

English 425
Comics and Contemporary America
Spring 2021 | MTh 11:30am – 12:50pm

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Course Description

Comics are integral to the study of America and American fiction today. They experiment with representation, play with genre, speak truth to power, and prompt important conversations about fiction's role in memory and catharsis. We'll discuss these topics and more by engaging the politics and aesthetics of comics and sampling various critical approaches to the combination of words, images, and narrative in contemporary America. You'll learn how comics work and how to write about them for popular and academic audiences.



Image from Monstress (2016) courtesy of Sana Takeda, Marjorie Liu, and Image Comics

I'll ask you to complete the following assignments:

- Annotated comics (5% x 4)
- Analysis of a technique used in comics (25%)
- Cultural analysis of comics and contemporary America (25%)
- Final exam (30%)

We will study the following:

- *Ms. Marvel*, Vol. 1 (2014), by G. Willow Wilson, Adrian Alphona, and Jake Wyatt
- *Victor LaValle's Destroyer* (2017), by Victor LaValle and Dietrich Smith
- *Monstress*, Vol. 1 (2016), by Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda
- *Daytripper* (2010), by Fabio Moon and Gabriel Ba
- *Special Exits* (2010), by Joyce Farmer
- Selections of comics by Weshoyot Alvitre, Kyle Baker, Lynda Barry, Alison Bechdel, Charles Burns, Emily Carroll, Kelly Sue DeConnick, Will Eisner, Sigrid Ellis, Emil Ferris, Matt Fraction, Neil Gaiman, Kieron Gillen, Roberta Gregory, Joy Harjo, the Hernandez brothers, Stephen Graham Jones, Tom King, Jack Kirby, Stan Lee, Jeff Lemire, David Mazzuchelli, Scott McCloud, Jamie McKelvie, Carla Speed McNeil, Alan Moore, Robert Morales, Brennan Lee Mulligan, Molly Ostertag, Greg Rucka, Gail Simone, Art Spiegelman, Fiona Staples, Brian K. Vaughan, Tillie Walden, Chris Ware, Bill Watterson, Delicia Williams, and Gene Luen Yang