

Comics and Graphic Novels (A005565)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings in academic year 2025-2026

A (semester 1) English Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2025-2026

Busi Rizzi, Giorgio	LW07	lecturer-in-charge
Van de Wiele, Eva	LW07	co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2025-2026

	crdts	offering
Master of Arts in Comparative Modern Literature	5	A
Exchange Programme Linguistics and Literature	5	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

comics, graphic novels, children's magazines, word-image relationships, intermediality

Position of the course

This course introduces advanced students to historical and theoretical tools for analyzing and contextualizing different kinds of comics (strips, periodicals, graphic novels, digital comics), with a special focus on graphic novels and comics magazines.

Contents

The graphic novel has become a staple of the literary scene. It also continues to mystify: is it a work of literature, of visual art? Is it a novel or an art book? What is the difference between comics and graphic novels? Understanding comics as a medium - graphic novels, albums, comic strips, and digital comics as different manifestations of the medium - this course seeks to examine comics in all their diversity.

The course hence

- interrogates the polarities of popular, genre fiction and literary fiction
- investigates the differences between literary and cultural products for children and adults and the grey areas where they overlap
- reflects on the relation between materiality and mediality, and what it implied in the evolution of comics formats
- equips students with historical and theoretical tools for analyzing different kinds of comics (strips, periodicals, graphic novels, digital comics)
- comprises an individual research project developed by the students.

Passive knowledge of French is an advantage.

Initial competences

Proof of conducting small research projects and writing research papers (ability to formulate research questions and hypotheses, select and apply appropriate methodologies, distill and evaluate results) through, for instance, a BA paper or another research paper of at least 8.000 words.

Final competences

- 1 Acquire insight into comics histories and methodologies from comics studies, image analysis and periodical studies for reading different kinds of comics

(graphic novels, comics magazines).

- 2 Design and conduct a comics-related research project by selecting, combining and applying relevant methodologies for the study of comics
- 3 Incorporate feedback on different stages of the project (research question and methodology, preliminary analysis, results and their presentation)
- 4 Give feedback to peers on different stages of the project
- 5 Effectively communicate results through different academic formats (a brief scholarly text, a presentation, a poster and a final paper)

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Group work, Seminar, Lecture, Independent work, Peer teaching

Extra information on the teaching methods

Sessions will combine lecture and seminar methods, with opportunities for students to participate in class discussions. Part of the activities may be conducted online or through alternative means. Students are expected to come to class prepared and encouraged to take notes, ask questions during class, discuss and answer each other's questions, and think actively.

Study material

Type: Slides

Name: Slides

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Number of Slides : 120

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : No

Available through Student Association : No

Type: Handouts

Name: various essays

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Number of Pages : 300

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : No

Available through Student Association : No

Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : intensive

Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time

Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

Type: Other

Name: Les grandes espaces (graphic novel)

Indicative price: € 20

Optional: no

Language : Other

Author : Catherine Meurisse

ISBN : 978-2-20507-450-5

Number of Pages : 92

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : No

Available through Student Association : No

Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : regularly

Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time

Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

Additional information: A cheaper price could be found online; any edition will do.

Type: Other

Name: Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home (graphic novel)

Indicative price: € 30

Optional: no

Language : English

Author : Nora Krug

ISBN : 978-1-47679-662-8

Number of Pages : 288

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : Yes

Available through Student Association : No

Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : regularly

Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time

Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

Additional information: Alternative title Heimat: A German Family Album. A cheaper price could be found online; any edition will do.

Type: Other

Name: Watchmen (graphic novel)

Indicative price: € 20

Optional: no

Language : English

Author : Alan Moore, Dave Gibbons

ISBN : 978-1-40124-819-2

Number of Pages : 448

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : No

Available through Student Association : No

Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : regularly

Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time

Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

Additional information: A cheaper price could be found online; any edition will do.

Type: Other

Name: Maus (graphic novel)

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: yes

Language : English

Author : Art Spiegelman

Number of Pages : 208

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : Yes

Available through Student Association : No

Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : regularly

Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time

Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

Type: Other

Name: Ice Haven (graphic novel)

Indicative price: € 25

Optional: no

Language : English

Author : Daniel Clowes

ISBN : 978-0-37571-469-6

Number of Pages : 88

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : No

Available through Student Association : No

Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : regularly
Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time
Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally
Additional information: A cheaper price could be found online; any edition will do.

Type: Other

Name: Phallaina (digital comic, available on Android and iOS)
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : English
Author : Marietta Ren
Available on Ufora : No
Online Available : Yes
Available in the Library : No
Available through Student Association : No
Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : regularly
Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time
Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

Type: Other

Name: Persepolis I and II: The Story of a Childhood and The Story of a Return (graphic novel)
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: yes
Language : Other
Author : Marjane Satrapi
Number of Pages : 343
Available on Ufora : Yes
Online Available : No
Available in the Library : No
Available through Student Association : No
Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : regularly
Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time
Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

Type: Other

Name: Fun home: a family tragicomic (graphic novel)
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: yes
Language : English
Author : Alison Bechdel
Number of Pages : 232
Available on Ufora : Yes
Online Available : No
Available in the Library : No
Available through Student Association : No
Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : regularly
Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time
Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

Type: Other

Name: Pretending is Lying (graphic novel)
Indicative price: € 25
Optional: no
Language : English
Author : Dominique Goblet
ISBN : 978-1-68137-680-6
Number of Pages : 144
Available on Ufora : Yes
Online Available : No
Available in the Library : No
Available through Student Association : No
Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : regularly
Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time
Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

Additional information: A cheaper price could be found online; any edition will do.

Type: Other

Name: The adventures of Tintin: The Calculus Affair (comic book)
Indicative price: € 8
Optional: no
Language : English
Author : Hergé
ISBN : 978-1-40520-629-7
Number of Pages : 62
Available on Ufora : Yes
Online Available : No
Available in the Library : No
Available through Student Association : No
Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : regularly
Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time
Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally
Additional information: A cheaper price could be found online; any edition will do.

Type: Other

Name: 99 Ways to Tell a Story: Exercises in Style (comic book)
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: yes
Language : English
Number of Pages : 208
Available on Ufora : Yes
Online Available : No
Available in the Library : No
Available through Student Association : No
Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : regularly
Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time
Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

References

Maaheen Ahmed, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Comics*. Cambridge University Press, 2023.
Maaheen Ahmed, Rikke Platz Cortsen, and Julia Round, *Comics and Graphic Novels*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022.
Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey, *The Graphic Novel: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press 2014.
Bart Beaty and Benjamin Woo, *The Greatest Comic Book of All Time: Symbolic Capital and the Field of American Comic Books*. Palgrave 2016.
Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics*. Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2007.
Charles Hatfield, *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature*. Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2009.
Charles Hatfield and Bart Beaty, eds. *Comics Studies: A Guidebook*. Rutgers University Press, 2020.
Barbara Postema, *Narrative Structure in Comics: Making Sense of Fragments*. RIT Press, 2013.
Thierry Smolderen, *The Origins of Comics: From William Hogarth to Winsor McCay*. University Press of Mississippi 2014.

Course content-related study coaching

Possibility of feedback and counselling on an individual basis.

Assessment moments

continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Presentation, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible

Extra information on the examination methods

Draft texts, presentations and posters based on the research project will be discussed with peers. A final essay is due in January (or during the resit period).

Calculation of the examination mark

1 Participation (attendance and feedback): 10%

2 Research outline: 5%

3 Presentation: 40%

4 Final paper: 45%

To pass the course, students need a grade of at least 9.5/20 on their final paper. In case of resit, students will have to retake only the component they failed (only applies within the same academic year).

Facilities for Working Students

- Exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance
- Feedback can be given by the teacher via e-mail or by appointment