

Cleveland Institute of Art Continuing Education and Community Outreach
CE263.00

The Art of Comics

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February 11th – April 1st | Thursdays, 6pm – 9pm | Room G107

“The ‘words & pictures’ that make up the comics language are often described as prose and illustration combined... poetry and graphic design seems more apt.” – Seth

Course Description

The Art of Comics will focus on the growing medium of comics by examining how they work and what they are capable of. By taking a look at a diverse collection of comics (including newspaper strips, webcomics, manga, bande dessinée, graphic novels, abstract work, etc.), as well as other texts on the subject, we'll explore just what makes a comic a comic.

A unique blending of the visual and the poetic, the comics art form is one full of expressive potential. Students will cover the writing, page layout, panel composition, cartooning, and production involved in making a comics narrative and see how they all work together

Course Goals

Students will have a richer understanding of the comics medium, marked by a comprehension of the particular qualities of the medium.

Students will conceive of, write, develop and produce a comics work that in some way explores the specific qualities of comics.

Students will have a more informed knowledge of the history of the comics medium.

Materials

No materials are required besides the basics (paper/Bristol board, pencil/pen), but here are a number of highly recommended technical tools that you are encouraged to try.

Drawing

Sketchbook, pencils, erasers
Bristol board – at least 11”x14”
Ruler, shape templates

Inking

Ink (Speedball, Higgins, etc.)
Pen nibs, brushes, micron pens
white out

Production

Glue, tape, x-acto knife, cutting board, scissors
Watercolors, gouache, prisma markers
Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, Dreamweaver
Photocopier, scanner and printer

Course Calendar

Class One: February 11th : What are Comics? – Poetry and Graphic Design

Introduce students to the medium of comics. What are the defining characteristics? What can comics do that no other medium can? We’ll start to learn how to really “read” comics.

In-Class Assignment – Make a short comic introducing yourself and why you took the class in your favorite style of cartooning.

Class Project Status – Introduce the main assignment. We’ll start kicking around ideas for your class project.

At Home – You’ll start writing the script.

Class Two: February 18th : Style – Visible Voices

The first thing you notice about a comic is the way it is drawn. Style is just one of the many important tools used in comics. How can it be used to convey your specific meaning?

In-Class Assignment – Draw three self-portraits emphasizing an aspect of your personality, each in a different style.

Class Project Status – Bringing in your script, we'll go over them and start fine-tuning. We'll also start to figure out what your comic is going to look like.

At Home – Focus on sketching out the look of your book. Read "How to Read Nancy" by Paul Karasik and Mark Newgarden.

Class Three: February 25th : Page Design – The Macrocosm

Comics rely on the combination of elements to convey some meaning, whether you intend it to or not. The way you combine those elements is of utmost importance, and we'll look at how design and layout can support or get in the way of clear storytelling.

In-Class Assignment – Redraw one of the sample comics as simple black-and-white shapes.

Class Project Status – Now that you've got a clearer picture of how your book is going to look, start thumb-nailing out your script, paying attention to page flow.

At Home – Finish thumb-nailing the script, making adjustments where necessary.

Class Four: March 4th : Panel Composition – The Microcosm

Comics may be greater than the sum of its parts, but each little detail is still crucial to the overall work. Taking a look at each individual component of the page, we'll see how things work individually and how that relates to them working together.

In-Class Assignment – Choose one of the sample comics and condense it into a single panel.

Class Project Status – We'll go over your thumbnails and start to make more detailed sketches of your pages, paying attention to how the individual panels affect the design and the flow of the story.

At Home – Finish planning out your class project.

Class Five: March 11th : Time – What is the Fourth Dimension?

A standard truism of comics states that space equals time. Given that nearly all comics have a narrative function, time is a critical tool at your disposal. We'll examine the many ways that cartoonists manipulate time in subtle ways

In-Class Assignment – Draw two comic strips that each have its own pace, with an equal number of panels.

Class Project Status – As a group, we'll review your project prep work and discuss some final pre-production notes. Start getting organized for production – figure out a work schedule, what you will need, etc.

At Home – Start work on your comics.

Class Six: March 18th: Color, Experimentation and Thinking Beyond

There is so much more to the world of comics than black and white line drawings. Color is an important and expressive tool that unlocks a whole other layer of meaning for your comic. We will also look at experimenting with other materials beyond pen and ink, including mixed media, collage, photography and more.

In-Class Assignment – Take one of the comics you made in a previous class and remake it with a different material, using color to set the mood.

Class Project Status – You’ve got everything planned, so now you’ll be given class time to work on your projects.

At Home – Full steam ahead on your class projects

Class Seven: March 25th: Publishing – Comics as Objects

There is more to making a comic than getting all the pages finished – you’ve got to present it to the reader somehow. We’ll have a brief overview of different ways comics are published, packaged and distributed, taking note of how the finished product affects the meanings associated with the comic.

In-Class Assignment – Most of the class time will be spent working on your class project. We’ll talk a little bit about how things are going individually and as a group, but mostly this time is for you to work.

At Home – Finish up your comics.

Class Eight: April 1st: Reading and Editing

We’ll get together as a group to read and talk about all the hard work you’ve put into your class projects. Particular attention will be paid to how people read comics (or anything for that matter) and we’ll also talk about the editing process.

In-Class Assignment – Group discussion about class projects, the future of your comics and feelings about the class.

Now What? – Being the last time we meet, there’s no homework, but you are encouraged to go back and tweak your comics, based on our group discussion. From there, there are any number of different things you can do with the finished work, as well as the next one, and the next one, etc (if you so choose).

Class Site

A recommended reading list, extra-credit reading and additional reference materials will be available on the class blog:

<http://kevinczap.com/artofcomics>

This site will be updated periodically throughout the run of the course so be sure to check back often and add comments!



-James Kochalka, "The Horrible Truth About Comics"