1. Course Description

A critical examination of the development and popularity of the comic book and graphic novel, the course will focus on the history, interpretation, collection and consumption of these texts within a particular focus on: 1) library collection and acquisition and 2) textual and visual literacy. Through an investigation of the existing research, this seminar explores: how different audiences interpret the medium, the implications for how we read a text, how these materials redefine current attitudes towards youth and adult literacy and how these attitudes affect collections development policies. We will also examine the current state of the comics industry and how new digital applications increase access to these materials. As a result, the way readers interact with this highly visual medium changes. In the final week, we focus in-depth on a particular comic book genre and examine its role in the library setting and its popularity with North American readers.

At the end of the course students will be able to demonstrate the following MI program learning outcomes as set forth by the faculty:¹

(1) Students will be familiar with the fundamental theories of collecting graphic novels. Students will know how to transform these theoretical principles into practice as they develop and refine best practices for collection development.

(2) Students will gain insight into how the inclusion of a once neglected format in information centers reflects changing values towards image and text. This suggests that comics have gained mainstream acceptance and are not mere artifacts of popular culture but texts that appeal to a wide readership.

(3/4) Students will develop their writing and research skills through conducting original research in the field of comics studies as well as develop frameworks with which to critically assess current scholarly writings on the subject.

(5) Students will learn how the digitization of comics affects the publishing industry. Particular attention will also be given to reading comics in a digital environment either on an e-reader or online.

(6) Students will be encouraged to share the graphic novels/comics they are currently reading. For those students who have little or no experience reading in this format this is an opportunity to explore different genres as well as artistic and writing styles.

¹ [http://current.ischool.utoronto.ca/studies/learning-outcomes](http://current.ischool.utoronto.ca/studies/learning-outcomes)
2. Intended Audience

This course is designed for anyone who is interested in learning more about how the increasing popularity of graphic novels and comic books is redefining the ways in which we define literacy. This course would be an excellent prerequisite for individuals wishing to: a) pursue a career involving children and young people; b) learn more about the graphic novel and comic book genre; or c) develop standardized collection development and evaluation criteria for the graphic novel and comic book genre.

3. Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Accessibility Services Office\(^2\) as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services staff is available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations.

4. Information Resources

There will be a course site on Blackboard (https://portal.utoronto.ca) to which all registered students will have access through their UTORid. This will serve as the primary gateway for students to download course materials.

There are four required textbooks for the course. They are available in UofT campus bookstore. The required texts are:


5. Organization of the Course and Seminar Presentation

The principle form of course delivery is a seminar and includes student presentations with occasional lectures. In order to facilitate discussion, students will sign up to present each week’s assigned readings to the course. Students must provide a handout (this can be creative). The handout must be submitted electronically to the instructor no later than 11pm the day before class. Copies of handouts will be distributed to the class. Student seminar presentations and presentation handouts are ungraded (however students are graded on class participation). There are three graded assignments for the course. On occasion, a guest lecturer will be invited to speak to the class.

\(^2\) http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/
Week 1 (Jan. 9) Welcome and Introduction to Course Themes:
Introductory lecture on graphic novels and comic books. Topics to include: History, development of the medium and its study.

Readings:


Week 2 (Jan 16) Collections Development I: Principles

Readings:


Week 3 (Jan 23) Collections Development II: Vendors and Publishers

Readings:


Websites:

- Image Comics: [https://www.imagecomics.com/](https://www.imagecomics.com/)
- Marvel: [http://marvel.com/comics](http://marvel.com/comics)
- Scholastic: [http://www.scholastic.ca/graphix/](http://www.scholastic.ca/graphix/)

GUEST: Andrew or Peter from The Beguiling

**Week 4 (Jan 30) Understanding Visual Literacy and Defining “Comics”**

**Readings:**


(f) Nel, P. Same genus, different species?: Comics and picture books. *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 37(4), 445-453.

Week 5 (Feb 6)  Graphic Novels in the School Library: Engaging Learners and Readers K-12

Readings:


GUEST: Pamela Love, Teacher-Librarian at Prep School, Upper Canada College

Week 6 (Feb 13)  Graphic Novels in Public and Academic Libraries

Readings:

(a) Dewan, P. (2010). Why your academic library needs a popular reading collection now more than ever. *College & Undergraduate Libraries* 17(1), 44-64.
FIELD TRIP MEET AT THE MERRILL COLLECTION AT TPL! Lilian H. Smith Branch, 3rd Floor, 239 College Street, Toronto, ON M5T 1R5

Week 7 (Feb. 20)  No Class—Family Day Holiday

Week 8 (Feb. 27)  Graphic Novels and (Young) Adult Readers
Readings:


Week 9 (Mar 6)  Web Comics, the Comics Industry and Subcultures
Readings:


**Week 10 (Mar 13)**  Student Presentations

**Week 11 (Mar 20)**  Student Presentations

**Week 12 (Mar 27)**  Manga Culture

Readings:

[http://www.springerlink.com/content/f11798i55w2872n0/fulltext.pdf](http://www.springerlink.com/content/f11798i55w2872n0/fulltext.pdf)
Blackboard; and Robarts: DS822.5 C36 2009 - check availability]

**FIELD TRIP: Japan Foundation Library at 131 Bloor Street West, Suite 213, Toronto, ON, M5S 1R1 ??**

[Reading List Service provided and links accessed by the Information Services Unit at the Inforum: Winter term, 2013]

6. Assignments

i. **Collections Development Assignment.** Each student will be asked to develop their own comic book/graphic novel collections development guidelines. Before deciding on the criteria, the student must first describe the context in which they will be writing, e.g. for what type of institution will they be building a comic book/graphic novel collection? Once the student has decided on the specific institution they must develop a comic book/graphic novel collections development document tailored specifically for their particular group of users. The document may be formatted according to student preference but it should be
detailed with specific inclusion criteria and weights given to each. After developing the policy document, the student must select 6 items with which to start their new collection. The student must use their guidelines to analyze each of the items they will include in their collection. In addition, the student must also use their collections policy guidelines to reject 6 items. All ten items must be relevant to the collection scenario (e.g. if collecting historical biographies then Pokémon should not be listed in the rejection pile. The rejection pile should comprise other historical biographies). Some questions students may want to consider before drafting their collections development guideline may be:

- Who are the users?
- What are their age groups?
- What purpose would the collection serve?
- What would the surrounding community think of your collection?
- What resources does your institution possess that would allow them to promote the collection?
- Who publishes the most on your topic?

This assignment will be submitted in both hardcopy and electric formats. Please format your file to conform to the following: INF2129_A1_Lastname_Firstname.doc

*N.B. Students who have taken INF2127: Collection, Development, Evaluation and Management may not reuse any piece of work already submitted to that class for evaluation.

ii. Group Presentation. In Weeks 10 and 11 students will give a group PowerPoint presentation on either a specific comic book/graphic novel OR a comic book/graphic novel series. At a minimum, students must address the following questions in their presentation:

- Name of the comic book/graphic novel
- Major themes of the comic book/graphic novel
- A discussion of the author including:
  - Relevant personal background
  - Major artistic influences
  - Major criticisms/accolades
- How is the work received among readers?
  - Major awards
  - Criticism/Accolades
- How is the work received among other graphic novelists/comic book artists?
- Is there any scholarly writing about the work?
  - If yes: please provide an overview of how scholars have treated the work.
  - If no: discuss the work’s potential as a subject of scholarly inquiry.
- What Canadian libraries own the item? Is there any reason why the owning institution would want to have a copy of the work in its collection?
- What issues, if any, would a public library have about including the work in its collection?
Students are to submit the PowerPoint file electronically to the instructor and a printout of the slides (with notes) on the presentation day. Please format your file to conform to the following: *INF2129_A2_Lastname_Firstname.ppt*

*N.B. PowerPoint files will be shared with the class.*

**iii. Student Research Paper.** Students will write a 10-12 page research paper related to a specific aspect of graphic novels or comic books. Students may wish to consult the following lists of questions and topics.

*Example Questions:*

- How is the graphic representation of information changing our attitudes towards literacy?
- To what extent are comic books and graphic novels considered to be texts?
- What is the current state of North American scholarship on graphic novels and comics?
- What are some of the gaps in current research on comic books and graphic novels in the library?
- In what ways can public libraries draw attention to their graphic novel and comic book collections?
- How has the internet increased readers’ access to graphic novels and/or comic books?
- In what ways are graphic novels and comic books similar/different?
- In what ways does the medium promote/hinder character development?
- In what ways do graphic artists and graphic novelists communicate between each other and their fan base?
- How do comic book/graphic novel publishers market their products to consumers?

*Example Topics:*

- Graphic novels and comic books in public libraries
- Graphic novels and comic books in academic libraries
- Censorship issues
- Representations of gender in graphic novels and comic books
- A critical analysis of a specific comic book/graphic novel genre (e.g. evolution of the superhero genre, the popularity of autographics)
- A critical analysis of a specific comic book/graphic novel title/series
- Comic books, graphic novels, and social networking
- Comic book conventions
- Comic book stores and their relationship to libraries
- Comic books and primary school education
- Comic books and secondary school education
- Comic books and post-secondary education
- Comic books and graduate education
• Internet comics
• Comic book collecting
• Comparison between classic literature and its graphic novel iteration
• Comparison between comic books/graphic novels and film adaptations
• Women readers and comic books/graphic novels
• Comic book artists/graphic novelists as auteur
• Cataloguing graphic novels/comic books
• Integrating graphic novels/comic books into general collection
• Separating graphic novels/comic books from general collection
• Legal aspects of collecting manga

This assignment will be submitted in both hardcopy and electric formats. Please format your file to conform to the following: INF2129_A3_Lastname_Firstname.doc

7. Assignments and Grading

The grade will be based on the components as follows: Class participation, collection development, group presentation, and research paper assignment. Students will be responsible for submitting their assignments according to their due dates. Late assignments will be lowered one letter grade for each day past the due date. The following weights will be used:

Class Participation: 10%
Collections Development Assignment: 30% Due: Week 4
Group Presentation: 20% Due: Weeks 10 & 11
Research Paper: 40% Due: Week 12

Submitted work will be returned as soon as possible with written comments and the grade. Each student is encouraged to discuss graded assignments with the instructor in order to identify strengths and weaknesses and to discuss academic progress in the course.

8. Content Guidelines

i. Research
The purpose of these assignments is for the student to explore the world of comic books and graphic novels in further detail. It is expected that students consult primary sources but students are also expected to examine both scholarly and industry secondary literature.

ii. Formatting Guidelines

Students may format their paper using APA, MLA, or Chicago. The paper must contain the following:

a. Title page
b. Table of contents
c. Body
d. List of references

In addition, students should take note of the following:

- Students may wish to include an appendix for supporting materials but it is not required and will not be counted towards the total page requirement.
- All papers must be formatted using 12 pt. Times New Roman font.
- Pages are to have one inch margins all around.
- Paragraphs must be double-spaced.
- With the exception of the title page, all other pages must be numbered.
- Students should use headings in their paper to separate different sections (where applicable).
- Figures & Tables should be numbered sequentially and captioned at the bottom. They are not counted towards the total page requirement.

9. Writing Support

The SGS Office of English Language and Writing Support\(^3\) provides writing support for graduate students. The services are designed to target the needs of both native and non-native speakers of English and include non-credit courses, single-session workshops, individual writing consultations, and website resources. These programs are free. Please avail yourself of these services, if necessary.

10. Academic Integrity

The content of these assignments is of necessity derivative; however, students must identify their sources. Commonly known facts or concepts do not have to be cited but the student must cite all sources used in background research and must reference (in-line) and fully cite the source of any text, data or diagram that has been copied verbatim or without modifications from any source.

The instructor, the iSchool and U of T have a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism as defined in Section B.I. 1. (d) of the University’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters\(^4\). Students are encouraged to consult the Code, including Appendix “A”, Section 2. Every suspected case of plagiarism will be pursued vigorously. Please review the material you covered in Cite it Right and, if necessary, consult the site How Not to Plagiarize\(^5\).

11. Possible Course Changes and Student Feedback

If it is necessary to make changes in the course or the assignments during the term, these will be announced as soon as possible. Evaluation and feedback about all aspects of the course are welcome. This feedback may be done individually, through the student class representatives, or by means of the course evaluation forms at the end of the term.

\(^3\) http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/informationfor/students/english
\(^4\) http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm
\(^5\) http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize