

ENGLISH 350

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS: MULTIMODAL STORYTELLING



“Hand-Made Tale” by Erica Rogers

Pencil and Ink on pages from
Mommy Dearest (1978) by Christina Crawford

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Thursdays 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. by video conference
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Welcome to “*Drawing Conclusions: Multimodal Storytelling*.” In this course we will explore the complexities of graphic illustration, images, words, and storytelling. We will employ a variety of “multimodal” strategies while telling stories that matter to us as individuals, and to our communities. To fulfill these aims, we will:

- Build our icon library by using graphic recording and visual notetaking strategies

- Explore and analyze the graphic memoir as a complex multimodal form
- Explore the rhetorical complexities of visual storytelling
- Refine, and in some cases recreate, our sense of revision possibilities for our academic work
- Develop a creative community that encourages extensive, peer engagement with writing and creating through peer review, editing, and support
- Observe and reflect on our own sense of learning as we model the work of others to see what we can learn about ourselves
- Experience multimodal compositions as analog and digital works

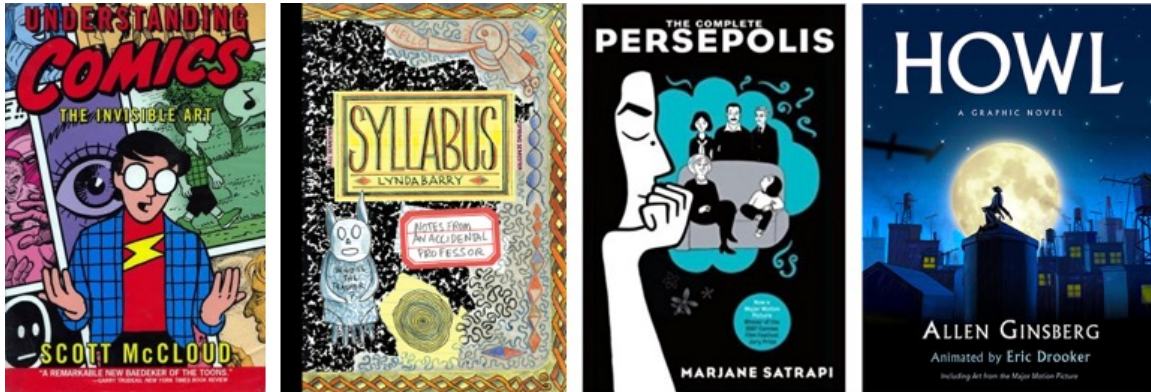
With these goals in mind, we will also experiment with our own collective sense of community within the classroom. As we work to explore community as a concept and construction, we will develop one. I will work as a facilitator and collaborator to your work and learning. Meaning, because the focus of the course is writing and creating as social practices, the teaching and learning done within and outside the course will reflect those practices. We will each serve as teachers and learners – a good education is reflexive this way, creates room for each of us to learn and to teach each other.

As the course unfolds, we will work together to define our grading agendas, individual and collective course goals, as well as our own sense of what it means to be a writing community. Throughout your education to this point, I believe you have gained plenty of experiences with education as something done *to* you without your input or expertise considered. In this course, we will work to rewrite that old, tired script, and try to create a space in which your writing education is done *with* you.

This means we will have to (re)consider the public definitions of words like “student” and “teacher,” as well as explore our own identities as learners. Because this is a community-based course, language and image will play significant roles in our work together. We will need to step away from the silent student and talking teacher lecture model, not just because it’s boring for all of us, but because we will gain and give far more if we take on active, engaged roles together. In some ways, a classroom environment is the ultimate political space as histories and sociopolitical statuses clash and merge. It’s not always easy to be a community, but like a healthy democracy, the difficulty is what makes the magic happen. Expect to hear more and talk more about that idea later. More importantly, I want you to remember this:

**YOU DO NOT NEED TO BE A TRAINED ARTIST
TO CREATE SOMETHING MEANINGFUL.**

REQUIRED TEXTS



REQUIRED SUPPLIES

- A can of “workable fixative” – a sealing spray for drawings on paper that allows you to keep working, or to layer work
- Graphite pencils in 2b, 4b, 6b, and 8b
- Various erasers, including a vinyl eraser and a knead-able eraser
- Colored pencils. I recommend a student set of Prismacolor, the Artist Studio pencils from Michael’s, or Crayola
- A basic set of Micron ink pens, or other felt-tip ink pens of various points. Sharpies are not recommended (they bleed through paper, stink, and contain acids), but can be used in certain circumstances (we’ll talk about this)
- A set of watercolor paints - I recommend the Artist Studio set from Michael’s

THERE ARE MANY “GRADES” OF ART SUPPLIES (PROFESSIONAL, STUDENT, NOVICE). ALL ARE FINE FOR THIS WORK, SO STAY WITHIN YOUR BUDGET.

WORKLOAD

“Imagination is more important than knowledge.” – Albert Einstein

We’ll be working on *two major projects* this term:

Graphic Storytelling That’s Delightfully Digital: Our midterm project will be a multimodal, digital project inspired by our discussions, readings, and activities. I will provide instructions for this project during our second week of classes. With all of the various platforms and programs available, you won’t have a shortage of possibilities. Please see the “Graphic Portfolios” content area on our course website for more information.

Graphic Memoir That’s Amazingly Analog: For this project, you will use your newly honed visual storytelling skills to illustrate a story true to you as you experienced this course. We will rely on Lynda Barry’s book, *Syllabus*, as an example. Don’t worry. We’ll use the sketchbook for all the work you do for the course, including notes, class notes, activities, low-stakes writing, and project planning. You’ll also include all of your graphic recordings. Your panels will organically emerge each week (rather than at the end) as we progress. By the end of the course, when this project is due, you will have created anywhere from 14 to 16 memoir panels.

Final Course Narrative: The final analysis is a retrospective inquiry and analysis of your work in the course, a narrative explaining what you learned and why, what you would do to improve the course, as well as an analysis of yourself as a creator/learner. The aim of this analysis is to articulate your journey, discoveries, and the ideas from course texts that most provoked your thinking. This final paper will be submitted as a final “exam” at the end of the term.

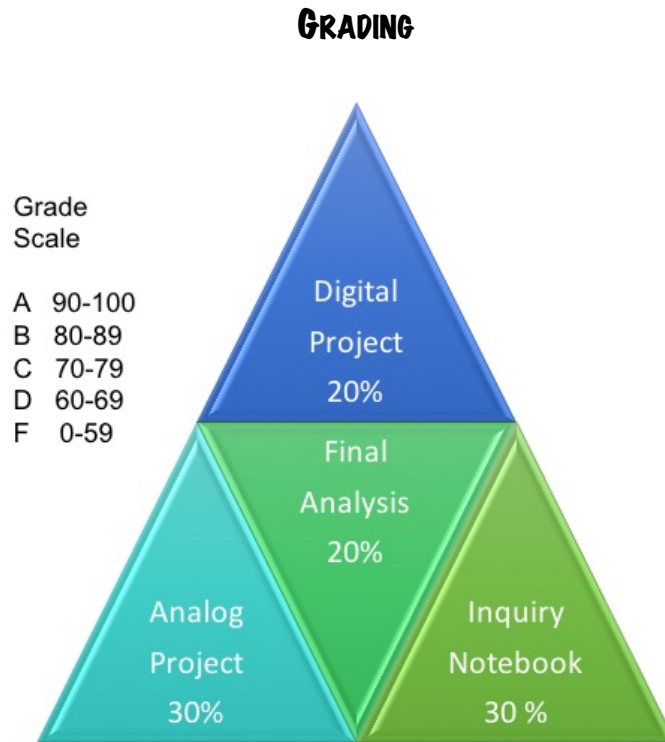
We will maintain an inquiry Notebook (sketchbook) for the duration of the course:

An Inquiry Notebook is like a journal, but includes your graphic work, too. Lynda Barry’s *Syllabus* (2014) is a great example of this form (but no one is expecting you to be as good as she is). We will use our notebooks for all work in this course outside of the digital project. This will become clearer to you as the course evolves, but no that inquiry notebook/sketch work is a substantial part of the course and will be graded for consistency, depth, and engagement and NOT artistic “talent” (who decides that, anyway?). You are free to include personal writing and all other forms of expression, and you can even mark sections of your book off-limits for evaluation (such as private things you don’t want your instructor to read). Instructions for keeping an inquiry notebook/journal will be ongoing, but an introduction to the inquiry notebook/journal concept can be found in the “How-To” section of our course website. *We will also conduct group work with our inquiry notebooks, so bring them class each day.*

We will conduct class discussions on course texts and other related (or seemingly unrelated) topics:

Sometimes, it may seem that a conversation is “off topic.” However, organic, dialectic (spoken) inquiry into complex texts or issues often spark “side conversations” that may seem unrelated to “the work.” These are, in fact, important conversations that can be byproducts of the work itself while creating new, entrepreneurial lines of inquiry. It’s important to note that our emphasis on course discussion is on participation and civility. We will, sooner or later, discuss politically difficult or “hot-button” issues, and everyone should expect to be either offended or

offensive sooner or later – this is what happens when people actually communicate (instead of spit out answers they think the instructor wants). As we define our specific sense of community membership and practices, tensions will become a welcome part of our learning. I promise. Please read all course materials prior to class and come prepared to civilly discuss them and/or the issues they provoke.



THE FINE PRINT: POLICIES

Presence: To be present is to come to class sessions prepared, ready to participate, and engaged with those around you. Presence is more than being a body in the chair each session. Because this is a Tuesday/Thursday course dependent on class interaction and discussion, you will be allowed three absences before your final course grade is affected. For every absence after three, your final grade will be deducted by one full letter grade. *Six absences or more will result in automatic failure of the course.* If you have extenuating circumstances, such as a severe and chronic illness, a family issue, or any significant challenge that may interfere with your pursuit of knowledge in this course, please let me know. I'll do my best to work with you.

Late work: As a general rule, *I do not accept late work.* I do, however, make room for extenuating circumstances. If you are going to be absent the day a project is due, be sure to have a colleague bring your work to class for you or make arrangements to get your work to me in advance. Athletes, ROTC members, and others working within difficult extra-curricular activities related to scholarships or financial aid should expect, always, to turn in work *prior* to due dates should those dates fall on scheduled absences.

Accommodations: Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of university to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation

services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Academic Integrity: Students taking courses at this institution are expected to adhere to a strict code of academic integrity. Failure to do so will result in automatic failure of the course, and could, depending on the circumstance, result in probation or expulsion. Academic dishonesty is defined very succinctly as: “cheating, fabrication or falsification of a student’s work, plagiarism, complicity in academic dishonesty (you know someone cheated or helped them to cheat), misrepresentation to avoid academic work (i.e., claiming a death in the family will prevent you from completing work when there has not been a death in the family), or failure to report any information regarding academic dishonesty. This includes allowing others to use your work from a course as their own in another, providing copies of answers or exams, unauthorized collaboration with others (including tutors, teaching assistants, etc.), and/or modifying or deleting the files of others.” I thank the UNL College of Computer Sciences for the definition. Please see: www.academicintegrity.edu for the complete university policy.

Writing Center: The university Writing Center can provide you with meaningful support as you write for this class, other classes, or for nonacademic purposes including creative writing, cover letters, resumes, and applications for graduate and/or professional schools. Knowledgeable peer consultants are available to talk with you as you plan, draft and revise your work. Please check the Writing Center website (www.campus/writing), or stop by the main center, for locations, hours, and information about scheduling 25- or 50-minute consultations.

Course Schedule

**Assignments listed after 8/24 should be completed
BEFORE class on the day indicated.**

Before you get started, please watch my “Formatting your Sketchbook” tutorial on our course website so that you can prepare your book before doing anything else.

For more info on visual notetaking, see Doug Neill’s video:

<https://youtu.be/eZQ7ILUasek>

and his website:

<http://www.thegraphicrecorder.com>

Week 1: A Foundation of Essential Skills

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|-----------------|-------------|---|
| Tuesday | 8.24 | Introductions, course overview
We’ll watch Rachel Smith’s video
https://youtu.be/3tjPeumHNLy |
| Thursday | 8.26 | Read: <i>Understanding Comics</i> ,
Chapters 1 -2
Create/Sketch: A graphic recording of key concepts from this reading |

Weekly Draw: Using one of McCloud’s pages as a template example, draw an introduction to what *could* become the intro to your series. Who are you? How do you want to introduce yourself to your readers? For this exercise, use graphite pencils so that you can erase when

needed. If you want a sample, look at any of the first pages of the books required for this course. These openers offer many ways of beginning.

Week 2: "This is Not a Pipe"

Tuesday 8.31 **Read:** *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 3, and graphically record. In class, we'll discuss the rhetorical work of audience awareness, assumptions, biases, stereotypes, and the ways we plan for our audiences. We will also discuss arrangement – how we order (and disorder) readers' attention.

Thursday 9.2 **Read:** *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 4 and 5, and graphically record. In class, we will discuss iconography, and the "amplified form" of the image.

Weekly Draw: Return to your drawing from last week. Now that you have a clearer understanding of time, movement, and iconography, your first drawing from last week should be ripe for revisions. Make strategic choices that incorporate what you have learned this week with the visual telling of your introductory page. Once you have made changes to the pencil drawing, INK THE DRAWING using your felt-tip pens.

Week 3: The Story Only You Can See

Tuesday 9.7 **Read:** *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 6, and graphically record. **Bring one of your favorite children's books to class.** The campus library has a children's literature collection, so you'll have no problem finding a favorite (or a new favorite that inspires you). In class, we will discuss McCloud's ideas while also discussing classism and social values in the arts.

Thursday 9.9 **Read:** *Understanding Comics*, Chapter 7, and graphically record. Now, looking at your chosen children's book, see if you can trace the path the writer and illustrator took to fulfill "the six steps" McCoud explains. What was the purpose of the work? Who was its audience? What form(s) did it take? Why, do you think, the writer/artist did the work at all? In other words, what can you see beyond the iconography, symbolic expression, and optics? Come to class prepared to demonstrate your thinking and discoveries in small groups.

Weekly Draw: Using graphic recording techniques, map out a potential outline for your analog memoir project. Identify the six steps, mull them over, and see if you can put together a potential map for your future work.

Week 4: Drawing You In

Tuesday 9.14 **Read:** *Understanding Comics*, Chapters 8 and 9. In class, we will discuss the totality of the McCloud reading, and how it will help us to read the remaining books for the course. We will also discuss the

upcoming digital project, and I will provide a project overview with instructions.

Thursday 9.16 Sketchbook share session and idea generation day. We will work in small groups to discuss our ideas and potential plans for the digital project, using concepts we have covered in class. The six steps, it turns out, apply to multimodal composition regardless of medium or mode.

Weekly Draw: The digital project is all about connecting with others in order to enact, or attempt to enact, a small change in the world around you. For this week, make a graphic recording of a potential outline for your project that focuses on the six steps. Who is your audience? What do you want that audience to do? What is your purpose? What medium or mode is best suited to your interests, talents, and audience? Project samples have been provided to you in one our course website. Because we're new to this work, we may have to focus on imitation in hopes of finding or discovering innovation.

Week 5: It's All Greek to Me

Tuesday 9.21 Read: Heinrichs "Soften them Up" (.PDF) on course website. In class, we will discuss *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, and how they can help us to frame project purposes and our appeals to our audience. Graphic recording, as I hope you have accepted by now, is required for all readings.

Thursday 9.23 Read: Pipher "The Story Only You Can Tell" (.PDF) on course website. In class, we will discuss the intersection of personal experience and passions, and public action. This will help us to determine the core of our digital project's purpose, one that is in line with things we care about in our lives outside of school. We will use our weekly draw from last week, too.

Weekly Draw: This week, I want you to graphically record a research plan that will help you to develop both essential knowledge regarding the issue at the core of your project's purpose, and develop a credible *ethos*. You will need to do some "presearch" as we discussed this week, noting possible sources that will help you to do the work you most want to do. For example, if you are considering a social media project, then some of your presearch will rest in learning what the social media industry recommends for such projects. If you are thinking about a blog, iMovie, or other multimedia presentation, then researching the "how-to's" and "tips" for such work is equally important. Consult the assignment overview to see a sample of a presearch graphic map.

Week 6: Making Promises and Keeping Them

Tuesday 9.28 DUE: Written Project Plan with photocopy or imbedded image of your graphic plan. See the instructions on our course website. In class, we'll discuss how to evaluate the credibility of sources.

Thursday 9.30 Read your sources! In class, we'll compare graphic recordings.

Week 7 & 8: Keeping Promises, Developing Credibility

- Tuesday 10.5 Read your sources!** In class, we'll discuss what you've read so far and you'll show your small group partners your graphic recordings.
- Thursday 10.7 Read your sources!** In class, we'll discuss digital design and the options.
- Tuesday 10.12 DUE:** Photocopies of your digital recording pages for all of your sources. There are copying machines at the library, and in the campus copy center, as well as various businesses around town.
- Thursday 10.14 Design Workshop.** Bring your laptops!

Week 9: It Sure Is Drafty!

- Thursday 10.23 DUE:** A full draft of your digital project. We will work in pairs today to get meaningful peer response. Final drafts of this project, with an artist's statement (see the instructions on the course website) are due Tuesday of next week.

Week 10: Learning from Others

- Tuesday 10.28 DUE:** Final drafts of your digital projects with author's note. In class, we will schedule grading conferences. Bring your illustration supplies today. From this point onward, you will read one graphic book per week, and discussions, led by student groups, will occur on Thursdays. Tuesdays will be illustration days. You will need to bring your illustration supplies every Tuesday. Group discussion leadership guidelines are on our campus website.
- Thursday 10.30** Discussion of *The Illustrated HOWL*. Group Student Group A will facilitate the discussion.

Weekly Draw: For this week, focus your attention on your graphic memoir work. We will always get started on something interesting on Tuesdays, so the weekly draws will now be focused on your memoir project.

Week 11: Life Isn't Always Black and White

- Tuesday 11.3** Illustration Workshop
- Thursday 11.5 Discussion of *Persepolis***
Student Group B will facilitate the discussion.

Weekly Draw: Continue on your panels. How much you do is up to you, but do come prepared next week to show your progress to the class.

Week 12: Hard Stories Can Be Our Best Stories

Tuesday **11.10** Illustration Workshop

Thursday **11.12** Discussion of *Fun Home*
Student Group C will facilitate the discussion.

Weekly Draw: Continue on your panels. As we have learned from the previous three graphic projects, hard stories are good stories when they invite the reader to make connections with his or her own life experiences. As you continue with your graphic memoir project, what emotions, experiences, and struggles might resonate with your readers?

Week 13: Asides and Bunny Trails as Deeply Thoughtful Interruptions

Tuesday **11.17** Illustration Workshop

Thursday **11.19** Discussion of *Syllabus*
Student Group D will facilitate the discussion.

Weekly Draw: Continue on your panels. Deadlines are looming! Use a method, idea, or strategy evident in Barry's work that might make your own more interesting. What kind of "asides" and "bunny trails" might provide an interesting and important rupture? How can you use these to create tension and focus to your memoir?

Week 14 & 15: Human and Animal Behaviors

Tuesday **11.26** Illustration Workshop and overview of your final reflection paper.

Thursday **12.28** Thanksgiving! We're going to switch up the rhythm for next week, using Tuesday to discuss a book, and Thursday as an illustration workshop.

Weekly Draw: Continue on your panels. Deadlines are lurking!

Week 16: Closures and Openings

Tuesday **12.3** Discussion of *The Complete Maus*
Student Group E will facilitate the discussion.

Thursday **12.5** **DUE: Your Inquiry Notebooks**
Your graphic memoir should be finished (in terms of the course). Memoir panels will be graded as your analogy project. Inquiry Notebooks will be graded as separate work that encompasses your efforts across the entire 16 weeks. Assessment rubrics for both are available on our course website. **Final Course Narratives are due during our scheduled final exam period. Notebooks will be returned at this time.**