Mass-reproduced words and images co-exist in their most dynamic form in the various traditions of comic books—such as manga, the cartoon strip, and the graphic novel. This class will read samples of these forms in detail and place them in their social and historical contexts. At the same time, we will consider theoretical and critical models for reading words and images together, and examine ideas of mass-reproducibility and models of narrative. We will also think about the larger questions of power, nationality, gender, mass culture, and ecology often presented as themes in manga and graphic novels.

This class should be of interest to anyone concerned with verbal and visual culture, popular forms, formations of national identity through mass culture, colonialism, the history of representation in the twentieth century, cultural exchanges, aesthetics, and postmodernism. Of course, this class has a specific appeal to fans of comic books or to those who are curious about vastly influential and widely popular contemporary art form. The class does not presume a prior familiarity with comics, just enthusiasm and an open mind.

COLT L/M/CT Track: This is a Media concentration course.

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