WR 120 Queer American Literature and Culture

Alternative Genre Assignment: Creating Your Own Comic

**Purpose:** We’ve spent this semester learning the fundamentals of sound college writing, from introductions to paragraph structure to engaging in a scholarly conversation. For the final project of the semester we’ll do something slightly different. You will use the knowledge you have gained about comics and life writing to create your own short graphic narratives. As you create a work in this medium, you will gain greater insights into comics as a form of self-expression; issues related to the reliability of memory and authenticity in life writing; the role that audience plays in the creative process; and points of convergence and divergence between the genres of academic writing and graphic memoir creation.

There are **three components** to this assignment:

1. **Comic:** You will create your own graphic narrative, fiction or nonfiction, of roughly 10-15 panels. You might decide to draw on your own past experience, as Alison Bechdel does in *Fun Home.* You might instead present a fictionalized version of your own experience, or you can decide to create a story that is entirely fictional. Whatever you choose, be sure to pay careful attention to your audience. What information does the audience need to know to fully understand the story? What can you draw and what do you have to write? Remember that your audience can only know what you put on the page.

Your comic must have at least one of each of the following features:

* Different panel shapes/sizes
* Captions
* Speech bubbles
* Thought bubbles
* A panel with a close-up of a character/objects
* Background details/scenery/objects, etc.

1. **Oral Presentation:** You will give a 3- to 5-minute presentation to the class about your comic. Your presentation should summarize the plot; then, select 2-3 panels to close read. In your close reading, you should first contextualize these panels (where in the narrative do they appear?) and then discuss the visual and written choices you made.
2. **Final Reflection:** Once you have completed your graphic narrative, you will write a 500-word reflection (double spaced) meditating on the creative process, discussing the challenges you faced, and examining what you learned about the comics form. This should be a cohesive essay, not simply a scattered collection of notes. Your essay should address the following prompts/questions:

* Explain your creative process. How did you come up with your story? How did you decide which details to include? Were there details you decided to cut? When/why did you decided to open/closed panels, different panel shapes, text vs. images?
* What insights have you gained about comics from creating your own? What have you learned about storytelling in the comics form?
* What challenges did you face in creating your own comic? What was the most difficult part of the assignment?
* What did you learn about self-expression? How did making your own comic change how you think about art in general?
* Besides not having to write another academic essay, what was your favorite part of this assignment? Did you enjoy the brainstorming process, or the drawing, or trying to figure out how to communicate your ideas in visual form?

**Due Dates:**

* **Monday, Nov. 16**: Comic Storyboard (send to Kristin before class)
* **Wednesday, Nov. 18-Fri., Nov. 20:** Optional Conferences
* **Monday, Nov. 23:** Full Comic Draft + Peer Review
* **Friday, Dec. 4:** Final Comic + Reflection (submit on Slack as PDF [comic] and Word doc [reflection])
* **Friday, Dec.** **4 & Monday, Dec. 7:** Presentations

**Further Guidance:**

* You can create your comic using digital tools; by hand; or a combination thereof. All images must be your own. I will *not* be evaluating comics based on artistic ability or materials used, but on **thoughtfulness of execution; incorporation of knowledge about how readers interact with comics; and originality.**
* For your storyboard, consider using a free website like [Strip Generator](http://stripgenerator.com/strip/create/), which allows you to lay out panels, speech bubbles, characters, and objects. In your second and final drafts, you will need to create your own images. Again, be assured that I am not evaluating you on artistic ability!
* If not already digital, please scan your comics and send them to me as a single PDF document on Slack. This will allow for the best possible reading quality as I respond to your project. Find information on scanning at the BU Libraries [here](https://www.bu.edu/tech/services/cccs/printing/myprint/myprint-scan-to-email-cloud-storage/). If you do not have access to a scanner, let me know and we can work out an alternative submission method.
* This is a creative assignment, and I want you to have fun with it! Be creative, take risks, and do your best. Reach out if you have any questions or qualms.