

# WRDS 150: Comics Studies

Arts Studies in Research and Writing (ASRW) program

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## Course Information

**Instructor:** Dr. Mike Borkent

**Contact:** [mborkent@mail.ubc.ca](mailto:mborkent@mail.ubc.ca) (I try to respond within 24 hours, but I am not available evenings or weekends.)

**Online course content:** [canvas.ubc.ca](https://canvas.ubc.ca) (Do not use Canvas for messaging me: please use email.)

**Office hours:** MW, 2-3pm, or by appointment, at BUTO #204

**Late Assignment Dropbox:** *Do not* put materials under my office door. Please use the metal mailbox located on the left-hand wall just inside #380 Ike Barber Learning Commons (IKBC), M-F, 830-430. The First Year Programs office (#379), just inside #380 on the right, can help direct you if need be.

**Electronics policy:** Laptops and phones will not be used in class except when specifically requested.

**Copyright:** All course materials are covered by copyright and may not be distributed without permission. See policies section below for complete information.

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## Land acknowledgement

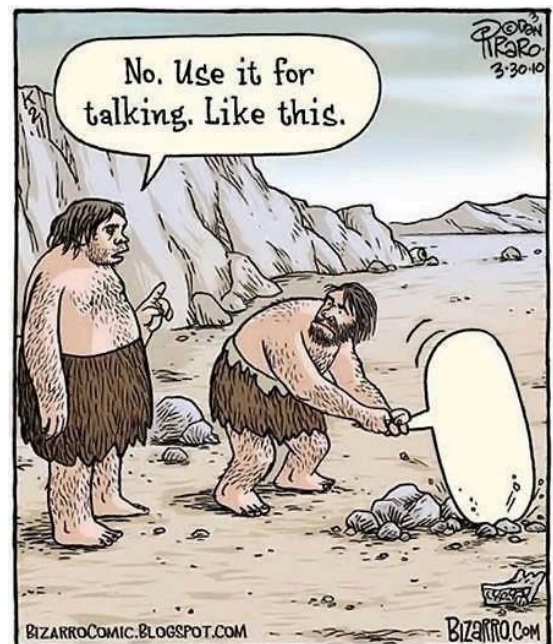
It is important to acknowledge that Vancouver campus of UBC, where this course takes place, is located on the traditional, ancestral, unceded (occupied) territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) people. I thank the Musqueam people for extending their welcome to the University faculty, staff, and students to pursue academic research and education. I, like many of us, commute in from other Coast Salish territories, to whom we should also be grateful.

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## Course Description

Comics—which communicate with images, words, and layouts—have become an increasingly popular form of visual communication and storytelling in many places and cultures. Comics come in various forms (print and online), types (non-fiction and fiction), and for various audiences. They now frequent bestselling book lists and garner literary awards (as graphic novels). They are in newspapers, on gum wrappers, and on smart phones. As a common form of communication, comics have become an increasingly popular academic topic as well across a variety of disciplines. In this course, we will engage with how different academic disciplines engage with comics to build scholarly knowledge.

In this course, students will be introduced to a range of scholarly practices through the examination of academic works drawn from several disciplines and through the completion of a variety of reading, writing, editing, and presentation assignments. We



will examine how different disciplines—including studies from literature, history, linguistics, and medical education—engage with comics, cartoons, and graphic narratives in fundamentally different ways, based on their differing questions and approaches to developing knowledge.

We will examine how an interdisciplinary approach to comics helps us isolate different mechanisms and traditions of scholarly knowledge making, while tracing how these approaches inform academic writing practices. Students will develop skills in both analyzing and developing academic writing, which will support them in communicating clearly and effectively as they continue in their academic work, no matter their areas of interest. Moreover, through academic readings and samples of comics, students will also develop a range of critical tools for engaging with multimodal artifacts that use visual, verbal, and spatial cues to build meaning.

## Course Learning Objectives

*From the ASRW WRDS 150 curriculum statement*

### 1. Working with scholarly sources to read and interpret academic discourse in context

You will work with scholarly articles to recognize how the conventions of communication within academic disciplines, including forms of argumentation and what counts as evidence, reflect and shape the types of knowledge associated with research cultures in the university.

This will be done by:

- a. Reading, summarizing, comparing, and critically evaluating scholarly articles, retaining the key arguments/findings and emphases of the originals.
- b. Identifying the discursive moves and arguments made by members of specific academic research disciplines, including practices of positioning, definition, attribution, hedging, and orchestration.
- c. Recognizing the goals, methods, and communication practices of specific academic research disciplines.

### 2. Engaging in apprentice scholarly research

You will participate as apprentice members of academic research communities by identifying and tracing the scholarly conversation around a research problem and by developing questions, collecting evidence, and constructing arguments through ethical and collaborative practices of scholarship.

This will be done by:

- a. Developing a research project that addresses a gap in knowledge within a particular research community, and which implements relevant discursive features and rhetorical moves in a variety of genres, including a research proposal and working bibliography, a presentation, and a final paper.
- b. Gathering relevant and credible primary and secondary sources, using appropriate tools and methods, including UBC Library resources.
- c. Engaging responsibly with and within research communities, using appropriate citation practices that meet the expectations of academic integrity and adhering to ethical standards of data collection with research collaborators.
- d. Engaging in constructive and collaborative practices of knowledge production, including performing peer review and integrating feedback.

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## Required Assignments

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| 1. Attendance and participation (5%)*              |  |
| 2. Process-folio: in-class exercises/homework (5%) | <u>Research Project</u> :**  |
| 3. Reading Response Entries (5%)                   | 6. Research proposal, incl. working bibliography and peer review draft (15%) |
| 4. In-class Summary Assignment (10%)               | 7. Presentation (15%)  |
| 5. In-class Academic Style Quiz (10%)              | 8. Final paper, incl. peer review draft (35%)                                |

*Detailed criteria for assignments will be provided separately in class on handouts (and uploaded to Canvas).*

**\* This is a writing and exercise intensive class.** I expect your active participation in class discussions, exercises, and activities, which all support the learning objectives of the course, and which are further assessed through the Process-folio and Reading Responses. Attendance is not enough. **Participation is required**, including by engaging with your peers and me in a respectful and inquisitive manner.

\*\* All of the Research Project assignments build upon each other, so be sure to have each in on time to make the most of feedback (otherwise, late penalties apply as well). All project assignments will use MLA bibliographic style for citing source information (see on Canvas for a UBC handout on MLA, as well as the links to online resources below).

See the *Course Policies* section below for Late and Extension policies.

### Level Up (Non-required upgrade option)

#### Proposal Re-writing Opportunity

You may resubmit a *substantially* revised version of your Proposal assignment **within 1 week of its return**. You must include with your revised version all of the previously submitted materials (as outlined in the assignment handout) **and my previous rubric feedback**. This way I can see how you have responded to feedback.

The mark you receive on your revised version will be your final mark for the assignment.

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## Required Readings

### Sample Comic

Sousanis, Nick. "Against the Flow." *The Boston Globe*, 04 October 2015.

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2015/10/03/sousanis/XOMd3JBYnEdzQCWHM6twTJ/story.html>

Download, print and read the comic **for class on Sept 9**. Think carefully about what it means, and how it communicates its message. Be ready to discuss it in class.

### Core Scholarly Articles

The following list of articles are **available online through the UBC library** website: search for the author and title in the Summons bar.

For ease of access, I have made the articles by Bergen and by Green and Myers available for download on the **Course Reserve**, linked through the Canvas site.

You must email me well before the class date if you are having trouble accessing the papers.

**NOTE**

1. You must **download** (in PDF format), **print**, and **read** each article for its assigned class. I recommend downloading and printing all of the readings at the beginning of semester, to make sure you have them when you need them. Consider compiling them in a duotang as a reading pack.
2. You must **bring your readings (including past ones) to every class, like a textbook**, until we start presentations. We will be actively working with and writing on these articles throughout much of the semester, including comparing elements between them later on.

**Art and Literary Studies**

Bukatman, Scott. "Sculpture, Stasis, the Comics, and Hellboy." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2014, pp. 104–17.

Peppard, Anna F. "'A cross burning darkly, blackening the night:'" Reading racialized spectacles of conflict and bondage in Marvel's early Black Panther comics," *Studies in Comics*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2018, pp. 59-85.

**Cultural and Historical Studies**

Kelp-Stebbins, Katherine. "Global Comics: Two Women's Texts and a Critique of Cultural Imperialism." *Feminist Media Histories*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2018, pp. 135-156.

Barrow, Mark V, Jr. "Carson in Cartoon: A New Window onto the Noisy Reception to *Silent Spring*." *Endeavour* vol. 36, no. 4, 2012, pp. 156-164.

**Cognitive Linguistics and Applied Comics**

Bergen, Benjamin. "To Awaken a Sleeping Giant: Cognition and Culture in September 11 Political Cartoons." *Language, Culture, and Mind*, edited by Michel Achard and Suzanne Kemmer, CSLI Publications, 2003, pp. 1–12. ([Download from Course Reserve on Canvas](#))

Green, Michael J., and Kimberly R. Myers. "Graphic Medicine: Use of Comics in Medical Education and Patient Care." *British Medical Journal*, vol. 340, 2010, pp. 574-77. ([On Canvas site](#))

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**Recommended Textbook**

Giltrow, Janet, Richard Gooding, Daniel Burgoyne, and Marlene Sawatsky. *Academic Writing: An Introduction*. 3rd ed., Broadview Press, 2014. [On Reserve at Koerner library](#).

We will not use this book as a textbook. However, **I encourage you to buy it**, since the theoretical approach it describes informs much of this course and I will reference it in lectures and on the syllabus. You may also wish to review the glossary definitions or do extra practice exercises.

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**Supplemental Online Resources**

You will be required to use **MLA style** for your in-text citations and bibliographical lists with your project assignments. Use these resources to help you follow this bibliographic style of citation.

- UBC Library's MLA guide is reposted in Canvas > Supplementary Handouts  
This resource introduces MLA style in a concise and relevant manner, especially for working with scholarly sources (use the next resource for tips on documenting visual sources like comics).
- Academy of Art University's *MLA Citation Guide*:

[http://elmo.academyart.edu/reference-help/mla\\_citation\\_guide.html#graphic](http://elmo.academyart.edu/reference-help/mla_citation_guide.html#graphic)

This resource provides a helpful and concise introduction and series of examples relevant to our course (scroll down on webpage), with an emphasis on scholarly and visual sources.

- Purdue's *Online Writing Lab*: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue\\_owl.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html)

This source provides more extensive and detailed overviews and examples of in-text citation and source documentation in several styles, including MLA. Follow the sidebar menu to examine many elements.

## Supplemental Readings and Guides

Almossawi, Ali. *An Illustrated Book of Bad Arguments*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., The Experiment, 2014.

NOTE: available for *free* online (but please make a donation to support the author):  
<https://bookofbadarguments.com/>

Babington, Doug, Don LePan, Maureen Okun, and Nora Ruddock. *The Broadview Pocket Guide to Writing*. Rev. 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian ed., Broadview Press, 2016. (ISBN: 9781554813360)

This book is a valuable supplementary reference for any general writing concerns that may arise through peer and instructor feedback, and for more MLA style information.

Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Norton, 2018.

On reserve at Koerner library. A helpful resource focused on how to work with other sources to develop arguments.

## Research and Writing Help

**First**, attend class, ask questions, and consult the textbook and guides.

**Office hours**: Come to my office hours and discuss your work with me. I am very happy to help!

**The Centre for Writing and Scholarly Communication** offers excellent tutors that you can access regularly. I strongly encourage you to make use of this great resource for your writing and presentation assignments throughout the semester (for any course, not just this one!):

<http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/improve-your-writing/>

**Library Help Section**: <https://help.library.ubc.ca/>

**Criteria for Evaluating Resources**: <http://guides.library.ubc.ca/EvaluatingSources/ScholarlyPopular>

## Course Policies

### Communication

I expect respectful interactions between all people in my class. Everyone has a voice and a place, as long as it does not negatively impact others. I encourage diverse perspectives, active listening, rigorous discussion, and debate.

Students are encouraged to ask me questions in class and at office hours. In person is always the best way to clarify concerns with class content and assignments quickly and comprehensively.

**Email:** I will do my best to answer emails within 24 hours, except on evenings and weekends when I am away from the computer. In emails, please use proper forms of address and complete sentences. I will use emails primarily to answer simple concerns: attendance issues relating to illness, alternate office hour arrangements, and such. If you have detailed questions about assignments, please talk to me in person.

### **Attendance and Participation**

You are expected to attend and participate in all classes. The course is structured so that lectures and in-class activities and exercises build upon each other (and add to your *Process-folio* mark). If you miss classes, you will miss key information and activities. More importantly, actively participating and engaging in class activities, including taking notes, engaging in discussions and asking questions, strongly supports the development of scholarly skills.

You are responsible to take notes, and to get notes for missed classes from a fellow student—don't email me and ask if you "missed anything." Yes, you did. Lecture slides may be posted online to the Canvas site, but they will not reflect the detailed discussions surrounding them. You will need to find a source for notes about that content.

If there are serious circumstances that prevent you from attending class (for instance, illness, accident, or family tragedy), please email or speak to me as soon as you know, so that we can discuss how to accommodate it.

If you are struggling or going through a difficult time, I encourage you to contact Arts Advising or the Centre for Access and Diversity about academic concessions and other resources you can use to help you manage your particular situation. They also make recommendations to me so I can respond effectively and fairly to the situation. Domestic Students should email [arts.advisor@ubc.ca](mailto:arts.advisor@ubc.ca); international Students [arts.international@ubc.ca](mailto:arts.international@ubc.ca); and Aboriginal Students [arts.aboriginal@ubc.ca](mailto:arts.aboriginal@ubc.ca)

### **Readings**

You must print out and read all of the assigned academic readings before their designated class. Practice active reading by writing notes on them. Look up all unfamiliar words or references. Be inquisitive. Note what strikes you as interesting, important, or bizarre. You will not be able to participate in the class work if you do not know what we are talking about.

Write out your thoughts as answers to the Reading Response prompts. These notes build comprehension and help you participate in class discussions as well as refresh your memory as you develop your term paper.

Don't hold back! This class will only be fun and interesting if you engage in the readings and the discussions.

### **Assignments**

**Late policy:** Please submit all assignments at the beginning of class on the due date. Late papers will receive a penalty of **5% per day** (including weekends). I will not accept papers if they are more than 5 days late.

Late papers must be handed in to me in person, or dropped in the First Year Programs mailbox in #380 Ike Barber Learning Commons (between 830-430, M-F), just inside the door, on the left hand wall, so they can be date stamped.

I do not accept assignments that have been slipped under my office door, since I do not know when they were submitted.

**Scheduling issues:** Short extensions may be granted if unforeseen circumstances arise (for instance, a sudden illness severe enough to send you to the hospital), *if you provide appropriate documentation* (such as a doctor's note) in a prompt and timely manner. Tell me if you have a significant concern as soon as possible.

To be excused from a class or to reschedule assigned work to observe a religious holiday or attend a sports trip, students must notify me well in advance (and in non-religious cases, with appropriate documentation). Other changes or accommodations must be worked out with the Centre for Accessibility or Arts Advising.

**Private tutors:** Some students hire tutors or use a tutoring service on an occasional basis to assist them with specific assessment tasks. Others work with a tutor on a regular basis. While ASRW recognizes that tutors can be helpful, we have also observed that tutors may misdirect WRDS 150 students and thus impede their learning, as well as their success in the course. Using tutors may even inadvertently result in questionable academic conduct (see Academic Integrity statement below).

We therefore generally discourage the use of tutors in this course except those available through the Centre for Accessibility Office, the Centre for Writing and Scholarly Communication (listed as a Writing Resource above), or *WriteAway* through UBC's eTutoring platform

<https://etutoringcanada.ca/login.cfm?institutionid=14&returnPage>).

## Copyright

All materials of this course (course handouts, lecture slides, and presentations, assessments, readings, etc.) are the intellectual property of the Course Instructor or licensed to be used by the copyright owner. Recording of classes is not permitted. Redistribution of these materials by any means without permission of the copyright holder(s) constitutes a breach of copyright and may lead to academic discipline.

## Grading:

All faculty at UBC are required to follow UBC's grading scale for student assessment. The overall average in WRDS 150 classes typically falls between 68-72%.

Percentage	Letter grade
90-100	A+
85-89	A
80-84	A-
76-79	B+
72-75	B
68-71	B-
64-67	C+
60-63	C
55-59	C-
50-54	D
0-49	F

## Academic Integrity

*Note: the following statement is abridged and adapted from the ASRW faculty handbook and UBC policies.*

We – your instructors, ASRW, UBC and the scholarly community at large – share an understanding of the ethical ways that we produce knowledge. A core practice of this shared value of academic integrity is that we acknowledge the contributions of others to our own work, but it also means we produce our own contributions

that add to the scholarly conversation: we don't buy or copy papers or exams, or have someone else edit them. We also don't falsify data or sources, or hand in the same work in more than one course.

Because it is so important that research be done ethically, I expect WRDS 150 students to meet these expectations. Any instance of cheating or taking credit for someone else's work, whether intentionally or unintentionally, can and will result in at minimum a zero for the assignment, and these cases will be reported to the First-Year Programs Chair and the Faculty of Arts Associate Dean, Academic.

**For more information, see:**

- The online resource listed above with course readings for how to use MLA style for documenting sources.
- UBC Learning Commons: <https://learningcommons.ubc.ca/academic-integrity/>
- UBC calendar entries on Student Conduct and Discipline: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/?tree=3,54,0,0>

**Well being**

University is demanding, and student life can be complicated. Be sure to take care of yourself and look out for each other. If you are struggling or need help, including emotional and physical support or following sexual harassment or assault, see UBC's counselling and support services: <https://students.ubc.ca/health-wellness>

If I am concerned for your wellbeing, I will reach out. I may also report my concerns to *Early Alert*, which is a UBC program that quickly connects students with support services. The information I provide is kept confidential and is sent because I wish to support your wellbeing and academic success, which I can do best by helping connect you to helpful resources. For more information on *Early Alert*, see: [earlyalert.ubc.ca](http://earlyalert.ubc.ca).

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**Schedule**

Date	Topic ( -- ) = Relevant supplemental reading from the Giltrow <i>et al's Academic Writing (AW)</i>	Required readings and Assignments
<b>Week 1</b>		
Sept 4	Introductions and overview	
6	What is academic writing? ( <i>AW Ch 1</i> )	
<b>Week 2</b>		
9	What are comics and how do we read them?	<b>Reading:</b> Sousanis– Bring comic printed out
11	Reading academic writing	<b>Assignment:</b> <i>Bring Bukatman's article <u>as a printed out PDF</u> (no need to read before class).</i>
13	<b>Bukatman</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Bukatman <b>Assignment:</b> Reading Response
<b>Week 3</b>		
16	Summary and levels of generality ( <i>AW 31-42</i> )	



18	<b>Peppard</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Peppard <b>Assignment:</b> Reading Response
20	Reporting expressions and establishing positions (AW 46-60)	

#### Week 4

23	<b>Kelp-Stebbins</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Kelp-Stebbins <b>Assignment:</b> Reading Response
25	Orchestrating voices and evidence (AW 109-122; see also <i>They Say, I Say</i> ).	
27	<b>Barrow</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Barrow <b>Assignment:</b> Reading Response

#### Week 5

30	Summary workshop and Project introduction	
Oct 2	<b>In-class Writing Assignment</b>	<b>Assignment:</b> <u>In-class Summary</u> (Bring your <i>printed</i> copy of Barrow's article)
4	Researching: documentation styles and working with primary materials	<b>Assignment:</b> Bring primary source for project to class, incl. <u>printed</u> selections.

#### Week 6

7	<b>Bergen</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Bergen <b>Assignment:</b> Reading Response
9	Abstractions and definitions (AW Ch 7)	<i>Project research clusters finalized</i>
11	Proposals and knowledge deficits (AW 131-134, Ch 8)	<b>Assignments: (1) IN CLASS:</b> Bring <u>printed copy</u> of Project working bibliography with research statement. <b>(2) ONLINE:</b> Cut and paste citations and notes to your group post in <i>Canvas: Discussions</i>

#### Week 7

14	<b>NO CLASS – Thanksgiving</b>	
16	Proposal peer review workshop, and the mental desktop (AW 9)	<b>Assignments:</b> bring printed draft proposal to class.
18	Developing analyses	<b>Assignment:</b> <u>Proposal (with annotated draft and working bibliography) due</u>

**Week 8**

21	<b>Green and Myers</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Green and Myers <b>Assignment:</b> Reading Response
23	Introductions, discursive I, and forecasting (AW 8, 11).	
25	Limiting expressions and modality (AW Ch 13)	

**Week 9**

28	Integrating sources and analyses	
30	Conclusions and extensions (AW, Ch 14)	
Nov 1	Presentation peer-review workshop	<b>Assignment:</b> bring a printed copy of draft presentation slide and presentation notes/script <b>Assignment:</b> <u>Processfolio and Reading Responses (5 of 6) due</u>

**Week 10**

Nov 4 – 8	<b>Presentations</b>	<b>Assignment:</b> Presentations and peer reviews, on Nov 4-15, according to the assigned schedule.
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**Week 11**

11	<b>NO CLASS – Remembrance Day</b>	
13 – 15	<b>Presentations</b>	<b>Assignment:</b> Presentations and peer reviews continue

**Week 12**

18	Conference review and writing for concision	
20	Nominal style (AW Ch 10)	
22	<b>In-class Assignment</b>	<b>Assignment:</b> <u>In-class Academic Style Quiz</u> – bring laptop (preferably) or phone

**Week 13**

25	Paper peer review workshop	<b>Assignment:</b> bring a <u>printed</u> draft of your paper
27	Peer review: Editing for academic style	<b>Assignment:</b> bring drafts again!
29	Last class: review	<b>Assignment:</b> <u>Final paper due on Canvas (as PDF) and in class (including with the annotated draft)</u>