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4th Transnational Literary Journalism Summer School

“Comics Journalism, *BD Reportage*, Documentary Manga: Graphic Literary Journalism around the World”

1–5 June 2026

Université de Lorraine (Nancy)

Course Description

Literary journalism – or journalism *as* literature – is journalistic writing that reads like fiction but which is based on immersive research, eyewitness accounts and verifiable facts as closely scrutinized as possible. Situated comfortably between two axes of media pedagogy and research, literary journalism (*journalisme littéraire* in French, *periodismo narrativo* in Spanish, *ruporutāju* in Japanese, and *literarische Reportage* in German) represents a form of written communication that is both literary and journalistic in form and aesthetic but which informs and educates the public, provides detailed historical and cultural contexts and editorial commentaries and, potentially, alters socio-political policy and opinion. Comics journalism – or its European and Japanese cousins, respectively *BD reportage* and documentary manga – is a *graphic* form of literary journalism, which combines text and illustration to vehicle its message. Researched, written and drawn, comics journalism injects into the final narrative a visual subjectivity that complicates the textual one already present.

This five-day graduate course for Master’s and PhD students – throughout Europe and, potentially, Asia – of Journalism, Communications, Media Studies, English, Spanish, German, Japanese or French Literature, History, Cultural Studies or Government Policy will explore how current trends in graphic literary journalism in France, Colombia, Spain, Japan, Britain, Germany and the U.S. is reshaping the media landscape of each country, providing a significant panacea not only to counter the decline in traditional print media readership but also to placate the readers’ growing distrust in that media’s global message.

Following morning and afternoon workshops and lectures on eight principal themes treated in graphic literary journalism (war and trauma, immigration, drug trafficking, autocratic politics and social inequalities), students (master’s, doctoral and postdoctoral) and interested faculty members will be introduced to the historical and cultural motivations behind the current popularity of graphic literary journalism in many corners of the world. Professional French cartoonist [Yan Lindingre](#) will hold a masterclass on documentary graphic reportage for the attendees.



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At the end of the course, students will be required to develop their own pedagogical unit (modeled after one of the six themes presented or based on an entirely different theme not addressed during the course) and present it orally in English before the group.

This Summer School is recognized by the Erasmus+ Mobility/Staff Training program. To learn more about obtaining Erasmus+ Mobility accreditation, [click here](#).

The Summer School is sponsored in part by the “Lorraine Université d’Excellence” (part of the France 2030 Program, reference ANR-15-IDEX-04-LUE), the LUE International Booster Tohoku – IDEA) grant, the research center IDEA ((199713889P) and the Humanities Faculty of the Université de Lorraine (ALL Nancy). Other partners (RECOLTE) have also been contacted.

Course Participants and Fees

The Summer School is **open to all Master’s and PhD students, postdocs, and faculty members in Europe or abroad** (retired, part- or full-time) in the fields of Journalism, Media and Communications, History and Languages, **as well as professional journalists** from Nancy/Metz, France in general and abroad.

Registration fees:

- 0 € for students (Master’s, doctoral and postdoctoral)
- 0 € for unemployed or retired faculty
- 50 € for part-time faculty or professional
- 100 € for full-time faculty or professional

Course Requirements

Full attendance is mandatory (morning and afternoon, Monday through Friday).

Working alone or in groups of two or three (depending on course enrollment), students must deliver a twenty-minute oral presentation in one of the program’s four languages (English, Spanish, Polish or French) during the final afternoon of the course. Topics will be selected at the end of the second day.

Course Credit

For PhD students, 5 *crédits* toward the *Formations disciplinaires*, *Formations transverses* or *Langues: Anglais-FLE* requirements of their *École Doctorale*.

For Master’s students, no ECTS credits can be awarded toward the completion of their degree, but the hours could be applied to the completion of a *stage* or any similar pedagogical requirement.



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All enrolled participants will receive at the end of the Summer School an attestation of their active participation (*certificat de reconnaissance de formation, certificado de asistencia, certyfikat udziału w konferencji*).

Course Prerequisites

As English will be the Summer School's lingua franca, a minimum B2 level is desired. However, Polish, German, Japanese, Spanish and French will also be used throughout the week-long school, should participants require additional language instruction.

Course Program

Instructors:

John S. Bak, Université de Lorraine (France)
Catalina Uribe Rincon, Universidad de los Andes (Colombia)
Alexandra Wiktorowska, Uniwersytet WSB Merito w Poznaniu (Poland)
John Hartsock, SUNY Cortland (United States)
Soenke Zehle, Hochschule der Bildenden Künste Saar (Germany)
Christopher Craig, 東北大学 (Tohoku University, Japan)
Julie Wheelwright, Birkbeck College, University of London (England)
Isis Menteth, British Academy, London (England)
Jan Miklas-Frankowski, Uniwersytet Gdański (Poland)

Professional Guest Speaker:

Yan Lindingre, "Cartoon for Peace" ([BD artist and scenarist](#))

Course Content Modules:

Individual modules are intended to teach students via lectures and workshops, with specific reading assignments of the history and the function of comics journalism, *BD reportage* and documentary manga per the eight different themes listed below. A group project is required by the end of the week-long course.

Course Themes:

Module 1: "Drawing Memory: Comics as Civic Storytelling. The Work of Spanish Artist Paco Roca"

Director: Aleksandra Wiktorowska

This module invites participants to explore the potential of comics as a form of civic storytelling, with a particular focus on the work of Spanish artist Paco Roca. Though not a



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journalist in the conventional sense, Roca's graphic narratives – such as *Los surcos del azar* and *El abismo del olvido* – engage deeply with questions of history, memory, personal testimony, and collective trauma. His work offers a compelling example of how comics can document real experiences and give voice to stories often left out of official histories. Through a combination of visual analysis, group discussion, and a guided creative exercise, participants will reflect on how memory and narrative can intersect on the comics page. The session will culminate in the creation of a short comic, drawing on a personal or family memory that connects to a wider social or historical issue. No prior drawing skills are required – only an interest in storytelling and a willingness to experiment. This is a space for thinking about comics not only as art or entertainment, but as a powerful medium for witnessing, documenting, and imagining justice.

Module 2: “Making It Real: Using Zines to Explore Difficult Subjects”

Directors: Julie Wheelwright and Isis Menteth

Nonfiction writers can use graphics to explore emotionally challenging personal and political subjects. Whether it's Joe Sacco's “comic journalism” on the Bosnian War, or Marjane Satrapi's memoir *Persepolis*, these writers create powerful narratives that engage readers through the techniques often associated with literary journalism: scene setting, granular detail, dialogue, character development, dramatic tension and structures. But they provide the added dimension of visual illustrations to take readers further into their world, visualize its characters and experience the often complex emotions with the events they depict. In this Zine-production workshop, run over two days, we will ask students to come up with their own ideas for tackling a “difficult subject” of their choosing – working in small groups – to develop a story outline. After a brief introduction to literary journalism, documentary nonfiction and a brief history of Zines, we will provide students with the tools to create their projects during the workshop.

Module 3: “Japanese Atomic Manga and Graphic”

Director: John S. Bak

This module will study Keiji Nakazawa's atomic manga *おれは見た* (*Ore wa mita*, 1972) as graphic literary journalism. One of the first manga to be translated into English as *I Saw It*, it recounts the bombing of Hiroshima on 6 August 1945. A little over two decades later, he would recount his experiences, and confront his trauma, with the documentary manga *I Saw It*. Here, the emotional weight of the illustrations visualising his trauma tips the scale in terms of generating reader empathy. A few years later, when he expands this manga into the ten books that would comprise the world-famous series *Barefoot Gen*, the textual trauma he describes carries more levity and achieves a certain balance with the visual representation of suffering, his own as well as that of the Japanese people of Hiroshima. By the time he delivers his *Autobiography* a decade later, Nakazawa had said all he needed to say visually, and the book's lengthy textual trauma is splayed out in minute detail, with only a few new illustrations now lending support. When studied diachronically, these three works reveal how Nakazawa's healing process passed from predominantly image/(text) to text-image to finally text/(image), with the parentheses signifying that word's recessed presence in the manga's traditional text-image matrix.



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Module 4: “Joe Sacco: The Emergence of a Comics Literary Journalist”

Director: John Hartsock

We know Joe Sacco, graphic novelist and creator of *Palestine*, *Safe Area Goražde* and other works, set out to be a comics journalist. But he is also very much a literary journalist. Similar to literary journalism, he engages in a “narra-descriptive journalism” except the descriptive modality is reflected in the deceptively simple line drawing. But beyond that, we can detect at work in his graphic novels strategies many literary journalists embrace. Among them: He makes the familiar unfamiliar in the attempt to estrange us from our conventional ways of seeing the world. He foregrounds his subjectivity to play the “holy fool” in the attempt to disarm his readers. He leaves us suspended intentionally in the disorientation that comes of the “inconclusive present” resulting in a lack of closure. His satire of caricature not only reminds us of just how fragile all mimesis is, but also provides him the basis for a different mimetic freedom. On top of these, and especially relevant to the graphic novel, he leaves us voiceless in panels without text. Ultimately, he insists, literally, on the satiric “comic” image as fundamentally *tragic* to disrupt our social and cultural assumptions.

Module 5: “Documenting Trauma”

Director: Soenke Zehle

This module offers an introduction to documentary comics and graphic novels, exploring how visual narratives uniquely engage with historical events and processes and, in so doing, continue to make unique contributions to the cultural techniques of an increasingly data-driven investigative aesthetics. Building on the growing interest in questions of authenticity and trustworthiness these works address, the module therefore also takes into account how this engagement is being reframed by generative technologies capable of creating vast amounts of synthetic representations that challenge and compete with existing forms of “engaged” media such as the documentary comic. Participants will examine the intersection of history, memory, and graphic form, gaining insight into how documentary comics expand traditional historical discourse by making it visually accessible and emotionally resonant. Combining historical examples with contemporary works of reportage, the session highlights the medium’s ability to convey complex socio-political realities through compelling storytelling and imagery. To contextualize the uniqueness of the comic as a distinct aesthetic practice, the workshop will include a brief foray into generative intelligence platforms used in investigative analysis and documentary storytelling.

Module 6: “Ink, Blood, and Truth: Drawing Colombia’s Memory through Narconarratives”

Director: Catalina Uribe Rincón

This module will explore how recent Colombian graphic nonfiction reimagines the intertwined histories of narco-trafficking and journalism. It focuses on two works: *Escobar. Una educación criminal* (2025), by Juan Pablo Escobar, Pablo Martín Farina, and Alberto



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Madrigal; and *Don Guillermo: una biografía ilustrada* (2025), by Pablo Guerra and a collective of Colombian illustrators. *Escobar* revisits the violence of the 1980s through the eyes of the drug lord's son. Spanish artist Alberto Madrigal's soft watercolors and manga-inspired perspectives create an uneasy intimacy that blurs tenderness and brutality, exposing how aesthetic beauty can coexist with moral distortion. *Don Guillermo*, by contrast, reconstructs the life of journalist Guillermo Cano Isaza, editor of *El Espectador*, who was murdered by Pablo Escobar in 1986 for exposing the cartels and defending press freedom. By placing these two narratives in tension, the self-mythologizing story born of criminal legacy and the testimonial biography of a journalist who confronted it, this talk examines how Colombian comics transform violence into visual testimony and reclaim journalism as an act of moral and civic resistance.

Module 7: “Transgenerational Trauma: Encoding War Experience in American Comic Books”

Director: Christopher Craig

This module will guide students in exploring the ways that lived experiences, history, and trauma can be encoded in nonfictional, fictional and fictionalized American war comics over generations of production. Following an introduction to American war comics and an outline of their history and production, students will be given sample issues of war comics to study in order to identify and analyze images, descriptions, and other elements informed by lived or transmitted experiences. The first session will focus on stories published in the first half decade of American war comics, 1949-1952, when comics artists and writers often had direct and recent experience with combat. The second session will move to works published in the 1970s and 1980s, by which time the previous depictions of trauma and other experiences had been encoded into the genre and were interacting with contemporary experiences and consciousness of the Vietnam War and other conflicts.

Module 8: “Holocaust Representation in Non-Fiction Comics”

Director: Jan Miklas-Frankowski

The aim of this module is to analyze three distinct examples of Holocaust representation in non-fiction comics – *Maus* by Art Spiegelman, *The Last Outrage: The Dina Babbitt Story* by Raphael Medoff, Neal Adams, Joe Kubert, and Stan Lee, and *Achtung Zelig!* by Krzysztof Gawronkiewicz and Krystian Rosenberg – and to explore the relationship between nonfiction storytelling and traumatic memory. We will seek to demonstrate that nonfiction narratives function as socially significant tools for affective storytelling – for recovering suppressed histories and working through historical trauma (Wawrzyniak 2015; Bilewicz 2024). Since unprocessed trauma can lead to social polarization, it must be addressed through post-traumatic growth – by moving beyond intergenerational trauma via dialogue, empathy, and the transformation of memory.

Course Schedule



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Day 1. Monday, 1 June 2026

9:00 – 10:00	Welcome, with coffee and croissants
10:00 – 10:30	Introduction to the MANGIX project (Lorraine/Tohoku) and the Comics Journalism Summer School Program (course goals, impacts and requirements) John S. Bak, Christopher Craig
10:30 – 12:00	Workshop: Module 1
12:00 – 14:00	Lunch on your own
14:00 – 15:30	Workshop: Module 2
	Coffee Break
16:00 – 17:30	Workshop: Module 3

Day 2. Tuesday, 2 June 2026

9:00 – 10:30	Workshop: Module 1 (concluded)
	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	Workshop: Module 2 (concluded)
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch on your own
14:00 – 15:30	Workshop: Module 3 (concluded)
	Coffee Break
16:00 – 17:30	Workshop: Module 4

Day 3. Wednesday, 3 June 2026

9:00 – 10:30	Workshop: Module 4 (concluded)
	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	Workshop: Module 5
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch on your own



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14:00 – 15:30	Workshop: Module 6
	Coffee Break
16:00 – 17:30	Workshop: Module 7
Day 4. Thursday, 4 June 2026	
9:00 – 10:30	Workshop: Module 5 (concluded)
	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	Workshop: Module 6 (concluded)
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch on your own
14:00 – 15:30	Workshop: Module 7 (concluded)
	Coffee Break
16:00 – 17:30	Project work (on your own or in groups)
20:00 – 23:00	Banquet dinner, Café Foy, Place Stanislas (pre-paid reservations required)
Day 5. Friday, 5 June 2026	
9:00 – 10:30	Workshop: Module 8
	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	Workshop: Module 8 (concluded)
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch on your own
14:00 – 16:30	Masterclass in Documentary BD: Yan Lindingre, “Cartoon for Peace”
	Coffee Break
17:00 – 17:30	Closing remarks
17:30 – 19:00	Cocktail reception