

HISTORY 1840G

Graphic History!

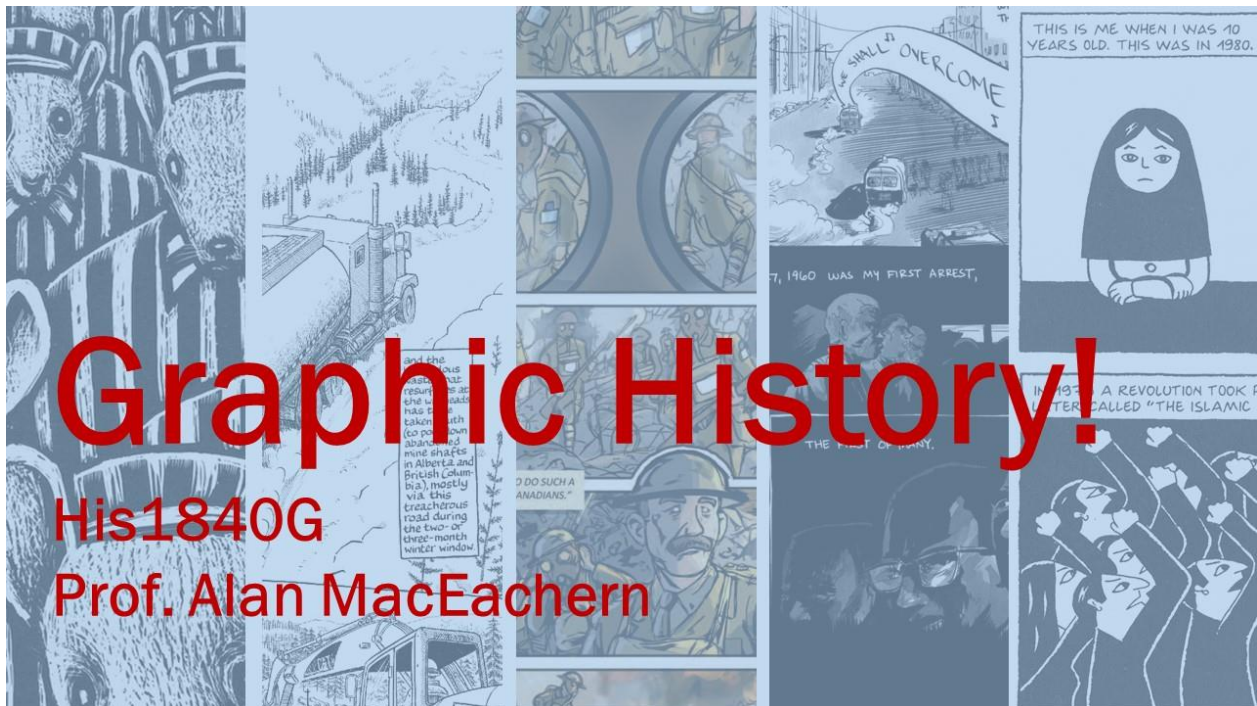
Winter term 2025

Instructor: Prof. Alan MacEachern

Alan's office hours: Lawson 2268, Mon 9:30-11:30

Alan's email: amaceach@uwo.ca****This is a summer 2024 DRAFT syllabus.****

Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for the final version.



Images from *Maus*, *Paying the Land*, *Through Their Eyes*, *March*, & *Persepolis*.

Course description:

In recent decades, the medium of graphic history – historically-themed graphic novels – has had a profound effect on how the past is communicated. Books such as *Maus*, *Persepolis*, *March*, *They Called Us Enemy*, and *Louis Riel* have been so successful in conveying their historical topics to readers that they are effectively transforming how those topics are popularly understood. Graphic adaptations of purely textual histories such as *The 9/11 Report* and *Sapiens* demonstrate the growing respect accorded this visual medium.

Graphic History! examines a series of such books that cover historical events from around the world and across time. The goal is not only to learn more about the events themselves, but also to explore what the visualization of history contributes. As a medium for history, what are graphic history's strengths and weaknesses, its genres and conventions? Does it allow better access to an individual's thoughts and

experiences – but at the expense of the broader context and circumstances? Does the interweaving of text and images help to communicate time's passage better than text alone can? What does graphic history teach us about the nature of history itself?

Please note: His1840G involves topics such as war, violence, and gender and racial discrimination. You may find the discussion or visual presentation of such topics upsetting. I will warn students of potentially disturbing content and will expect the class to be sensitive and respectful in discussion with one another. The classroom will provide a space for a critical and civil exchange of ideas.

Learning outcomes:

Through the lectures, readings, and assignments, you will

- gain an understanding of key events, concepts, and figures in global history over the past two centuries,
- learn the history, structure, and conventions of graphic history, and consider how the incorporation of graphic narrative differentiates it from purely textual (or film or other) representations of history,
- identify, evaluate, and develop skills in the interpretation and utilization of primary sources and secondary sources,
- become familiar with the library and electronic resources,
- develop a full understanding of plagiarism,
- develop essay-writing and small-group discussion skills.

Methods of evaluation:

Further information on all assignments will be provided on OWL Brightspace & in class.

- **4 Reaction papers – due**
 - **27 January**
 - **10 February**
 - **3 March**
 - **10 March**

5% each x 4 = 20%

You are to write and submit a 250-word reaction paper about each of the 4 graphic histories that will be read and discussed in full this term. Read the book and reflect on it. You may want to deal with some of these questions (or others): What did you learn? How is the history told? What did the visualization of this history contribute to its telling? What worked well / not well? How does the book reinforce / challenge what has been discussed in the course so far?

Reaction papers are due the Friday before the class in which the book is being first discussed; beyond that, there is a no-questions-asked grace period up until the class itself. After this grace period, the reaction paper will not be accepted.

- **Graphic history project**

In this course, we are learning what graphic representation does for / to history. We will be working to determine that in lectures and tutorials, but we should also explore it firsthand. Your major assignment this term is to create a short graphic history of your own. Artistic ability is welcome, but not required!

- **Proposal and bibliography – due 24 February – 10%**

You are to submit a 250-word short essay that describes your proposed project, introducing the historical person or event, its historical significance, and the focus you plan to take. You are to include a bibliography of a minimum of 5 sources you plan to use to research this history.

- **Graphic history – due 24 March – 25%**

Applying the graphic narrative elements and historical skills that you have learned this term, you are to create a graphic history of your own of 6 or more pages (actual sheets of paper or Powerpoint or Google Slides), plus citations and bibliography. Feel free, beyond drawing, to incorporate photos, maps, art, etc. that you find online, with attribution. Your graphic history will conclude with a 500-word “author’s statement,” explaining what you want the reader to know, in terms of what you wished to achieve, what issues you faced, and what you learned in the process.

- **Course engagement – 15%**

You are to attend lectures and tutorials and be ready to contribute to discussion in both. Attendance will be taken at all tutorials. It is expected that students may miss the occasional tutorial or class; contact me only if you are or will be absent for an extended period.

- **Final exam – April exam period – 30%**

The exam will cover all lectures, tutorials, and readings from the term, and will consist of short answer and essay questions.

Make-up exams can only be approved by Academic Counselling. Please see the History Department’s [Undergraduate Policies and Statements](#) page for procedures and requirements involving make-up exams.

Absences, Late Assignments, & Course-specific Policies:

- You are to submit your assignments through the course OWL Brightspace page. Please submit them in Microsoft Word, preferably with a file name “[Last name], [assignment] – ex. “Smith, proposal.” You do not need to submit a paper copy.
- Given the nature of the Reaction papers, they must be submitted prior to the class in which the book is first discussed; they will not be accepted afterward. The Proposal and bibliography and the Graphic history assignments may be passed in late, but there is a 5% late penalty per day, including weekends. Students seeking academic accommodation or consideration regarding the Graphic History assignment due March 24 must contact their Academic Advising office and provide formal supporting documentation.
- The Faculty of Social Science’s policy statement on plagiarism and the use of plagiarism detection software is outlined in the History Department’s [Undergraduate Policies and Statements](#) page.
- The use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT is discouraged in this course and is permitted only for activities such as brainstorming and refining ideas or checking grammar and style. Beyond that, you are not to make use of such tools in the writing of course assignments. **All writing submitted in this course must be your own.** (If in doubt, please ask me for clarification.)

Course materials:

The following books are available in the Western Bookstore and on 2-hour course reserve at Weldon Library. A digital copy of *Through Their Eyes* is also available through Weldon Library, 1 reader at a time, as linked below. *Maus* and *Persepolis* may be available on the Internet Archive, as linked below. Beyond that, you are welcome to borrow or share any editions of physical copies or ebooks that you can find.

- Matthew Barrett and Robert Engen, [Through Their Eyes: A Graphic History of Hill 70 and the First World War](#) (2022).
- Art Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, [vol.1](#) (1986) and [vol.2](#) (1992).
- Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*, [vol.1](#) (2003).
- Chester Brown, *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* (2003).

All other course readings are available on the course OWL site, through the Weldon Library online system, and/or at the URL given.

Course Schedule & Readings:

- 1. Week of 6 January **Introductions**
- 2. Week of 13 January **Comics & History, Space & Time (1)**
 - Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993), 1-59.
- 3. Week of 20 January **Comics & History, Space & Time (2)**
 - Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993), 60-118.
- 4. Week of 27 January **Barrett & Engen, Through Their Eyes (1)**
 - Matthew Barrett & Robert Engen, *Through Their Eyes*.
 - **Reaction paper to *Through Their Eyes* due before class.**
 - Douglas E. Delaney, "Introduction," *Capturing Hill 70*, eds. Douglas E. Delaney and Serge Marc Durflinger (2016).
- 5. Week of 3 February **Barrett & Engen, Through Their Eyes (2)**
 - Serge Marc Durflinger, "A Battle Forgotten? Remembering Hill 70 in Its Time and Ours," *Capturing Hill 70* (2016), 239-51 only.
- 6. Week of 10 February **Spiegelman, Maus, pt.1**
 - Art Spiegelman, *Maus*, vol.1
 - **Reaction paper to *Maus*, pt.1 due before class.**
 - Anne Frank House, "[What is the Holocaust?](#)"
 - Joshua Brown, "Of Mice and Memory," *Oral History Review*, 1988.

Reading Week

- 7. Week of 24 February **Spiegelman, Maus, pt.2**
 - Art Spiegelman, *Maus*, vol.2
 - **Graphic history project – proposal & bibliography due.**
 - Note: 7 March is the last day to drop the course without academic penalty.
 - Hillary Chute, "History and Graphic Representation in *Maus*," *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 2006.

- 8. Week of 3 March **Satrapi, *Petropolis***
 - Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis, The Story of a Childhood*, vol.1
 - **Reaction paper to *Persepolis* due before class.**
 - Robert Root & Marjane Satrapi, "Interview with Marjane Satrapi," *Fourth Genre: Explorations in Nonfiction*, 2007.

- 9. Week of 10 March **Brown, *Louis Riel* (1)**
 - Chester Brown, *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography*, 1-118.
 - **Reaction paper to *Louis Riel*, 1-118 due before class.**
 - Jordan Bolay, "The Politics of Representation in Chester Brown's *Louis Riel*," in *The Canadian Alternative*, ed. Dominick Grace & Eric Hoffman, 2017.

- 10. Week of 17 March **Brown, *Louis Riel* (2)**
 - Chester Brown, *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography*, 119-272.
 - Roger E. Selhany, "Aftermath," in *A Rush to Judgment: The Unfair Trial of Louis Riel*, 2019.

- 11. Week of 24 March **Graphics History as Politics**
 - **Graphic History project due.**
 - Excerpt from Jeff Lemire, *Secret Path*, 2016.
 - Ian Adams, "[The Lonely Death of Charlie Wenjack](#)," *Maclean's*, 1 Feb 1967.
 - [The Secret Path](#) (video).
 - Look at the "[Remember Resist Redraw](#)" poster series, Graphic History Collective, 2017.

- 12. Week of 31 March **The Future of the Past**
 - **31 March is the final day to withdraw from His1840 without academic penalty.**
 - Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey, "Nostalgia and the Return of History," *The Graphic Novel: An Introduction*, 2015.
 - B. Erin Cole, "[I Make Exhibits](#)" & "[The Desert Keeps Receipts](#)," *Contingent Magazine*, 2020, and "[I Have to Write the Labels](#)," "[Archives Time](#)," "[Am I Still A Historian?](#)" "[Bikes, Bison, & Chemical Weapons](#)," LittleBrainComics.com.

Additional Statements:

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.