

Glasgow School of Art Course Specification
Course Title: Comic Books and Creative Practice

Please note that this course specification is correct on the date of publication but may be subject to amendment prior to the start of the 2026-27 Academic Year.

Course Code:	HECOS Code:	Academic Session:
PELC207		2026-27

1. Course Title:
Comic Books and Creative Practice

2. Date of Approval:	3. Lead School:	4. Other Schools:
PACAAG April 2022	School of Design	This course is available to students on PGT programmes which include a Stage 2 elective.

5. Credits:	6. SCQF Level:	7. Course Leader:
20	11	Dr David Sweeney

8. Associated Programmes:
This course is available to students on PGT programmes which include a Stage 2 elective.

9. When Taught:
Stage 2, Taught online only

10. Course Aims:
The overarching aims of the stage 2 electives are as follows: • Encourage interdisciplinary, critical reflexivity from within an open set of choices; • Foster deep investigative approaches to new or unfamiliar areas of practice and theory; • Cultivate self-directed leadership and initiative-taking in both applied and abstract modes of practice/ study not necessarily associated with a student's particular creative specialism; • Enable flexible, ethical exploration and connection of diverse knowledge and understanding within a specialist programme of study. This particular course aims to: • Provide a historical overview of the field of comics worldwide; compare and contrast comics form around the world; • Interrogate the cultural worth of comic books, introducing students to a range of theories and practical applications of comic book studies; • Explore the uses of narrative structure within comic books, and the ideological ramifications of specific texts;

- Examine the intersection between the field of comics and other areas of cultural production, from fine art to television;
- Explore and interrogate established assumptions and practices in the field through flexible, ethical considerations of other contemporary fields of culture;
- Interrogate the relationships between comic book theory and methodologies and creative practices.

11. Intended Learning Outcomes of Course:

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Develop a rationale for applying selected analytical methods to art or design studio practices;
- Debate and analyse a number of approaches to the critical analysis of comic books and explore cross-disciplinary approaches within creative research;
- Demonstrate how ideas, methods and practices interrelate in this field;
- Develop and defend a practical/ theoretical research project proposal within the subject area based on independent research;
- Consider new approaches to creative practices beyond established western traditions;
- Evaluate the contribution made to art and design research and practice through the study of alternative non-textual sources.

12. Indicative Content:

This online course shows not only that comics can be studied in a legitimate scholarly manner, it also shows how such scholarship should be undertaken, drawing attention to the methodological mistakes researchers often make and the pitfalls they face as a result. The course will explore some of the following topics.

- Why comic books?
- Medium and genre
- Comics in Society
- Comics in Biography
- Comics and Identity

Classes consist of comprise of the following indicative content:

- Why Study Comic Books? + Workshop
- Medium and Genre + Workshop
- Comics and/as Literature + Workshop
- Comics in Society + Workshop
- Comics and Biography + Workshop
- Comics and Identity+ Workshop
- Comics and Biography + Workshop

13. Description of Summative Assessment Methods:

Attendance at online at lectures, seminars and group discussions will be mandatory. In addition to this, students will be required to submit an assignment that presents an analysis of an idea or concept, artwork, practitioner or debate, which they consider is at the cutting edge of their field of enquiry. This submission may take one of two forms:

Assessment Method	Description of Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week (assignments)
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Essay	3500 word written essay (this should include examples of visual work, where appropriate, and a bibliography)	100	Week 11, Stage 2
Or			
Practical Submission*	Creative submission accompanied by a 1000 word positioning statement	100	Week 11, Stage 2

13.1 Please describe the Summative Assessment arrangements:

For this course, students will be required to produce and submit one assignment. This may take either of the following forms:

- Written submission: an essay of 3500 words, correctly presented and referenced, relating to a topic pertinent to the course. Students intending to write an essay should have the topic approved in advance by the course tutor.

OR

- Practical Submission*: Students may submit a comic book, graphic novel or other piece of sequential art which must be agreed in advance with the course tutor. Creative submissions should be accompanied by a 1000 word positioning statement and full list of references.

*If a student wishes to make use of equipment and technical support from Technical Services, including the use of GSA's media studio, they must first consult with their tutor who will in turn liaise with Technical Services to consider what level of support and technical provision might be available - due to restricted capacity.

Assessment Criteria

Students on this course will be assessed on their ability to:

- conceptualise and present a research problem;
- utilize appropriate methods and tools when conducting a research project;
- situate their projects of research within a research context;
- critically reflect on the success and effectiveness of their own projects of practice and research;
- demonstrate a level of depth in the analysis of works, practitioners, ideas and/or debates appropriate to postgraduate level.

Please also refer to the course handbook for further specific guidance about the assessment criteria.

14. Description of Formative Assessment Methods:

Engagement with formative assessment is a mandatory requirement.

Individual feedback is available during mid-course tutorials to provide formative feedback.

14.1 Please describe the Formative Assessment arrangements:

15. Learning and Teaching Methods:

Formal Contact Hours	Notional Learning Hours
20	200

15.1 Description of Teaching and Learning Methods:

Timetable: 2 hours weekly for 10 weeks

16. Pre-requisites:

Successful completion of PGT Stage 1

17. Can this course be taken by Exchange/Study Abroad students?

No

18. Are all the students on the course taught wholly by distance learning?

No

19. Does this course represent a work placement or a year of study abroad?

No

20. Is this course collaborative with any other institutions?

No

20.1 If yes, then please enter the names of the other teaching institutions:

N/A

21. Additional Relevant Information:

This course will provide a comprehensive critical introduction to the field of comic books. Comics continue to occupy a position fairly low down on the scale of cultural value. However, they are a distinctive medium, providing pleasure to huge audiences, and with close ties to the fields of graphic design, illustration, animation and fine art. In addition, a range of recent works – from *Maus* to *Jimmy Corrigan* – have been highly acclaimed by critics, and comic books continue to provide inspirational source material for successful television series and movies.

22. Indicative Bibliography:

A full bibliography will be issued at the beginning of the course, as part of the course handbook.

Barker, Martin, (1989), *Comics, Ideology, Power and the Critics*
 Carrier, David, (2000), *The Aesthetics of Comics*
 Chute, Hilary, (2010), *Graphic Women*
 Clark, Laurel, (1991), *Comics: An Illustrated History*
 Eisner, Will (2008), *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative*
 Eisner, Will, (2006), *The Contract With God Trilogy*
 Eisner, Will, *Comics & Sequential Art* (2005)
 Gravett, Paul, (2004), *Manga*
 Koyama-Richard, Brigitte, (2007), *One Thousand Years of Manga*
 McCloud, Scott, (2015), *The Sculptor*
 McCloud, Scott, (2006), *Making Comics*
 McCloud, Scott, (1994), *Understanding Comics*
 Miller, Ann, (2007), *Reading Bandes Dessinees*
 Robinson, Lillian, (2004), *Wonder Women: Feminism Zaps the Comics*
 Sabin, Roger, (1996), *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels*
 Saraceni, Mario, (2003), *The Language of Comics*
 Sinclair, Mark & Bell, Roanne, (2005), *Pictures and Words*
 Wigan, Mark, (2000), *Sequential Images*
Future Shock! [DVD], (2014)
American Splendor, [DVD], (2004)
Persepolis, [DVD], (2008)