Comics became an important expression of popular Western culture during the second half of the 19th century and have been the object of sustained academic attention since at least the 1940s and 1950s, though clearly one could trace the origins of narrative art much further back in time. Once dismissed as an inferior category of literature, intended mainly for children and their entertainment or their basic education, comic books have steadily gained popularity among adult readers. During the 1980s, the term “graphic novel” became fashionable, and it has been used increasingly to describe book-length comics aspiring to literary and artistic recognition. One of the many appealing qualities of today’s comic books and graphic novels is their ability to cross disciplinary boundaries and genres, touching minds and hearts in ways that other narrative art forms cannot.

This course will explore a select number of contemporary comics and graphic novels produced by noteworthy European, Brazilian, Francophone, Hispanic, and/or Latinx authors. The primary works will cover topics as diverse as war, politics, social issues, the legacies of colonialism, mental health, trauma, race, gender, art and architecture, the crime fiction genre, and antihero adventure. Scott McCloud’s now classic Understanding Comics will provide a basis for discussing techniques that come to bear on narrative coherence and psychological depth.

The language of instruction for this course will be English. All primary works are available in English, but students are welcome to use foreign language versions of the same texts, when available.

Works:
Brazil: Bá (Gabriel) and Fábio Moon, Two Brothers. Dark Horse Originals, 2015. ISBN: 978-1616558567.