

Fall 2023

COURSE INFORMATION

Class Days / Times: T/TH 11-12:15

Instructor: Professor William Nericcio

Class Location: AL 101

Preferred pronouns: he, him, his

Mode: lecture, discussion, face-to-face

Phone: 619-594-1524

Platform: Canvas

Email: bnericci@sdsu.edu

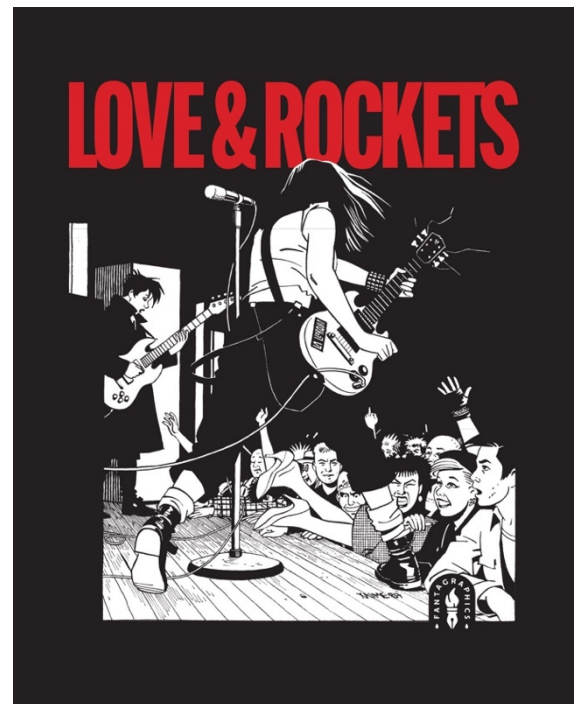
Office location: AL 273

Office hours: T/TH 1-2pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

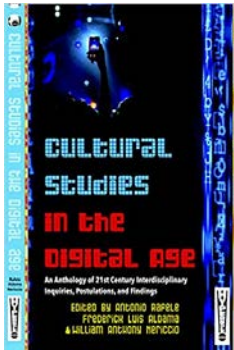
More and more these days, the literary is being besieged by the visual. Where, heretofore, literature was known and valued as words on the page, now, in the 21st century, readers must supplement their semantic, hermeneutic understanding with semiotic, pictorial understandings as well. This is as true in the mainstream (Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions*; Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*; Humberto Eco's *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana*) as it is from emergent literary/semiotic talents (Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez's *Love and Rockets*; Adrian Tomine's *Shortcomings*).

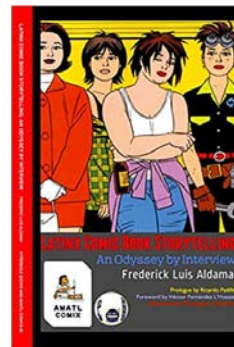
Nowhere has the explosion of works occurred more than in the world of comics -- graphic novels, sequential art, etc. And so it is that the canons of both literary studies and ethnic studies must expand to accommodate this growing medium. In the United States, it has been in the comic book talents of Americans of Mexican descent (Mexican-Americans, Chicanas/os/x) that has most witnessed this Renaissance. From the early works of Gus Arriola (*Gordo*), to the aforementioned Los Bros Hernandez, to Herbblock award-winning political cartoonist Lalo Alcaraz, to the the feminista-inspired universe of Kayden Phoenix, comic book history in the United States has exploded. This class will survey this 20th and 21st century evolution focusing on the works, artists, communities, and movements associated with these brilliant artists and writers.



COURSE MATERIALS

TABLE 1 EXAMPLE OF COURSE MATERIALS

Materials (including texts, readings, course fees, equipment, and any technology requirements)	Required or optional	Where and how it can be obtained
 <p>Tales from la Vida: A Latinx Comics Anthology (Latinographix) by Frederick Luis Aldama</p>	R	CAMPUS BOOKSTORE
 <p>Latinx Superheroes in Mainstream Comics (by Frederick Luis Aldama)</p>	R	CAMPUS BOOKSTORE
 <p>Cultural Studies in the Digital Age: An Anthology of 21st Century Interdisciplinary Inquiries, Postulations, and Findings by Antonio Rafele et al</p>	R	CAMPUS BOOKSTORE
 <p>Accidental Ambassador Gordo: The Comic Strip Art of Gus Arriola by Robert C. Harvey & Gus Arriola</p>	R	CAMPUS BOOKSTORE

	<p>SANTA Graphic Novel by Kayden Phoenix</p>	<p>R</p>	<p>CAMPUS BOOKSTORE</p>
	<p>Latinx Comic Book Storytelling Paperback, edited by Frederick Luis Aldama</p>	<p>R</p>	<p>CAMPUS BOOKSTORE</p>
	<p>Latino USA, Revised Edition: A Cartoon History by Ilan Stavans (Author), Lalo Alcaraz (Illustrator)</p>	<p>R</p>	<p>CAMPUS BOOKSTORE</p>
	<p>Maggie the Mechanic (Love & Rockets) by Jaime Hernandez</p>	<p>R</p>	<p>CAMPUS BOOKSTORE</p>
	<p>Human Diastrophism (Love & Rockets) by Gilbert Hernandez</p>	<p>R</p>	<p>CAMPUS BOOKSTORE</p>

COURSE DESIGN: MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENTS

Readings/ Watchings

The class will be run as a seminar. You are expected to enter the room each class day having completed the reading assigned for that day. The readings will be demanding. It is up to you to assure that time is available for diligent class preparation. While I understand that many of you work, I must also remind you that “work” does not constitute an excuse for missed classes or under-preparation on the part of a University student.

Attendance/Participation

Your attendance, class participation and quizzes represent 30% of your grade--as such, you are encouraged to share your prepared, informed interpretations and findings with the class. Leave opinions, hunches and prejudices outside the classroom as you are expected to back up any and all of your suggestive comments with references to the text prepared for that session. Only serious students are asked to consider this seminar. The expense of the materials and my high expectations of your commitment to our intellectual collective make this a poor place to be if you are looking for easy credit hours. In addition, given that we meet only twice a week, I will allow only THREE unexcused absences for the semester--after that, I will lower your final grade a whole letter grade for each day you elect to imitate a slacker middle school dropout. NOTE: Students should not anticipate the indignity of a "pop-quiz" unless it is apparent that the assigned readings have not been carefully prepared.

Written Requirements

You can expect unannounced in-class short-essay assignments based on your reading for a given day--and note that YOU ARE responsible for assigned readings which have not yet been discussed in our seminar. There will be a short-essay position paper due midway through the term; in addition, there will be one 5-7 page research essay based on one of the texts surveyed for the semester—this will be due just before you run off for your Spring Break (details to follow); You will have the opportunity to revise this essay and submit your perfected masterpiece during the final week of the semester. There will also be a comprehensive final during the final exam period.

Office Hours About the Readings

The worst thing about a large state university is that it encourages anonymity--you are a number filling a requirement. This collective is above such boorish, anti-social behavior and, as Director of our proceedings this semester, I outlaw this practice. As such, I expect to meet you during the course of the semester during office hours. Make plans to take advantage of office hour appointments either alone or in groups. Also I encourage you to meet the people who are sharing work with you. Office hours will be from 1 to 4 Tuesdays and Thursdays Wednesday in AL 273.

About the Readings

Some, indeed many, of the works we will read and discuss in this course use language, describe events or actions, or take positions which you may find personally offensive; some of the authors may present ideas that you may find dogmatic or ideological. As a form of communication, comics are often humorous and satirical. Even when they are being serious, comics tend towards parody, caricature, and exaggerated cartoon representations of our political, social, and sexual lives. If you do not wish to risk being offended, or if you are otherwise concerned, you may not wish to take this course.

Be especially careful of expecting authors or characters to know what you know, or to think, believe, or act as you do. I will be discussing the historical and cultural contexts for works and characters in each part of this course, but that will only be useful if you are willing to avoid inappropriately imposing standards and values on works. In the case of underground and some alternative comics, for instance, you will also need to remember that the social norms of particular countercultural or subcultural groups in earlier times may not be those of mainstream groups today or of different groups at the time when these comics were produced. Authors and characters may think, believe, act, or speak in ways -- especially in the area of sexuality -- that are quite different from you.

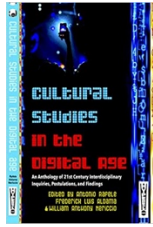

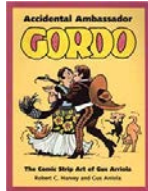
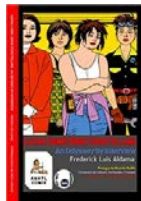
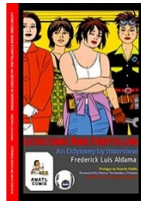
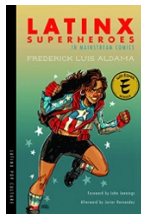
In any case, if you are concerned about your personal reaction to the course materials, some of which contain sexually explicit images and/ or slang and profanity, or the possible evolution of class lectures, please confer with me during the first week of class. I do not promote the use of offensive language or call needless attention to offensive works or passages (even those that deliberately set out to offend "mainstream" American values as part of their aesthetic intention), but I expect to conduct an open and candid discussion of the graphic materials and ideas we are studying. Our goal is intellectual and critical understanding -- not condemnation -- of a unique American art form.

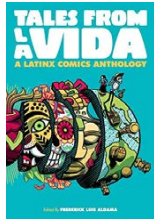

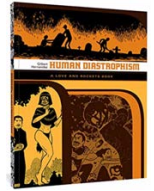
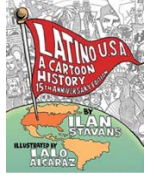


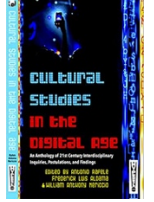
Special Note for Graduate Students (MA; PhD)

Graduate students adding this course to their selection of classes will master supplementary and special readings, research, and writing assignments consistent with the proficiencies graduate students should have in development. Said work will incorporate writing one book review on recent scholarly publications (to be completed during the first month of classes) and authoring a principal "formal essay" with a higher page-count than the undergraduates and with a substantively larger bibliographic requirement than their undergraduate classmates. Depending on Graduate student enrollment in the class, they can expect to be asked to lead class dialogue in a formal presentation/lecture based on their additional research.

COURSE SCHEDULE

NOTA BENE: ALL BOOKS WILL BE AVAILABLE VIA COURSE RESERVES AT THE SDSU LOVE LIBRARY

Date	Activity	Assignment	
Week 1	What is a comic book? Preliminary introduction to high-level analyses of comix, graphic narrative, and sequential art	Readings in/from <i>Cultural Studies in the Digital Age</i> .	
Week 2	The backstory of Mexican-American figuration in the United States: Stereotypes as Visions and Nightmares	Readings provided via pdf on canvas from <i>Tex[t]-Mex: Seductive Hallucinations of the "Mexican" in America</i> , Wm. Nericcio	
Week 3	Mexican Americans in Comix in the early 20 th Century	Readings from <i>Accidental Amabassdor: Gordo</i>	
Week 4	Mexican American, Chicax, and Latinx Comic Book Storytellers: An Introduction and Review	Readings from <i>Latinx Comic Book Storytelling</i>	
Week 5	Mexican American, Chicax, and Latinx Comic Book Storytellers: An Introduction and Review	Readings from <i>Latinx Comic Book Storytelling</i>	
Week 6	Hitting the mainstream: History of Latinx figuration in American Mass Culture	Readings from <i>Latinx Superheroes in Mainstream Comics</i>	
Week 7	Review for Midterm and review of first writing assignment Midterm	Readings provided via pdf on Canvas from contemporary comic book studies journals including <i>The Comics Journal</i> ; <i>Inks</i> ; and others; exam focus, readings Week 1-6.	

Date	Activity	Assignment	
Week 8	Autobiography, Community, and Culture: Chicanx and Latinx Stories of the self.	Readings from <i>Tales from La Vida: A Latinx Comics Anthology</i>	
Week 9	Femme Chicana Explorations: the worlds of Kayden Phoenix	Readings from <i>Santa: A Graphic Novel</i>	
Week 10	The Latin American Connection—the early works of Gilbert Hernandez	Readings from “Human Diastrophism: The Blood of Palomar” by Gilbert Hernandez	
Week 11	Latinx and Chicanx Histories	Readings from <i>Latino USA</i> by Lalo Alcaraz and Ilan Stavans	
Week 12	Chicanx Los Angeles Revisited: The remarkable SoCal revisioning of the Southlands by Jaime (Xaime) Hernandez	Readings from <i>Maggie the Mechanic</i>	
Week 13	Part II: Chicanx Los Angeles Revisited: The remarkable SoCal revisioning of the Southlands by Jaime (Xaime) Hernandez	Readings from <i>Maggie the Mechanic</i>	
Week 14	Review for the Final Paper—Readings in contemporary Cultural Studies	Readings from <i>Cultural Studies in the Digital Age; and the PMLA</i>	
Week 15	Review of the semester for the Final Exam	Catch up on your readings for the semester	
Week 16	Final Exam	Exam focus, Weeks 8-14	

GRADING POLICIES (UNDERGRADUATE)

- Quizzes/Attendance/Class Participation 30%
- 1 Short 2-3 page position paper 20%
- 5-7 Page Research Essay 30%
- Final Exam 20%

GRADING POLICIES (GRADUATE)

- Quizzes/Attendance/Class Participation 30%
- 1 Short 2-3 page position paper 20%
- In Class Presentation or annotated bibliography 20%
- 15-25 Page Research Essay 30%

GRADE PERCENTAGES

Grade	Explanation	Grade Points (per grade)
A	94-100	4.0
A-	90-93	3.7
B+	87-89	3.3
B	84-86	3.0
B-	80-83	2.7
C+	77-79	2.3
C	74-76	2.0
C-	70-73	1.7
D+	67-69	1.3
D	64-66	1.0
D-	60-63	0.7
F	0-59	0.0

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Through their engagement with this course, students will:

1. **RECOGNIZE** the history of Chicana, Chicano, Chicanx, and Latinx comic book contributions
2. **DEPLOY** vocabulary with regard to advanced critical tactics in art history, cultural critique, cultural studies, and word/image analysis
3. **ANALYZE** comics, using superb semiotic and semantic hermeneutic skills for doing so.
4. **CRITIQUE** the history of Mexican American figuration and storytelling in the 20th and 21st centuries
5. **EVALUATE** their critical authorial voices—especially their capacity to speak to the nuances of graphic illustration, cultural history, and sequential art dynamics

And, in so doing students will emerge from the class with a deeper understanding of the role graphic narrative has played in the Chicana/o movement, in American Literary history, as well as a command of the connections between Latinx/Chicanx social justice movements and the history of illustration and storytelling.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The Departments of English and Comparative Literature and Chicana/Chicano Studies embrace a notion of intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class and religion. We are especially committed to increasing the representation of those populations that have been historically excluded from participation in U.S. higher education.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

For millennia, the Kumeyaay people have been a part of this land. This land has nourished, healed, protected and embraced them for many generations in a relationship of balance and harmony. As members of the San Diego State University community, we acknowledge this legacy. We promote this balance and harmony. We find inspiration from this land, the land of the Kumeyaay.

ESSENTIAL STUDENT INFORMATION

For essential information about student academic success, please see the [SDSU Student Academic Success Handbook](#).

- SDSU provides disability-related accommodations via the Student Ability Success Center (sascinfo@sdsu.edu | sdsu.edu/sasc). Please allow 10-14 business days for this process.
- Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. Please let me know if you would prefer an alternate name and/or gender pronoun.