



# ST. JEROME'S UNIVERSITY

**St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo**

**Department of English**

**ENGL 108A**

**The Superhero**

**Spring 2019**

**MW 11:30-12:50, EV3 4412**

## **Instructor Information**

Instructor: Jesse Hutchison

Office: Sweeney Hall, Room 2113

Office Hours: TTh 2:30-3:30pm

Email: j6hutchi@uwaterloo.ca

## **Course Description**

Holy superhero analysis, Batman! In this course, we will look at a variety of ways that the superhero has appeared in literature over the years. We will begin by reading stories about Gilgamesh and Heracles to consider how these early heroic figures influenced the creation of the 20th century American superhero. Throughout the rest of the course, we will concentrate on three superheroes, specifically the DC triumvirate of Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman. We will examine the different ways that these three figures have appeared over the years from their very first appearances in the late 1930s and early 1940s all the way up to today's versions. The course, then, looks at how events such as WWII, the Cold War, 60s activism, Reaganomics, and 9/11 impacted the way that artists and writers crafted superheroes and told their stories. We will consider the superhero as a social construction that typically embodies (and sometimes questions) the dominant social values and beliefs of their place and time. Along with the early epic poems, the course will look at individual comic book issues, a graphic novel, television episodes, and a film. The course also focuses on how to develop, research, and write an English essay with an argument that is more powerful than a locomotive.

## **Expectations**

We will be discussing these texts in significant detail. My central expectation is that you come to class fully prepared. Being fully prepared means that you have read the required texts, you have given them some thought, and you have arrived in class with something relevant to say about them, or with a question in mind. To participate fully, you must bring your books to class with you. Please be on time, and plan to attend every class.

## **Required Text**

Course Kit

*The Epic of Gilgamesh*

The Dark Knight Returns, Frank Miller

### Readings Available on Comixology

Detective Comics (1937-2011) #27  
 Superman (1939-2011) #1  
 All-Star Comics #8  
 Wonder Woman (1942-1986) #3  
 Wonder Woman (1942-1986) #179  
 Batman (1940-2011) #153  
 All Star Superman #1  
 All-Star Batman and Robin, the Boy Wonder #2

### Course Requirements and Assessment

Assessment	Date of Evaluation	Weighting
Attendance		10%
12 Quizzes		15%
Essay #1 (3-4 pages)	June 3	15%
Essay Outline	July 10	5%
Final Essay (6-7 pages)	July 29	30%
Final Exam	Exam Period (August 2 to August 16)	25%

#### Essay #1 (15%)

For this essay, you will be asked to write a critical analysis of The Epic of Gilgamesh. Some topics to consider may be the hero's journey, Gilgamesh's status as a precursor to the superhero, the representation of women in the text, or an evaluation of Gilgamesh as a hero. These are just suggestions and you may also choose your own topics. Papers should be typed and double-spaced using 12 pt Times New Roman font. Remember too that 3-4 pages means at least a full 3 pages at a minimum. You are to write argumentative, thesis-driven essays. Use proper MLA citation methods. Please consult the most recent edition of the MLA handbook for details. Due on June 3.

#### Essay Outline (5%)

Write a proposal for the final essay in which you provide the thesis statement as well as the main points of your essay in point form (however, the thesis should be written as a complete sentence or sentences). There is no set page limit, but the more detailed, the better. Aim for at least a full page of points. The purpose of this assignment is to have you thinking about your essays in advance with the understanding that your final paper is subject to change and always a work in progress. Due on July 10.

### **Final Essay (30%)**

For this essay, you will be asked to write a critical analysis of two of the texts that we looked at during the term. You may compare two texts dealing with the same superhero or you may compare two texts featuring two different superheroes. You are not to write on *The Epic of Gilgamesh* for this essay, but you may use the Heracles poems as one of your two texts. Some topics to consider are how the texts reflect the context in which they are written, how the texts reinforce and/or challenge the status quo, how they reflect feminist points of view, and how they reflect conventional conceptions of masculinity. As in the previous essay, these are only suggestions and you may also choose your own topics. For this essay, you are asked to do some research and incorporate at least two peer-reviewed secondary sources. Papers should be typed and double-spaced using 12 pt Times New Roman font. Remember too that 6-7 pages means at least a full 6 pages at a minimum. You are to write argumentative, thesis-driven essays. Use proper MLA citation methods. Please consult the most recent edition of the MLA handbook for details. Due on July 29.

### **Exam (25%)**

The final exam will be 2.5 hours and it will be scheduled during the formal exam period (August 2 to August 16). You will be asked to write on six of the course texts but you will not be allowed to discuss the two texts that you used for your final essay. A full description of the exam format will be discussed later in the term. Please keep in mind that travel plans are not acceptable grounds for an alternative final examination time.

### **Quizzes (15%)**

There will be a quiz at the beginning of class for each text (with the exception of the Brian Robb article, the Batman TV show, and the Wonder Woman movie). For texts that are expanded over two lectures (*Gilgamesh* and *The Dark Knight Returns*), the quiz will be at the beginning of the first lecture on the text. The quiz will ask basic questions to ensure that you are reading the material and retaining important information. Because there will be twelve quizzes total, each will be worth 1.25%.

### **Course Outline / Class Schedule**

May 6: Introduction

May 8: "Comic Books to Blockbusters: The Rise of the Superhero," Brian Robb from *A Brief History of Superheroes* (located on GoogleBooks)

May 13: *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

May 15: *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

May 22: Essay Workshop

May 27: "The Little Heracles," "The Nemean Lion," Theocritus (in course kit)

May 29: *Detective Comics (1937-2011) #27* (original 1939 version only) (located on Comixology)

June 3: *Superman (1939-2011) #1* (located on Comixology), Essay #1 Due

June 5: "Meet the Squiffles," "Case of the Costume Clad Killers"

June 10: "Introducing Wonder Woman" from *All-Star Comics #8* (located on Comixology)

June 12: *Wonder Woman (1942-1986) #3* (first three comics only) (located on Comixology)

June 17: "The Lady and the Lion" (in course kit)  
 June 19: Batman (1940-2011) #153, Wonder Woman (1942-1986) #179 (both located on Comixology)  
 June 24: Screening: Batman TV series and discussion  
 June 26: Batman TV series discussion and essay workshop on secondary sources  
 July 2: "Must There Be a Superman?" (in course kit)  
 July 3: The Dark Knight Returns  
 July 8: The Dark Knight Returns,  
 July 10: All Star Superman #1, All-Star Batman and Robin, the Boy Wonder #2, Essay Proposal Due  
 July 15: screening: Wonder Woman  
 July 17: screening: Wonder Woman  
 July 22: Wonder Woman movie discussion  
 July 24: Course Wrap-Up  
 July 29: Exam Review, Final Essay Due

### Late Work

The two essays and essay proposal are to be handed in on LEARN by 11:59pm on the day the assignment is due. Microsoft Word documents are preferred over PDF and Pages. Marks will be returned on Learn. For the essay proposal, I will write notes in the comment section provided by Learn. For the essays, I will re-attach the document with my notes and comments on the document itself. The penalty for a late assignment is 2% per day, including weekend days. This will be incurred in all cases except certified emergencies. Papers more than ten days late will not be accepted, and a mark of zero will be given for the assignments.

A doctor's note is required to avoid a late penalty, and it should document serious illness on and for the period directly preceding the due date for assignments, or on the scheduled dates of exams. In cases of personal matters such as mental health concerns, I am very sympathetic but I am also unable to properly evaluate these cases. If you need an extension on work for such issues, it is crucial to go to AccessAbility and have them evaluate your case. They can then contact me if they believe you require alternate accommodations for assignments. At that point, I am always happy to help the student in any way that I can.

### Attendance Policy

Class attendance is crucial for both your attendance grade and your quiz marks. Furthermore, the final exam will focus exclusively on information discussed in lecture. A doctor's note is required to avoid attendance marks being docked for an absence. Similar to the late work information, if there are personal issues such as mental health concerns that make attending class difficult, you will need to go to AccessAbility to have them evaluate your case and they can contact me if they believe you require alternate accommodations. If you miss a class for unavoidable circumstances, please connect with a classmate to discuss the material that was covered during your absence.

## Important Information

**Academic Integrity:** To maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Affiliated and Federated Institutions of Waterloo (AFIW) are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity](#) webpage for more information.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline](#). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [University of Waterloo Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read the [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances](#).

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Appeals](#).

**Note for Students with Disabilities:** The [AccessAbility Services](#) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

### How to read comics on Comixology:

1. Go to the Comixology website, <http://www.comixology.com>
  2. Register for an account (username, email address and a password for now). Click on Register on the right hand side, under the Log In button.
  3. Search for comics under the titles given on page 1 of syllabus
  4. Click on the Free or Buy boxes to add these issues to your cart.
  5. When ready to check out, go to the Cart icon on the top right and follow the instructions
- . \*\*Important - credit card is required - do not separate the numbers.

\*\*Important - students must have updated Flash Player on their computers.

To read the comics: Go to [comixology.com](http://comixology.com) and log in. Click on My Comics on the top bar, and you should find the issues you purchased there, available to be read online. (Unfortunately, they can only be read online, not downloaded.)