



Superhero Fiction

ENGL 4115B/5610S

Early Summer 2015 (May-June)

Although costumed superheroes have been fixtures of comic books since the debut of Superman in 1938, the awarding of the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2001 to Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* seemed to register a shift in the superhero's cultural status and domain—but did it? The main goals of this seminar will be to explore the history, contours, and concerns of superhero fiction. What are its principle generic features? When, how, and why did it emerge? What cultural work does it do? What is its relation to superhero comics? And why is it (suddenly?) so ubiquitous? With an eye to such questions, this seminar will proceed along two different but intersecting lines of inquiry. One of these will be to trace the emergence and transformation of the superhero in comic books, from the early twentieth century to the present day. The second will be to examine the points of connection and disjunction between the history of the superhero in comics and the appearance of superhero figures in other genres and media, particularly pulp fiction, science fiction, the “literary” novel, and the short story. For more information contact: brian.johnson@carleton.ca



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