

# storytelling through computer animation

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Hours: MW 11:30-12:30, 2-3 or appt.

Meeting Times: Monday, Wednesday 12:30 - 1:50pm  
Room 118 or csLab, Science Center

What is *your* story?

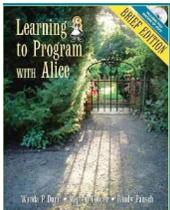
## Summary

Today's technologically-rich world of cell phones, Facebook, and YouTube keeps us connected like never before. Yet, our "sharing" comes in bite-size exchanges – rarely is there time to tell *your* story. Telling stories can communicate, recreate and preserve our cultures, memories, and traditions. This course is a combination of seminar and hands-on computing to expose you to new modes of and practice with telling your own stories. In the seminar portion, the readings, your writing, and discussions will focus on graphic novels as a successful storytelling genre. In the lab, you will use a gallery of computer-animated 3D characters and virtual worlds to spark story ideas. You will learn to program social interactions between characters as a means to the end of storytelling using the programming language Alice. The software Comic Life will facilitate the construction of your tales.



## Books

Dann, W., Cooper, S., Pausch, R. (2006). Learning to Program with Alice. Prentice Hall.

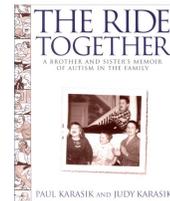


Eisner, Will (1978). A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories. DC Comics.

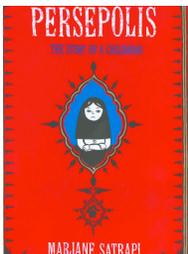


Will Eisner

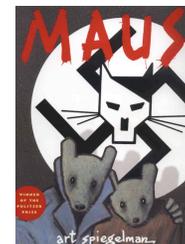
Karasik, Paul and Karasik, Judy (2004). The Ride Together: A Brother and Sister's Memoir of Autism in the Family. Washington Square Press.



Satrapı, Marjane (2004, 2005). Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood. and Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return. Pantheon.



Spiegelman, Art (1986). Maus I and II. Pantheon Books.



*I recommend that you also buy a 3-ring binder.*

**Goals of this First Year Seminar:**

This seminar is an opportunity for you to foster a new identity, that is, the identity of you as a scholar. The semester of work associated with this course includes reading, study, writing, discussion, oral presentations, and computing.

Our goals include:

- (0) sharpening your skills in **evaluating** the graphic novel genre as a medium for storytelling
- (1) **increasing your confidence** in asking and responding to difficult questions
- (2) achieving new successes when **expressing yourself** in a group and or larger audience
- (3) raising your confidence in **writing** and **creating** your own stories
- (4) heightening your skills in **marshalling evidence**, including full and complete referencing
- (5) reaching a new level of **computing competency** and applying computing to new areas

Working on these goals is to practice the stuff of scholarship: confident presentations, digging for information, creative and professional writing, an ability to solve hard problems with computing, including writing software when what you want is not out there. Learn to do these well, practice, start over, study again, take them with you. In sports, it takes patience and hard work to make a powerful move. Likewise in scholarship, it will take patience and hard work for you to “make a powerful move.”

**Your Grade:**

Things to do	Grading Percents	Frequency/Due
Participate in class discussions	10%	<i>always ...</i>
Attend four (4) campus talks/performances/exhibits	5%	1) <b>Satrapi</b> lecture Sept 17, 7:30pm, Hindle Aud. 2) <b>Karasik</b> Talk: Oct. 7, 5pm 3) view 2 of 4 <b>Iranian Films</b> , Watson Hall
Labs	10%	in lab as needed
Alice Programming Assignments	25% overall	
a1: Intro to Alice	5%	Mon, Sept 28
a2: Interacting Characters	5%	Mon, Oct 19
a3: Conditionals and loops	5%	Mon, Nov 02
a4: Events	10%	Mon, Nov 09
3 Writing Assignments	20% overall	
w1: Timeline entry 1 (v1)	5%	Mon, Sept 28
w2: Timeline entry 2 (v2)	5%	Wed, Oct 07
w3: Historical analysis of the early fears of comics	10%	Wed, Dec 02
Your story (final project)	30% overall	
v1 Design	5%	Wed, Nov 11
v2 Demo/Presentation	5%	Wed, Nov 18
Final In-class Presentation	5%	Dec 07 or 09
Final Story Submission	15%	Wed, Dec 09

**Late Submissions:**

Due is due. Always turn in whatever you have on time. Something turned in on time is much better than not having it accepted because it is late. Late is not an option. (Good, glad we can all agree with this.) Note: **Alice Programs** are due on various dates (see detailed syllabus); however, since I know from experience that many students like to use the last night for testing, I will allow you to submit your programs until 5am the following day. For example, Program a1 is due MON, Sept 28<sup>th</sup>, but you can submit it electronically until 5am TUE, Sept 29<sup>th</sup> -- Careful! The course website (onCourse) makes it appear as if the program is due on TUE, but remember, that means TUE at 5am!

**Honor Code Revisited:**

It goes without saying that all submitted work will be the student's own, in keeping with the Wheaton Honor Code, unless the assignment has assigned groups. For labs, you may get "help" from fellow classmates, but remember that all completed work must be your own. Use discretion; don't ask your colleague for "the" answer. However, I do encourage you to discuss the problem in general, such as the type of statements or functions one might use. For programming assignments, your answers and software must be your own from beginning to end. Here is an analogy. Almost no one would ever "use/steal" a line or two from another person's poem. Consider it the same with your programs. Don't "borrow/use" lines or sections of code from another classmate. Your program is (like) your poem; everyone's program should be unique. Be wise. If a colleague is asking you for too much help, be honest and remind them your program is just that, *your* program.

**Tips for working on your own ....**

- (0) It is expected that you spend at least 2-3 hours on reading, study, and preparation for every 90 minutes of lecture and discussion.
- (1) It is expected that you spend at least 4-8 hours per week on your current programming assignment. WARNING: Programmers typically underestimate the time it takes to complete a software project; 4-8 hours per week on your programming assignment may be one of those "underestimations."

**In classroom "LABS"**

- (0) The computer work in class (labs) are a critical part of the course. In a way, it is your time to "hack", solve unique problems, and show that you can work hard on the problem at hand. Your labs will prepare you to work on your next programming project. You must be in lab to get credit for the session. If you happen to miss a lab, you are strongly encouraged to do it on your own time, but please do not ask for credit.
- (1) In order to best grasp the material presented in the lab, I strongly suggest that you completely redo any labs that you find difficult. (Read that last sentence again, unless of course you've already reread it once.)

**HELP**

*Please don't wait too long before you see me;  
a quick chat in my office can often clear things up.  
I'm here often ...*

**Day Timah** (I'm from Maine so I can make fun of Northeastern USA accents ☺)

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**Wed Sept 02**

"hello FYS"

review of syllabus and onCourse ("moodle") site

Part I: A historical timeline of "comics" -- Hieroglyphics to ...

2do: Read (three items):

- (i) Eisner's A Contract with God (*read all 4 short stories by next Wed*)  
(*"the first modern graphic novel"*)
- (ii) Check out Eisner fan's website [see onCourse link]
- (iii) Weiner, Stephen, "The Graphic Novel: Comics Take Themselves Seriously." In *Faster than a Speeding Bullet: The Rise of the Graphic Novel*, pp. 17-20. New York: NBM, 2003. Reproduced in *Contemporary Literary Criticism-Select*. [see online link in onCourse]



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**Mon Sept 07**

Labor Day – no class

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**Wed Sept 09**

Discuss Eisner's A Contract with God



Part II: A historical timeline of "comics"

2do: w1 – Pick/research an item, author, or historical event on the timeline of comics;  
-- version #1 (w1) of a 3-5 page paper due Mon, Sept 28

Iranian Film #1, Ellison Lecture Hall, Watson Hall – 7pm

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**Mon Sept 14**

Part III: A historical timeline of "comics"

Lab: "20+ things you need to know how to do in MS Word"



Your topic for your paper (w1) is due: Wed Sept 16

Due: w1 will be due on Mon, Sept 28

(see next page for Mon Sept 14 continued ...)

**Mon Sept 14 continued ...**

Prepare for WED's Guest Lecture

2do: Read "Frames and mirrors in Marjane Satrapi's Persepolis." (Critical essay)  
symploke Jan 1, 2007 [see onCourse for link]

2do: Listen to:

Highly Acclaimed 'Persepolis' Denounced by Iran by Kim Masters, *All Things Considered*,  
(National Public Radio), November 8, 2007. [see onCourse for link]

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16126274>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Iran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Iran)

(especially from Qajar Dynasty to present)

2do: Check out Persepolis v2.0, now cast around the recent Iranian election

<http://www.spreadpersepolis.com/>

2do: On one page (landscape), **make a timeline of Iranian History** (at least the **20<sup>th</sup> century – present**); **Bring your timeline with you to WED's guest lecture** (you can handwrite your timeline; we're most concerned that you brief yourself on Iranian history *before* the class on Wednesday and in preparation for the Satrapi lecture on Thursday evening)

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**Wed Sept 16**

Topic for your paper is due today

An outline and list of references is due: Mon, Sept 21

**Iranian history timeline due in class**

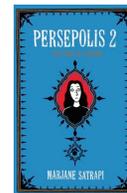
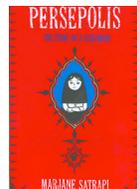
**Guest Lecture:** Touba Ghadessi Fleming, Assistant Professor of Art History

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**Thursday Sept 17**

Marjane Satrapi Lecture

Hindle Auditorium, Science Center, 7:30pm



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**Mon Sept 21**

w1: Outline and references due today

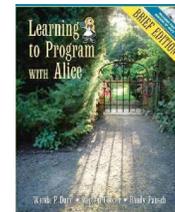
Reference Librarian (and graphic novel guru) Mason Brown discusses and demos online library tools for literary criticism of graphic novels and shares some of his “favs” from his personal collection

Quiz: So, can you *really* do 20+ things in MS Word? Hands-on quiz.

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**Wed Sept 23**

Lab: Introduction to “Alice”



2do: Install Alice on your own computer.

2do: Read Alice text: Foreward, Preface, and Ch1 p1-16.

2do: Complete **a1: #4 or #5 p17 – Due Wed Sept 28.**

2do: Begin reading Paul and Judy Karasik’s  
The Ride Together (read Part One and Two by  
Mon Sept 28 )



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**Mon Sept 28**

Your paper (**w1**) is **due** today.

**a1 due:** Be ready to demo #4 or #5 p17 in lab.

More Alice today.

2do: Begin w2-research for version #2 of your timeline paper using new literary criticism resources Mason showed us -- w2 due on Wed, Oct 07.

2do: Read Alice p16-25 -- Storyboarding

2do: Finish Paul and Judy Karasik’s The Ride Together (for Wed discussion)

2do: Come to Wed class with at least two questions about the reading you’d like to ask Paul.

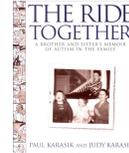
This draft of your questions should be typed in. You will have a chance to modify these.

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**Wed Sept 30**

Dinner at President's House tonight! 6-7pm (Don't be late! ☺ )

Due: Draft of two (2) questions to ask Paul.



**Discussion:** Paul and Judy Karasik's The Ride Together

2do: Refine a set of questions to ask Paul in preparation of his visit Oct 07 (due Mon, Oct 05)

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**Mon Oct 05**

Due: Final draft of two questions for Paul Karasik  
w2 due on Wed, Oct 07

Lab: Alice – Section 2.2 – Working with the “Chap02-03-04FirstEncounter.a2w” world

2do: Read Alice p26-38, Repeat the lab at home  
Read Alice p40-42 (The *vehicle* property): Can your chicken ride a horse?

2do: Read “Paul Karasik”, in *Contemporary Authors Online*. (A profile of the author's life and works) -- Also see links to other interviews on onCourse webpage.

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**Wed Oct 07**

w2 (second draft of comic paper) due today



Paul Karasik

12:30 May Room, Mary Lyon – Paul Karasik visit

**Special Event**

5pm Holman Room, Mary Lyon – Paul Karasik lecture:  
“The Language of Comics”

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**Mon-Tue Oct 12-13**

**Fall BREAK**

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**Wed Oct 14**

Lab: Alice – Exercises 2.2 -- #3 then #4



2do: Read Maus: A Survivor's Tale (Book 1) by Art Spiegelman for Mon, Oct 19

2do: Check out Spiegelman's bio online [see onCourse]



2do: a2 Alice – Modify today's lab. Create a world with interacting characters.

Try to use as many of the features of Alice that you have learned so far.

**a2 Due: Mon, Oct 19.**

Iranian Film #2, Ellison Lecture Hall, Watson Hall – 7pm

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**Mon Oct 19**

a2 due today



Discuss Maus (Book 1)

2do: Read (two items):

(i) Spiegelman's Maus: And Here My Troubles Began (Book 2)

(ii) Wilner, Arlene Fish, "Happy, Happy Ever After': Story and History in Art Spiegelman's Maus." *Journal of Narrative Technique* 27, no. 2 (spring 1997): 171-89. Reproduced in *Contemporary Literary Criticism-Select*.

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**Wed Oct 21**

Discuss Maus (Book 2)

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**Mon Oct 26**

Lab: Alice – Programming for real ...

- built-in functions for objects
- simple control structures



2do: Read Alice p49 – 59, bottom of 62-65

2do: Complete Exercise #1 in 3-1 on p66 for class on Wed, Oct 28

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**Wed Oct 28**

Exercise #1 in 3-1 on p66 due



Lab: Alice – Repetition with a loop

2do: Read Alice p61-62, 68

2do: **a3 due Mon Nov 02** – Complete Exercise #7 (Snowman to Stool) on p67.



Creating Comics: Genres, themes, characters ...

Lab: Introduction to Comic Life

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**Mon Nov 02**

**Advising Week**

**Due: a3** “Snowman to Stool” exercise

Creating Comics: More genres, themes, characters ...

Lab: Alice – Interaction: Events and Event Handling

Lab: Working on *your* story ...



2do: Read Alice p91 – 97

2do: **a4 due Mon Nov 09** – Choose between Exercise #5 (Ninja Motion), #6 (Cheshire Cat), #7 (Turtle Motion Control), or create your own exercise that uses Alice events and user-defined methods for your objects

2do: Brainstorm on *your* story ...

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**Wed Nov 04**

Planning the panels, time frames, gutters ...

Lab: Working on *your* story ...

2do: **v1 of your design**, including theme, characters, panel layout **due on Wed Nov 11**

**Due: a4 due on Mon Nov 09**

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**Mon Nov 09**

**Due today: a4** Event-driven world

Due this Wed: v1 of your design of *your* story, including theme, characters, panel layout started (due Wed Nov 5)

Sharing *your* (work in progress) story ideas to the rest of the class

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**Wed Nov 11**

Due today: v1 of your design, including theme, characters, panel layout started

2do: Begin v2 of *your* story ... (due Wed Nov 18)

Iranian Film #3, Ellison Lecture Hall, Watson Hall – 7pm

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**Mon Nov 16**

Lab: work on *your* story ...

2do: w3 -- Write a 3-page historiographic essay that explores several contradictory sources on the impact of comics on young readers during the 1930s, 40s, and 50s in the United States. (due Wed Dec 02)

See the onCourse link for definitions, examples, and other helps when writing a historiographic essay:

<http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/writing/history/assignments/historiographic.html>

A set of readings to evaluate are held on reserve in the Library. You will have to spend considerable time reading, re-reading, taking notes, and consolidating arguments on this material.

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**Wed Nov 18**

Demo/presentation of *your* story to the rest of the class

Due: v2 of your story – take turns presenting

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**Mon Nov 23**

Lab: work on *your* story ...

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**Wed-Fri Nov 25-27**



**Thanksgiving Break**

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**Mon Nov 30**

Lab: work on *your* story ...

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**Wed Dec 02**

w3 Due today: Your historiographic essay on the impact of comics on young readers.

Lab: work on *your* story ...

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**Mon Dec 07**

Final presentation of *your* story

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**Wed Dec 09**

Final presentation of *your* story

Due: Final copy of *your* story

Evaluations