Tuesday and Thursday, 2-4pm (Communications 121)

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Office hours: Tuesday 12-2pm (Communications 105)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
In August 2009, the Walt Disney Co. inked a $4 billion deal to buy Marvel Entertainment Inc., with the expectation that comic book icons like Spiderman and Iron Man will lead boys back to the Disney brand and result in superheroic profit margins. As this deal indicates, over the past decade comic books have not only become central to the horizontal integration and conglomeration of the media industry, but they have become an integral part of our entertainment experience, with comic book films reigning at the box office and comic book adaptations expanding the narrative world of popular film, TV and literary franchises. Beginning with a discussion of comics’ history, medium specificity and methods of formal analysis, this course will primarily address the industrial and cultural significance of comic books as they have evolved from niche literary subculture to a driving force in popular culture. Topics for the course include: the rise of the comic book Hollywood Blockbuster, the shifting promotional space of Comic-Con, the role of comic books in transmedia storytelling systems for television and film franchises, the aesthetic and cultural distinctions between comic books and manga, and the recuperation of graphic novels into “high art.”

REQUIRED READINGS:
Readings are listed below on the course schedule; assigned articles are to be read before the class date under which they are listed. All readings are required and can be purchased at The Bay Tree Bookstore, can be accessed online [O], or through the library’s online journal archive [L]. Additional links to online articles or recommended reading may be sent via email. For journal articles marked [L], go to http://library.ucsc.edu/find/online-journals and find the PDF of that article using the publication information provided in the syllabus. If you have any trouble accessing these readings, please inform me immediately.

You also have comic books as required readings. I understand that this is a financial weight that many of you will be unable/unwilling to take on, so I didn’t order them through the bookstore. I would encourage you to: 1. Find them online, 2. Buy them used through Amazon (most can be purchased for around $5), or 3. Support your local comic book stores, Comicopolis (829 Front St.) or Atlantis Fantasyworld (1020 Cedar St.). I will also be putting my personal copies on reserve at McHenry Library. Please treat these copies kindly, and do not mark them up or bend the pages.
List of required texts (in addition to the course reader):

List of required comics:


**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**
Tuesday class will be comprised of a short lecture to contextualize the week’s theme and a lengthy discussion of the reading, occasionally accompanied by select clips. Some weeks we will be placing the readings in conversation with film and television texts, some will be devoted entirely to discussing the readings. Consequently, it is vital that you complete all of your readings for the week by class on Tuesday, on the weeks we have screenings. If there is no screening, the readings will be split up between Tuesday and Thursday (see your syllabus). **Attendance is required at both sessions every week**, even if you’re familiar with the screenings.

Your attendance and active participation is central to the class’ success and to your success in the class, as is your thoughtful engagement with the course readings. Documented medical or family emergencies will be excused, and you have one “free pass” for when you need a personal day. All other absences will negatively impact your attendance and participation grade. As part of your participation and attendance grade, you are required to email me one discussion question based on one or more of the readings before **9pm on Monday each week**. This question should be designed to provoke conversation, and convey that you have read the assigned articles thoroughly. You are welcome to ask clarifying questions about the essays in class, but your discussion question should push beyond comprehension to critically engage with the readings. You’re encouraged to email me with any additional material you come across that you think might be relevant to the class (blog posts, videos, articles, etc.). You can also send me link via Twitter (@iheartfatapollo).

In addition to a **midterm exam** composed of short identifications and essay questions, you will be responsible for conceptualizing and writing a **term paper** on a research topic of your choice, and giving a **short presentation** on your research findings and argument in the final weeks of class. You will submit your proposed final paper topic in week 7 in the form of a short paragraph describing your project and how it relates to the themes of the class. More details on this assignment will be distributed in the coming weeks.

**All assignments must be handed in on time**, and turning in assignments late will be detrimental to your grade. All assignments must be completed to pass the course. Exceptions will be made and extensions will be given only for medical or family emergencies (provided you can offer documentation).
Grading breakdown:  
Attendance/Participation = 25%  
Midterm = 25%  
Presentation = 20%  
Final Paper = 30%

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:  
If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please get an Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and submit it to me in person outside of class (e.g., office hours) within the first two weeks of the quarter. Contact DRC at 459-2089 (voice), 459-4806 (TTY), or http://drc.ucsc.edu for more information on the requirements and/or process.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:  
PLAGIARISM IN ANY FORM WILL BE REPORTED TO THE APPROPRIATE PROVOST’S OFFICE, WILL RESULT IN FAILURE OF THE COURSE, AND COULD LEAD TO DISMISSAL FROM THE UNIVERSITY. If you have any questions or doubts about how to properly cite a source, don’t hesitate to contact me.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 • Introduction to the Course and Comics in Context  
Tuesday 3/29 and Thursday 3/31  
Read:  
Screen:  Comic Book Confidential (dir. Ron Mann, 1988, 90 min.)

Week 2 • Comic Book Form  
Tuesday 4/5 and Thursday 4/7  
Read:  
- Scott McCloud, Understanding Comics  
- Pascal Lefèvre, “The Construction of Space in Comics” [CR]  
- Thierry Groensteen, “The Impossible Definition” [CR]  

Week 3 • Superheroes  
Tuesday 4/12 and Thursday 4/14  
Read:  
- Douglas Wolk, “Superheroes and Superreaders” [CR]  
- Umberto Eco, “The Myth of Superman” [CR]  
- Mike Madrid, “Wonder Woman’s Extreme Makeovers” [CR]  
- Peter Coogan, “The Definition of the Superhero” [CR]  
- Superman: Red Son  
**Week 4** • Comic Book Auteurs: Alan Moore as Case Study
Tuesday 4/19 and Thursday 4/21

**Read:**
- *Watchmen*
  - Douglas Wolk, “Alan Moore: The House of Magus” [CR]
  - Paul Petrovic, “The Culturally Constituted Gaze: Fetishizing the Feminine from Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons's Watchmen to Zack Snyder's Watchmen” [O]
    http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v5_4/petrovic/
  - Brandy Ball Blake, "Watchmen: The Graphic Novel as Trauma Fiction." [O]
    http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v5_1/blake/

**Screen:**
- *Selections from Watchmen* (dir. Zach Snyder, 2009, 162 min.)
- *Tales of the Black Freighter* (dir. Dan DelPurgatorio & Mike Smith, 2009, 26 min.)

**Week 5** • Underground Comix and Indie Cinema
Tuesday 4/26 and Thursday 4/28

**Read:**

**Screen:**

**Week 6** • Manga
Tuesday 5/3 and Thursday 5/5 (MIDTERM- bring blue books)

**Read:**
- Fusami Ogi, “Beyond *Shoujo*, Blending Gender” [CR]

**Week 7** • Webcomics, Motion Comics, and Transmedia Storytelling
Tuesday 5/10 and Thursday 5/12

**Read:**
- Henry Jenkins, “Transmedia Storytelling 101” [O]
  - Sean Fenty, Trena Houp and Laurie Taylor. "Webcomics: The Influence and Continuation of the Comix Revolution." [O]
    http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v1_2/group/index.shtml
  - *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: The Long Way Home*
  - Also read: *Axe Cop* Episode #0-5 (http://axecop.com/index.php/aceepisodes) OR the 6 most recent installments of *Penny Arcade* (http://www.penny-arcade.com/comic/)

**Screen:**
- *Buffy Season 8 motion comics*

**Due:**
- Term paper topics (via email by 5/15)

**Sign up:**
- Presentation date/time
Week 8 • Comic-Cons and Comic Book Fandom
Tuesday 5/17 and Thursday 5/19
Read:  - Paul Lopes, “From the Late Industrial to the Heroic Age: Comic Book Fandom and the Mainstream Pulp Rebellion” [CR]
 - Matthew J. Pustz, “From Comicons to Web Pages: The Origins of Comic Book Culture” [CR]
 - Scott Pilgrim’s Precious Little Life (Volume 1)
Screen: Scott Pilgrim vs. the World (dir. Edgar Wright, 2010, 112 min.)

Week 9 • Comics and (Quality) Television
Tuesday 5/24 and Thursday 5/26 [Term Paper Presentations, Round One]
Read:  - The Walking Dead
 - Christopher Lockett, “Zombie Gentrification” [O]
http://flowtv.org/2011/01/zombie-gentrification/
Screen: The Walking Dead (“Days Gone By,” dir. Frank Darabont, 2010, 60 min.)

Week 10 • Term Paper Presentations Continued
Tuesday 5/31 [NO CLASS] and Thursday 6/2 [Term Paper Presentations, Round Two]

Week 11 • Term Papers Due
Tuesday, 6/7