

Melanie Kohnen, Spring 2019

## **Introduction to Rhetoric & Media Studies: Comics Research Project**

(200 points / 20% of your final grade)

This project has three components:

- Research 4-6 issues of a comic (the equivalent of one trade paperback)
- Present your findings to our class (Weeks 14 and 15)
- Submit a summary of your findings (due on your presentation date)

You are welcome to talk to me during any stage of this assignment during office hours or another meeting.

### Comics research:

Review Mary Kearney's guide to research, p. 2-4 (reading for 1/24). Keep in mind that your project is much smaller in scope than what Kearney outlines (for example, you do not need to do a literature review for this project).

Beyond thinking about the story of the comic and what it means, also consider the following:

- Who are the author(s) and artist(s)? Are they well-known or just starting out? What other comics have they created? Are they on social media (most likely Twitter) and share insights into their work/life there?
- Which company published this comic, and how influential is this company for the world of comics? Was it self-published? Did it originally appear in print or online?
- Does it feature an established character/characters, or characters invented by the author/artist?
- Does it speak to a specific cultural context or community? Directly or via metaphor? How does the story and its characters engage with dominant ideology and social norms?
- Has this comic been adapted into other media?
- Does this comic feature a conventional or unusual style, include panel arrangement/layout? Which pages and panels stand out to you, and why?
- Have readers written reviews of this comic, either in professional publications (newspapers, magazines, well-known online sites), or in their own social media spaces?

Douglas Wolk's book *Reading Comics* features 17 short analyses of comics; you may find looking at those helpful for your own project (book is on reserve at the library).

You won't be able to include all of this information in your presentation, but answering these questions gives you a thorough understanding of the comic and its context. In your presentation, you will introduce the highlights of your research to the class.

### **Presentation Guidelines:**

- An 8min presentation in class, accompanied by a visual aide
- A 500-word summary of your presentation that includes a link to your slides (due on your presentation day)

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As a way to wrap up the course, you will give a short (8min) formal presentation to the class. Your presentation introduces your research and analysis of one comic. You also need to design a visual aid (Google slides is easiest to access and share).

Your presentation should draw on the research you have done; you should also draw on concepts and theories we have studied.

Remember that you likely won't be able to incorporate the answers to all the questions listed in the research assignment in your presentation. Choose to incorporate the answers that are most relevant to your comic.

In addition to the in-class talk, submit a 500-word summary of your presentation below. The summary needs to be in full sentences/paragraphs. Include a link to your slides.

***Please come to my office hours or make an appointment if you want to show me a draft of your presentation. I will give you feedback on any aspect of this project.***

**Presentation structure:**

- Introduce your comic: What is it about? Who wrote/drew it? Who published it and when?
- Overall summary of your research findings
- Choose one page from your comic that embodies your findings; make sure to discuss how art and words work together to convey meanings
- Have a strong summarizing conclusion; don't end on "uh, that's it."

**Regarding your presentation aid:**

- Not every word you say needs to be on a slide: be selective in how to use text
- Text needs to be at least 18 points (so it's legible for everyone in the room)
- Incorporate images from your comic (please make sure these are high resolution images), plus other relevant images/video
- Be creative in your slide design: no one wants to look at ten slides that each have a bullet-point list and one image
- [Example of a good slideshow](#) (though this one still has too much text)
- [Tutorial](#) on images/graphs/transitions in Google Slides
- [In-depth overview](#) of Google Slides (with GIFs!)

**Grading criteria:**

- Following the assignment guidelines, including adhering to the time limit
- Strength of your analysis
- Grasp of course content
- Design of your slide show
- Overall style and clarity of the presentation