

Contents

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?



READING COMICS ACROSS GENRES



DRAWING: CREATING OUR OWN COMICS (EVEN IF THEY'RE BAD)



WATCHING VIDEOS TO LEARN EVEN MORE

COMICS: DABBLE DEEPER



Basically, Lucy Knisely Ruined Me

Last year, after watching Lucy Knisely post on Instagram about her experience with her new baby, Pal, I began to get ideas. I was slowly getting back to regular reading and writing after having my own baby, and I was itching to dig into my own art. *Remember when you used to make art?* I asked myself. I could do it again. I just wasn't sure how.

"I saw how she could put her squishy mama heart out there, and I longed to put mine out there too."

When I was in college, I took a musical theatre class, where I told the teacher I was going to do the “Moses” number from *Singin’ in the Rain*, complete with the tap dancing, because I had just enrolled in tap classes for the first time. I figured, surely, in about eight weeks, I could dance like Gene Kelly. This is the problem with a willing suspension of disbelief: they do it, and if I work hard, so can I!

And this is how Lucy Knisely ruined me: I gobbled up her cartoons and saw how someone could engage daily with the mundane, the gross, the beautiful, the weird. I saw how she could put her squishy mama heart out there, and I longed to put mine out there too.

One problem: I can’t draw. I love graphic novels and memoirs, I love cartoons, but when it comes to drawing things on paper, there’s a disconnect in my brain. Linear perspective goes out the window and size is.... relative. Sure. Let’s say relative.

I knew I wanted to read more comics, and I knew I wanted to learn about drawing, and that’s where this comics course came from. One woman trying to regain her art by drawing, even if I’m really, really bad at it.

Methodology

So how do we dabble deeper? This is where you create your own adventure, so to speak.

For me, I wanted to immerse myself in comics, but I also wanted to learn to draw. To achieve the drawing aspect, I took a few steps. First, I went to Craftsy and purchased a \$99 course to teach me how to draw. Since I own it, I can drop in and out whenever I have the time, take a few lessons, and continue practicing. The course is informative, but it’s very comprehensive and might not be right for the beginner, casual artist. Find what works for you. I’ve listed some resources below in the syllabus and schedule.

Then I made an expensive trip to the craft store, and I got an easel, and a big sketch pad, and my life got infinitely more exciting. You can plot a novel on a large sketch pad. You can distract a toddler with a large sketch pad. And you can sketch, sketch, sketch with a large sketch pad, and that’s what gets exciting here.

Because of course, the lesson is clear. The comics artists we love did not become such overnight. Practice and work and courage and trying are required. These shall be our virtues.

*Wait! I just want
to read comics!*



Let’s read them! As we go through the schedule, feel free to take or leave the drawing assignments. If you want to read along, do that. If you want to draw, get your pencil and let’s do it! The beauty of a syllabus for fun? It’s whatever you want it to be!

COURSE MATERIALS

BOOKS

REFERENCE

Understanding Comics by Scott McCloud

Making Comics by Scott McCloud

VOLUME ONE'S

Ms. Marvel Vol. 1: No Normal by G. Willow Wilson (art by Adrian Alphona)

Bitch Planet, Vol. 1: Extraordinary Machine by Kelly Sue DeConnick (art by Valentine de Landro)

The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl, Vol 1: Squirrel Power by Ryan North (illustrator Erica Henderson)

March, Book One by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin (illustrator Nate Powell)

Spider-Woman: Shifting Gears Vol. 1: Baby Talk by Denise Hopeless (illustrator Javier Rodriguez)

Lumberjanes Vol. 1: Beware the Kitten Holy by Noelle Stevenson, Grace Ellis, Faith Hicks, etc.

GRAPHIC NOVELS/MEMOIRS

Ghosts by Raina Telgemeier

Something New: Tales from a Makeshift Bride by Lucy Knisley

American Born Chinese by Gene Luen Yang

The Best We Could Do by Thi Bui

Photographic: The Life of Graciela Iturbide by Isabel Quintero and Zeke Peña

Embroideries by Marjane Satrapi

Pregnant Butch: Nine Long Months Spent in Drag by A. K. Summers

Nimona by Noelle Stevenson

Strange Fruit, Vol. 1: Uncelebrated Narratives from Black History by Joel Christian Gill

ART SUPPLIES (OPTIONAL)

Small sketch pad

Large sketch pad

Pencils (of varying degrees of softness)

COURSE SCHEDULE

	Watch	Primary Reading	Supplementary Reading
WEEK ONE			
Day One	“How to Draw” Video 1 and 2	<i>Understanding Comics</i> (pp. 1-60)	<i>Ms. Marvel Vol. 1</i>
Day Two	Video 3	*	*
Day Three	Video 4	*	<i>Bitch Planet Vol. 1</i>
ASSIGNMENT	Draw an object in your home, taking time with line and shape. Bonus: once you’ve drawn the object, give it a face and make it into a character.		
WEEK TWO			
Day One	Video 5	<i>Understanding Comics</i> (pp. 61-118)	<i>The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl, Vol 1</i>
Day Two	Practice lessons in video by sketching a stack of books; re-watch if necessary	*	*
Day Three	Video 6	<i>Understanding Comics</i> (pp. 118-162)	<i>March Book One</i>
ASSIGNMENT	Stack some books, coffee cups, wine bottles - whatever you have - against a blank backdrop (a blank wall is best). Now sketch, paying attention to positive and negative space.		
WEEK THREE			
Day One	Review notions of positive and negative space. Repeat assignment from W2D3.	<i>Understanding Comics</i> (pp. 162-215)	<i>Spider-Woman: Shifting Gears Vol. 1</i>
Day Two	Video 7	*	*
Day Three	Draw a rectangle using the golden ratio, and then morph it into something (a garden bed, a supermarket aisle, a bookshelf, etc.)		<i>Lumberjanes Vol. 1: Beware the Kitten Holy</i>
ASSIGNMENT	Try your hand at drawing a face using the principles of golden ratio. Don’t worry if things aren’t perfect; just get a sense of where line and ratio figure in a face.		

