its brilliantly varied themes, tones, politics, and aesthetics. Readings include an autobiographical coming-of-age story; a 'graphic medicine' memoir; science fiction; 'film noir' detective fiction; a very free adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*; a young adult narrative; and Lynda Barry's incomparable "autobiofictionagraphy."

## Proposed assignments/exams:

4 presentations 20%; analytical essay 20%; research essay 30%; Final Exam 30%

Proposed readings: Bechdel, *Fun Home*; Leavitt, *Tangles*; Robertson, Iskwé, et al., *Will I See*; Simmonds, *Cassandra Darke*; Gauld, *Mooncop*; Feiffer, *Kill My Mother*; Barry, *Greatest of Marlys*.