

A cartoonist to watch out for

March 07, 2013 11:30 AM Johanna Gretschel
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Acclaimed author Alison Bechdel gives the [Custard Lecture](#) on Wednesday (March 6). (Photos by Cheryl Gerber)

“There's an old maxim that cartoonists are mediocre writers and mediocre artists,” critically acclaimed cartoonist Alison Bechdel said to the thunderous laughter of a packed crowd in the Kendall Cram Lecture Hall on Wednesday night (March 6).

Bechdel's original claim to fame is *Dykes to Watch Out For*, a comic strip that she drew for fun until a friend encouraged her to publish it in *Womannews*, a feminist newspaper, in 1983.

The strip grew into a serialized production with a regular cast of characters who depicted contemporary lesbian life. It ran for 25 years.

“There wasn't anything at that time that represented me and my friends, what we looked like, what we were doing,” Bechdel said.

Though she drew the Dykes characters' tics and quirks from herself, Bechdel delved much deeper into the personal in 2006 with the publication of *Fun Home*.

The autobiographical graphic novel depicts her own coming out as a lesbian while dealing with her OCD father, who was a closeted bisexual and committed suicide when Bechdel was 19.



Bechdel draws in her Tulane audience.

Her latest graphic novel, *Are You My Mother?*, explores her relationship with her mother.

“The thing that drives us to create anything is a kind of a lack, or a pain, and we're trying to fill that void,” the Eisner Award winner said.

One of Bechdel's challenges is navigating her personal relationships after revealing such intimate details to the public through her works.

She says her mother still has not acknowledged her latest novel, and maintains that *Fun Home* represents only her truth, and not necessarily that of her mother or brothers.

Tulane [gender studies](#) student Caitlin Truitt was one of the lucky students who had dinner with Bechdel before the lecture at the Newcomb College Institute, which organized the event.

“We talked a lot about what it means to write a memoir, and what is truth,” Truitt said. “I like how she says that reality is a subjective process.”

Johanna GretscheI received a bachelor's degree with an English major from Tulane in 2012, and she is in the master's degree program.