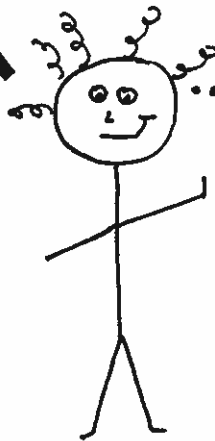




# HISTORY AND THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

FALL 2011



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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to History 490Q! This research seminar is devoted to sustained, critical investigation of the relationships among words, pictures, and reading in history by thinking deeply with and about comics and graphic novels.

Your guide for the term is Carla Nappi. If she had a superhero alter ego, it would be Sauce.<sup>1</sup> You can find her during office hours in BuTo 1109 ("The Gravy Boat") on Mondays from 10-12, or email her at [carla.nappi@ubc.ca](mailto:carla.nappi@ubc.ca) to set up an appointment for another time.

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## GOALS

At its most elemental level, we historians are essentially in the business of telling stories. One goal of this seminar is to explore the relationship of historical storytelling to its media (time, space, words, images) by introducing a fascinating genre of storytelling that might not, at first blush, seem obviously related to history. We will be explicitly adopting a trans-disciplinary

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<sup>1</sup> **Code Name:** Sauce  
**Actual ID:** Carla Nappi  
**Super Power:** Ability to spontaneously generate gravies, relishes, and other condiments out of thin air from sheer force of will  
**Superhero Catchphrase:** "It's SAUCIN' TIME!"  
**Cape or No Cape?** Definitely no cape.

or interdisciplinary approach in our work as historians this term. Another goal of the seminar, then, is to help introduce you to the particular questions, approaches, potentially great opportunities, and potentially massive pitfalls of writing and thinking history using tools from other disciplines. As the major written product of your work in this seminar will be a substantial research paper, an additional major goal is of course to help train you in the methods and nuances of conceiving of a research question, transforming it through research, and manifesting it in your own original written work as a historian.



## REQUIREMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

**VOICE:** You each have one, and my job is to help you inform, refine, and project it this term. Over the course of the semester, you will be developing your own research agendas - thus, it is critical for you to start thinking (from Day One) about how to bring your own work into the discussion. Come see me any time to talk about ways to develop your research in directions inspired by our class discussions.

### **REQUIREMENTS:**

1. **Reading and Thinking.** Throughout the seminar, you are expected to complete the readings thoughtfully and come to class prepared to engage in sustained and thoughtful conversations with your colleagues. Let us know when you are excited, perplexed, confused, or otherwise surprised by what you are reading. Ask questions and listen carefully to your peers. Share your ideas. Take notes while reading. Join us each week having completed the reading and the written assignments. (Come to class! Attendance is critical to your success in the course.) As you think about each week's material in the context of the seminar, make sure to emphasize ways that these sources can help us interrogate historical documents in a new way.

2. **Weekly Thinkpieces.** Post, by Sunday at noon, one fantastic thing stemming from your reading that you're prepared to talk about in class. This can take any number of forms: a question, a paragraph, a sentence, one very very very very carefully chosen word or image. As the term progresses, I will refine this weekly assignment as necessary. The point of these is for me to see something of what each of you is thinking about the readings each week before we come together as a group to talk about it.
3. **Acting as Seminar Guru for One Week.** You will take turns leading a session of the seminar by presenting an overview of the reading, including a discussion of major themes and critiques of the work, and presenting questions for discussion. In preparation for leading seminar, you will be asked to write a 3-5 page (typed, double-spaced) response essay instead of the week's thinkpiece. Please also come to seminar armed with basic biographical information on the author or authors of the week: Who are they? What else have they worked on? Where do they typically like to go out for a nice dinner? Your 3-5 page response essay should: 1. Provide a brief overview of the major themes in the week's case study and other reading; 2. Venture some ideas as to how the week's reading materials related to each other and to historical practice; and 3. Present questions for discussion that reflect your careful reading of the week's material. We will be posting response essays on our Vista site for the course. Please post your response essay no later than **Sunday at noon of each week** so that we all have time to read and carefully consider your deep thoughts.
4. **Reading the Week's Response Essay.** Everyone should read the weekly response essays carefully before the seminar meeting on Tuesday. During the seminar the week's leader will (briefly and for no more than 5-10 minutes!!!) open the discussion, and will be expected to

occasionally jump in and lead us all down The Path of Right Thinking when we go astray.

5. **Completing the Final Research Paper and its Assorted Components on Time.** As with most 490 seminars, you are required to complete an original research paper on a topic of your choosing by the conclusion of the course. For your final research paper, you can choose to either focus on comic books as primary sources, and/or use the course material as a methodological jumping-off point for a paper in your topical area of passion and expertise. Each member of the seminar should meet with The Management individually in the first weeks of the term to talk about possible directions for the final paper.

**EMAIL: IT IS VITAL** that you check your UBC email regularly, as email is the primary medium I will use to contact you about the course.

Above all, approach our discussions online and in person with respect for your colleagues and yourself. And have fun.

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GRADING

The grading for the course will be assessed as follows:



Participation in class and online 30%

- This involves being an active and thoughtful participant in discussions
- This involves posting a brief thinkpiece about the week's reading material to the course Vista site each week by noon on the Sunday before we meet!

- This involves leading seminar as the Seminar Guru for one week

**30%** Interim assignments along the way to the final paper 20%

- Title, Abstract (with thesis!) and preliminary bibliography due Sept 30
- Outline with introduction, conclusion, and annotated bibliography due Oct 28
- First draft due Nov 18
- Brief 5-minute oral presentation of first draft (to be presented Weeks 11-13)
- Peer review of a colleague's first draft due Nov 25

**40%** Final draft of research paper 40%

- Due by 5 pm December 09, submitted via email to The Management

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THE COURSE VISTA SITE

The course Vista site will effectively be our virtual classroom for the semester. Make friends with it!

Log in with your CWL. Click on Tab for "HIST 490Q - 101 - 102 - Seminar for Majors in History - 2011W - Nappi" The "Course Tools" on the left side of the page lists all of the course components, including the Thinkpiece boards and Seminar Guru Response Essays (in "Discussions"). To post to our Vista site:

1. Click "Discussions"
2. Click on the discussion board for the week ("Week 2 Thinkpieces," etc.)

3. To post a new thread, click the bar for "Create Message" and follow the directions. You can also post attachments.

And so on, and so on. Lather, rinse, repeat. If you have trouble logging in with your CWL, ask the Vista Helpdesk using the online form or telephone number available here:

<http://www.elearning.ubc.ca/lms/student-resources/#getting-help>

Most weeks, we will be pairing a case study reading (comics!) with a short methodological piece or pieces on visuality, text, and image. Almost all of the short pieces are available online as indicated in the Weekly Schedule, below.

The case studies comprise the following required texts, all available on reserve in Koerner Library and for purchase in the UBC Bookstore:

1. Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*
2. Shaun Tan, *The Arrival*
3. Joe Sacco, *Footnotes in Gaza*
4. Jacobson, *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation*
5. Spiegelman, *In the Shadow of No Towers* [on reserve in Koerner]
6. Spiegelman, *The Complete Maus* (I & II)
7. Tardi, *It Was the War of the Trenches*
8. Bryan Talbot, *Alice in Sunderland*
9. Alan Moore, *The Watchmen*
10. Chris Ware, *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*
11. Ba and Moon, *Daytripper*
12. David B., *Epileptic*
13. Ben Katchor, *The Cardboard Valise*

Read each short methodological piece actively, keeping the following questions in mind: What is the author's main argument? How does the author conceptualize texts, images, and/or their relationship? How does this conceptualization help us, and how can it specifically help you think about images, words, and text as they shape history and historical practice? Reading to answer these questions is more important than obsessing over the details within a given study. You are encouraged at every step of the way to bring your own historical interests, materials, and case studies into the discussion!

**6****ATTENDANCE, DEADLINES, ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

**ATTENDANCE AND DEADLINES:** I expect to see you all each week. The Management practices Random Acts of Attendance-Taking, so consider yourself forewarned. More than one absence over the term will start to impact your grade. Late assignments (including papers and required posts to the Vista board) will be docked 5 points per day late.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** All work in this class must be your own, and assignments found to be plagiarized will receive a failing grade. Do not cut-and-paste from websites, do not copy others' words or ideas without citing the source, and do not hand in work that you have also handed in (or will hand in) for another class. Familiarize yourself with UBC's definitions of and policies regarding plagiarism: <http://www.library.ubc.ca/clc/airc.html>, and come talk to The Management if you have any questions about this, at any time.

**7****RESEARCH SKILLS REQUIREMENT**

1. Every student in a HIST 490 (or its 403, 466 and 468 equivalent) is required to take a library skills seminar in September or in January. The purpose of the seminar is to ensure all History Department majors will




- have at least a basic familiarity with the holdings of the UBC library system, the different kinds of research resources available to them, and how to find them for their coursework and research papers.
2. Students should sign up for the seminars via the History department website. The seminars are scheduled for the first month or so of the term. Students must go on-line to find out when and where to attend the workshop.
  3. Every student who completes the workshop must fill out a paper receipt which will be sent back to their instructor to show that they have taken the class.

<b>8</b>	<b>THE WEEKLY SCHEDULE<sup>2</sup></b>
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**Week 2**  **13 SEPT**      *INTRO: COMICS, HISTORY, AND YOU*

**READINGS:** Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*

**Week 3**  **20 SEPT**      *IMAGES AND STORYTELLING*

**READINGS:** Jacques Tardi, *It Was the War of the Trenches*  
 W.J.T. Mitchell, "What is an Image?" *New Literary History* 15.3  
 (Spring 1984): 503-537. [Available via the UBC library  
 website on JSTOR]  
 John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*.

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<sup>2</sup> The Management (a.k.a. "Sauce") reserves the right to alter this during the term in response to the changing needs of the class.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnfB-pUm3eI> [Watch episodes 1-4]

**Week 4**



27 SEPT

**MEMORY, ORAL HISTORY, AND VISUAL  
REPORTAGE**

**READINGS:** Joe Sacco, *Footnotes in Gaza*

Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message"

<http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/theory/Media-1-1.html> (Excerpts from *Understanding Media, The Extensions of Man*, Part I, 2nd Edition; originally published, 1964).

Interview with Joe Sacco, *The Believer* June 2011

[http://www.believermag.com/issues/201106/?read=interview\\_sacco](http://www.believermag.com/issues/201106/?read=interview_sacco)

**Week 5**



04 OCT

**IMAGING BIOGRAPHY**

**READINGS:** Art Spiegelman, *The Complete Maus* (I & II)

Hillary Chute, "History and Graphic Representation in *Maus*," *Twentieth Century Literature* 52.2 (Summer 2006), 199-230. [UBC library website]

Supplementary: *The Search* and Harvey Pekar, *American Splendor*

**WEEK 6**



11 OCT

***IMAGES, COGNITION, AND VISUAL CULTURE***

**READINGS:** Art Spiegelman *In The Shadow of No Towers*  
Jacobson & Colón, *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation*  
<http://www.cse.buffalo.edu/~rapaport/575/F01/lakoff.on.terrorism.html>

Supplementary: Kristiaan Versluys, "Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers*: 9/11 and the Representation of Trauma," *MFS* 52.4 (Winter 2006), 980-1003 (Access via UBC Library Online Catalog)

**WEEK 7**



18 OCT

***TEXT AS IMAGE, IMAGE AS TIME***

**READINGS:** Jimmy Corrigan: *The Smartest Kid on Earth*  
Gene Kannenberg, Jr., "The Comics of Chris Ware," in Heer & Worcester, eds., *The Comics Studies Reader* (University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 306-324.  
Thomas A. Brehehoft, "Comics Architecture, Multidimensionality, and Time: Chris Ware's Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth," *MFS* 52.4 (Winter 2006), 869-890 (Access via UBC Library Online Catalog)

**WEEK 8**



25 OCT

***IMAGE AS TEXT***

**READINGS:** Shaun Tan, *The Arrival*

**WEEK 9**

01 NOV

**MIXED MEDIA, LOCAL HISTORY**

- READINGS:** Bryan Talbot, *Alice in Sunderland*  
Susan Sontag, "Photography" *New York Review of Books* 20.6  
(October 18, 1973) [Access through NYRB "Print Archive"  
via UBC Library]  
Sontag, "Photography Unlimited," *NYRB* June 23 1977  
Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," in *Image-Music-Text*  
(London: Wm. Collins Sons and Co., 1977), 32-51. [On  
reserve in Koerner]

**WEEK 10**

08 NOV

**IMAGE, STORY, ARCHIVE**

- READINGS:** Ben Katchor, *The Cardboard Valise*  
Jared Gardner, "Archives, Collectors, and the New Media  
Work of Comics," *Modern Fiction Studies* 52.4 (Winter  
2006), 787-806 (Access via UBC Library Online Catalog)  
K.A. Appiah, "Whose Culture Is It?" *NYRB* 53.2 (Feb 9,  
2006)  
[http://mfs.uchicago.edu/upcoming/culture/readings/appiah  
.pdf](http://mfs.uchicago.edu/upcoming/culture/readings/appiah.pdf)

**WEEK 11**

15 NOV

**GRAPHIC HISTORY**

- READINGS:** Alan Moore, *The Watchmen*  
**FIRST DRAFT ORAL PRESENTATIONS, PT 1**

**WEEK 12**



22 NOV

*IMAGINING THE NORMAL*

**READINGS:** David B., *Epileptic*

Sontag, "AIDS and its Metaphors," *NYRB* October 27,  
1988

Sontag, "Images of Illness," *NYRB* February 9, 1978

**FIRST DRAFT ORAL PRESENTATIONS, PT 2**

**WEEK 13**



29 NOV

*IMAGES, CHARACTER, AND TIME*

**READINGS:** Ba and Moon, *Daytripper*

**FIRST DRAFT ORAL PRESENTATIONS, PT 3**