

Fondren Fellows Project:

Any questions can be directed to fondrenfellows@rice.edu



Mentor:

David Messmer, Associate Teaching Professor, Director

of FWIS Program

Project Title:

Campus Comics: Continuing the Rice Comics Anthology

Description:

This Fellowship will help launch the second issue of Rice's yearly comic book anthology containing comics created by Rice students. The anthology will be distributed across campus.

Project Summary:

The fellows will act as the editors of the 2nd issue of a yearly comic anthology that showcases sequential art produced by Rice students. Printed copies of the anthology would be freely available to all members of the Rice community, and would be widely distributed in the spring.

To produce the anthology, the Fellows would work closely with the materials in the Comic Art Teaching and Study Workshop (CATS) Collection (MS 1049) at the Woodson Research Center. Close study of those materials, many of which are comic anthologies, will introduce the Fellows to possible formats and layouts for the anthology they will be editing. Also, the pieces of original comic artwork that are part of the CATS collection will help the students anticipate the necessary steps for adapting an original piece of art to a printed format.

As the Fellows progress through the process they will make occasional visits to my class, FWIS 181 – African American Graphic Novels, to present plans for the anthology in its various phases and to solicit feedback and ideas from the FWIS students, thus offering my students a unique opportunity for experiential learning.

Finally, the Fellows will help to organize a “launch party” for the comic in the Kyle Morrow Room, where contributors’ original art will be displayed next to some of the original pieces that are part of the CATS Collection.

Overall, the project will show the central place of the Woodson’s materials in inspiring a comic anthology that will add to the creative culture of Rice and allow students a new outlet for displaying their considerable artistic and story-telling talents.

How many fellows are you requesting (up to 3)? How would their work be broken down and managed?

I am requesting two Fellows. Fellows would work closely with the mentor throughout the project. In the fall they will also work with staff at the Woodson as they engage with the CATS Collection materials. In the spring they will work with Fondren staff to plan the “launch party.”

Key tasks outline:

Fall:

The Fellows will have four primary tasks in addition to regular meetings with the mentor.

First, the Fellows will familiarize themselves with the materials in the CATS Collection, especially focusing on the tremendous range of formats that comics anthologies (and comics in general) might take. These materials will be a reference that the Fellows can return to throughout the year as they make important editorial decisions.

Second, the Fellows will develop and implement a strategy for raising awareness of the anthology and soliciting submissions from the student body, while also building a small committee of students to eventually help select the comics that will be included in the anthology. Given last year’s success, this will include a study break near the finals

period.

Third, the Fellows will also begin reaching out to potential sponsors who might like to be featured in the comic. These contributions could take the form of payment, or of supplying some of the refreshments at the study break and/or launch party.

Finally, they will design and implement a workflow for receiving submissions and for convening the committee to decide which comics to include. To compile and print the anthology in time, the Fellows will need to have selected the works by the end of the semester.

Additionally, the Fellows will visit my FWIS class on two occasions – once to introduce the students to the project, and a second time to present their ideas regarding the anthology’s format. In both cases this will not only raise awareness among an audience that presumably has an interest in comics, but will also offer the Fellows a chance to receive ideas and feedback.

Spring:

The primary task will be the creation and distribution of the anthology comic. Working closely with the mentor, the students will make final design decisions as they compile the comics that have been selected for inclusion in the anthology. They will also continue reaching to potential sponsors. Printing will take place through The Newspaper Club – an online printing service that is ideal for the comic format and that will make ordering large numbers of the comic relatively fast and easy.

In the meantime, the Fellows will develop a distribution plan that they will then execute when the printed comics arrive. Central to this distribution will be a “launch party” that the students will help organize with help from the mentor and some members of the Woodson (since the idea is to present pieces of original art from the CATS Collection alongside student work).

Finally, the Fellows will, once again, visit my class on two occasions – once to familiarize the students with the project (since this will be a new section of the class), and once to promote the anthology.

Qualifications for applicants:

Some familiarity with and love of comics will be important. Someone with experience working with layouts would be helpful, though not absolutely necessary. Ideally, the Fellows, either individually or as a team, will have a strong blend of creativity and organizational acumen.

What would students learn through their participation in this project?

The Fellows will develop important editorial skills while also learning how to utilize archival materials in the production of a creative product. Any student interested in publishing will gain hands-on experience with the process as they carry an entirely original work from its inception through to its final publication.

Additionally, the students who contribute to the anthology will have a unique opportunity to gain experience working with editors and learning about the process of turning their creative ideas into a tangible product that will be available to a wide audience.