

# **BTP2NA\_T\_23 Introduction to Cartoon Storytelling, Spring 2023**

**Time:** Mondays (18.00 – 20.00 Central European Time)

**Place:** Online beginning Monday, February 13, 2023 – March 27, 2023 and then in person at various days April 4, 2023 – April 10, 2023.

**Instructor:** Steven Fischer

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course looks at the ways we might use words and image to document stories of Debrecen, Hungary and to release and heal from trauma. This is a project-based course with the intent of releasing a bi-lingual collection of personal stories (in cartoon form) completed in class. The exercises we'll experience condition participants to use observation and creativity to document the times in which we live and how we interpret. Students will learn to appreciate the inner journey cartooning and writing offers as a source of mental health and personal expression.

Our stories will focus on the students' personal, international experience in Debrecen during time of war and of COVID-19. The international students completing these works will offer a variety of perspectives on the city, its history, its culture, and document the city during this most historic time of pandemic and civil unrest. The experiences students share can address not only personal experience in search to understand, but also express feelings and observations related to current events important to Debrecen: the war, economic crisis, pandemic, the refugee crisis, etc.

**BOOK OBJECTIVES:** The book we release, collecting the stories students complete in class, has many uses.

1. It served as a keepsake for the students.
2. It serves as a portfolio piece for those interested in a career in the arts.
3. Copies of the book will be a contribution to the libraries at University of Debrecen and to the City of Debrecen. This can be used for promotion of the university (to celebrate the unique and diverse offerings of the school as well as to attract future international students) and of the city (to contribute to the attraction of tourism and cultural diversity).

## **Professor Bio:**

Steven Fischer is a two-time Emmy-nominated writer/producer/director and Fulbright recipient. He began his career as a cartoonist, releasing his *Steve & Bluey* series as a newspaper comic strip, in two published books, a TV series (TCI-TV, 1996-1999), and as a series of unique radio comedies. His original cartoons have served many patrons including authors, magazines, and corporate clients including: Boston Red Sox/JCS New England Television Network, 9-1-1 Magazine, The Directors Guild of America, University of Maryland, Blue Dot Heating and Plumbing, Rocky Run Tap & Grill. His film work encompasses fiction, non-fiction, and animated stories, and includes the movies *Freedom Dance* (2007) featuring Golden Globe-winning actress Mariska Hargitay, and *Old School New School* (2010) with Emmy-winning actor Brian Cox. His commissioned work includes films and programs for Maryland Public Television/PBS, TV Asia, Nextel, DuPont, and Nalco/Ecolabs.

Mr. Fischer served his first Fulbright award in 2014, presenting Cartoon Storytelling at the University of Debrecen. He teaches cartoon storytelling and creative writing at Northwestern University and has spoken on various aspects of creativity at: University of Tokyo, Harvard Medical School, and Smith Farm for the Healing Arts.

He is the producer of “The Scrub Club” animated series for NSF, Int’l, teaching children basic health habits. In 2019 Mr. Fischer produced the *EarthRise Apollo* series of projection mapping animation celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Lunar Landing, screened in Europe, Asia, and North America.

Websites:

<http://www.steveandbluey.com>

<http://www.stevenfischer.net>

## **COURSE OBJECTIVE**

This course is for anyone who has an interest in expressing themselves through cartoons and those interested in cartoons as an art form. This class is about realizing the potential of becoming a cartoonist no matter your skill level. This course is intended to introduce students to the possibilities cartooning offers as a vehicle to express and communicate effectively. Students should realize that while commercial cartooning may require certain skills and abilities, the only limitation in the art of cartoon storytelling are those self-imposed. Anyone willing to express him or herself honestly can create a legitimate comic. Our objective is to create and complete an original story with original characters.

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Appreciate cartoons as a justified art form.
2. Appreciate the value of independently produced cartoons.
3. Realize their individual potential as a cartoonist.
4. Learn to effectively express a scenario or idea in various illustration formats such as comic strips, comic books, and single panel gags.

Each student will produce one 3 to 5 page cartoon story about their experience in Debrecen during time of war and of COVID-19. The story should demonstrate the student’s ability to understand character development, narrative structure, and storytelling.

## **DEADLINE**

Finished cartoons are due on or before **Wednesday, April 5, 2023**. Cartoons will need to be scanned and sent to the instructor via email or uploaded to a file sharing service (DropBox.com is preferred). **NOTE:** The in-class exercises are used to generate ideas for your final project, you cannot turn in class exercises as your final project. Email to Steven Fischer at [sfischer2013@gmail.com](mailto:sfischer2013@gmail.com)

## **EVALUATION**

The final grade will be calculated from the grades assigned on **class participation (25%), attendance (25%), homework (25%), final project (25%)**. More than three absences will result in a “not fulfilled” grade. Grades will be assigned according to the following conversion formulae: 1= fail; 2= satisfactory; 3 = average; 4 = good; 5 = excellent.

## **ADDITIONAL RULES**

Students **may not miss more than three classes** under any circumstances. Students are kindly requested to contact their tutor at least a day before class if they are to make a presentation but cannot attend. If you do not turn up on occasions when course assignments are due and you fail to notify the tutor you will lose all the credit points on the particular assignment.

## **READINGS:**

Readings will be distributed on paper in class and may be available electronically

## **SESSIONS**

### **Monday, February 13, SESSION 1, INTRODUCTION**

What is this class all about?

What is a cartoon?

Hear from students

The power of observation

Students limn! (That is, draw.) Drawing exercises – Observation drawing

### **Monday, February 20, SESSION 2, WRITING**

Observation drawing

The Parts of a Narrative

Read and discuss *Hurricane* by Will Eisner

Narrative examples: The Bank Robbery; Shoeshine Guy

Narrative exercise: breakdown your observation drawing and find the narrative in it.

### **Monday, February 27, SESSION 3, CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT**

Observation drawing

Read/discuss Renni Brown article *Love Your Characters to Life*

Diagram – NEED / ACTION TAKEN TO FULFILL NEED

Exercise: What Irks You?

Exercise: What do you really love in life?

Learn to see things not as they are but as could be!

### **Monday, March 6, SESSION 4, GENERATING IDEAS**

Hand in character bios

A look at the nature of creativity and the creative process.

Observation Drawing

Storytelling exercise – Mindcamp exercise, Second City exercise

Create a story based on the ideas generated in the Mindcamp and Second City exercises. (2-pages minimum)

### **Monday, March 13, SESSION 5, PAGE LAYOUT**

Observation drawing

Page layout examples

Klaus Janson's Juxtaposition exercise!

POV exercise

**Monday, March 20, SESSION 6, NON-FICTION CARTOONS and NON-FICTION WRITING**

Hand in completed comic strips

Observation drawing

What is this non-fiction section all about?

Discuss *Girl Stories* by Lauren Weinstein and *My Uncle Jeff* by Damon Hurd

Review - The Parts of a Narrative

Review story breakdown, and how it applies to Luke Skywalker and George Washington

**Monday, March 27, SESSION 7, STUDIO SESSION**

One-on-one work with professor.

**Tuesday, April 4 in-person SESSION 8, STUDIO SESSION**

One-on-one work with professor.

**Wednesday, April 5, in-person SESSION 9, Finals DUE**

One-on-one work with professor.

**Printing, binding of book Thursday April 6 – Monday April 10, 2023; public release of the book: Wednesday April 12, 2023.**

END.