COURSE DESCRIPTION

Over the past couple of decades, there has been an explosion of “graphic novels” aimed at adult readers concerning Jewish society, history, and religion. This course explores the history of American comics through the lens of its Jewish creators and Jewish themes. We learn to interpret this complex art form that combines words and hand-drawn images, translating temporal progression into a spatial form. Reading primarily American, but also European and Israeli narratives, our discussions will focus on autobiographical and journalistic accounts, in comics, of uprooting, immigration, conflict, and loss.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Given the unusual circumstances under which this course is being taught, the format and the requirements are provisional and subject to change. I plan to check in with everyone at the end of every week to make sure that you are keeping up with the course. I welcome suggestions and feedback about the format and the requirements. If the tools that we are using for distance learning don’t work, we may reevaluate. Deadlines will be flexible, depending on how the situation in the world, in our communities evolves, and in your lives evolves.

These are your responsibilities for the course:

1. Readings for every week will be posted on canvas: I ask that you read, take extensive notes, and prepare questions/comments on the texts in advance.
2. I plan to post short recorded lectures to canvas (probably 2 lectures of about 5-7 minutes each a week), which I ask that you view in advance of our zoom class meetings. The lectures will provide some background information and questions to think about in advance of our discussion.
3. We will meet for 60 minutes on zoom, twice a week, starting at 10:00am CST (8:00am for people on the West Coast). This allows us to stick with the originally scheduled time-slot for the class (and should hopefully allow you to participate in other online classes as needed). The zoom meetings will be posted on canvas in advance, and you just have to click on the link to join. I plan to structure these zoom meetings as a discussion. This is your time to ask questions, think out loud about our texts, and have a conversation. Our community is an
important aspect of the course, and Yael and I will both be thinking about how to foster it in this not-always-perfect medium. We plan to break out into smaller groups on zoom part of the time. If you are unable to attend a zoom session for any reason, let us know and we will figure out an alternative. The discussions WILL be recorded and made available on Canvas.

4. Every week (starting in week II), we will pair you with one other student from the class (on a rotating basis) and will give you some task to work on together, which will center on the readings for the following week. This might include: close read a passage together, discuss it, and prepare some discussion questions about it, to be shared in advance with everyone else; summarize the main argument of an article and distribute a handout to everyone else in the class; choose one sequence of panels in one of our texts and share some formal observations about it with the rest of the class. For your work in pairs, you can use any medium that works for you (chat/text/facetime/etc).

5. I will ask you to post your pair-work to the class blog, where we can also carry on the conversations beyond the zoom meetings.

6. You will prepare three assignments for the course (more detailed instructions for all of these, as well as deadlines, will follow):

   - Show and tell: find a comic/graphic novel/ tv series/ magazine story/ anything else of relevance to the class, and prepare a brief video/written commentary about it for everyone else in the class to view. I’d be happy to help you look for things to share, if needed. You need to make at least one of these, but are warmly encouraged to do more. These will all be shared on the class blog.

   - Midterm writing assignment: I will post prompts on Canvas, and give you three days to write brief responses to them (ca 1,500-2,000 words altogether)

   - Final project: this can be an academic paper of about 5-7 pages, on a topic of your choice (to be discussed with me in advance). I would also enthusiastically welcome creative projects: create your own visual narrative, using illustrations/collages/digital image making tools of your choice. If you choose a creative project, I ask that you write 2-3 pages of a reflection describing your process, and how this project relates to something that you learned in this class.

   - So that I know that you’ve read through all of this, please email me your favorite Coronavirus crisis meme or gif now.

Grades will be assigned based on all of the elements described above (in class and blog discussion board participation 25%, weekly pair-work 25%, assignments 50%).

Office Hours: feel free to email me for personal zoom appointments. If it seems necessary, I may set regular virtual office hours later in the quarter.
**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

**WEEK 1**

Tuesday, April 7: Introduction

- Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, Introduction, Chapter 1

Thursday, April 9th: PASSOVER, No Class

**WEEK 2**

Tuesday, April 14th: The “Silver Age” Superhero Comic Book (1961-1981) [Participation optional if you observe Passover on this day]

- The Fantastic Four #1 (1961), The Fantastic Four #4 (1962) chapter 2 “Enter the Sub-Mariner!” (83-88)

- The X-Men #1 (1963)

- The Invaders #13 (1977)


Optional extra reading: Maya Barzilai, “Supergolem: Revenge after the Holocaust”

Thursday, April 16th: Will Eisner, Defining the Graphic Narrative


- Sharon Rudahl, “My Resting Place”


**WEEK 3**

**Tuesday, April 21: Imagining the Tenements: Leela Corman and Liana Finck**

- Leela Corman, Unterzakhn


- Scott McCloud, Understanding Comics, chapter 4.

**Zoom Conversation with Leela Corman**

**Thursday, April 23: Art Spiegelman’s Maus**

- Spiegelman, Maus: A Survivors Tale Part I (My Father Bleeds History)


**WEEK 4**

**Tuesday, April 28: Maus continued**

- Spiegelman, Maus: A Survivors Tale Part II (And Here My Troubles Began).

  - Miriam Katin, We Are on Our Own, excerpt.

Thursday, April 30th: Underground comix: Robert Crumb and Harvey Pekar

- Harvey Pekar and Robert Crumb, American Splendor #3, “Standing Behind Old Jewish Ladies in Supermarket Lines”
- The Power of Comics, Chapter 3, pp. 50-58.

**WEEK 5**

Tuesday, May 5th: Crumb’s Genesis

- Robert Crumb, The Book of Genesis (excerpts)

Thursday, May 7th: J.T. Waldman, Megillat Esther

Waldman, Megillat Esther

**WEEK 6**

Tuesday, May 12: The Rabbi’s Cat

- Joann Sfar, The Rabbi’s Cat, “The Bar Mitzva”

Thursday, May 15: Film viewing – The Rabbi’s Cat, Joann Sfar

[Details on where and how to screen it forthcoming]

**WEEK 7**

Tuesday, May 19: Israeli Comics

Asaf Hanuka, The Realist
“Black Egg” http://www.asafhanuka.com/read-comics/#/black-egg/

Optional film Viewing: Waltz with Bashir, Ari Folman

Thursday, May 21: Joe Sacco, A Journalist in Palestine

• Joe Sacco, Palestine (excerpts)


• Joe Sacco, Presentation at the 2002 UF Comics Conference

WEEK 8

Tuesday, May 26: Rutu Modan

• Rutu Modan, “Jamilti”
  • Rutu Modan, Exit Wounds

Thursday, May 28: Rutu Modan

• Rutu Modan, Exit Wounds

Potentially: Zoom Conversation with Rutu Modan

WEEK 9

Catch up and Wrap up!