

# ENGLISH 392: COMICS, CHILDHOOD & CHILDREN'S COMICS

Monday & Wednesday, 2:00 to 3:15pm, Class #14440, Prof. Charles Hatfield



Comics, historically, have been a disreputable medium, branded as a threat to children—*yet children have been the target audience of many of the most successful comics ever made.*

Comics Studies has been so eager to attain legitimacy and “adulthood” that it has neglected children’s comics as a subject—*yet children’s comics include the most influential comics ever.*

Children’s Literature Studies has been so adverse to comics and popular culture that for decades it has ignored the medium—*yet comics have been central to the literacy stories of millions of children.*

These contradictions are at last being questioned, for today children’s and young adult comics are once again the most lucrative, widely read comics of all. In the US, the graphic novel for young readers has ushered in a new era of comics, with sales and influence surpassing those of superhero or other traditional comic books. Simply put, *now is the Golden Age of graphic novels as children’s and young adult books.*

This fall, English 392 will study why this renaissance has come about, and the complex history that lies behind it. We will explore the intersection of comics, children’s literature, and childhood studies, from the early 20th century to now, with emphasis on today’s burgeoning market for children’s graphic novels.

Readings: articles and book chapters in Children’s Literature and Comics Studies, plus a range of children’s comics, from pioneering strips (e.g. *Peanuts*) to comic books (e.g. *Uncle Scrooge*) to contemporary graphic novels by Raina Telgemeier, Gene Luen Yang, and others. Further, each student will be able to find their own areas of interest and dig more deeply. Requirements: expect to present in class and lead class discussion at least once; share some of your reading experiences in an online forum; perform a hands-on visual analysis; and pursue self-directed research and write a seminar paper. Follow the evolving requirements and reading list on Prof. H’s blog, <http://www.kindercomics.org> [.]

PS. There will be guests, both scholars and comics professionals!