



British Politics in Comic Books

Erasmus

Lecture

Teacher: **dr Wojciech Lewandowski**

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Office hours: **Tuesday, 16.45-18.15, Nowy Świat 69, room 32 (from 19 February to 13 April 2018)**

Academic Year: 2017/2018

Summer term: 15 h

BRITISH POLITICS IN COMIC BOOKS

DURATION

Days and hours: **Tuesday, 15:00-16:30 (from 19 February to 13 April 2018)**

Place: **Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28, Old Library, room 115**

ETCS: 6

Examination: **Take-Home Quiz**

EVALUATION

1. **Presence.**
2. **Take-Home Quiz.**

COURSE AIMS/OBJECTIVES

The course is aimed at discussing selected aspects of British Politics presented in comic books and graphic novels. Apart from the analysis of British socio-political phenomena, the relevance of political fiction studies will be mentioned. The specific topics include war and memory, political dissent, national identity (especially in Scotland) and Brexit.

COURSE SCHEDULE/CONTENT

1. POLITICS AND POPULAR CULTURE. INTRODUCTION

Problems:

- Popular culture – definitions and interpretations.
- Politics and society in popular culture – introduction.
- Political fiction - art as a way of understanding politics.

Essential Readings:

Davidson, James F. 1961. "Political Science and Political Fiction." *American Political Science Review* 55 (4): 851-860.

Storey, John. 2009. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture. An Introduction*. Pearson. Longman: 1-16.

van Zoonen, Liesbet. 1998. "A Day at the Zoo: Political Communication, Pigs and Popular Culture." *Media, Culture & Society* 20 (2): 183–200.

Further Readings:

Barker, Chris. 2002. *Making Sense of Cultural Studies. Central Problems and Critical Debates*. London-Thousand Oaks-New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Fiske, John. 1995. *Understanding Popular Culture*. London-New York: Routledge.

Negash, Girma. 2004. "Art Invoked: A Mode of Understanding and Shaping the Political." *International Political Science Review* 25 (2): 185-201.

Strinati, Dominic. 2000. *An Introduction to Studying Popular Culture*. London: Routledge.

van Zoonen, Liesbet. 2007. "Audience Reactions to Hollywood Politics." *Media, Culture & Society* 29 (4): 531–47.

Woodcock, Pete. 2006. "The Polis of Springfield: the Simpsons and the Teaching of Political Theory." *Politics* 26 (3): 192-99.

2. COMIC BOOKS AS AN ART FORM AND ITS HERITAGE

Problems:

- Comics as a media form.
- Visual and narrative aspects of comic books.
- From comic strips to comic books – the evolution of the medium.
- History of comic books in United Kingdom and United States.
- British Invasion and the changes in American comic book market.
- Comics and social and political censorship.

Essential Readings:

McCloud, Scott. 1994. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. HarperPerennial.

Sabin, Roger. 2010. *Adult Comics: An Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge: 13-129.

Further Readings:

Baetens, Jan, and Hugo Frey. 2015. *The Graphic Novel: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press: New York.

BRITISH POLITICS IN COMIC BOOKS

- Conners, Joan L. 2013. "Laughing and Learning: Using Political Cartoons to Teach Politics." In *Teaching Politics Beyond the Book Film, Texts, and New Media in the Classroom*, edited by Robert W Glover and Daniel Tagliarina, 67-86. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Eisner, Will. 2008. *Comics and Sequential Art*. New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Little, Ben. 2010. "2000AD: Understanding the 'British Invasion' of American Comics." In *Comics as a Nexus of Cultures: Essays on the Interplay of Media, Disciplines and International Perspectives*, edited by Mark Berninger, Jochen Ecke, and Gideon Harberkorn, 140-52. Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.
- Murray, Chris. 2010. "Signals From Airstrip One: the British Invasion of Mainstream American Comics." In *The Rise of the American Comics Artist: Creators and Contexts*, edited by Paul Williams and James Lyons, 31-45. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.
- Kibble-White, Graham. 2005. *The Ultimate Book of British Comics*. London: Allison & Busby Limited.
- Nyberg, Amy Kiste. 2005. "«No Harm in Horror»: Ethical Dimensions of the Postwar Comic Book Controversy." In *Comics as Philosophy*, edited by Jeff McLaughlin, 27-45. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.
- Skidmore, Max J., and Joey Skidmore. 1983. "More Than Mere Fantasy: Political Themes in Contemporary Comic Books." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 17 (1): 83-92.

3. NATIONAL IDENTITY AND COMIC BOOKS. THE CASE OF SCOTTISH REFERENDUM

Problems:

- Concepts of nation, and nationalism, and national identity.
- National myths and stereotypes in comic books.
- Popular culture as a source of national identity.
- Scottish Independence Referendum - political aspects.
- Nationalistic superheroes as a way of expressing national unity.

Comics and graphic novels:

- Brubaker, Ed (w), and Steve Epting (a). 2007. *Captain America Omnibus*. Vol. 1. New York: Marvel Publishing.
- Ferguson, John (w), Gary Welsh (a), and Tone Juskjaer (a). 2013. *Saltire. Invasion*. Dundee: Diamondsteel Comics.
- Le Bénédicte, Jean-Claude Smit (w), and Grzegorz Rosiński (a). 2008. *Fantastyczna podróż. Wyspa przypraw i inne opowieści*. [A Fantastic Cruise: The Island Of Tides and Other Stories] Trans. M. Mosiewicz. Warszawa: Egmont Polska.

Essential readings:

- Dittmer, Jason. 2011. "Captain Britain and the Narration of Nation." *The Geographical Review* 101: 71-87.
- Hoyer, Anne. 2009. "National Identity in a Popular Scottish Comic." *Journal of Linguistic and Intercultural Education* 2 (2): 115-124.

BRITISH POLITICS IN COMIC BOOKS

Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2016. "SuperScots. Superheroes and Scottish Identity." In *Scottish Culture: Dialogue and Self-Expression*, edited by Aniela Korzeniowska and Izabela Szymańska, 380-88. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper.

Further readings:

Dittmer, Jason. 2005. "Captain America's Empire: Reflections on Identity, Popular Culture, and Post 9/11 Geopolitics." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95: 626-643.

Hoyer, Anne. 2010. "Cultural Specifics of a Scottish Comic: *Oor Wullie*." In *Comics as a Nexus of Cultures: Essays on the Interplay of Media, Disciplines and International Perspectives*, edited by Mark Berninger, Jochen Ecke, and Gideon Harberkorn, 108-115. Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.

Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2013. "Scotsmen Versus Englishmen: Ancient Antagonisms as Depicted in a Belgian Comic Book." In *Facets of Scottish Identity*, edited by Aniela Korzeniowska and Izabela Szymańska, 145-52. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper.

Lindsay Isobel. 1997. "The Uses and Abuses of National Stereotypes." *Scottish Affairs* 20 (1) (First Series): 133-148.

Reynolds, Richard. 1994. *Super Heroes. A Modern Mythology*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Scott, Cord. 2007. "Written in Red, White, and Blue: a Comparison of Comic Book Propaganda From World War II and September 11." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 40 (2): 325-43.

Strömberg, Fredrik. 2010. *Comic Art Propaganda: A Graphic History*. Lewes: ILEX.

4. WAR AND MEMORY. FROM PICTURE LIBRARIES TO CONTEMPORARY COMICS

Problems:

- War and comic books: from propaganda to critical narratives.
- Keeping social memory alive. British war effort in *picture libraries*.
- *Charley's War*: British antiwar comic books.
- War comics and Royal Air Force. The case of military advertisement campaign

Comic books:

Ennis, Garth (w), and Peter Snejberg (a). 2009. "Dear Billy." In *The Complete Battlefields. Volume 2*, Garth Ennis (w), Peter Snejberg (a). Mt. Laurel: Dynamite Entertainment.

Ennis, Garth (w), Chris Weston, Gary Erskine, John Higgins, Dave Gibbons, David Lloyd (a). 2004. *War Stories*. Vol. 1. DC Comics: New York.

Ennis, Garth (w), David Lloyd, Cam Kennedy, Carlos Ezquerra, Gary Erskine (a). 2015. *War Stories*. Vol. 2. Avatar Press: Rantoul.

Mills, Pat (w), and Joe Colquhoun (a). 2004-2013. *Charley's War*. Vol. 1-10. Titan Books: London

Spiegelman, Art (w&a). 2011. *The Complete Maus. 25th Anniversary Edition*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Essential readings:

Conroy, Mike. 2009. *War Comics: A Graphic History*. Lewes: ILEX: 106-129.

BRITISH POLITICS IN COMIC BOOKS

Scott, Cord. 2007. "Written in Red, White, and Blue: a Comparison of Comic Book Propaganda From World War II and September 11." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 40 (2): 325-43.

Further readings:

Chapman, James. 2011. *British Comics: A Cultural History*. London: Reaktion Books.

Goodnow, Trischa, and James J Kimble, eds. 2016. *The 10 Cent War. Comic Books, Propaganda, and World War II*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Kibble-White, Graham. 2005. *The Ultimate Book of British Comics*. London: Allison & Busby Limited.

Rech, Matthew F. 2014. "Be Part of the Story: a Popular Geopolitics of War Comics Aesthetics and Royal Air Force Recruitment." *Political Geography* 39: 36-47.

Strömberg, Fredrik. 2010. *Comic Art Propaganda: A Graphic History*. Lewes: ILEX.

5. POLITICAL DISSENT IN COMIC BOOKS. UNDERGROUND COMICS, MARGARET THATCHER, FASCISM AND ANARCHISM

Problems:

- Political dissent – theoretical and moral aspects.
- From protest through civil disobedience to violence – forms of political disobedience.
- Political and social discontent in British underground comix.
- Margaret Thatcher in comic books.
- Between fascism and anarchism: postapocalyptic Britain in Alan Moore's and David Lloyd's graphic novel *V for Vendetta*
- Individual vs totalitarianism: anatomy of disobedience in *V for Vendetta*.

Comic books:

Moore, Alan (w), and David Lloyd (a). 2008. *V for Vendetta*. New York: DC Comics.

Essential readings:

Chapman, James. 2011. *British Comics: a Cultural History*. London: Reaktion Books: 200-222.

Di Liddo, Annalisa. 2009. *Alan Moore: Comics as Performance, Fiction as Scalpel*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi: 111-125.

Keller, James R. 2008. *V for Vendetta as Cultural Pastiche. A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel and Film*. Jefferson, NC, London: McFarland & Company, Inc., chap. 1-2.

Tinwell, Angela. 2013. "The Impact of Thatcherism in Popular Culture." *Journal of European Popular Culture* 4 (2): 123-37.

Further readings:

Huxley, David. 1990. *The Growth and Development of British Underground and Alternative Comics, 1966-1986*. PhD Thesis. Loughborough University of Technology.

Gravett, Paul, and John Harris Dunning. 2014. *Comics Unmasked: Art and Anarchy in the UK*. London: The British Library.

Kibble-White, Graham. 2005. *The Ultimate Book of British Comics*. London: Allison & Busby Limited.

Kohns, Oliver. 2013. "Guy Fawkes in the 21st Century. A Contribution to the Political Iconography of Revolt." *Image [&] Narrative* 14 (1): 89-104.

BRITISH POLITICS IN COMIC BOOKS

- Kowalski, Dean A. 2008. "R for Revolution. Hobbes and Locke on Social Contracts and Scarlett Carsons." In *Homer Simpson Goes to Wasington. American Politics through Popular Culture*, edited by Joseph J. Foy, 19-40. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.
- Kukkonen, Karin, and Anja Muller-Wood. 2010. "Whatever Happened to All the Heroes? British Perspectives on Superheroes." In *Comics as a Nexus of Cultures: Essays on the Interplay of Media, Disciplines and International Perspectives*, edited by Mark Berninger, Jochen Ecke, and Gideon Harberkorn, 153-63. Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.
- Little, Ben. 2010. "2000AD: Understanding the 'British Invasion' of American Comics." In *Comics as a Nexus of Cultures: Essays on the Interplay of Media, Disciplines and International Perspectives*, edited by Mark Berninger, Jochen Ecke, and Gideon Harberkorn, 140-52. Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.
- McLaughlin, Paul. 2007. *Anarchism and Authority: A Philosophical Introduction to Classical Anarchism*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Sabin, Roger. 2010. *Adult Comics: An Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge.

6. COLD WAR FEARS IN BRITISH COMICS

Problems:

- Cold war in western popular culture.
- Communist invasion and nuclear apocalypse in graphic narratives. The case of 2000 A.D. magazine.
- Democracy vs. communism in graphic novels and comic books.
- Miracleman and Ozymandias: superheroes, utopia and social control.

Comic books:

- Mills, Pat, and Gerry-Finley Day, Nick Allen, Nick Flynn, Chris Lowder (w), Jesus Blasco, Pat Wright (a), et al. 2008. *Invasion!* Oxford: Rebellion.
- Moore, Alan (w), and Dave Gibbons (a). 2014. *Watchmen*. International Edition. New York: DC Comics.
- The Original Writer, and Mick Anglo (w), Garry Leach, Alan Davis, Steve Dillon (a). 2014. *Miracleman Book One: A Dream of Flying*. Marvel Comics: New York.
- The Original Writer (w), and Chuck Austen, Rick Veitch, John Totleben (a). 2014. *Miracleman Book Two: The Red King Syndrome*. Marvel Comics: New York.
- The Original Writer, and Grant Morrison, Peter Milligan (w), John Totleben, Joe Quesada, Mike Allred (a). 2015. *Miracleman Book Three: Olympus*. Marvel Comics: New York.
- Wagner, John (w), and Colin McNeil (a). 2015. *Judge Dredd: America*. Rebellion: Oxford.

Essential readings:

- Chapman, James. 2011. *British Comics: a Cultural History*. London: Reaktion Books: 144-171.
- Wolf-Meyer, Matthew. 2003. "The World Ozymandias Made: Utopias in the Superhero Comic, Subculture, and the Conservation of Difference." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 36 (3): 497-517.

Further readings:

- Conroy, Mike. 2009. *War Comics: a Graphic History*. Lewes: ILEX.

BRITISH POLITICS IN COMIC BOOKS

- Hughes, Jamie A. 2006. "'Who Watches the Watchmen?': Ideology and 'Real World' Superheroes." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 39 (4): 546-57.
- Kibble-White, Graham. 2005. *The Ultimate Book of British Comics*. London: Allison & Busby Limited.
- Strömberg, Fredrik. 2010. *Comic Art Propaganda: A Graphic History*. Lewes: ILEX.
- White, Mark D., ed. 2009. *Watchmen and Philosophy: A Rorschach Test*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

7. BREXIT IN POLITICAL CARTOONS AND COMICS

Problems:

- British membership in the European Union.
- Social, political and cultural backgrounds of Brexit.
- Brexit or Exit?
- Consequences of Brexit for the future of European project.
- Brexit in popular culture. The case of political caricature and comic books.

Essential readings:

- Ashcroft, Richard, and Mark Bevir. 2016. "Pluralism, National Identity and Citizenship: Britain After Brexit." *The Political Quarterly* 87 (3): 355–59.
- Henderson, Alice, Charlie Jeffrey, Robert Liñera, Roger Scully, Daniel Wincott, and Richard Wyn Jones. 2016. "England, Englishness and Brexit." *The Political Quarterly* 87 (2): 187-99.
- Ryan, John. 2017. "If You Didn't Laugh, You'd Cry... Brexit and the Renaissance of British Humour." *LSE Brexit*. October 4. <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2017/10/04/if-you-didnt-laugh-youd-cry-brexit-and-the-renaissance-of-british-humour/>.

Further readings:

- Outhwaite, William, ed. 2017. *Brexit: Sociological Responses*. London, New York: Anthem Press.
- Tekin, Funda. 2016. "Brexit or No Brexit? Political and Institutional Implications of an EU Without the UK." *IAI Working Papers*. March. <http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiw1607.pdf>.
- Weale, Albert. 2016. "Nostalgic Democracy Triumphs Over Democratic Internationalism." *The Political Quarterly* 87 (3): 352-54.

LECTURER

Wojciech Lewandowski, Ph. D. – Assistant Professor at the Institute of European Studies at the Faculty of Journalism and Political Science at the University of Warsaw. Co-founder and coordinator of British Socio-Political Studies Research Group BRITANNIA. Guest Lecturer at American Studies Center, Warsaw University. Host of a music radio show “Art.Rock Universe”.

Scientific interests

- Cultural interpretations of social and political processes;
- British and American culture (special focus: graphic novels and comic books, counterculture of the 60's, progressive rock, horror literature);
- History of Political Thought: American transcendentalism, anarchism; ethics and politics;
- Transatlantic relations (especially cultural and political relations).

Selected publications

- Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2017. “Heavy History - Difficult History: Scottish National Myths and History Interpreted by a German Heavy Metal Band.” In *Imaging Scottishness: European and Domestic Representations*, edited by Aniela Korzeniowska and Izabela Szymańska, 217–31. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Semper.
- Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2017. “Siedem małych słów. Obraz wojny wietnamskiej w powieści graficznej *Kaznodzieja* Gartha Ennisa i Steve’a Dillona.” [Seven Little Words. The Image of Vietnam War in *Preacher* Comic Book by Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon] In *50 twarzy popkultury*, edited by Ksenia Olkusz, 623-640. Kraków: Ośrodek Badawczy Facta Ficta.
- Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2016. “Political Monologue vs Political Dialogue in Graphic Novels.” *Przegląd Europejski* 4 (42): 76-87.
- Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2016. “SuperScots. Superheroes and Scottish Identity.” In *Scottish Culture: Dialogue and Self-Expression*, edited by Aniela Korzeniowska and Izabela Szymańska, 380–88. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper.
- Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2015. “Nowy człowiek, zamaskowany niszczyciel. Wizja zagłady dystopijnego państwa w powieści graficznej «V jak Vendetta» Alana Moore’a i Davida Lloyd’a.” [] *Creatio Fantastica* 3 (50): 26-41.
- Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2013. “Scotsmen versus Englishmen: Ancient Antagonisms as Depicted in a Comic Book.” In *Facets of Scottish Identity*, edited by Aniela Korzeniowska, Izabela Szymańska, 145-152. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper.
- Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2013. *Kto ma się bać? Władza polityczna i sprzeciw wobec niej w filmie «V jak Vendetta».* [Who Should be Afraid? Political Power and Resistance in *V for Vendetta* movie] Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wydziału Dziennikarstwa i Nauk Politycznych.
- Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2013. “Brytyjski komiks polityczny. Zarys problematyki.” [British Political Comic Books. Basic Problems] *Przegląd Europejski* 4(30): 108-119.
- Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2013. “Soft Power jako narzędzie geopolityki. Znaczenie kultury popularnej.” [Soft Power as a Strategic Instrument in Geopolitics. The Role of Popular Culture] In *Polityka zagraniczna państw Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej na przełomie XX i XXI wieku. Ujęcie geopolityczne* [The Foreign Policy of the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe at the Turn of the 20th and 21st Centuries. The Geopolitical Perspective], edited by Józef Tymanowski, 59-69. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wydziału Dziennikarstwa i Nauk Politycznych UW.
- Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2012. “Kultura brytyjska.” [British Culture] In *System polityczny Zjednoczonego Królestwa* [Political System of the United Kingdom], edited by Przemysław Biskup, Małgorzata Kaczorowska, 109-129. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR.
- Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2011. *Wolność i samotność. Myśl społeczno-polityczna amerykańskiego transcendentalizmu.* [Freedom and Loneliness. Social and Political Thought of American Transcendentalism] Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wydziału Dziennikarstwa i Nauk Politycznych.
- Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2010. “Pudel, mąż agentki i niedoszły zbawca Brytanii. Obraz Tony’ego Blaira w wybranych tekstach kultury popularnej.” [Poodle, Agent’s Husband and Would-Be Saviour of Britain: Tony Blair’s Depiction in Selected Texts of Popular Culture] In *Era Blaira i Browna. Wybrane problemy polityczne rządów Partii Pracy w Zjednoczonym Królestwie 1997-2010* [Blair’s and Brown’s Era. Select Political Problems of Labour Government in the United Kingdom 1997–2010], edited by Franciszek Gołembski, Przemysław Biskup, Małgorzata Kaczorowska, 67-79. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR.
- Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2007/2008. “The Dark Side of Walden.” *The Americanist. Warsaw Journal for the Study of United States* 24(American Popular Culture as Import and Export): 117-132.
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