

**Caltech Course Description****VC 170****Narrative in Twentieth Century American Art****Lecturer: Ryan Linkof, Ph.D.**

What role does narrative play in modern and contemporary art? Though often derided by critics for its associations with popular culture and mass-produced “kitsch” objects, narrative art has powerfully shaped modern visual culture through its broad dissemination and accessibility. This course will explore narrative’s marginal position within art and art criticism of the past century, showcasing the kinds of artists often excluded from traditional fine art narratives. Students will critically engage with the work of illustrators such as Maxfield Parrish, Norman Rockwell, Frank Frazetta, and Jeffrey Catherine Jones, as well as social realist painters, filmmakers, commercial photographers, and comic artists. The course will ask students to examine how art history has been told, offering tools to engage critically with the visual culture that has permeated and informed much of American life.