

Fall 2020  
**ENGLISH 4717/5717**  
Thematic Title: *Watchmen*  
MWF 12:00PM - 12:50PM  
*entirely online*

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This course surveys the history, reception, and artistic form of comics and graphic narrative in the United States, with primary exploration of a single comic miniseries that has had a massive influence on the comics industry and on the way we think about superheroes: Alan Moore and David Gibbons's *Watchmen* (1986-1987). This semester ENGLISH 4717 will function almost like a single-novel "Text in Context" course; after grounding ourselves in the pre-1980s history of American superhero comics over the first few weeks of the course, we will focusing almost exclusively on *Watchmen* and its long afterlife in prequel comics, sequel comics, parody comics, homages, critiques, film adaptations, and, most recently, the critically acclaimed HBO sequel series (2019-2020). What has made *Watchmen* so beloved, so controversial, and so very influential on the larger superhero-industrial-entertainment complex? Why has DC Comics returned to *Watchmen* again and again, even as one of its original creators has distanced himself further and further from the work? What have different creators done, or tried to do, with the complex but self-contained narrative framework originally constructed by Moore and Gibbons? With superheroes and superhero media more globally hegemonic than ever before, what might *Watchmen* still have to say to us today?

**DISCOVERY TIER: Memory, Cognition, and Intelligence**

Comics are an art form operating via the juxtaposition of temporally differentiated images with text, requiring readers to hone the capacity of the mind that Scott McCloud calls *closure* in order to make sense of the relationship between the many various types of information presented on the page. This skill, while superficially similar to typical reading of traditional prose, requires activation of very different modes of attention and interpretation, and typically much more active reading practices—which is why Marshall McLuhan thought comics were a "cool" medium that forced us to fill in the blanks and the gaps in the text, as opposed to the overwhelming sensorium of music, television, or film. Comics interpretation theory is thus tightly linked to questions in the cognitive science and the cognitive humanities, with the question of the different ways visual art forms and language produces meaning in the mind becoming unavoidable; students in the class necessarily become self-reflexive about their own reading practices both in and outside the comics form. In this version of the class, this practice will be augmented by our focus on the repeated remixing of a particular text, *Watchmen*, through multiple transmedia forms across multiple decades of American cultural production.

## LEARNING GOALS

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and understand various formal characteristics of comic art;
- Apply techniques of literary analysis to comics and graphic novels;
- Demonstrate understanding of the cultural and historical contexts in which various comics and graphic novels have been written;
- Explores the ways that comics require a different mode of cognition and a different sort of dedicated, active attention than either literature or film;
- Use literary study to develop skills for careful reading and clear writing;
- Read and discuss comics on the levels of both form and content.

**REQUIRED TEXTS** (available at the Book Marq on 16<sup>th</sup> Street or via ComiXology online)

Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, *Watchmen*

Kieron Gillen and Caspar Wijngaard, *Peter Cannon: Thunderbolt*

Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely, *All-Star Superman*

Natacha Bustos, Amy Reeder, and Brandon Montclare, *Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur: The Beginning*

Darwyn Cooke and Amanda Conner, *Before Watchmen: Minutemen and Silk Spectre*

J. Michael Straczynski and Adam Hughes, *Before Watchmen: Dr. Manhattan*

Geoff Johns and Gary Frank, *Doomsday Clock*

Tom King and Jorge Fornés, *Rorschach #1*

Any edition of these texts is suitable, including a digital version. Selected additional texts will be made available through D2L, as well as during class.

We will also discuss the Zack-Snyder-directed film adaptation of *Watchmen* from 2009, as well as the HBO sequel series *Watchmen* from 2019-2020. Students will be responsible for viewing these materials; the cheapest legal way will likely be a trial membership of HBO Max, which offers a seven-day free trial. Please let me know if this is proving to be a challenge to you. I am also exploring options for a socially distanced screening of these materials on campus during the semester, but the complexities and disruptions of the pandemic may unfortunately make this impossible.

## FORMAT

Like many classes at Marquette this semester, the originally planned format for this course has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The course has been reconceived and rebuilt to make sense in an entirely online format, facilitated by asynchronous work on Marquette's D2L learning platform and by synchronous meetings on the free video-conferencing platform Zoom.

**On Mondays and Wednesdays, we will meet together on Zoom.** If possible, we will have full-class meetings on these days; if that proves unwieldy, we will switch to a "flex" model in which half the class signs into the Zoom conference and the other half watches the recorded discussion afterwards. Attendance will not be required on these days; if you are unable to make the synchronous meeting, you can watch the recorded session and make a D2L response afterwards to receive full credit for attendance.

**By Friday, I will ask you to post a freeform response in the designated “sandbox” forum for that week.** This does not have to be a formal written post, but can also take the form of a podcast, short video, a work of art or music, a short story or fan fiction, a comic, or more; any response of any sort is fine, provided it is thoughtful and substantial. By the end of the weekend, I will ask you to respond to at least two other sandbox posts. The idea is to respond collectively to the material we are studying together in a way that is not stifling, anxious, or overstructured by academic expectations that cannot really apply to this odd and altered educational context; my hope is to strip away grading strictures that can only be dysfunctional in the current moment and foster instead more multifaceted, more generous, and hopefully richer intellectual encounters, driven by your interests.

These sandbox posts will replace much of the written assignments in the course. The remaining assignments will be mini-papers that test some of our powers of analysis in a low-stakes experiential way, without rising to the level of a traditional academic paper, as well as a final paper or project that responds to *Watchmen* as a cultural object in a way that is important to you.

### **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND PERSONAL EMERGENCIES**

Everyone at Marquette recognizes that this is an extremely difficult time which may be filled with different sorts of uncertainty as we move forward with the academic year. Your safety, health, and well-being are our primary concern and we want to be able to support you in any way that we can.

The university also understands that you may be facing personal obstacles that may make it difficult to meet your typical academic goals. Please refer to the Student Resources page on the Marquette COVID-19 Response webpage for information and resources on basic needs such as housing, food, financial aid, and medical and mental health; the webpage also offers information on official University communications, access to technology, and student services. Faculty and staff are also here for you.

If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your situation outside of class, please don't hesitate to talk with me. I want to be a resource for you. You are not alone.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Class Participation (Mon/Wed Zoom Lectures and make-up D2L Posts)	20%
Sandbox Posts (weekly Friday post and two weekly responses)	20%
Close Reading mini-paper	20%
Thinkpiece mini-paper	20%
Final Paper/Project	20%

Additional details on these assignments can be found as an appendix at the end of this document, as well as under CONTENT on D2L.

Graduate students will be responsible for a separate set of assignments, which will be distributed separately to them.

## GRADING

Grades will follow the following rubric:

- \* To earn a **C**, you must clearly restate the meaning or project of a text in your own terms. A C essay may volunteer an original argument, but will likely lack evidence or analysis of its sources. C essays are clearly written, though they might display some grammatical weakness.
- \* To earn a **B**, you must begin to raise important questions about the text under consideration and to use those questions to drive your own interpretive agenda. A B essay typically advances an original argument and provides solid analysis of the text(s) under consideration. B essays are clear, concise, and free of grammatical errors.
- \* To earn an **A**, you must construct an essay that does more than simply comment on the work of others; you must forward, counter, or transform what they have to say. An A essay advances an original argument that builds toward a climax and makes a persuasive case for its own significance. A essays are clearly written, and often eloquent.
- \* A **D** means that you have not written in clear prose or that you seem to have deeply misunderstood the text. An **F** means that you did not fully or seriously engage the assignment.
- \* **A-**, **B+**, **B-**, **C+**, and **C-** grades fall squarely in the gaps between the above categories.

Grades are not awarded on an artificial curve or in competition with each other. There is no reason that every student cannot receive an A in this course.

## UNGRADED ASSIGNMENTS

Your makeup posts and sandbox posts will be graded on an extra-credit / pass / low-pass / fail basis:

- Fulfilling all the requirements of the assignment will earn you full credit;
- Failing to do so will earn you half-credit (at best) or no credit (at worst);
- Going beyond the terms of the assignment in an especially ambitious or creative way can earn you extra credit.

## QUIZZES

I do not like to give reading quizzes; I think they infantilize the college-level scholar. However, this is by necessity a very reading-intensive class; if it seems to me that people are not keeping up with the reading, pop quizzes may become necessary despite my philosophical objections. You have been warned.

## FORMAT OF WRITTEN WORK

Your final paper should be typed in twelve-point font, double-spaced with one-inch margins, saved in a format Microsoft Word can open. Your filename should contain *your name* in it, for

example, yourlastname-closerreading.docx. Get into the habit of giving your files descriptive names of this sort.

I expect you to *edit* and *proofread* all written work, even blog posts and blog comments. Drafts that contain excessive typos or grammar mistakes may be returned to the author for correction before I offer comments.

Please give each piece of writing an original title, and include your name, assignment, and due date in a header on the first page. Insert page numbers if your work spans more than one page.

**All sources relied upon for the writing of your paper, including the primary text, must be appropriately cited.**

### **PAPER SUBMISSION**

The papers should be submitted via D2L's Dropbox by class time on the due date. **Late papers will be penalized a full grade for each day that it is late; due to university policy late final papers will not be accepted at all.** However, see below about extensions.

Work can be submitted early with no penalty. Please feel free to organize the timing of assignments in this class in a way that works for you.

### **EXTENSIONS**

Although the papers in this course have a sufficiently long timetable to allow you to plan and complete all assignments in a timely manner, I nonetheless recognize that each of you has a unique schedule and that some of the due dates I have selected could occasionally prove problematic for individual students in the course, especially in the context of the pandemic. **If you find that you will need an extension on a particular assignment due to this kind of conflict, please contact me to arrange an alternative due date.** There is no need to concoct an elaborate story to justify this, or to lie to me; simply tell me the truth about what's going on and we can work out an alternative that works for you.

### **TECHNOLOGY IS TERRIBLE: PLAN AHEAD!**

The Internet goes down. Files become corrupted. Computers crash. These are predictable facts of twenty-first century life, not emergencies. For this course, for all your courses, for the rest of your career and your life in this world you need to develop work habits and strategies that take into account the basic, inescapable unreliability of computers. Start your assignments well in advance of the due date; save them often; save backup copies of essential documents, including copies off-site using a service like Carbonite, Dropbox, or Google Drive.

### **ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION**

Class discussion is an essential component of this seminar; class discussion, not lecture, will be the primary means by which we will investigate these texts together. It is therefore crucial that you come to class every day having read the required material and prepared to discuss it, as well as having viewed any prefatory textual or audiovisual material I have posted on D2L.

As noted above, due to the circumstances of this semester I will not begin the semester requiring attendance in our Zoom meetings, provided you watch the recorded session and post on D2L afterwards. However, this policy will be subject to review; the Zoom sessions require a critical mass of students to be functional and if they become too empty I *will* need to start requiring attendance. This is a collective action problem and I trust that we will be able to figure it out together.

The course adheres to Marquette University's attendance policy, which can be found on the Internet at <http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/#attendance>.

You are allowed **three absences** (defined as neither attending the Zoom nor writing a D2L post before the next class period) over the course of the fall semester. **After that, your class participation will drop by a letter grade for each additional unexcused absence.** Upon the seventh unexcused absence, you will receive a WA (Withdrawn—Excessive Absences) for the semester.

As with a face-to-face class, each student is expected to *participate in* and *contribute to* our discussions. Just being in the room is not enough. If there is a reason you feel you cannot participate in a given session, please let me know before class begins so I do not call on you that day.

## **D2L FORUMS**

This course will make extensive use of the D2L forums at <http://d2l.mu.edu>. In addition to being a place where you can find electronic copies of the syllabus and other course handouts, D2L also features an online forum where you can express your response to the material before class begins and where we can continue our discussions after class is over.

The D2L discussion forums are an excellent place for people who may feel inhibited by in-class discussion to share their opinions with the class. I will be reading the discussion forum regularly and I recommend you do the same. You may choose either to begin a discussion thread on a new topic or to respond to a post composed by one of your classmates—and you are of course always free to make a post for a Monday or Wednesday class even if you did attend the Zoom session. I will take note of any such posts for extra credit at the end of the course.

**Before class on Friday** every student is required to take the following actions:

- \* **upload a picture either of their face or a representative symbolic image to their D2L profile;**
- \* **take the entrance survey on D2L;**
- \* **craft a “sandbox” response to Jim Henley’s “Gaudy Nights.”**

Students will post a sandbox post and two sandbox responses every week, missing up to two weeks without penalty.

**EMAIL**

Students in this class are required to check their official Marquette email account—whatever account D2L sends its emails to—at least once the afternoon before a scheduled class meeting, in case there are any last-minute announcements or disruptions.

I endeavor to respond to all emails within 24 hours, usually much less—but please do not send me urgent emails regarding your assignments on the night they are due and expect an immediate reply.

**CONFERENCES**

**All students are asked to meet with me in at least two short one-on-one conferences either via Zoom or at an appropriately socially distanced outdoor location**, once before Fall Break and once after. Weekly signups will be available on D2L.

Please know I am very happy to meet with you individually to discuss either graded work or work-in-progress in excess of this requirement as many times as you like. Simply come to my weekly Zoom office hours, or email me to set up an appointment.

**FLEXIBILITY**

If it will benefit the class, changes may be made to the above.

**WRITING CENTER**

Students are strongly encouraged to make use of the Writing Center, located in Raynor Library Room 240, at any stage of the writing process.

Please visit the Writing Center website at <http://www.marquette.edu/english/writingcenter/> to find out how to schedule an appointment and to access the studio's online resources.

**ACCOMODATIONS**

Students with disabilities who believe they may require accommodations in this course should contact me early in the semester so your learning needs can be appropriately met.

I am of course more than happy to work with you to make sure you are successful in this course and to make this course most accessible for you. However, without documentation, I am limited in what I am able to do. Therefore, in order for me to help you most effectively, I need you to be proactive in contacting Marquette University's Office of Disability Services (located on the fifth floor of the 707 Building). ODS can be reached by phone at (414) 288-1645 or by email at [ods@marquette.edu](mailto:ods@marquette.edu).

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Students are expected to abide by the academic honesty policy outlined in your undergraduate bulletin. I urge you all to examine this material and consult me with any questions you may have about plagiarism or academic integrity *before* it becomes an issue.

Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not an acceptable excuse for plagiarism. **Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the course.** No exceptions or special dispensations will be made.

Marquette students now sign an Honor Pledge, which states:

- *I recognize the importance of personal integrity in all aspects of life and work.*
- *I commit myself to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, by which I earn the respect of others.*
- *I support the development of good character, and commit myself to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity as an important aspect of personal integrity.*
- *My commitment obliges me to conduct myself according to the Marquette University Honor Code.*

Full details of Marquette's academic integrity policy are available on the Internet at <http://www.marquette.edu/provost/academic-integrity.php>.

On a personal level, I (like everyone) hate being lied to. Please, do not feel you need to concoct elaborate stories. Simply be honest with me about whatever is going on and we will work it out.

### **ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

We all enter this classroom with preexisting political, ethical, philosophical, and intellectual commitments. You are all required to engage the material—but you are absolutely *not* required to agree either with any of the writers we will discuss, or with me, in whole or in part.

### **RESPECT**

This classroom is a community. It is crucial that we treat each other with the appropriate level of courtesy and respect. No one should be made to feel unwelcome here. Failure to treat other students with the respect they deserve will **severely** impact your class participation grade.

### **KEEP THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN!**

I want this class to be a meaningful and valuable experience for you, both in its own terms and in service of the development of your larger college experience. If you have any ideas, suggestions, or concerns about the way things are going, my door is always open. I put this statement on every syllabus, but I think it is especially important in a semester that is likely to be as chaotic and disorienting as this one. Please, keep me in the loop about what is going on with you in the world outside our Zoom sessions, and help me to make this class as successful as it can be.

### **JUST A FEW WORDS ABOUT COPYRIGHT**

This course will be making use of digital excerpts of selected comic works. In nearly all cases, these works are protected under copyright, and consequently our use of them for educational purposes is governed by the principle of fair use. (For more information on this, please see [http://www.marquette.edu/library/copyright/fair\\_use.shtml](http://www.marquette.edu/library/copyright/fair_use.shtml).) You should not distribute any copyright-protected material to anyone outside this class.

### A NOTE ON SUSPENSE

*Watchmen*—both the original comic and its television counterpart—is, among other things, a mystery.

My vision therefore is that we will endeavor to stick to the material assigned to each given day, without jumping ahead in the story. Please work with me as best you can to respect this rule.

### WEEKLY SCHEDULE

*Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class as they become necessary.*

DATE AND MODE		ASSIGNMENTS
W	Aug 26	S FIRST DAY OF CLASS Introduction to the Course A Brief Prehistory of Comics
F	Aug 28	A Sandbox: Jim Henley, “Gaudy Nights”
M	Aug 31	S <u>The Golden Age of Comics</u> <i>Action Comics</i> #1 Selections from <i>Wonder Woman</i>
W	Sep 2	S <u>The Silver Age</u> <i>Superboy</i> #1 [D2L] Umberto Eco, “The Myth of Superman” [D2L] excerpts from David Hadju’s <i>The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic-Book Scare and How It Changed America</i> and Qiana Q. Whitted, <i>EC Comics: Race, Shock, and Social Protest</i> [D2L]
F	Sep 4	A Sandbox: <u>The Marvel Explosion</u> <i>Fantastic Four</i> #1, <i>Tales of Suspense</i> #39, <i>X-Men</i> #1, and <i>Hulk</i> #1
M	Sep 7	<i>LABOR DAY—NO CLASS</i>
W	Sep 9	S <u>The Bronze Age</u> Saul Braun, “Shazam! Here Comes Captain Relevant” [D2L] <i>Green Lantern/Green Arrow</i> #76, <i>Amazing Spider-Man</i> #121 and <i>Iron Man</i> #128 [D2L] Spencer Ackerman, “Iron Man vs. the Imperialists” [D2L] Gail Simone, “Women in Refrigerators” [web]
F	Sep 11	A Sandbox: Marc Singer, “‘Black Skins’ and White Masks: Comic Books and the Secret of Race” [D2L]
M	Sep 14	S <u>The Dark Age</u> Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, <i>Watchmen</i> (1986-1987), #1-3
W	Sep 16	S Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, <i>Watchmen</i> (1986-1987), #4-6
F	Sep 18	A Sandbox
M	Sep 21	S Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, <i>Watchmen</i> (1986-1987), #7-9 Anna C. Marshall, “Not So Revisionary: The Regressive Treatment of

			Gender in Alan Moore 's <i>Watchmen</i> "
W	Sep 23	S	Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, <i>Watchmen</i> (1986-1987), #10-12 Matthew Wolf-Meyer, "Utopias in the Superhero Comic, Subculture, and the Conservation of Difference"
F	Sep 25	A	Sandbox: <i>Watchmen</i> sequel pitch session
M	Sep 28	S	<i>Watchmen</i> (dir. Zack Snyder, 2009) Graham J. Murphy, "'On a More Meaningful Scale': Marketing Utopia in <i>Watchmen</i> " [D2L] Jacob Brogan, "Stop/Watch: Repressing History, Adapting <i>Watchmen</i> " [D2L]
W	Sep 30	S	Andrew Hoberek, <i>Considering Watchmen: Poetics, Property, Politics</i> (excerpts) [D2L] Kieron Gillen and Caspar Wijngaard, <i>Peter Cannon: Thunderbolt</i> Alan Moore interviews (excerpts) [D2L]
F	Oct 2	A	Sandbox: <i>Watchmen</i> criticism survey
M	Oct 5	S	<u>The Nostalgia Age?</u> Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely, <i>All-Star Superman</i> (first half)
W	Oct 7	S	Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely, <i>All-Star Superman</i> (second half)
F	Oct 9	A	Sandbox: <i>Watchmen</i> vs. the MCU
M	Oct 12	S	Natacha Bustos, Amy Reeder, and Brandon Montclare, <i>Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur: The Beginning</i> (first half)
W	Oct 14	S	Natacha Bustos, Amy Reeder, and Brandon Montclare, <i>Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur: The Beginning</i> (second half)
F	Oct 16		<b>FALL BREAK—NO CLASS</b> <b>CLOSE READING DUE SUNDAY NIGHT</b>
M	Oct 19	S	Darwyn Cooke and Amanda Conner, <i>Before Watchmen: Minutemen and Silk Spectre</i> (2012-2013)
W	Oct 21	S	J. Michael Straczynski and Adam Hughes, <i>Before Watchmen: Dr. Manhattan</i> (2012-2013)
F	Oct 23	A	Sandbox
M	Oct 26	S	Geoff Johns and Gary Frank, <i>Doomsday Clock</i> (2017-2019), Book One
W	Oct 28	S	Geoff Johns and Gary Frank, <i>Doomsday Clock</i> (2017-2019), Book Two
F	Oct 30	A	Sandbox
M	Nov 2	S	<i>Watchmen</i> (HBO 2019-2020), episode 1
W	Nov 4	S	<i>Watchmen</i> (HBO 2019-2020), episodes 2-3 Official Watchmen Podcast episode 1 interview with Damon Lindelof
F	Nov 6	A	Sandbox <b>FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE SUNDAY NIGHT</b>

M	Nov 9	S	<i>Watchmen</i> (HBO 2019-2020), episodes 4-5 interview with Lila Byock
W	Nov 11	S	<i>Watchmen</i> (HBO 2019-2020), episode 6 Official <i>Watchmen</i> Podcast episode 2 interview with Cord Jefferson thinkpieces by Emily Nussbaum, Jamelle Bouie, Jorge Cotte, Jaime Omar Yassin, and others
F	Nov 13	A	Sandbox
M	Nov 16	S	<i>Watchmen</i> (HBO 2019-2020), episodes 7-8
W	Nov 18	S	<i>Watchmen</i> (HBO 2019-2020), episode 9 Official <i>Watchmen</i> Podcast episode 3 Aaron Bady, “Dr. Manhattan Is a Cop: <i>Watchmen</i> and Frantz Fanon” Leslie Lee, “Whitewashing <i>Watchmen</i> ” Alyssa Rosenberg, “If HBO makes a second season of ‘ <i>Watchmen</i> ...’”
F	Nov 20	A	Sandbox: <i>Watchmen</i> season two pitch session
M	Nov 23	S	Tom King and Jorge Fornés, <i>Rorschach</i> #1 (2020) <b>THINKPIECE DUE</b> LAST DAY OF CLASS
Th	Dec 3 12:30 PM		FINAL PAPER/PROJECT DUE IN D2L DROPBOX FINAL REFLECTION DUE IN THE D2L FORUMS

### **FOLLOW FAME: FRIENDS AND ALUMNI/AE OF MARQUETTE ENGLISH**

*On Facebook (page):* [www.facebook.com/marquettefame](http://www.facebook.com/marquettefame)

*On Facebook (group):* [www.facebook.com/groups/496438583889194](http://www.facebook.com/groups/496438583889194)

(search for “Undergraduate English at Marquette”)

*On Twitter:* @MarquetteFAME

While our ability to see each other in person is necessarily constrained this semester, there will be opportunities for department events and virtual meetups that will be advertised through these outlets. I hope you can attend!

## FURTHER READING

There is simply not enough time in the term to read everything we might want to read about comics, much less all the comics themselves. Students interested in exploring these topics further might consider some of the following critical texts in addition to those read or discussed in class:

- Will Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985)  
 Richard Reynolds, *Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology* (1992)  
 Roger Sabin, *Comics, Comix, and Graphic Novels* (1996)  
 Ian Gordon, *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture, 1890-1945* (1998)  
 Anne Magnussen and Hans-Christen Christiansen, *Comics & Culture* (2000)  
 Matthew McAllister, Edward Sewell, and Ian Gordon, *Comics and Ideology* (2001)  
 Bradford W. Wright, *Comic Book Nation* (2001)  
 Will Brooker, *Batman Unmasked* (2001)  
 Scott Bukatman, *Matters of Gravity* (2003) and *The Poetics of Slumberland* (2012)  
 Lily Robinson, *Wonder Women: Feminisms and Superheroes* (2004)  
 Douglas Wolk, *Reading Comics* (2007)  
 Hillary Chute, "Comics as Literature" (2008) and *Graphic Women* (2010)  
 Matthew J. Costello, *Secret Identity Crisis: Comic Books and the Unmasking of Cold War America* (2009)  
 Fred Van Lente and Ryan Dunlavey, *Comic Book Comics* (2008)  
 Grant Morrison *Supergods* (2011)  
 Dan Hassler-Forrest, *Capitalist Superheroes: Caped Crusaders in the Neoliberal Age* (2012)  
 Nick Sousanis, *Unflattening* (2015)  
 Ramzi Fawaz, *The New Mutants: Superheroes and the Radical Imagination* (2015)  
 Bramlett, Frank, Roy Cook and Aaron Meskin (eds.), *Routledge Companion to Comics* (2016)  
 Chris Foss, Jonathan W. Gray, and Zach Whalen (eds.), *Disability in Comic Books and Graphic Narratives* (2016)  
 A. David Lewis and Martin Lund (eds.), *Muslim Superheroes: Comics, Islam, and Representation* (2017)  
 Stephen E. Tabachnick (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Graphic Novel* (2017)  
 Kate Polak, *Ethics in the Gutter: Empathy and Historical Fiction in Comics* (2017)  
 Aaron Kashtan, *Between Pen and Pixel: Comics, Materiality, and the Book of the Future* (2018)  
 Marc Singer, *Breaking the Frame: Populism and Prestige in Comics* (2019)

Students are also invited to support their local comic shop, Collector's Edge Comics, with convenient locations all across the city: <http://www.collectorsedgecomics.com>.

## APPENDIX: GUIDE TO WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

*Makeup Posts (due by the next class period after the Zoom session you missed):* A personal response to something under discussion in the previous Zoom session, extending, critiquing, or transforming that discussion in a substantive way. As a general guideline, a makeup post should be approximately 200-300 words.

*Sandbox assignments (due every Friday):* A substantive response, in a critical or creative format of your choosing, responding to some aspect of the material under discussion that week. A prompt will typically be provided, but you are not required to use it.

As a general guideline, a sandbox post should require a level of effort commensurate with a 400-500-word D2L post.

*Close reading mini-paper (due by Sunday, October 18):* Your first mini-paper in this course will be a close reading of a panel, page, or splash page from any comic from the first half of the semester, seeking to demonstrate how the design of that passage (its *form*) helps to generate its political, philosophical, or existential *content*. This mini-paper does not need a formal introduction or conclusion; it might be helpful to think of it as a prospectus for the formal paper you *would* write, *if* this class were requiring formal papers this semester. In keeping with the Discovery Tier theme of cognition, the point of the assignment is to demonstrate that you understand *how* and *why* we close read comics. As a general guideline, this mini-paper should be approximately 800-1000 words; a full description of the assignment is available on D2L.

*Thinkpiece minipaper (due by Monday, Nov. 23):* Your second mini-paper in this course is an analytical “thinkpiece” (on the order of 1000-2000 words) suitable for publication in an online outlet like the Verge, Slate, Salon, Teen Vogue, Jezebel, the Bustle, Vox, Los Angeles Review of Books, and the like. While making a full and complete argument, this is not traditional academic writing: it will not use a five-paragraph essay structure, may not have a formal introduction or conclusion, and will not require a formal works cited (though should let the reader know through links or in-text reference where they can find the original sources of information that is not common knowledge). It will also probably rely on a different style, tone, and diction than your formal academic writing; it may even incorporate external links, or images and moving gifs. A full description of the assignment is available on D2L.

*Final Paper/Project (due by Thursday, Dec. 3):* Taking the place of a final exam, this assignment asks you to respond to *Watchmen* as a cultural object in a manner of your choosing. Options include a critical analysis of *Watchmen* or some *Watchmen*-adjacent text, a curatorial study of *Watchmen* or of comics more generally, or a creative response (including, if you like, creating a comic of your own). This can take whatever form you find suitable for your creation; the sky is truly the limit. As a guideline, you should think of this as requiring a level of effort commensurate with a six-to-eight-page paper. I ask you to submit a proposal for your final project by Friday, November 6, so we can be sure that our expectations are aligned and that your project is achievable in the time and space allotted by the assignment. We will also talk a bit about your final projects in small groups on the last day of class, Monday, Nov. 23. As with the other major assignments in the course, a full description for this assignment is available under CONTENT on D2L.