

Course Name: Comics and International Relations

Course Code: MA(DLB) 0747

Course Type: Elective

Credits: 4

Course Level: BA & MA

Semester: Spring 2025

Name of Instructor: Dr. Rajdeep Pakanati

Course Description

Memes, zines, shorts, reels and GIFs abound in the social media age. They have a shared DNA with **comics**. Scott McCloud defines comics as “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer”. In short, comics is sequential art. Politics is also everywhere. When we bring comics and politics together, they open a new avenue for us to understand international relations. In this course, we will rely on comics as material which engage, and even shed light on, social events. People, places, conflicts, economics, futures are subjects which animate them. And international politics is of course concerned with them.

This course is primarily about international politics, not comics. We will rely on various comics to tease out comics engage with the world(s) they portray. Comics serve a political purpose, sometimes even as propaganda. We will read in between the ‘frames’ to see how they address various themes in international politics.

Intended Learning outcomes

- Learn about various topics in international politics through comics
- Learn to critically read comics in their political and cultural contexts.
- Transferable Skills: Develop skills to communicate international politics in a creative way.

Assessment

Assignment 1: 35 Marks

Using the Framework provided by Scott McCloud (p.74), choose a comic of your choice and assess the grammar of that comic by taking stock of the 6 transitions in that work.

Assignment 2: 35 Marks

Create a 5-panel comic strip (labelled A through E) that depicts a very short sequence of international politics, based on current events. Quality of your workmanship on the comic is a criterion of assessment. You can even attempt stick figures! **Detailed guidance will be provided in class.**

End-Term Assignment: 30 Marks

Identify a theme in international politics and connect it to your choice of comics. What are the elements of comics – icons, space, time, abstraction, etc. that populate the work you have chosen and how do they help us understand the international political theme of interest?

Attendance Policy

As laid out by the university.

Academic Integrity

Academic Honesty, Cheating, and Plagiarism. – As per university policy

Participation/Attendance Policy – As per university regulations

Use of phone/ texting/ laptop – As per university guidelines

Keyword Syllabus

International Relations, Comics, Graphic Novels, Literature, Images, Discourse

COURSE LETTER GRADES AND THEIR INTERPRETATION

Letter Grade	Percentage of Marks	Grade Points	
O	80 and above	8	Outstanding: Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability.
A+	75 - 79	7.5	Excellent: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and critical and analytical ability.
A	70 - 74	7	Very Good: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles, critically analyse existing material and originality in thinking and presentation.
A-	65 -69	6	Good: Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills.
B+	60 - 64	5	Fair: Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B	55 - 59	4	Acceptable: Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of the study and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B-	50 - 54	3	Marginal: Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials, and poor critical and analytical skills.
P1	45 - 49	2	Pass 1: Pass with Basic understanding of the subject matter .
P2	40 - 44	1	Pass 2: Pass with Rudimentary understanding of the subject matter.
F	Below 40	0	Fail: Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills and marginal use of the relevant materials. Will require repeating the course.

Course Material Essential Book

Scott McCloud. Understanding Comics. HarperCollins, 1994

Readings

Other readings and articles will be made available online in OneDrive.

Session Plan

Session	General Topic	Readings	Approach/ Pedagogy
1.	Introduction	Hansen, Lene. "Reading comics for the field of International Relations: Theory, method and the Bosnian War." European Journal of International Relations 23, no. 3 (2017): 581-608.	Lecture
2.	Understanding Comics - 1	Scott McCloud. Understanding Comics. Chapter 1 to 4.	Lecture
3.	Understanding Comics - 2	Scott McCloud. Understanding Comics. Chapter 5 to 9	Lecture
4.	Cartographical Imaginations & Places in Comics	Tintin Asterix More to be decided	Critical Analysis of assigned Comics
5.	Comics and Conflicts	Palestine by Joe Sacco More to be decided	Critical Analysis of assigned Comics
6.	Comics and Political Violence	Vanni by Benjamin Dix & Lindsay Pollock Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir by malik Sajad Maus by Art Spiegelman	Critical Analysis of assigned Comics
7.	Comics and Individuals	Che: A Graphic Biography by Spain Rodriguez and Paul Buhle More to be decided	Critical Analysis of assigned Comics
8.	Comics and Regions	Zodiac by Ai Weiwei Manga from Japan (Text to be decided)	Critical Analysis of assigned Comics
9.	Feminist International Relations and Comics	Persepolis Her Side of the Story Drawing the Line: Indian Women Fight Back	Critical Analysis of assigned Comics
10.	Comics and Economic Development	Uprooted – Ita Mehrotra River of Stories	Critical Analysis of assigned Comics

11.	Migration and Refugees in Comics	The Arrival – Shaun Tan More to be decided	Critical Analysis of assigned Comics
12.	Comics and Indian Politics	Amar Bari Tomar Bari Naxalbari: A Socio-Political Indian “Comic” Delhi Calm	Critical Analysis of assigned Comics
13.	Comics: Future or Dystopia?	Dream Machine: AI and the Real World – Appupen and Laurent Daudet Dune	Critical Analysis of assigned Comics
14.	End-Term Exam	End-Term Exam	NA

Note: The List of Comics that we will refer in this course, will be more than the above specific references. They will be made available when the course starts.