

**Carleton University
Summer 2016
Department of English**

**Course and Section No: ENGL 1400 A
Course Title: Literature, Art, and Culture
“The Rise of the Superhero!”**

**Time: Tues. & Thurs. 14:35-17:25
Location: LA A720
*Please confirm location on Carleton Central***

**Instructor: Prof. M. Hewson
Office Hours: Tues & Thurs 10:00-11:00
Office: DT 1913
email: marc.hewson@carleton.ca
Phone: 2320**

COURSE DESCRIPTION: If box-office grosses and marketing tie-ins are reliable popular indicators, North Americans have been having a love affair with superheroes in recent years. This course aims to explore the growth of this fascination over the last century or so, through analysis of the development of textual and graphic depictions of costumed crime-fighters, starting in the era of pulp fiction and working through to modern cinematic blockbusters. We will examine the changing modes of representation literarily and visually as the early-twentieth-century pulp heroes like Tarzan and John Carter grew into the Batmans and Supermans still beloved today. Of concern will be the ways in which cultural presumptions and prejudices affect definitions of good and villainy in the realm of the superhero.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Available at Campus Bookstore: Edgar Rice Burrows, *A Princess of Mars*
Edgar Rice Burrows, *Tarzan of the Apes*
Michael Chabon, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*
Robert Mayer, *Superfolks*
Philip Wylie, *Gladiator*

Available at Comixology: Mark Millar, *Superman: Red Son*
Frank Miller, *The Dark Knight Returns*
Alan Moore, *Watchmen*
All-Star Comics #8
Green Lantern # 85-86

Available at Classic Comics *Action Comics* #1
Reading Room: *Detective Comics* #27

Available for 24hr-loan at MacOdrum Library Christopher Nolan (Dir.), *The Dark Knight*

Available as free download [Lester Dent, A Man of Bronze](#)

EVALUATION: Critical Response Papers: 45% (3x15%)
Research Essay: 25%
Take-home Final Exam: 30%

Make note of the following course regulations:

1) **Submissions:** A) Essay assignments should be submitted at the beginning of the assigned class, or dropped off at the English Department drop box located outside 1812 Dunton Tower. Those assignments are date-stamped and put in my mailbox. Assignments are NOT to be slipped under my office door. Emailed or faxed assignments will not be accepted without prior written agreement of the professor. If one of your assignments is lost, misplaced, or not received by the instructor, you are responsible for having a backup copy that can be submitted immediately upon request; B) Workshop exercises are to be written and submitted in the class during which they are assigned.

2) **Due Dates and Late Policies:** A) Essay assignments submitted after the due date without accompanying medical or other appropriate documentation will be deducted 5% PER DAY, beginning 8:30am the day after the due date, to a maximum of 5 days (weekends counting as one day). After that, no undocumented late papers will be accepted. There will be no individual exemptions from or exceptions to this rule. If non-emergency situations develop, familiarize the professor with them BEFORE they occur whenever possible. Also, be aware that late essay assignments may not be marked in time for return with on-time papers, meaning students may not have time to implement advice and commentary for subsequent assignments; B) Workshop exercises will not be accepted after the assigned class without documentation to explain student absence.

3) **Posted Grades:** All assignment grades will be posted on the course's cuLearn site. Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

4) **Plagiarism:** The University Senate defines plagiarism as presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas, or the work of others as one's own. This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else
- using ideas, quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts or ideas without appropriate acknowledgement in an essay or assignment
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works, and/or failing to use quotation marks
- handing in substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs

Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include failure of the assignment, failure of the entire course, suspension from a program, suspension from the university, or even expulsion from the university. You should familiarize yourself with the University's Academic Integrity policy online at <http://carleton.ca/studentaffairs/academic-integrity/>. For more detailed discussion of the issue of plagiarism and proper use of sources, consult the following website: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>.

5) **Preparation & Attendance:** While attendance will not be actively monitored, regular attendance at lectures is expected. Lecture notes or synopses will not be provided to students missing class—it is your responsibility to make up for missed work. Active participation is expected; this means being prepared to take notes, discuss readings and complete workshop exercises.

6) **Communication:** I will use email and the cuLearn course site to communicate with students; you are advised to check both regularly. You are encouraged to contact me through email using your connect accounts. Please indicate your concern in the subject line (*e.g.* “research question”); unidentified emails will be deleted. Excessive informality is discouraged. I check email once daily Monday to Friday (usually sometime in the morning) but NOT on weekends. This means last-minute emails concerning assignments or what-have-you will likely not be returned in time to clarify questions (particularly those sent later in the day on Fridays).

7) **Classroom Etiquette:** Students are expected to be on time for each class so as not to disrupt the lecture for other class members. Also any electronic activity is expected to be for note-taking purposes only; texting, surfing, “facebooking,” “tweeting” etc are rude and disruptive for all others in the classroom. Cell-phones and MP3 players should be turned off for the duration of lecture. Additionally, while discussion is encouraged, private conversations between students are distracting to those not involved; any comments should be made openly or not at all.

ACCOMODATIONS

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

- 1) **Pregnancy obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www.carleton.ca/equity/>
- 2) **Religious obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www.carleton.ca/equity/>
- 3) **Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** The **Paul Menton Centre** for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*) at <http://www.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dates-and-deadlines/>

Lecture and Reading Schedule

(subject to changes announced in class or via cuLearn)

May 3 rd	Introduction Researching Literature, Comics and Film
May 5 th	Analyzing Visual Texts
May 10 th	Burroughs, <i>Tarzan of the Apes</i> <i>Detective Comics #27</i>
May 12 th	Burroughs, <i>A Princess of Mars</i> <i>All-Star Comics #8</i>
May 17 th	Wylie, <i>Gladiator</i> <i>Action Comics #1</i>
May 19 th	Dent, <i>The Man of Bronze: A Doc Savage Adventure</i>
May 24 th	Mayer, <i>Superfolks</i> , <i>Green Lantern # 85-86</i>
May 26 th	Moore, <i>Watchmen</i>
May 31 st	Miller, <i>The Dark Knight Returns</i>
June 2 nd	Chabon, <i>The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay</i>
June 7 th	Millar, <i>Superman: Red Son</i>
June 9 th	Nolan, <i>The Dark Knight</i>
June 14 th	Course Summary, Take-home Exam Distribution
June 23 rd	Take-home Exam Due 2:30pm-5:30pm DT 1913

General Explanation of Grading Criteria

Below is a general summary of elements that will factor into the grade for each of the essays you submit. The list for each grade provides an idea of the “do’s and don’t’s” associated with that letter grade; students should assume that they must meet all the positive expectations and avoid all the negative ones to achieve the mark in question.

A-range Grades: Excellent

(Paper exceeds standard expectations for first-year essays):

- Arguments are always clear, explained and proven via cogent textual analysis
- Ideas are original and imaginative not derivative of lecture material
- Overall structure and paragraph structure are logical and well linked
- Style and language are sophisticated
- Grammar is free of any flaws
- Documentation is correct throughout
- Technical expectations (length, formatting etc) are completely met

B-range Grades: Good

(Paper meets standard expectations for first-year essays):

- Arguments are generally clear and well explained with fairly cogent textual analysis
- Ideas are not totally original/imaginative, but derivative ideas are handled well
- Overall structure and paragraph structure essentially logical and linked, but with some flaws
- Style and language are handled fairly well but with some flaws
- Some grammar errors are evident
- Documentation is almost always correct
- Technical expectations are completely met

C-range Grades: Adequate

(Paper meets some but not all standard expectations for first-year essays):

- Some unclear, unexplained and unproven arguments, with limited cogent textual analysis
- Ideas are usually derivative and not always handled well
- Overall structure and paragraph structure are loose, sometimes illogical and not well linked
- Flaws are evident in style and language use
- Many grammar errors are noticeable
- Documentation errors occur with relative frequency
- Some technical expectations are not met

D-range Grades: Poor

(Paper only meets a few of the standard expectations for first-year essays):

- Arguments are generally unclear, unexplained and unproven without cogent textual analysis
- Ideas, if present, are generally derivative and ill-handled
- Overall structure and paragraph structure are scattered, often illogical and poorly linked
- Significant flaws in style and language use exist
- Problems with grammar are evident throughout
- Documentation is largely incorrect or missing
- Many technical expectations are not met

F-range Grades: Failure

(Paper fails to meet the standard expectations for first-year essays):

- Arguments, if present, are confused and unproven with only superficial textual analysis
- General lack of ideas driving the paper to conclusion
- Overall structure and paragraph structure difficult or impossible to discern
- Major flaws exist in style and language use
- Systematic grammar errors are present throughout
- Documentation is incorrect or absent
- Majority of technical expectations are not met

GRADING ABBREVIATIONS

Grammar & Style Problems

<u>abc</u> or <u>ABC</u>	letter-case error (incorrect capitalization/non-capitalization)
≠	faulty parallelism
agr	agreement (subject/verb or pronoun)
awk	awkward construction
CS	comma splice
DM	dangling modifier
frag	sentence fragment
gr	complex grammar problem
MM	misplaced modifier
ref	referent problem with pronoun
rep	repetition (of word, phrase or idea)
run on	run-on/fused sentence
shift	incorrect change in verb tense or mood
WC	word choice (inappropriate selection)
WW	wrong word (incorrect selection)
×	omit

Logic & Argumentation Problems

expand	ideas require more discussion to be persuasive
explain	ideas need further definition/clarification
link?	unclear transition between sentences/paragraphs
logic problem	sentence creates situation counter to logic/reality
unclear/?	ideas are not comprehensible
vague	ideas remain ambiguous, inexplicit or imprecise

ENGL 1400 A CRITICAL RESPONSE PAPERS

Over the course of the semester, students will submit short critical-opinion papers in answer to the questions below. In each case, answers should interrogate the question through discussion of both artistic and narrative components. Papers need not make use of any outside material beyond the primary sources and possible lecture matter in justifying their answers. Papers will be evaluated on their ability to establish a claim, to support that claim using evidence from the texts in question, to present the claim in proper grammar and style, and to offer information in a technically accurate way (i.e. to comply with of MLA submission guidelines, available here: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/1/>, and the rules and limitations presented below).

As stated in the syllabus, plagiarism will not be tolerated. All work must be the students' own, created specifically for this course. Any and all people's intellectual property must be accurately documented in the manner explained in the above website, including lecture notes. Be certain you understand what constitutes academic fraud and learn to avoid it by visiting the websites mentioned above.

LENGTH: 3-4 double-spaced pages (exclusive of works cited) in Times 12 with 1" margins.
Papers less than 2 FULL pages of essay text will not be read or marked.

DUE DATES: Papers will only be accepted in hardcopy up to the start of class on the dates listed below. **Late papers unaccompanied by appropriate documentation WILL NOT be accepted.**

VALUE: 15% x 3 = 45%

TOPICS:

- 1) Choose an issue or short multi-issue story arc of your favorite superhero and explain why you think it is the definitive vision of that character artistically and narratively.

OR

Compare the first appearances of Superman (in [Action Comics #1](#)) and Batman (in [Detective Comics #27](#)), defining how the visuals and plot of each issue defines superheroism differently.

DUE DATE: May 19th

- 2) Choose one of our pre-superhero novels and discuss how it uses narrative description to create a mental image of its hero similar to the ways comic book visually define their superheroes.

DUE DATE: June 2nd

- 3) Choose one of our graphic novels and argue how it acts to undermine the ideal of the superhero in both its story and its imagery.

DUE DATE: June 13th

ENGL 1400 A RESEARCH ESSAY

Write a critically evaluative paper on one of the following topics. Essays must make use of and refer explicitly within the paper to a MINIMUM of 2 scholarly sources (excluding the primary filmic and literary texts), offering proper documentation in MLA format. Consult this site for information on MLA rules and regulations: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/1/>. ***Essays not meeting the minimum research requirements will receive an F***. Each essay must examine one film and one book in making its argument. The essay will be evaluated on its ability to establish a claim, to support that claim using evidence from the works themselves and from academic sources relating to those works, to present the claim in proper grammar and style, and to offer information in a technically accurate way (*i.e.*, to comply with the rules and limitations presented below).

As stated in the syllabus, plagiarism will not be tolerated. All work must be the students' own, created specifically for this course. Any and all people's intellectual property must be accurately documented in the manner explained in the above website, including lecture notes. Be certain you understand what constitutes academic fraud and learn to avoid it by visiting the websites mentioned above.

LENGTH: 5-6 double-spaced pages (exclusive of works cited) in Times 12 with 1" margins.
Papers less than 4 FULL pages of essay text will not be read or marked.

DUE DATE: June 9th in hard copy at the beginning of class.
Late papers unaccompanied by appropriate documentation WILL NOT be accepted.

VALUE: 25%

TOPICS:

- 1) As a post-9/11 cinematic vision of the (super)hero, how does *The Dark Knight* visually and narratively explore the struggle between good and evil?
- 2) Does *Watchmen* argue for the costumed (super)hero as a positive or a negative motivator for human betterment as expressed through Moore's story and Gibbons's art?
- 3) To what extent is *The Dark Knight Returns* a cycling back of The Batman to his original characterization in the 1930s, both in terms of story and artistic style?
- 4) Is it plausible to argue that *Tarzan of the Apes* is a superhero comic book without the art? To what extent does Burroughs anticipate the narrative and artistic strategies of later comics creators?
- 5) Create a topic of your own design from a pairing of one each of the films and books we are covering in the course. (Topics must be approved via email NO LATER THAN May 31st.)