BAM 70500-02 | FALL 2023
The Art of Visual Memory: Exploring and creating
biography and memoir in the Graphic Novel format

Tuesdays, 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM
In Person | 3 credits

Professor:

Sara Gómez Woolley

SJWoolley@citytech.cuny.edu

COURSE SITE:

https://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/

bam-70500-02-visualmemory/

*Daily Class Supplies:

• Graph Paper, or bulleted notebook (no spiral binding)

• Pencils, Erasers, Sharpeners

• Drawing Pens .005- .05 (Microns)

• Black ball point pen (something

that wont bleed through paper)

Required Hardware:

Mac or PC

Scanner

Optional Hardware:

Tablets (Wacom, Huion, iPad Pro)

Suggested Software:

MS Word or similar

Adobe CS

* PLEASE SEE FULL SUPPLY LIST ON

COURSE SITE

Course Overview

In this hands-on course, students will explore the genre of biography and memoir as expressed through comics. Through readings, written responses, discussion, and hands-on assignments, we will examine the diversity, long-tradition, and power of life writing in the comic book medium.

This course is appropriate for all levels of familiarity with drawing and art making. Students will be encouraged to work in a variety of creative media - but individual project outcomes will be tailored to each student's specific expertise and interest in the genre. Coursework will focus on learning the "language of comics", (panels, pages, timing, beats, etc.) with the goal of applying that language to create original sequential illustration projects such that combine words and images to tell personal narratives.

Through active, creative practice in the medium, we will examine the relationship between words and images in this exciting form of writing where both parts are meant to be read.

 3 Credits, 4 Hours

Philosophy

THIS IS A COURSE FOR MAKERS.

Everyone has a meaningful story to tell. Whether you went to art school, or you haven't picked up a pencil since kindergarten, there's no difference. We all have access to a creative visual voice.   It is the goal of this course to help each student find and develop their unique "visual voice" and to help them express their peronal narratives in comics format as quickly as possible.

Comics are language. Every language can be learned. Comics have a distict grammar set made up of language parts composed of BOTH words and images. (Realistic drawing is NOT one of the requirements of this language.)

You'll find this course is front loaded with language aquisition tools, and idea generation tools. The majority of your effort in this course will be spent on conceptualizing and producing creative work, with the goal of gaining fluency.

We will read many comics and prose texts together with the goal of inspiring and supporting our writing practice. However, the anaylsis of these readings is not the main focus of the course, nor where the bulk of your time will be spent.

MAKE IT BY HAND

The majority of course work will be done by hand. (At least to conceptualize!) It is my firm belief that marks made on paper have a direct line to the brain and to the heart. You will be able to use all the devices - tablets, ipads, laptops, phones… but we will start our creative work BY HAND, and your in class assignments will be created and completed by hand.

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Grading System

• CRAFT 25%

Each week there will be an in - class activity or assignment. These are short form, hands on
projects which are meant for learning, practice, and experiementation in the comics format.
You will begin them in class and will be expected to share them for critique in the following
week. These are not individually graded assignments. Their value is as part of the learning
process, independent of the final outcome.

• COMMUNITY 25%

This class is planned to function as a creative crucible! In order to do so we need to build
an active writing community to share ideas, critique work, cowork and support. There are
multiple channels to participate in building our class culture factored into the overall grading
system.

In this course you are expected to help to grow and care for our creative community. Here are
some ideas of waysto contribute:

Participate in our DISCORD (required)

Moderate our DISCORD

Facilitate Reading Discussions

Design, Edit, and Layout our class anthology. (Help!)

Solicit feedback on your work in process (Discord and in class)

Critique each other's work (Discord and in class)

Knowledge Share! - We all come from a range of diverse experiences and spaces
of expertise. PLEASE volunteer to share your knowledge!

• FINAL PROJECT 50%

Though there will be multiple projects throught the semester (see CRAFT) there will be only
one graded assignment. Students will work over the course of the semester on one Memoir,
Biography, or Auto Bio project that will be proposed by week 3 of the semester and is due on
week 15. Comic length, medium, and other outcomes will be tailored to the individual project
and author.

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Course Structure

This is an in person course with an online course home on the OPEN LAB and a DISCORD for asynchronous critique and discussion.

READING & REFLECTION: (approx. 1/3 of class time)

We will read every week and analyze works looking at both CONTENT and FORMAL considerations. Our dual goal is to build fluency in the language of comics, and knowledge of the genre, thereby enabling us to become storytellers who speak in the comic book medium.

Students will respond to our weekly reading in 2 ways:

1- In the form of a physical "book report". Each book you read will spur a drawing and reflection. This is for the purpose of slowing us down so that you we can access and process using our creative mind, as well as our analytic one. Assume that each book report will take 20- 30 min.

2- By posting questions asynchronously in our class DISCORD. Each week 2 students will lead a discussion of the book we have read in class, incorporating some of the questions and themes brought up by their cohort.

ACTIVITIES & LECTURE: (approx. 1/3 of class time)

We will use many different games and activities as a method of introducing concepts and getting creative work flowing. Come prepared to create.

IN CLASS WORK: Each week you'll have a series of creative prompts and short comics activities aimed at teaching the formal principles of the comics medium and getting speaking loudly and clearly in your comics voice. These will be fun and funny or sometimes hard and heavy and will require that you take risks creatively. You may not complete them all in class but you are always encouraged to post them to the DISCORD prior to the next week. You are NOT graded on them, so be BOLD!

OUT OF CLASS WORK: Keep a diary. We all have a story to tell. To help us reflect and to become more aware of our experiences and the characters, details, and settings that make them come to life, you are asked to keep a daily diary. Use the same graph paper notebook that you use for class. You'll be writing and drawing in this book as part of your diary about 15 - 20 minutes daily. You are encouraged to do this at the end of your day, on your way home, on your commute, or while you eat your dinner - anywhere you can make the space in your life to reflect. You'll be given a specific format for your entries. Some of these will funnel into in class assignments - and perhaps even your final project.

CRITIQUE & STUDIO WORK: (approx. 1/3 of class time)

Critiques

To create work in the biography and memoir genre is to make oneself vulnerable. This community is a safe space, and studnets are asked to consider their critiques and discussions mindfully and with positive intention. Each student will present his/her work for critique using appropriate vocabulary. Each student will anaylse and evaluate the work of others using appropriate vocabulary and with the purpose of betterment.

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Projected Schedule*

AUG 29 | Week 1 - INTRODUCTIONS & FINDING YOUR VOICE

IN CLASS INTRODUCTION ACTIVITIES

DISCUSS: Whats Your Why?

Introduction: Review academic policies, go over syllabus, course calendar, asynch resources

CRITIQUE GUIDE : EFFORT, TIME , CARE, GROWTH, STORY, CRAFT, CLARITY (not rendering.)

DISCUSSION: About this course:

Craft, Community, and Culture! - Discuss course structure and establish guidelines.
Reading VS. Making - This is a course for MAKERS!

Broad Overview of Genres and Styles - Biography and Memoir in Comics.

Look at Reading List / Introduce Reading Response Structure / Introduce Class Discord

DISCUSSION: What is Sequential Art? (a.k.a Comics) Discuss Class Relationship with Comics

LECTURE: THE LANGUAGE OF COMICS: an Over View. Reading order, Writing, Panel, Gutter, Tier, Flow & Eye Track, Beats & Timing, Point Of View ,Shot Choice, Pagination/ Page Turn. -- CHARACTER (We start here!)

DISCUSSION: Do we need to DRAW to make comics? NO! (...but it helps.)

Value of a sketch book. Why work and write by hand?

INTRO: Ivan Brunetti & Lynda Barry

IN CLASS ACTIVITY: Ivan Brunetti Self Portrait

DISCUSSION: Our First Character - exploration of self / personal voice. What is VOICE in Comics? What you choose to say and how you choose to say it. Value of Daily Diary for life writing

IN CLASS ACTIVITY: Meet the Artist - Share Week 2. (Begin in class)

Create a "meet the artist" page in your sketchbook with a comics version of yourself as a method of exploring your voice. Challenge yourself to consider multiple ways of using words + image to create meaning. Infographics, cross sections, embedded text (in a background or item?) , maps, dialogue, signage, sound effects, captions, are all options.

Homework: In Sketchbook (aim for 5) DAILY DIARY PAGES, (1) READING & RESPONSE (make a book report!), Complete Meet the Artist Page. (Discuss Level of Finish) *KEEP IT SIMPLE*

READ: SEE READING LIST

SEP 05 | Week 2 WORDS + IMAGE = MEANING

Student Lead Reading Response & Share - 30 min

Share Homework 1

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LECTURE: WORDS + IMAGE = MEANING , SHOW OR TELL!

DISCUSSION: What are some of the ways words and images interact in comics? Where do we see writing in comics?   How might the meaning of a drawing change when combined with different words?

IN CLASS ACTIVITY (1,2): Movie Quotes / New Yorker Captions

LECTURE: The 1 Panel COMIC (as an art form and as it relates to Autobio)

IN CLASS ACTIVITY (3): (1 panel comic Brunetti)

IN CLASS ACTIVITY (4): (1 panel comic, Overheard in NY!

Homework: In Sketchbook (aim for 5) DAILY DIARY PAGES, (1) READING & RESPONSE (make a book report!), Complete 1 Panel Comics (aim for 5) based on Diary.
READ: SEE READING LIST

SEP 12 | Week 3 MULTI PANEL STORYTELLING

Student Lead Reading Response & Share - 30 min

Share Homework 2

INTRODUCE CRITIQUE GUIDE: Clarity, Reading Order, Rhythm, Writing, Craft, Story Structure, & Content

LECTURE: I am a time lord! - TIME as it relates to comics: Gutter , Sequence, & Closure
IN CLASS ACTIVITY Its About TIME!

LECTURE: Now Strip! : Multi-Panel Storytelling & The 3 panel gag!

(SPOILER - You're now comics writers. This is the basic story arc - Beginning, middle & ending.)

DEMO: Non-photo blue pencil Sketching Techniques (We will begin to play in ink next week.)

INTRODUCE FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL: Due Week 5

Homework: In Sketchbook (aim for 5) DAILY DIARY PAGES, (1) READING & RESPONSE (make a book report!), Create a Comic Strip (or a few!) (3 or 4-panel) - Look to your diary as a space to begin. Consider story arc and how words and image work together to tell story. - Share Week 4.

READ: SEE READING LIST

SEP 19 | Week 4 COMICS GRAMMAR
Student Lead Reading Response & Share - 30 min

Share Homework 3
LECTURE: How to Read Comics…. Welcome to PAGES! (Reading order, Tiers, Flow & Eye Track, Beats & Timing)

REVIEW: Closure

IN CLASS ACTIVITY - 5 Card Nancy "Practice Closure" - J. Abel / Scott McCloud

LECTURE: More on Personal Narratives in Comics - Memior and Biography in Short Form

DISCUSS - Final Project Proposal

IN CLASS ACTIVITY: Two Truths and A Lie (we all have a story!)

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DEMO: Inking Techniques & Practice

ACTIVITY: Beginning Inking techniques: hands-on practice.

*Homework: In Sketchbook (aim for 5) DAILY DIARY PAGES, (1) READING & RESPONSE (make a book report!), (1) Inking Practice Page

Final project Checkpoint: Proposal Due Next Week. Share: Your WHY. Inspirational images, Characters, and Broad Story Beats.

READ: SEE READING LIST

SEP 26 | Week 5 *PROPOSAL DAY! *

*SKIP SHARE of Homework 3 (share on DISCORD)

*SKIP READING RESPONSE (share on DISCORD)

PROPOSALS: Each student takes 5 minutes for Proposal - 2 minutes for Q&A

LECTURE : Story as Iceberg - Before We Script... research and development deep dive!

ACTIVITY: Open Studio Time - BRING any materials you have written so far to workshop and share. Bring your current reseach. Bring multiple ideas to workshop if you have them.

Homework : In Sketchbook (aim for 5) DAILY DIARY PAGES, (1) READING & RESPONSE (make a book report!), (1) Inking Practice Page

Final project Checkpoint: ICEBERG Research! - Yes it matters what your main character ate for breakfast, that he didnt wear socks, and that the car he drove had a smelly exhaust. At this point it is not important if a detail makes it INTO the story. You want to have sights, sounds, smells, and tastes. (Setting, Character, Plot) Begin accumulating the referece files for your story background. Use PINTREST / DROPBOX/ NOTION etc.
READ: SEE READING LIST

Final project Checkpoint:For next class have a list of the main story BEATS. 1-2 sentances answering "AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED?"

OCT 03 | Week 6 SCRIPT & LAYOUT
Student Lead Reading Response & Share - 30 min

Share Reasearch Icebergs & Main Story Beats

DISCUSSION: Lets make a comic! But... where to Begin?

IN CLASS ACTIVITY - Each one Teach one! - (Create a How to or A Recipe Comic)

LECTURE: From STORY BEATS, to SCRIPT and LAYOUT

Thumbnails & Methods, multiple ways to work.

LECTURE: STORY ARC and PAGINATION - Planning your comic

IN CLASS ACTIVITY - Begin Final Project Script and Layout

Homework: In Sketchbook (aim for 5) DAILY DIARY PAGES, (1) READING & RESPONSE (make a book report!), (1) Inking Practice Page, Complete a one page "How to" or Recipe Comic, share week 7

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READ: SEE READING LIST

Final Project Checkpoint: Thumbnailed Layout & Draft Script should be done for Week 7

OCT 10 | MONDAY SCHEDULE

OCT 17 | Week 7 POINT OF VIEW

Student Lead Reading Response & Share - 30 min

Share One Page Comic

LECTURE: POINT OF VIEW & CAMERA ANGLE- using Camera Angles and Shots to enhance the drama of your story.

LECTURE: Simple Storyboards & Composition Basics

VIDEO & DEMO: Storyboarding

Homework: In Sketchbook (aim for 5) DAILY DIARY PAGES, (1) READING & RESPONSE (make a book report!), (1) Inking Practice Page, Choose a film or animation you admire. Choose a scene. In your Sketchbook storyboard that scene. Brunetti Style - keep it simple , Share week 8

READ: SEE READING LIST

Final Project Checkpoint: Tight Layout & Refined Script should be done for Week 8

OCT 24 | Week 8 CHARACTER
Student Lead Reading Response & Share - 30 min

Share Storyboards

LECTURE: Storytelling and Character Development.

ACTIVITY: PROMPT-A-PALOOZA

DEMO: SHOWING EMOTION

*Homework: In Sketchbook (aim for 5) DAILY DIARY PAGES, (1) READING & RESPONSE (make a book report!), (1) Inking Practice Page, Complete ideas spurred during Prompt-a-Palooza!

READ: SEE READING LIST

Final Project Checkpoint: Make Edits Based on Character Development. Finalize Script.

OCT 31 | Week 9 BREAKING THE RULES

Student Lead Reading Response & Share - 30 min

Share Character Prompt-a-Palooza!

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LECTURE : MAPS, BORDERLESS COMICS, POLYPTYCHS, and "SUPER PANELS"

DISCUSS: "11 Nightwings, One Panel", Gasoline Alley, Chris Ware -Jimmy Corrigan

IN CLASS ACTIVITY: MAP IT! - Show your character's journey

DEMO: Traditional Comics Workflow

Homework: In Sketchbook (aim for 5) DAILY DIARY PAGES, (1) READING & RESPONSE (make a book report!), (1) Inking Practice Page, Complete Character Journey Map.

READ: SEE READING LIST

Final Project Checkpoint: Thumbnails drawings become Tight Pencil Drawings - Make Last edits to Layout.

NOV 07 | Week 10 MAGIC & VISUAL METAPHOR

Student Lead Reading Response & Share - 30 min

Share Character Map

LECTURE: Where memoir meets Magic

DISCUSSION: Where is the line between memoir and fiction? When metaphor, folktale and personification are used in Life Writing - is it still life writing?
ACTIVITY: CHARACTER RECIPE

Homework: In Sketchbook (aim for 5) DAILY DIARY PAGES, (1) READING & RESPONSE (make a book report!), (1) Inking Practice Page, Complete a 1 - 2 page "Recipe" comic for your character.

READ: SEE READING LIST

NOV 14 | Week 11

Student Lead Reading Response & Share - 30 min

Share Character Recipe

DISSCUSSION: DIALOGUE

What to do with a character that wont stop talking!

DICUSSION: Wally Wood's 22 panels (that always work!)
Share 22' Panels

DEMO: Finalizing techniques & What about Lettering?

ACTIVITY: STUDIO TIME

Homework: In Sketchbook (aim for 5) DAILY DIARY PAGES, (1) READING & RESPONSE (make a book report!), (1) Inking Practice Page, Make your own veriosn of WALLY WOOD's 22 panels.

READ: SEE READING LIST

NOV 21 | Week 12 FORMATS FOR ILLUSTRATED LIFE WRITING

Student Lead Reading Response & Share - 30 min

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Share Your 22 Panels

LECTURE: Formats for Illustrated Life Writing (picture book, Comics, and Blended Forms)

DEMO: Printing and Pagination

ACTIVITY: 8 page collaborative mini comic

ACTIVITY: STUDIO TIME

Homework: In Sketchbook (aim for 5) DAILY DIARY PAGES, (1) READING & RESPONSE (make a book report!), (1) Inking Practice Page

READ: SEE READING LIST

Final Project Checkpoint: SHARE FINAL ART in Progress For FEEDBACK

NOV 28 | Week 13 STUDIO TIME

Student Lead Reading Response & Share - 30 min

DISCUSSION: ANTHOLOGY ROLES & CRITIQUE GROUPS

ACTIVITY: STUDIO TIME

Homework: In Sketchbook (aim for 5) DAILY DIARY PAGES, (1) READING & RESPONSE (make a book report!)

READ: SEE READING LIST

DEC 05 | Week 14 STUDIO TIME

Student Lead Reading Response & Share - 30 min

GUEST SPEAKER

Homework: In Sketchbook (aim for 5) DAILY DIARY PAGES, (1) READING & RESPONSE (make a book report!)

READ: SEE READING LIST

DEC 12 | READING DAY - STUDIO TIME

DEC 19 | Week 15 - FINAL PROJECT

Each student is required to produce printed copies of their comics to share with the class and instructor.

(DIGITAL Final Anthology submission due to be uploaded to DROPBOX)

*This is a flexible schedule and is subject to change.

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READING LIST

Please note, we will be reading books both for learning the craft of comics making as well as for inspiration. Most of these books are available from the library. Those denoted with a * are to be used in the first two weeks and would be worth buying your own copy.

This comics courseis both an instruction on craft and a creative writing workshop. With that in mind I've added The Anti Racist Writing Workshop by Felicia Rose Chavez, to our required read-ing. It is not a comic book we will be analysing together, but rather is a philosophy which will underpin how we relate to eachother's creative practice.

Our inspirational book list is long and will be updated on the course site.

 BOOKS ON CRAFT

*Understanding Comics - Scott McCloud

*Cartooning Philosophy and Practice - Ivan Brunetti

*Making Comics - Lynda Barry

Drawing Comics - Robyn Chapman

Writing in Pictures, Drawing in Words - Jessica Abel (PDF available on Course Site)

The Art of The Storyboard - Don Bluth (PDF available on Course Site)

GUIDELINES FOR CREATIVE CRITIQUE

*Anti Racist Writing Workshop - Felicia Rose Chavez

BOOKS TO INSPIRE US

*Dear Sophie, Love Sophie - Sophie Lucido Johnson, Harper Collins

*All Over Coffee - Paul Madonna, Citylights Books

The Realist - Asaf Hanuka, Simon & Schuster (Available on Kindle/ Comixology)

Please see course site for full list and schedule.