ENGL 4430: The Graphic Novel   Spring 2023

Course Description

When the University of Memphis first offered a literature class focused on graphic novels over two decades ago, the original course description was simple: "students will gain basic familiarity with the **new** genre of graphic or comic book novel." Twenty years ago, when graphic novels were relatively new, choosing the significant texts for the course meant paying attention to the pioneers of the form and studying the 3M's—*Maus*, Miller, and Moore. But since Art Spiegelman won the Pulitzer Prize for *Maus* in 1992 and Neil Gaiman won the World Fantasy Award for "Preludes and Nocturnes" in 1991, the genre has exploded in popularity, influence, and range of topics explored in the form. And while memoir and superheroes remain productive and innovative genres of graphic texts, recent standouts have tremendously expanded the territory covered by writers and illustrators, and the fact that academic scholarship has also kept pace with the growth also signals that graphic novels have earned their place in both classrooms and the canon. This semester of ENGL 4430, therefore, will nod toward the 3M's and acknowledge their part in leading the way toward "the new genre," but the course will focus on more recent and emerging graphic novels which are pushing the frontiers of graphic literature into the future.

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

- Recognize the relationship between visual and textual information in graphic novels and analyze visual elements as both artistic and literary components of the form.
- Distinguish characteristics of a variety of graphic novel genres and artistic styles and explain how writers' and artists' choices in terms of genre/artistic conventions influence readers' interpretations.
- Identify, understand, and accurately represent relevant scholarship from the rapidly growing body of research into graphic novels.

Course Requirements

- Read 12 assigned graphic novels and accompanying scholarship
- Complete weekly writing assignments (short, focused prompts)
- Participate in in-class activities (pedagogies vary)
- Unit quizzes
- Final project