

DEPICTING THE MARGINAL SELF: AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND GRAPHIC NARRATIVE

Prof. Sharon Oster, English
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MTWTh 10:00am-12:50pm



We will read a variety of graphic memoirs by writers who depict themselves as socially or politically marginal, on the fringe, at the edge, outsiders, and who find their voice in art. The artist's coming-of-age novel, or "*Kunstlerroman*," typically involves the maturation of the sensitive individual in conflict with the restrictive norms of middle-class society. What does graphic narrative uniquely offer to artists on the margins of society, who attend to the margins of the page as much as what lies on it? We will explore some of these questions: What does it mean to visualize the self as a cartoon, simply or artistically sophisticated? How does the visual medium best tell what are often invisible stories? What choices, advantages or disadvantages accompany different styles of graphic narrative, both for reading and interpretation? What is the relationship between text and image in such works? Is there a pattern of the kinds of stories told graphically? This course is contract-only. Evaluations will be based on weekly writing/literary analysis, oral presentation of interpretations, and a final paper or creative project of your choice. Authors may include Art Spiegelman, Anne Frank, Alison Bechdel, Marjane Satrapi, Amy Kurzweil, David Small, Miriam Katin, Riad Sattouf or others that you suggest. We will decide on the texts as a class!