Graphic Feminism

WGSS/English 577

Fall 2016

Susan Squier Thursday 11:15-2:15

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Office Hours: Weds 2-3 pm, Thurs 3-4 pm and by appointment (email me)

This course provides an introduction to the vibrant field of feminist comics, 1970-2016. During the last half century, women’s comics have given powerful voice to a wide range of feminist issues, including reproductive rights, racism, sexual abuse, sex positivity, religion, aging, the mother-daughter relation, queer, trans and bi-sexualities, and female embodiment. We will study a sampling of these brilliant feminist creators and their comics, from the underground feminist collectives of the 1960s to the present. We will also read several scholarly studies of feminist comics in order to learn how comics criticism can provide a new set of tools to feminist scholars. And because one can’t do comics criticism responsibly without having a sense of what it takes to actually create a comic, we will spend time in the studio hour of this seminar learning to do exactly that.

Requirements:

* **For each class: a 1-2 page response paper.** Two formats, depending on whether the reading for the class is a comic or a work of comics scholarship. For comics, these should be analyses of a brief section (1-2 pages, or several tiers or panels) from that comic, analyzing the form of the pages and discussing a theme or issue you find that these pages illuminate. (Either attach a photocopy of the pages or give the page numbers where possible.) When we are discussing works of comics scholarship, these papers should be responses to an aspect of the scholarly argument. **You may drop the lowest two response papers.**
* **Class presentation:** this should be a presentation of no more than 15 minutes on the reading for the day. Think of this as an “index card” presentation: formulation of one formal or thematic issue that you believe is distinctive or important about the reading of the day, with specific reference to the work assigned. You will post this presentation on the ANGEL site after you give it, so your classmates may refer to it.
* **Web comic presentation:** One presentation introducing a web comic you find interesting, with a paragraph on its importance for you as a feminist. We will not only post these on ANGEL, but will also present them verbally in class.
* **A seminar paper of 12-15 pages.** This should be a conference-style paper that focuses on feminist comics, topic chosen after consultation with me. This should reflect your own disciplinary or interdisciplinary positioning. That is, you could study a particular feminist cartoonist, or you could study a feminist issue as refracted through feminist comics.
* **A comic of your own.** This assignment is pass/fail: by the end of the semester you will have created a four-page feminist comic of your own, on a topic you choose.

**Required texts for the course: (These should be available at the PSU bookstore, but you can also try the Comic Swap on Fraser.) NOTE: All of the books except the Lynda Barry will also be on reserve in the PSU Library. I will be having the Lynda Barry scanned up on to ANGEL by Friday the 26th.**

1. Lynda Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* (Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 2002)  
2. Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007)  
3. Alison Bechdel, *Are You My Mother?* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012)  
4. Ivan Brunetti, *Cartooning: Philosophy and Practice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011)  
5. Hillary Chute, *Graphic Women* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011)  
6. Debbie Drechsler, *Daddy's Girl* (Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2008)  
7. Joyce Farmer, *Special Exits* (Seattle: Fantagraphics, 2010)  
8. Ellen Forney, *Marbles* (Seattle: Avery, 2012)  
9. Tahneer Oksman, *How Come Boys Get to Keep Their Noses*? New York: Columbia University Press, 2016)  
10. Marjane Satrapi, *Embroideries* (New York: Pantheon, 2006)  
11. Jillian Tamaki and Mariko Tamaki, *This One Summer* (New York: First, Second Press, 2014.

12. Jillian Tamaki and Mariko Tamaki, *Skin*. Groundwood Books, 2010.

**Accessibility statement:**

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University’s educational programs. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. The Student Disability Resources Web site provides [**contact information for every Penn State campus**](http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/disability-coordinator): ***http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/disability-coordinator.*** For further information, please visit the [**Student Disability Resources Web site**](http://equity.psu.edu/sdr):***http://equity.psu.edu/sdr.***

In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, [**participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation**](http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/applying-for-services): ***http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/applying-for-services.*** If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your [**campus’s disability services office**](http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/disability-coordinator) will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.

**WHAT TO BRING TO CLASS**: 1) I have put on the ANGEL website the basic cartooning supplies I am asking you to purchase and bring with you to every class. 2) I also ask you to bring your copy of Ivan Brunetti with you each day. 3) Finally, I also require you to bring with you the copy of the comic we are reading, each day, whether it is on Kindle or a paper copy. It’s simply impossible to work on comics without having the image/text in front of you!

**Class Schedule: (This may change as the semester progresses)**

**8/25** Trina Robbins, ed. *The Complete Wimmins Comix*

I am not expecting you to purchase this very expensive collection. Instead, I will have copies of comics scanned up to ANGEL for you to download and print. We will be working with and discussing the comics in our first class so please bring them with you.

**9/1** Lynda Barry, *One Hundred Demons* and Hillary Chute, *Graphic Women*, *Introduction* and chapter 3. Please also bring the photos of twelve objects for the studio hour and read Brunetti Week 2.

**9/8** Jillian Tamaki and Mariko Tamaki, *This One Summer*. Read Brunetti Week 3.

**9/15** Jillian Tamaki and Mariko Tamaki, *Skim* and read Brunetti Week 4.

**9/22**  Tahneer Oksmann, *How Come the Boys get to Keep Their Noses?*

Hillary Chute Chapter 1, *Graphic Women*

**Tahneer Oksmann visits our class.**

**9/29** Marjane Satrapi, *Embroideries*

Hillary Chute, *Graphic Women*, read Chapter 4. And read Brunetti Week 5

**10/6** Debbie Drechsler, *Daddy’s Girl*. And read Brunetti Week 6.

Hilary Chute, *Graphic Women*, read “Introduction” and Chapter 2.

Nick Sousanis at Penn State to accept the Lynd Ward Prize for the best graphic novel of the year 2015, for his *Unflattening*. He will be speaking in Foster Auditorium at 4:00 or so.

**10/13 Drawing time with comics mentor. Have read Brunetti Weeks 7 and 8**

**10/20 Library time to work on research for your seminar paper**

**10/27** Ellen Forney, *Marbles*. And read Brunetti, Week 9.

**11/3** Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* and Hillary Chute, *Graphic Women,* Chapter 5. And read Brunetti Weeks 10-14

**11/10** Emily Steinberg, creator of *Broken Eggs* webcomic, visits our class. The readings are up on the ANGEL website under Web Comics. There may also be an additional reading.

**11/17** Alison Bechdel, *Are You My Mother?*

**12/1** Joyce Farmer, *Special Exits*

**12/8** Paper presentations; comics presentations