

# Lit X – Comics and Graphic Novels

Offered to: All UG Programmes

**Course Category: Minor**

**Schedule of Offering: Semester I/III/V**

**Course sub-category: Skill Development**

**Course Credit Structure: 3**

**Course Code: LL160**

- **Lecture hours: 45**
- **Tutorial hours: 0**
- **Practical hours: 0**

**Total Contact Hours: 45**

**Instructor: Saurabh Singanapalli**

**Stream: Literature and Linguistics**

## 1. Introduction

We live in an increasingly visual world. Storytelling in the last few decades has undergone many changes, with the visual becoming ever more important, and one of the key drivers of this change have been comics and graphic novels. This course introduces and discusses this genre in detail, tracing its development through history, focusing on its success and popularity in recent times, and covering key theoretical concepts related to both studying and creating comics and graphic novels. The course will also introduce learners to famous works and authors, as well as critics and theorists in this field, which is as much literature as it is popular culture.

This course is also tagged as a 'Lit X' course. This series of courses is designed specifically to look at relatively newer and upcoming genres of literature: 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century upstarts that have captured the imagination of readers, and have carved a niche for themselves in a corner of the high table occupied by the classics. Such courses deal with the expanding idea of literature, and with genres that are pushing the boundaries of what literature is and can be.

## 2. Course Objectives

This course aims to:

- a) introduce learners to comics and graphic novels as a genre of literature.
- b) introduce learners to the narrative and visual interpretation theories that will enable them to better understand works in this genre.
- c) introduce learners to famous writers and works in this field.

### 3. Course Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) identify and describe the broad concerns related to the study of comics and graphic novels.
- 2) critically analyse comics and graphic novels in terms of their literary value, their artistic quality, and their effectiveness as visual narratives.
- 3) recognise famous authors and works in the field.
- 4) create a basic comic or graphic narrative of their own.

### 4. Pre-requisites

This course will be taught in English, and will require intensive reading, and also quite a bit of writing, in this language. Prospective students must self-evaluate and only join the course if they determine that they are comfortable with this. Students must be willing to actively participate in all tasks and activities in class, and must also do all assignments, graded or non-graded, diligently.

### 5. Readings

There is no single primary text book for this course. However, a set of readings have been identified for each module of the course, and will be made available to students as reference, both for class work and to assist their assignments.

In addition, the books/texts from which some of these readings will be sourced have been identified for subsidiary/supplementary reading below, and the students are encouraged to obtain and look these up to increase their own understanding of the subject, and to aid their participation in group discussions in class.

#### Recommended Reading:

1. McCloud, S. (1993). *Understanding comics: The invisible art*. Northampton, Mass.
2. Eisner, W. (2001). *Comics and Sequential Art*. 1985. Tamarac: Poorhouse.
3. Varughese, E. D. (2017). *Visuality and Identity in Post-Millennial Indian Graphic Narratives*. Springer.
4. Kelley, B. (2010). Sequential art, graphic novels, and comics. *SANE journal: Sequential Art Narrative in Education*, 1(1), 10.
5. Sen, O., & Baviskar, A. (1994). *River of stories*. Delhi: Kalpavriksha.
6. Spiegelman, A. (1997). *Maus: A survivor's tale*. Pantheon.
7. Satrapi, M. (2004). *Persepolis*. Pantheon.

## 6. Module-wise topics

### Module 1: Introduction (4 hours)

- Defining comics and graphic novels
- Discussing visual narratives

### Module 2: The History of the Sequential Narrative (6 hours)

- Ancient narratives
- Cartoons and comics
- Criticism and restrictions
- The Age of Superheroes
- Resurgence and The Graphic Novel
- Indian sequential art traditions

### Module 3: The Language of Comics (10 hours)

- The vocabulary of comics
- Frames and panels
- Imagery and Timing
- Writing and Sequential Art
- Textual study 1: *A Contract with God*

### Module 4: Famous Authors and Works: Around the World (10 hours)

- Part 1: Community Comics – Will Eisner
- Part 2: Fantasy and Superheroes – Alan Moore, Neil Gaiman
- Part 3: Lived experience – Art Spiegelman, Marjane Satrapi
- Part 4: Endearing yet much more – Herge, Goscinny and Uderzo
- Part 5: Comics in different cultures
- Textual study 2: *Maus*

### Module 5: Famous Authors and Works: The Indian Perspective (10 hours)

- Part 1: Culture and Mythology – *Amar Chitra Katha*
- Part 2: Syndication and growth – *Indrajal Comics*, Aabid Surti
- Part 3: The Indian experience – Sarnath Bannerjee, Appupen
- Part 4: The next generation
- Textual study 3: *River of Stories*

### Module 6: Comics: Unlimited (5 hours)

- Film Adaptations
- Reflections of society
- Course wrap-up: Future directions

## 7. Pedagogy

The teaching in this course will be through a combination of lectures, classroom discussions, and interactive activities. The instructor's role will be primarily to introduce concepts, assist with textual reading and interpretation, and generate questions of interest, but the discussion around these questions is expected to be mostly student-driven, with some minor assistance and prodding from the teacher.

## 8. Evaluation Pattern

- Weekly Quizzes (5) (20%)
- Written Assignments (2) (20%)
  - *1<sup>st</sup> Assignment: Modules 1 and 2*
  - *2<sup>nd</sup> Assignment: Module 4*
- Class presentations (2) (20%)
  - *1<sup>st</sup> Presentation: Module 3*
  - *2<sup>nd</sup> Presentation: Module 5*
- Final Project Assignment (40%)