**254 Take-Home Final Exam**

Points: 200

Due: See schedule online

**Assignment:**

Create a 6-panel strip that details the theme of conflict. This can be emotional conflict, physical conflict, a conflict of opinions or ideas. It’s really up to you how you choose to define “conflict.” While our class has focused on identity during wartime, you do not necessarily have to discuss conflict in these terms. We’ve talked about gender, religion, freedom, communication, travel, politics, race, etc. So there are plenty of angles you can explore for this assignment.

Be sure to consider how all of the panels work together. You’ll need to think about the gutters, bleeds, closure, panel size, panel-to-panel actions, word vs. picture relationships, the use of color, abstract vs. reality. How do all of these elements of the graphic novel and what you want to express about conflict all work together to form a compelling and interesting piece that could ultimately progress into a full-length graphic novel?

The first page of your strip should just layout the plan of the panels as they would appear on the page, kind of like a blueprint for reading. This initial page should represent the sizes, shapes, and placement of the panels. Label each one with a number, 1-6. For each panel, assign which type of panel-to-panel category it belongs to. (See page 74 of Understanding Comics for a list of these categories.) Also, which type of word/picture combinations are you using? (See pages 153-155 in UC for this list.) This blueprint should have just the blank numbered panels, their arrangement on the page, and these descriptors.

Next, you’ll want to construct each panel in its visual form. So, get drawing! You should use one page for each panel, remembering to be consistent with the size and shape of your blueprint panels. You may want to use an online comic creator to help you do the drawings—the easiest ones to use are: readwritethink.org; ehow.com; makebeliefscomix.com. If you’re not satisfied with these, do a little internet search of your own to find a better site—there are plenty out there. You may also get inspiration from clip art websites, as these are usually free and you don’t have to worry about copyright issues should you use them in your strip. You can get a friend to help you, too. Alternatively, you could even use photographs that you take of a particular scene, object, person, and apply the dialog to these images for your panels. Be creative!

Keep in consideration things like dialog boxes, narrative boxes, visual symbols, shading even! Now, you won’t be graded on your artistic ability here. The point is to be aware that all of these visual elements are interacting with the written word to show your ideas about conflict. You can always make a notation on the back of the page like, “I envision this male character to look like Tom Cruise.” Or, “The colors should be a muted yellow mixed with a bright green background that reminds you of a ripe lime.” These are silly examples, but hopefully show you what I mean by some extra info in case you can’t quite illustrate it the way you want to. If you decide to use color, you can do this with any medium you feel comfortable using and one in which will give your work its appropriate feel. For example, you may want to use colored inks, colored pencils, markers, crayons, even paints! These will all give different effects, so keep that in mind too. In black and white, a pencil can provide shading, while a pen can give sharper, thinner lines. A black marker can fill in spaces quickly and thoroughly. So, you have lots of options. You can choose what type of paper you work on too (craft paper, blank copy paper, cardboard, etc.), but please keep the size to *about* 8 ½ x 11 inches. In other words, I don’t want poster-size works to carry around, but you can use larger/smaller pieces if it works better.

In paragraph form, detail the following about your strip:

1. Why did you lay out the panels the way you did?
2. Why are the panels different sizes, or why are they all the same size?
3. If the panels are different shapes, what was your reasoning behind this? And if they are the same shape, why?
4. Why did you use color or decide to go with black and white? How does your choice contribute to tone or the underlying themes?
5. Did you choose to represent characters and ideas more abstractly? Why or why not?

Finally, write an additional 500 words on how your strip could be transformed into a longer graphic novel. How would the story develop? What issues of conflict and identity would be explored? Would other characters appear? What about location, time span? Does the story cover one event or are you showing the progression of a story over hundreds of years, for example? Do you close off the story and have a distinct ending, or is there room for a sequel? Think of this like you’re a cartoonist trying to “sell” your work to a publisher. You have the six-panel strip to show them, but you want to explore how turning it into a graphic novel would be a successful and interesting enterprise.

Make sure your name is on the back of every page of your drawings. (I don’t want your name on the front of the panels, which would be extra text essentially.) I will keep everyone’s work so that you can collect it from me next semester. Please do not submit your projects in a hard cover, 3-ring binder. A soft cover binder with plastic insert sheets is preferred.