

HISTORY 1840G

Graphic History!

Winter term 2026 lectures Thurs 9:30-11:30 (location TBA)
plus 1-hour tutorial each week (location TBA)

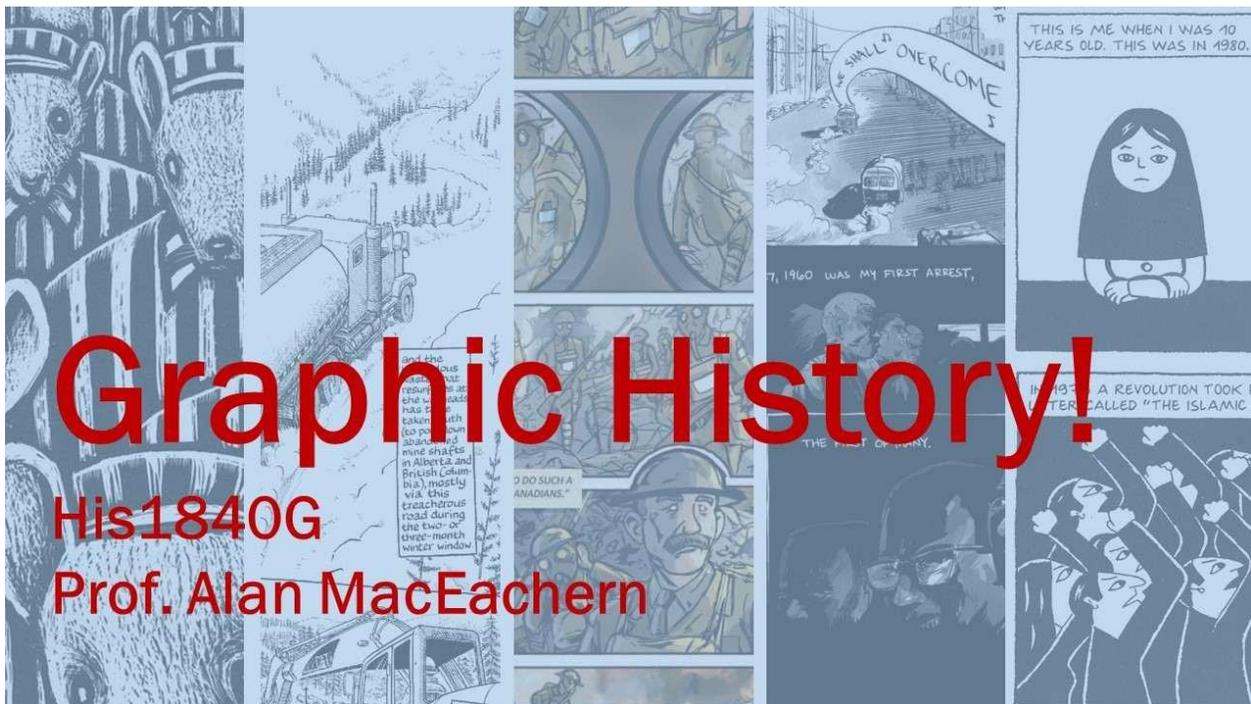
Instructor: Prof. Alan MacEachern, amaceach@uwo.ca

Office hours: Lawson 2268, Mon 9:30-11:30

Graduate teaching assistants: TBA

This is a summer 2025 **draft** outline.

Please see the OWL Brightspace course site in January 2026 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 characteristics and conventions? Does it allow better access to individuals' 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. Students are expected to be sensitive and respectful in discussion with one another. The classroom will provide 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 Brightspace & in class.

- **3 of 4 Reaction papers:**
 - **29 January**
 - **12 February**
 - **12 March**
 - **19 March**

5% each x 3 = 15%

You are to write and submit 250-word reaction papers about 3 of the 4 graphic histories that are being read and discussed in full this term. (You may submit all 4 and have your 3 highest grades count toward your final mark.) Read the book and reflect on it. 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 will only be accepted until the class in which the book is first being discussed.

- **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 annotated bibliography – due 26 February – 10%***
You are to submit a 500-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 an annotated bibliography, in Chicago style, of a minimum 5 sources you plan to use to research this history.
- ***Graphic history – due 2 April – 30%***
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 is also to include a 500-word “author/artist’s statement,” explaining what you wished to achieve, what issues you faced, and what you learned in the process.
- ***Course engagement – 15%***
Students are to attend lectures and tutorials and be ready to contribute to discussion in both. Attendance will be taken at both. It is expected that students may miss the rare lecture or tutorial; 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 Advising. Please see the History Department’s [Undergraduate Policies and Statements](#) page for procedures and requirements involving make-up exams.

Course policies:

- You are to submit your assignments through the course 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 annotated bibliography and the Graphic history assignments may be passed in late, but there is a 5% late penalty per day, including weekends. The final date to submit material for the course is the last day of classes, 9 April. All assignments must be completed to pass the course. Students seeking academic accommodation or consideration regarding the Graphic History assignment due 26 March 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.
- **All writing submitted in this course must be your own.** The use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT is discouraged and may be permitted only for activities such as brainstorming and refining

ideas or checking grammar and style. Your Graphic history assignment cannot be “drawn” using AI. (If in doubt about any of this, please ask me for clarification.)

Course materials:

There are 4 required texts:

- 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).

They are available in the Western Bookstore and on 2-hour reserve at Weldon Library. Alternatively, there is a digital copy of [Through Their Eyes](#) available through Weldon Library and digital copies of *Maus* and *Persepolis* at the [Internet Archive](#). Beyond that, you are welcome to borrow or share any editions of physical copies or ebooks that you can find.

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

Course Schedule & Readings:

- 1. Week of 5 January **Introductions**

- 2. Week of 12 January **Comics & History, Space & Time (1)**
 - Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993), 1-59.
Tutorial: What is History?
 - John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (2002), 1-11.

- 3. Week of 19 January **Comics & History, Space & Time (2)**
 - Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993), 60-117.
Tutorial: How to read History
 - Zachary M. Schrag, *The Princeton Guide to Historical Research* (2021), 18-23 & 103-7.

- 4. Week of 26 January **Barrett & Engen, Through Their Eyes (1)**
 - Matthew Barrett & Robert Engen, *Through Their Eyes*, 1-128.
****Reaction paper to *Through Their Eyes*, 1-128 due before class on 29 January.****
Tutorial: Choosing a topic & finding sources
 - Matt Upson, et al., *Information Now: A Graphic Guide to Student Research & Web Literacy*, 2nd ed. (2021), ch1 & 2.

- 5. Week of 2 February **Barrett & Engen, Through Their Eyes (2)**
 - Matthew Barrett & Robert Engen, *Through Their Eyes*, 129-286.

- 6. Week of 9 February **Spiegelman, Maus, pt.1**
 - Art Spiegelman, *Maus*, vol.1.

****Reaction paper to *Maus*, vol.1 due before class on 12 February.****

Tutorial: Citing sources & creating an annotated bibliography

- Matt Upson, et al., *Information Now: A Graphic Guide to Student Research & Web Literacy*, 2nd ed. (2021), ch3 & 6.

Reading Week

- 7. Week of 23 February **Spiegelman, *Maus*, pt.2**
 - Art Spiegelman, *Maus*, vol.2.

****Graphic history – proposal & annotated bibliography due on 26 February.****
- 8. Week of 2 March **field trip to ARCC, Weldon Library**
 - "[The Great Canadian Comic Books](#)" documentary (1971).

Tutorial: History & ethics

 - Matt Upson, et al., *Information Now: A Graphic Guide to Student Research & Web Literacy*, 2nd ed. (2021), ch7.
 - Stephen Pyne, *Voice & Vision: A Guide to Writing History & Other Serious Nonfiction* (2015), ch3.
- 9. Week of 9 March **Satrapa, *Petropolis***
 - Marjane Satrapa, *Persepolis, The Story of a Childhood*, vol.1

****Reaction paper to *Persepolis*, vol.1 due before class on 12 March.****

Tutorial: Planning your Graphic History

 - Stephen Pyne, *Voice & Vision: A Guide to Writing History & Other Serious Nonfiction* (2015), excerpt from ch5&6.
 - Matt Madden, *99 Ways to Tell a Story: Exercises in Style* (2005).
- 10. Week of 16 March **Brown, *Louis Riel***
 - Chester Brown, *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography*.

****Reaction paper to *Louis Riel* due before class on 19 March.****

Tutorial: tba
- 11. Week of 23 March **Graphics History as Politics**
 - Jeff Lemire, *Secret Path*, 2016 or [The Secret Path](#) (video).
 - Ian Adams, "[The Lonely Death of Charlie Wenjack](#)," *Maclean's*, 1 Feb 1967.
- 12. Week of 30 March **TBA**

****30 March is the final day to withdraw from His1840 without academic penalty.****

****Graphic History project due 2 April.****
- 13. Week of 6 April **The Future of the Past**
 - 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.
 - Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey, "Nostalgia and the Return of History," *The Graphic Novel: An Introduction*, 2015.

Tutorial: Exam prep.

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.