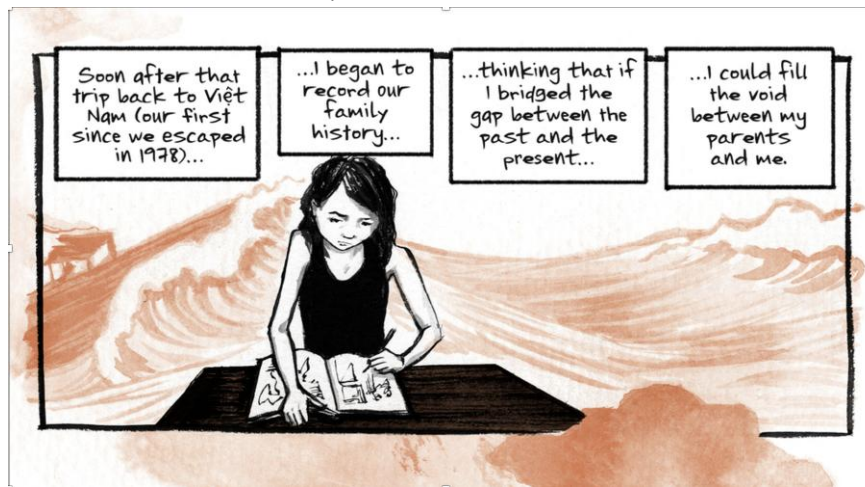


**Graphic Cultures**  
(WST 390: 01)  
Professor Lisa Diedrich



[Image attribution and description: detail from p. 36 of Thi Bui's *The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir* showing the author at a table with a pen and notebook drawing. This is the moment she begins to "record our family history." Thi Bui's avatar, table, and notebook is in black and white. Behind her, and overflowing the panel, in light orange watercolor wash, are waves in a rough sea with a rickety boat floating on a wave.]

In recent years, comics and graphic narratives have become a popular and innovative form for telling auto/biographical stories in a medium that artfully combines—co-mixes—words and images. The touchstone text of the form is *Maus*, Art Spiegelman's graphic narrative of his parents' experience of the Holocaust and his own transgenerational trauma. Other key texts in the hybrid genre include Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* and Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*, which, like *Maus*, have reached a wide readership, garnered popular and critical acclaim, as well as scholarly attention. These texts all share a preoccupation with exploring how selves come into being in relation to experiences and events that are both ordinary and extraordinary—e.g., childhood, sexuality, war, illness, trauma, shame, stigma, love, hope. Our class will take a multi-faceted and interdisciplinary approach to graphic cultures. We will begin with questions about form, exploring how lines, panels, pages, etc. are drawn, read, and interpreted. We will then turn to many examples of the genre, focusing on graphic stories of war and migration, gender and sexuality, and sickness, disability, and caregiving. Through many multi-modal activities, including annotation, drawing, comics making, and creative writing, we will explore the aesthetic multiplicity of comics, as well as the many contexts in which comics are created, shared, read, and studied.