

Creating Comics

Further Suggestions

I have attempted to create a relatively open module, with potential at every stage (readings, in-class exercises, workshop project) for modification according to the needs of particular courses across disciplines. In all cases, instructors should liberally adapt and optimize the module for their own purposes, using what I present here only as a starting point.

Natural science courses, for example, could adopt *Comic Life 3* as an alternative form of science writing, particularly as a means of explaining concepts and data to general audiences in a vivid and engaging way. Nature photography has unlimited potential in *Comic Life 3*, and various data visualization methods might be productively joined to the comic form. Such courses could integrate course content with the readings from McCloud and Sousanis, while also dropping *The 9/11 Report* and *Wonderbook* and diving deeper into *Logicomix*.

Social science courses, on the other hand, might foreground *The 9/11 Report* as a way of rendering historical or social phenomenon in comic form, combining text or data from documentary sources and “unflattening” them through integration with images and the creative and varying arrangement of frames to navigate between the microscopic personal scale and the telescopic historical and social scale. I have tried to demonstrate this contrast and navigation in my selection of the two chapters from *The 9/11 Report*.

Courses in the humanities will find inspiration in Vandermeer’s *Wonderbook*, which conceives of fiction as a living organism or even as a whole ecosystem: a conceptual leap that Vandermeer renders with the evolving motif of the story as reptile. His visual approach to narrative and rhetorical analysis, while idiosyncratic, provides a model for the interpretation of literary texts, art works, or cultural phenomena using comics, in which the linear argument structure we see frequently in academic writing gives way to new forms inspired by the images and spatial architecture in comics. As an alternative exercise, students could adapt a literary work or film as comic, searching for new meanings in the work as they reconstruct it in a new medium.