CAS/GRS New Course Proposal Form
This form is to be used when proposing a new CAS or GRS course.

This form should be submitted to Senior Academic Administrator Peter Law (617-353-7243) as a PDF file to pgl@bu.edu. For further information or assistance, contact Associate Dean Susan Jackson (617-353-2410; sjackson@bu.edu) about CAS courses or Associate Dean Jeffrey Hughes (617-353-2690; hughes@bu.edu) about GRS courses.

DEPARTMENT OR PROGRAM: ENGLISH
DATE SUBMITTED: 4.7.16

COURSE NUMBER: CAS EN 170

COURSE TITLE: The Graphic Novel

INSTRUCTOR(S): Jonathan Najarian (4th year grad student with three years teaching experience)

TO BE FIRST OFFERED: Sem./Year: __SPR__ / __2017____

SHORT TITLE: The “short title” appears in the course inventory, on the Link University Class Schedule, and on student transcripts and must be 15 characters maximum including spaces. It should be as clear as possible.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This is the description that appears in the CAS and/or GRS Bulletin and The Link. It is the first guide that students have as to what the course is about. The description can contain no more than 40 words.

Examination of the rise, nature, and status of the contemporary book-length graphic novel. Topics include graphic vs. traditional novel, word and image, style and space, representations of subjectivity, trauma, and history. Authors may include Spiegelman, Bechdel, Nakazawa, Sacco, Satrapi, Backderf.

PREREQUISITES: Indicate “None” or list all elements of the prerequisites, clearly indicating “AND” or “OR” where appropriate. Here are three examples: “Junior standing or CAS ZN300 or consent of instructor”; “CAS ZN108 and CAS ZN203 and CAS PQ206; or consent of instructor”; “For SED students only.”

1. State the prerequisites: NONE

2. Explain the need for these prerequisites:
CREDITS: (check one)

☐ Half course: 2 credits  ☐ Variable: Please describe.
☒ Full course: 4 credits  ☐ Other: Please describe.

Provide a rationale for this number of credits, bearing in mind that for a CAS or GRS course to carry 4 credits, 1) it must normally be scheduled to meet at least 150 minutes/week, AND 2) combined instruction and assignments, as detailed in the attached course syllabus, must anticipate at least 12 total hours/week of student effort to achieve course objectives.

We plan to run the course on a normal Tues/Thurs schedule of 75-minutes classes. The main material in the course consists of book-length graphic novels, and assessments will include regular quizzes, two written papers, a midterm, and a final exam—all of which will certainly require at least 12 hours per week from a student.

DIVISIONAL STUDIES CREDIT: Is this course intended to fulfill Divisional Studies requirements?

☐ No.
☒ Yes. If yes, please indicate which division _______Humanities__________________ and explain why the course should qualify for Divisional Studies credit. Refer to criteria listed here and specify whether this course is intended for “short” or “expanded” divisional list.

This course can be placed on the “short” divisional list. No prior experience with the topic will be presupposed, and it will provide students with the sort of broad humanistic goals that the divisional studies requirements are intended to fulfill. It deals with a major contemporary art form, introduces students to some of the methods of literary as well as theoretical analysis (words vs. images, traditional vs. graphic texts), and ask them to communicate their learning through a variety of assessments, including formal papers and exams.

HOW FREQUENTLY WILL THE COURSE BE OFFERED?

☐ Every semester  ☐ Once a year, fall  ☒ Once a year, spring  ☐ Every other year
☐ Other: Explain:

NEED FOR THE COURSE: Explain the need for the course and its intended impact. How will it strengthen your overall curriculum? Will it be required or fulfill a requirement for degrees/majors/minors offered by your department/program or for degrees in other departments/school/colleges? Which students are most likely to
be served by this course? How will it contribute to program learning outcomes for those students? If you see the course as being of “possible” or “likely” interest to students in another departments/program, please consult directly with colleagues in that unit. (You must attach appropriate cognate comments using cognate comment form if this course is intended to serve students in specific other programs. See FURTHER INFORMATION below about cognate comment.)

The English department’s curriculum currently includes relatively few courses on contemporary literature and culture—essentially just EN 347 and EN 547, which have come to run in alternating year, as well as the (new) EN 180, on contemporary apocalyptic narrative. The department has even few courses designed to explore the longstanding—yet increasingly contentious—line between “high” culture (poetry, fiction, drama) and “low” culture (film, television, graphic novels).

“The Graphic Novel” will help correct both of these weaknesses. It will consider narratives that have become pervasive over the last decade and a half, and that straddle the line between “high art” and “pop.” An examination of such stories can provide a glimpse of how we contemporaries understand a host of crucial moral and political topics: history, trauma, heroism, character, political power, and the grounds of our shared social life. Such an examination will also allow us to probe a number of challenging questions about aesthetics: how one understands the relationship between word and image; the various ways of unfolding a narrative and presenting actions and characters; how one distinguishes a superior work of art; how the composition of a work—its techniques and structures—impacts the way that we understand it.

At the more structural level, EN 170 will be an important and attractive addition to our repertoire of introductory courses, which are essential for drawing students toward the English department and into our major.

ENROLLMENT: How many undergraduate and/or graduate students do you expect to enroll in the initial offering of this course?

20 on its initial offering

CROSS-LISTING: Is this course to be cross-listed or taught with another course? If so, specify. Chairs/directors of all cross-listing units must co-sign this proposal on the signature line below.

No

OVERLAP:

1. Are there courses in the UIS Course Inventory (CC00) with the same number and/or title as this course?
   - No.
☐ Yes. If yes, any active course(s) with the same number or title as the proposed course will be phased out upon approval of this proposal.

NOTE: A course number cannot be reused if a different course by that number has been offered in the past five years.

2. Relationship to other courses in your program or others: Is there any significant overlap between this course and others offered by your department/program or by others? (You must attach appropriate cognate comments using cognate comment form if this course might be perceived as overlapping with courses in another department/program. See FURTHER INFORMATION below.)

None that we know of.

FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT: What, if any, are the new or special facilities or equipment needs of the course (e.g., laboratory, library, instructional technology, consumables)? Are currently available facilities, equipment, and other resources adequate for the proposed course? (NOTE: Approval of proposed course does not imply commitment to new resources to support the course on the part of CAS.)

Current facilities are sufficient.

STAFFING: How will the staffing of this course, in terms of faculty and, where relevant, teaching fellows, affect staffing support for other courses? For example, are there other courses that will not be taught as often as now? Is the staffing of this course the result of recent or expected expansion of faculty? (NOTE: Approval of proposed course does not imply commitment to new resources to support the course on the part of CAS.)

No changes to staffing needed.

BUDGET AND COST: What, if any, are the other new budgetary needs or implications related to the start-up or continued offering of this course? If start-up or continuation of the course will entail costs not already discussed, identify them and how you expect to cover them. (NOTE: Approval of proposed course does not imply commitment to new resources to support the course on the part of CAS.)

No unusual costs.

EXTERNAL PROGRAMS: If this course is being offered at an external program/campus, please provide a brief description of that program and attach a CV for the proposed instructor.

FURTHER INFORMATION THAT MUST BE ATTACHED IN ORDER FOR THIS PROPOSAL TO BE CONSIDERED:

• A complete week-by-week SYLLABUS with student learning objectives, readings, and assignments that reflects the specifications of the course described in this proposal; that is, appropriate level, credits, etc. (See guidelines on “Writing a Syllabus” on the Center for Excellence & Innovation in Teaching
Be sure that syllabus includes your expectations for academic honesty, with URL for pertinent undergraduate or GRS academic conduct code(s).

- Cognate comment from chairs or directors of relevant departments and/or programs. Use the form here under “Curriculum Review & Modification.” You can consult with Susan Jackson (CAS) or Jeffrey Hughes (GRS) to determine which departments or programs inside and outside of CAS would be appropriate.

DEPARTMENT CONTACT NAME AND POSITION: **Robert Chodat, Associate Chair of English**

DEPARTMENT CONTACT EMAIL AND PHONE: **RCHODAT@BU.EDU; 3-2565**

DEPARTMENT APPROVAL: ___________________________ 4.7.16  
Department Chair  

______________________________  
Other Department Chair(s) (for cross-listed courses)  

Date
DEAN'S OFFICE CURRICULUM ADMINISTRATOR USE ONLY

CAS/GRS CURRICULUM COMMITTEE APPROVAL:

☐ Approved       Date: __________________

☐ Tabled         Date: __________________

☐ Not Approved   Date: __________________

Divisional Studies Credit:

☐ Endorsed
   ☐ HU
   ☐ MCS
   ☐ NS
   ☐ SS

☐ Not endorsed

__________________________
Curriculum Committee Chair Signature and Date

Comments:

PROVISIONAL APPROVAL REQUESTED for Semester/Year __________________________

__________________________
Dean of Arts & Sciences Signature and Date

Comments:

CAS FACULTY: Faculty Meeting Date: __________________   ☐ Approved   ☐ Not Approved

__________________________
Curriculum Administrator Signature and Date

Comments:
Instructor: Jonathan Najarian  
Office: 236 Bay State Road, Room 121A  
Office Hours: T 12-2; W 11-1 and by appointment  
Contact: joncn@bu.edu

**Course Overview**

In the past several decades the graphic novel has emerged as a significant medium of narrative art. Today comics works have won Pulitzer Prizes, are required reading in colleges and universities, have been adapted for Broadway and Hollywood, occupy special issues of the *New York Times Book Review*, inspire dedicated imprints from major book publishers, and are reviewed everywhere, and with as much fervor, as novels are. Out of what histories does contemporary comics spring, and what can the form accomplish? How do we describe its differences from other kinds of narratives?

This course focuses specifically on the contemporary format of the book-length graphic novel (or graphic narrative). The course aims to understand what the word and image form of the graphic novel allows: why do authors write graphic novels as opposed to traditional novels? What can the graphic novel accomplish? How does style become a function of narrative? How do graphic novels document subjectivity, for both fictional and nonfiction characters? How do they build storyworlds for their characters to inhabit? With these questions as our guiding pursuit, the course is divided into three units: the first will be dedicated to exploring nonfiction works that document or describe disaster, including eyewitness accounts and "comics journalism." Unit two transitions to memoir and personal history, with a focus on histories that register or uncover trauma. Unit three examines fictional works and casts an eye towards experimental or unusual narrative forms.
Throughout we will pay careful attention to the formal language, or grammar, of comics in order to interpret its narrative procedure and possibilities. Comics is known as a form that **turns time into space** through its arrangement of panels on the page. In order to understand how the form operates, we will attend to practices of reading—and making—comics. These verbal-visual works often gesture to today’s readers to slow down in order to grasp details, style, dense or intricate composition, and the materiality of the book as object. While our formal and informal writing assignments will enhance analytical writing skills, our attention to the language of the comics genre will prepare you to think critically and maneuver carefully in a world that is saturated with both words and images.

**Required Texts**
The following texts are available at the BU Barnes and Noble in Kenmore Square. **I do not allow laptops in class**, and you may not read electronic versions of the following texts. Because higher production values are required to print images, graphic novels are sometimes more expensive than prose novels. Still, having hard copies of these texts will be crucial to your success in the course, in part because many of these texts are aware of themselves as objects. To offset costs, I have made photocopies of all supplemental readings.

Lynd Ward, *Vertigo* (Dover Publications 2009, first pub. 1937; 320 pages)
Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: My Father Bleeds History* (Pantheon 1986; 160 pages)
Art Spiegelman, *Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began* (Pantheon 1991; 144 pages)
Joe Sacco, *Footnotes in Gaza* (Metropolitan 2009; 432 pages)
Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis* (part 1) (Pantheon 2004; 160 pages)
Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (Houghton Mifflin 2006; 232 pages)
Lynda Barry, *One! Hundred! Demons!* (Sasquatch 2002; 224 pages)
Charles Burns, *Black Hole* (Pantheon 2005; 368 pages)
Isabel Greenberg, *Encyclopedia of Early Earth* (Little, Brown 2013; 176 pages)
Chris Ware, *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth* (Pantheon 2003; 380 pages)
Richard McGuire, *Here* (Pantheon 2014; 304 pages)

Other readings are available online through the Blackboard site.

**Coursework and Grade Distribution**

Attendance and Participation: 15%
Quizzes: 5%
Paper 1: 20%
Paper 2: 25%
Midterm: 15%
Final Exam: 20%

**Attendance and Participation:** Habitual attendance and active participation is crucial if you wish to succeed in this class. **As such, there is no cell phone or laptop use permitted in class.** You should read the assigned texts actively and curiously and come to class with questions, comments, and ideas. We will also use Blackboard discussions to facilitate in-class conversation; you will occasionally be asked to respond to readings online via Blackboard before class. As this is a discussion-based class, participation will be essential to your success and the success of the class as a whole.

You may miss up to three classes without penalty. You should, however, use these absences judiciously, as I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences (except in extreme cases). After three absences your final grade will be affected. Three late arrivals will count as one absence. If you have a special obligation that will cause you to miss several classes (such as religious observations or university athletics, etc.) please talk to me at the beginning of the semester. Missing five classes is grounds for failure in the course.

**Quizzes:** Over the course of the semester, you will participate in ten reading quizzes. These quizzes will, in general, be unannounced, but if you have completed the readings you will find the quizzes very easy. They will cover rather basic details of the text, but will require you to pay attention to what you are reading. The quizzes will be scored from 0-5, and each quiz will have 6 questions. If you correctly answer all 6 questions, you will receive a 6 out of 5, meaning that you could, for example, get a 4 on one quiz and a 6 on the next and achieve a 100% quiz grade. I will drop your lowest two scores. No quizzes can be made up; if you miss class on the day of a quiz, this grade will be among the two that are dropped.

I hope that these quizzes will encourage you to read actively and think critically about the text. You may even find that reading for the quizzes will train you to become a better reader, as you will start to pick up on subtle details you might have otherwise overlooked.

**Papers 1 and 2:** You will write two formal papers, the first due **21 February by 5pm** and the second due **Friday 28 April by 5pm.** The first paper will be 1250-1500 words and the second 1750-2000 words. We will undertake some in-class exercises to assist in the progress of these papers. Papers should be submitted via email to joncn@bu.edu. Late papers will be penalized by ⅓ of a letter grade for each day they are late (A becomes A-, A- becomes B+, B+ becomes B, etc.). More specific details/paper prompts will be distributed when the time is right.

**Midterm and Final:** There will be both a midterm and a final exam in this course. The midterm will be held in class on **Thursday 2 March.** The final will be held **TBA.** The exams will not be cumulative; the final will cover only post-midterm material. Please do not schedule a flight home before the final exam.
Plagiarism
Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. All of your written work must be your own, with the obvious exception of quoted materials, which must be properly documented using MLA format. The Academic Conduct Code booklet defines plagiarism as “any attempt by any student to represent the work of another as his or her own... Plagiarism can consist of acts of commission—appropriating the words or ideas of another—or omission—failing to acknowledge/document/credit the source or creator of words or ideas.” To be sure you know how to avoid plagiarism (or what constitutes plagiarism), please familiarize yourself with the Academic Conduct Code or come talk to me. The Academic Conduct Code is found online at http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/.

All cases of plagiarism must be reported to the Dean’s office, and you will automatically fail this course and face possible expulsion from the university.

Office Hours and Contact Information
My office is in the English Department, located at 236 Bay State Road. I encourage you to come see me if you have any questions about the course, the assignments, or want to discuss any of the readings in further detail. Please consider visiting at least once this semester, especially during paper writing season. If you cannot come during office hours, please set up an appointment.

Contact me via email anytime. I check my email countless times each day, and should respond rapidly to any queries.

Disability Protocol
If you require accommodations for a disability, please let me know. If you need more information, you can contact the Office of Disability Services at http://www.bu.edu/disability or call them at 617-353-3658.

Potentially Upsetting Material
Please note that we will read, see, and discuss potentially upsetting materials having to do with violence and with sexuality in contexts (both nonfictional and fictional) including war and personal abuse. Some of the work we will read has been considered offensive, despite pronouncing itself satire. Even though it may be difficult to study some of this material, it is important to grapple with these graphic words and images to understand the magnitude and consequences of history, lived lives, and the ethics of relationships in the context of literary expression, as well as debates around the power of images.

Tentative Schedule

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thurs Jan 19</td>
<td>Introduction and Overview</td>
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<td>What is comics? What is a “graphic novel”?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues Jan 24</td>
<td>Definition of comics; comics language and grammar; reading comics</td>
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Will Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art*, 1-6, “Comics as a form of reading”;
39-102, “The Frame”
60-93, “Blood in the Gutter”
Lynd Ward, *Vertigo*

**Unit 1: Nonfiction Narratives and Disaster Comics**

| Thurs Jan 26 | Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: My Father Bleeds History*  
| Tues Jan 31 | *Maus I*  
*Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began* (chapters 1 and 2) |
| Wed Feb 1 or Thurs Feb 2 | Film Screening: *Crumb* (1995), directed by Terry Zwigoff, produced by David Lynch, time and location TBA |
| Thurs Feb 2 | *Maus II*  
| Tues Feb 7 | Keiji Nakazawa, *I Saw It*  
| Thurs Feb 9 | *Barefoot Gen*  
| Tues Feb 14 | Joe Sacco, *Footnotes in Gaza*  
Hillary Chute, interview with Joe Sacco, from *Outside the Box* |
| Thurs Feb 16 | *Footnotes in Gaza*  
Kristian Williams, “The Case for Comics Journalism,” *Columbia Journalism Review* 2005 |
| **Tues Feb 21** | No Class — Monday Schedule  
**First Paper Due by 5pm to joncn@bu.edu** |

**Unit II: Trauma, Childhood, and Narratives of the Self**

| Thurs Feb 23 | Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis* |
| Thurs Feb 23 or | Film Screening: *Persepolis* (2007), directed by Marjane Satrapi and Vincent |
Fri Feb 24  Paronnaud, time and location TBA

Tues Feb 28  Persepolis

Thurs March 2  Midterm

March 4-12  Spring Break

Tues March 14  Derf Backderf, My Friend Dahmer
Alison Bechdel, Fun Home

Thurs March 16  Fun Home

Tues March 21  Lynda Barry, One Hundred Demons
Hillary Chute, interview with Lynda Barry, from Outside the Box

Thurs March 23  One Hundred Demons

Unit III: Fictional Narratives and Experiments in Form

Tues March 28  Charles Burns, Black Hole
Hillary Chute, interview with Charles Burns, from Outside the Box

Thurs March 30  Black Hole

Tues April 4  Isabel Greenberg, Encyclopedia of Early Earth

Thurs April 6  Encyclopedia of Early Earth

Tues April 11  Chris Ware, Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth
Hillary Chute, interview with Art Spiegelman and Chris Ware, from Outside the Box

Thurs April 13  Jimmy Corrigan
Johanna Drucker, “What is Graphic about Graphic Novels?” English Language Notes 46.2, 29-55 (2008)
Fri April 21

Tues April 25
Lauren Redniss, *Thunder and Lightning: Weather Past, Present, and Future*

Thurs April 27
*Thunder and Lightning*

**Friday April 28**
**Second Paper Due by 5pm to joncn@bu.edu**

**Tues May 2**
**Last Day of Class**
Review and Recap: What do graphic novels do? What can they do?

**Wednesday May 8**
**Final Exams Begin**