

ENGLISH 382—Ethnic Literature of the U.S.: Multiethnic Graphic Narratives
Spring 2020

Professor:	Lauren Gantz
Meeting Times:	T TH 3:30-4:45PM
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Office Hours:	M T 1:00-3:00PM, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

*“You don’t feel as real if you don’t see yourself reflected in the media [. . .] There’s something very powerful about seeing yourself represented.” -Dwayne McDuffie,
writer/editor for Marvel and founder of Milestone Media*

The comic book industry has a long and fraught history when it comes to racial representation. While comics have existed since the early 19th century, it wasn’t until the 1966 introduction of Black Panther that mainstream audiences encountered a protagonist of color. Prior to that watershed moment, early pioneers of the genre, such as Wil Eisner, and comics powerhouses Marvel and D.C. relied heavily on racial stereotypes, relegating people of color to secondary roles. In this class, we will examine the ways that comics writers and artists of color have represented their own communities. We’ll touch on the works of early artists such as Jackie Ormes, Henry Kiyama, and Alejandro Schomburg y Rosa. We’ll discuss the development of small independent presses for writers and artists of color, such as Native Realities and Milestone Media. We’ll examine graphic novels from major publishing firms and self-published webcomics. Throughout, we’ll discuss how writers and artists of color continue to shape our literary and visual culture.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course fulfills the U.S. Diversity requirement of the GEP. U.S. Diversity courses are designed to consider the role of diversity in American life, where diversity is defined to include both individual differences (e.g. personality, learning styles, and life experiences) and other group and social differences (e.g. race, gender, ethnicity, country of origin, class, sexual identity/orientation, religion, ability, or other affiliations). Satisfaction of this requirement will prepare you to act thoughtfully and responsibly as a U.S. citizen in a global society. Upon completing this requirement, you will be able to:

- Describe the various dimensions of diversity and marginalization within the United States.
- Explain the means by which one or more persistently marginalized groups in the U.S. have negotiated the conditions of their marginalization.

TEXTS

You are not required to purchase from the University Store. Used copies, photocopies, digital copies, and library copies are perfectly acceptable, provided that you read the same assigned sections of text as everyone else. If purchasing our required books will cause you insurmountable financial difficulty, please reach out to me so that I can get you access to our readings.

Required texts

Rental at University Store: *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* by Scott McCloud

For Purchase at University Store:

The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir by Thi Bui

Love and Rockets Library vol 2: Heartbreak Soup by Gilbert Hernandez

Deer Woman: An Anthology, edited by Elizabeth LaPensée and Weshoyot Alvitre

Victor LaValle's Destroyer, written by Victor LaValle and illustrated by Dietrich Smith

For Digital Purchase (Links on Canvas):

Fantastic Four #52 and #53, Marvel Comics

Tribal Force #1, by John Proudstar, Ron Joseph, Weshoyot Alvitre, and Lee Francis IV

El Peso Hero: Borderland, by Hector Rodriguez, Caanan White, and Chema

Available on Canvas

Additional comics, secondary readings on the historical and cultural context of each work (these will be uploaded and announced throughout the semester)

RESOURCES

comiXology.com

comiXology is a comic-book reader website. You can log in and read your books through the website, or you can get the comiXology app through the App Store, Google Play, or Amazon. You can download it to your tablet, phone, e-reader, or computer and link it to your Amazon account. Digital versions of *The Best We Could Do* and *Destroyer* are available; they cost significantly less than the print versions.

Comic Life 3 Software from plasq.com

If you're someone who's interested in creating your own comics—which will be an option for your final project—this software is great for that purpose. You can try it free for thirty days, or purchase it for \$30. **This is not a required purchase for the class.**

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you have a disability and need accommodations for this course, please contact the

Office of Disability Services. Call 715-346-3365, email dissv@uwsp.edu, or visit the Office in room 609 of the Learning Resource Center.

ABSENCE AND LATENESS POLICY

You will be given **two free absences** for the semester. Absences beyond those two will impact your participation grade (see grading criteria for explanation). Exceptions to this policy include absences for religious observances and/or course accommodations documented with Disability Services. Please ensure you arrive to class on time; **three tardies will count as an absence, and if you are more than fifteen minutes late, you will be marked as absent for the meeting.**

If you have to miss class, you are still responsible for turning in all assignments due on the date of your absence, and for completing assigned course readings. I would also advise contacting a classmate for notes. Please do not email me asking, "Did I miss anything?" The answer will always be, "Yes." If you need clarification of your classmates' notes, then you are welcome to contact me.

RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS

By UWSP policy, you must notify me of a pending absence due to a religious holy day within the first three weeks of class. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

Some of the assignments in this class will require the use of sources. When you use sources, you **must** cite them. MLA citation style is preferable but use any format with which you are familiar. The use of an unacknowledged source will result, *at minimum*, in your being required to redo the assignment for reduced credit. Depending on the nature and extent of the misuse, such behavior may result in a zero for the assignment or an F for the course. If you are unsure how to cite a source properly, please ask me. Other forms of academic dishonesty, such as purchasing work, copying the work of classmates, cheating on exams, etc., will also result in a major course penalty, including possible failure of the course. A report may also be submitted to the Dean of Students. For more information about UWSP's policies regarding academic misconduct, see: <http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/AcademicIntegrityBrochure.pdf>

EMAIL

Your UWSP email account is the university's standard method of communication with you, and you should check it regularly. I may at times use email to contact the class as a whole, or individual students; I will routinely use the course home page in Canvas for reminders and announcements.

Be advised that while I do check my email regularly throughout the week and on weekends, **I only read and respond to messages between 7AM-7PM.** Please contact me during those hours, unless it's an emergency.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Computers and tablets can be used for taking or referring to notes, checking Canvas, and/or accessing class materials. If I see you using these devices for purposes unrelated to our course, I will ask you to get back on task. Recurring problems may result in penalties including reduced participation grades and/or being marked tardy or absent for the class period(s) in question.

Cellphones should be out of sight and either turned off or silenced. If I see your phone out during class time, I will ask you to put it away. Refusal to comply with this policy will result in your being asked to leave the classroom. If you are expecting an urgent call, please let me know at the start of class. If you must take a call, please step out of the classroom as quickly and quietly as you can.

SAFE SPACE POLICY

We're all required to be respectful of each other's identities and opinions. There will be zero tolerance for slurs, derogatory language, harassment, or belittlement of ideas. If you need clarification, please refer to UWSP's Community Rights and Responsibilities Handbook (<http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/CommunityRights.pdf>). As a general rule, use common sense and treat others as you wish to be treated. If you feel unsafe in any class discussion, please speak to me immediately so that we can resolve the problem.

Some of the material that we cover may be triggering (i.e. produce an overwhelmingly negative physical and/or emotional response). I will always offer content warnings for such readings and/or viewings. If you suspect that a particular assignment will be triggering to you, then you and I can discuss how you would like to approach the material. I am happy to offer options including: stepping out of the classroom if discussion proves too intense, remaining quiet during class, and in extreme cases, skipping specific sections of our readings.

If you have any concerns about the class or the material, please come and talk to me so we can try to work out a solution as quickly as possible.

PERSONAL EMERGENCIES

Any student facing challenges that may affect their academic performance is encouraged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Such challenges may include

but are not limited to: mental or physical health crises, family crises, food insecurity, housing insecurity, financial insecurity, incidents of hate/bias, interpersonal violence, or sexual assault/harassment. Furthermore, please notify me if you feel comfortable doing so. That will enable me to provide any resources that I possess, including flexibility on assignment deadlines and/or attendance, or taking an incomplete in the course.

Be advised: **I am a mandatory reporter.** If you disclose to me that you have been a victim of sexual assault/harassment, hate/bias, or any crime, **I am required to inform the university.** Likewise, if you disclose to me that you are experiencing thoughts of self-harm, or have engaged in self-harm, **I must inform the university.** Think carefully about whether or not you would like to make a report before disclosing to me, or to any UWSP employee. If you do not want to report, but still want to let me know that you're dealing with a personal issue, you should speak in generalized terms.

If you've experienced any of the aforementioned issues, please check out the Campus and Community Resources page on Canvas. I've compiled a list of organizations and agencies you can turn to for help—both on-campus and off.

ASSESSMENT

UWSP regularly assesses the General Education Program (including this course) to ensure that we are providing you with the best education we can. As part of this effort, samples of student work may be shared, anonymously, with a small group of faculty members. If you have any questions about the assessment process or concerns about how your work may be used, please come talk with me.

GRADING AND REQUIREMENTS

Reading and preparation for class: For all class meetings, there will be assigned readings with specific suggestions of things to look for or to think about as you read. Doing the reading, thoughtfully, *before class* is necessary preparation for you to be able to participate fully in, and benefit from, the class meeting. You should also take some notes on your observations and reactions. I may call on individual students orally, have you write briefly about the reading early in class as a way to begin discussion.

Attendance and participation: You should attend class regularly and participate to the best of your ability. Class activities will include discussion and workshops. See page seven for grading criteria.

Reading quizzes: Throughout the semester, I will give several short reading quizzes to check that you've completed all assigned reading.

Reading responses: Reading responses will be informal, low-stakes writing assignments. They're meant to help you reflect on readings and explore ideas. Prompts for these will be posted on Canvas.

Essays: You'll write two short essays (3-4 pages). Details about these assignments, including grading criteria, will be provided in handouts, posted on Canvas, and discussed in class. The rough and final draft of each essay should be submitted to Canvas.

Self-Designed Final Research Project: You'll complete a final research project that you design on your own. This project can take a variety of forms—from a traditional essay, to a creative work, to a multimedia project. It can also tackle a variety of topics and texts, ranging from those we've discussed in class to those we haven't discussed, but in which you are personally interested. I'll provide you with a few possible subjects to get you started, but you'll need to conduct your own research and develop the parameters of your project.

Peer review: Major assignments must go through the peer review process—I will not accept projects that haven't been peer reviewed. On peer review days, you must bring a *completed* draft of your work. If you do not have a completed draft, you will be sent home and marked absent for that class period. If you have to miss class on a peer review day, or do not have your draft completed in time for peer review, it is *your responsibility* to find a classmate to review your work on his/her own time.

Peer review will count toward your participation grade (under the "contributions" category). For each workshop, you will complete a questionnaire that will be turned in for points credited. The quality of your answers to those questions will be used to determine your grade for the workshop—simple yes/no answers are unlikely to receive full credit. Take your time. Offer your classmates thorough, constructive, and thoughtful advice about how to improve their writing.

Revision: You will have the opportunity to revise one of your short essays. Your original grade and your revision grade will be averaged in order to determine your final score for that project. Details about revision expectations and deadlines will be included on the assignment sheet for that project.

Your grades will be determined using the following rubric:

Reading responses and quizzes	15%
Two short papers	40%
Final project	35%
Participation	10%

I will be using the plus/minus system for final grades. Please note: to ensure fairness, all numbers are absolute, and will not be rounded up or down at any stage. Thus a B- will be inclusive of all scores of 80.000 through 83.999.

A = 93-100	A- = 90-92	B+ = 87-89	B = 84-86	B- = 80-83	C+ = 77-79	C = 74-76
C- = 70-73	D+ = 67-69	D = 64-66	D- = 60-63	F = 0-60		

Criteria for Participation

	Ideal	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Attendance	Is present for the entirety of each class meeting, or (rarely) is absent for a compelling reason, which is shared with the instructor promptly.	Attends consistently (at least 85% of the time). Occasional absences or late arrival are mostly for a valid reason.	Missing class, arriving late, or leaving early, more than 15% of the time, or less often but without explanation.
Preparation	Always gives evidence of preparation when called on or quizzed.	Gives evidence of preparation when called on or quizzed at least 85% of the time.	Gives evidence of being unprepared more than 15% of the time.
Attentiveness	Consistently comes equipped (book, notebook, etc.) to class. Is always listening actively when not speaking.	Usually comes equipped and is listening actively when not speaking.	Attends to something other than class activities (e.g. texting, Facebook, studying for another class).
Quality of Contributions	Makes comments that stand out for the level of careful thought they demonstrate about the material and the unfolding conversation.		Makes comments that reflect inattentiveness to others' contributions, are irrelevant, or otherwise tend to derail the conversation.
Classroom Community	Improves the conversation in a significant way. (E.g. helps draw others out, makes extra effort to contribute if shy, etc.)		Impairs the conversation in a significant way. (E.g. dominates discussion, talks while others are talking, treats other students or their ideas with disrespect.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND LATE WORK:

Take-home assignments: In order to pass the course, you must complete every assignment. Take-home assignments are due *by the beginning of class* on the due date.

Late take-home assignments will lose a letter grade for each calendar day (note: not each class day) they are late. Extensions are negotiable if, knowing your own academic schedule and obligations, you anticipate needing more time for an assignment. **To request an extension, you must speak with me in person at least two calendar days before the assignment is due.** Together we will arrive on a later due date that must fit into the syllabus (i.e., the new due date must precede any other due dates for the unit). I will hold you to that new due date and deduct points if you miss it. **Do not e-mail me the night before something is due to ask for an extension; I will refuse. Plan ahead.**

You must build in time for possible technological failure ("my computer crashed") or contingency ("I left my flash drive with my paper on it at home"). **Late work is late, regardless of circumstance.**

In-class assignments and activities: In-class work (quizzes, exams, etc.) can **only** be made up under extraordinary, unavoidable circumstances. You must provide me with documentation of the reason for your absence.

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

Copies of all course documents and additional resources will be available in **Canvas**.

The **Tutoring-Learning Center**, located in the basement of the library (Room 018), can provide help with writing and many other skills you will need to succeed in college. Their regular hours are Monday – Thursday 9:00am – 8:00pm, Friday 9:00AM – 1:00PM. Appointments are recommended but not required. Phone 715-346-3568 or email tlctutor@uwsp.edu.

COURSE SCHEDULE

**Subject to change at instructor's discretion*

T 1/21	Introduction to the Course Definitions: What is a comic?
TH 1/23	Comics as Reading <i>Understanding Comics</i> chs. 1-3 Will Eisner, "Comics' as a Form of Reading" (Canvas)

- T 1/28** *Understanding Comics* chs. 4-5
Examine sample pages from *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan (Canvas)
- TH 1/30** *Understanding Comics* chs. 6-7
Wil Eisner's "The Frame" and "Writing and Sequential Art" (Canvas)
Examine sample pages from *Sixkiller* by Lee Francis and Weshoyot Alvitre (Canvas)
Due by midnight Saturday: Reading Response 1
- T 2/4** **Reading Quiz 1**
Histories of Racism and Stereotyping in Comics
Read "Racism as a Stylistic Choice and Other Notes" by Jet Heer; "Black Skins' and White Masks" by Marc Singer; and "From Subhuman to Superhuman" by Cornel Pewewardy (Canvas)
- TH 2/6** Early Artists of Color
Read selections from Jackie Ormes's *Torchy Brown*, Gus Arriola's *Gordo*, Henry Kiyama's *The Four Immigrants Manga*, and Eva Mirabal's *G.I. Gertie* (Canvas)
- T 2/11** Superhero Comics
Read *Fantastic Four* #52 and #53 (Format TBA)
Read "Birth of the Cool" by Adilifu Nama (Canvas)
- TH 2/13** Read *Tribal Force* #1 (Canvas) – (**content warning:** incest)
Read "Alter/Native Heroes" by C. Richard King (Canvas)
Due by midnight Saturday: Topic Proposal for Short Essay One
- T 2/18** Read *El Peso Hero*, "Borderland" (Canvas)
Read "Latinos Strike Back" by Frederick Luis Aldama (Canvas)
- TH 2/20** **PEER REVIEW SHORT ESSAY ONE**
- T 2/25** **Revision Workshop**
- TH 2/27** **Reading Quiz 2**
Underground Comix/Alternative Comics
Read *Heartbreak Soup* pgs. 6-56 (**content warning:** grooming, statutory rape)
- T 3/3** **SHORT ESSAY ONE DUE**
Read *Heartbreak Soup* pgs. 67-99

- TH 3/5** Read *Heartbreak Soup* pgs. 137-63 (**content warning:** domestic abuse, statutory rape)
Read "Los Bros. Hernandez" by Ana Merino (Canvas)
Due by Saturday at midnight: Reading Response 2
- T 3/10** Read *Heartbreak Soup* pgs.170-92 and pgs. 228-39
Read "Out of Sequence" by Patrick Hamilton (Canvas)
- TH 3/12** Read *Heartbreak Soup* pgs. 240-end (**content warning:** sexual exploitation of a minor)
Due by Saturday at midnight: Topic Proposal for Short Essay Two
- T 3/17** **SPRING BREAK**
- TH 3/19** **SPRING BREAK**
- T 3/24** **PEER REVIEW SHORT ESSAY TWO**
- TH 3/26** Small Presses and Independent Comics of Today
Read "A Milestone Development" by Jeffrey Brown and "Independent Voices" by Michael Sheyahshe (Canvas)
Visit websites for Native Realities Press, Blue Corn Comics, Milestone Media, Latinographix
- T 3/31** **SHORT ESSAY TWO DUE**
Read *Destroyer* chs. 1-3
Read "Introduction" from *Black Frankenstein* by Cathy Young (Canvas)
- TH 4/2** **Reading Quiz 3**
Read *Destroyer* chs. 4-6
- F 4/3** **LAST DROP DAY**
- T 4/7** Read *Deer Woman* through "Her Name is Paŋki· Xa' t̥cin" (**content warning:** sexual assault and sex trafficking)
Read "At the Mercy of the State" by Sarah Deer (Canvas)
- TH 4/9** Finish *Deer Woman* (**content warning:** sexual assault and domestic violence)
Due by Saturday at midnight: Reading Response 3
- T 4/14** Unit IV: Graphic Novels
Read "Preface" and Chs. 1-2 of *The Best We Could Do* (**content warning:** child death)

- Read "Critical Questions" by Andrew Kunka (Canvas)
- TH 4/16** Read chs. 3-5 of *The Best We Could Do* (**content warning:** domestic violence)
Due by Saturday at midnight: Reading Response 4
- T 4/21** Read chs. 6-7 of *The Best We Could Do*
Read "Illustrating Diaspora" by Catherine Nguyen (Canvas)
- TH 4/23** **Reading Quiz 4**
Finish *The Best We Could Do*
- T 4/28** **Library Research Day (ALB 316)**
- TH 4/30** Read *The Boat* (Canvas)
Read "Enhanced Web Comics" by Josip Batinić (Canvas)
Due by Saturday at midnight: Topic proposal and bibliography for final project
- T 5/5** **Individual Conferences**
- TH 5/7** **PEER REVIEW FINAL PROJECT**
- M 5/11** **Final projects and revised essays due by 12:15PM**

