About this course:
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.

Course Texts Available in Bookstore:
Course Kit
*The Epic of Gilgamesh*
*The Dark Knight Returns*, Frank Miller

Course Texts 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
Assignments and Evaluation:
Attendance: 10%
Essay #1 (3-4 pages): 15% due January 30
Reading Responses: 20% (see schedule for due dates)
Essay Proposal: 5% due March 13
Final Essay (5-6 pages): 25% due March 29
Final Exam: 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. 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 January 30

Reading Responses (2% each, 20% total): These responses require you to write five to six sentences in response to the readings that we are doing on ten specific days (see schedule for the days that ask for reading responses). If we are reading multiple texts on the day that the response is due, you may choose to respond to both texts or just one. The write-up is due before we read the text in class or it will not receive a mark. For this assignment, you can explain why you liked or didn’t like the text, or discuss how the text fits (or doesn’t fit) within the class themes, or discuss something that you felt didn’t make sense. If you wish to include a question for class discussion as part of your five to six sentences, you may do so as well. These assignments are small and only worth 2% but they do add up and their purpose is to both ensure that you are reading the texts in advance and thinking about them critically as a way to prepare you for your final essay and for the exam. They will also provide you with material to add to class discussion.

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 March 13

Final Essay: 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 the 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. 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 March 29**

**Final Exam:**
The final exam will be 2.5 hours and it will be scheduled during the formal exam period (April 9 to April 24). A full description of the exam format will be discussed later in the term. It will be cumulative; this means that it will cover all material from the course. Please keep in mind that travel plans are not acceptable grounds for an alternative final examination time.

**Grading Rubric**

**A** - The paper contains a clear, original, thought provoking, and argumentative thesis statement. The argument is persuasive and argued with coherency. Use of primary and secondary sources is exemplary. Quotations are well chosen and are smoothly integrated into the essay and sharply analyzed. There is a strong flow from paragraph to paragraph as well as from sentence to sentence. “A” papers are structured well, with solid introductions, body paragraphs, topic sentences, and conclusions. The essay remains on-topic throughout. The writing style is formal and professional. The words chosen are appropriate for the context and the writing is free from grammatical errors. Formatting details are free of errors.

**B** - The paper contains a clear and argumentative thesis statement which is argued with coherency and consistency throughout the paper. Good analysis of primary and secondary sources. Quotations are well chosen and are usually well integrated into the essay but they may occasionally be summarized rather than analyzed. There is a flow from paragraph to paragraph as well as from sentence to sentence. “B” papers are structured well, with solid introductions, body paragraphs, topic sentences, and conclusions. The essay remains on-topic for the most part but contains some tangents. The writing in the essay is clear though there are some awkward word choices and some grammatical errors throughout. The body paragraphs make good points but are occasionally too long or too short. Formatting details are mostly free of errors.

**C** – The paper contains a thesis but it is somewhat descriptive or speculative or, perhaps, somewhat unclear or awkwardly worded. There is a discussion of the primary and secondary texts but it does not always serve to reinforce an argument. The essay will occasionally veer off-topic, being about something other than the primary text. In a paper that requires research, the secondary source may be used a bit awkwardly or superficially. There is a structure at work in the paper but the essay occasionally becomes unstructured. There may be an imbalance of focus on one text over another. Paragraphs might be of good length or they might be all too long or too short. The writing style has multiple stylistic and grammatical errors leading to an occasional lack in clarity. Formatting is good but contains some errors.

**D** – The paper lacks a clear and coherent thesis statement. The discussion of the primary and secondary sources is superficial or entirely descriptive. The vast majority of the paper
is off-topic, being about something other than the primary text. The secondary source is used without clear understanding of the text and the context from which the quotation comes. There are frequent structural problems throughout. There is little flow in the paper as it contains mostly awkward transitions. Grammatical and stylistic errors contribute to a lack in clarity. The formatting contains multiple errors.

F – The paper lacks a thesis statement. The discussion of the primary and secondary sources is superficial or entirely descriptive. The vast majority of the paper is off-topic, being about something other than the primary text. It is possible that neither the primary nor the secondary text is quoted. There is a lack of structure to the paper and grammatical and stylistic errors render the paper largely unclear. The writing style may be unprofessional. The formatting either contains multiple errors or is absent entirely.

Course policies:

Missed classes and assignments
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.

If you miss a class for unavoidable circumstances, please connect with a classmate to discuss the material that was covered during your absence.

Appointments and email:

I am always happy to meet with students to discuss course matters, including difficulties with the material or upcoming assignments. Please feel free to make an appointment to meet with me, or send me an email.

If you send me an email, please wait 24 hours before sending me a reminder. I may not be able to respond right away, or I may be looking into the matter on your behalf, but I will get back to you as soon as possible. If you have not received a response after 24 hours, or 48 hours on a weekend, please email me again. Please note that mail from some external email servers, such as Hotmail or Yahoo, may be bounced by the university server.
Email should be reserved for relatively simple communication matters, such as brief questions or to make an appointment. If your query will require a longer conversation as in, for example, the discussion of a grade or an assignment, please make an appointment to meet with me in person. In general, I will not give out marks over email.

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage](http://example.com) and the [Arts Academic Integrity webpage](http://example.com) for more information.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her 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 Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71 - Student Discipline](http://example.com). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](http://example.com).

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances](http://example.com), Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72 - Student Appeals](http://example.com).

**Note for students with disabilities:** The [AccessAbility Services](http://example.com) 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.

**Mental Health Support**

**On Campus**

- Counselling Services: [counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca) / 519-888-4567 xt 32655
- **MATES**: one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services
- Health Services Emergency service: located across the creek form Student Life Centre
Off campus, 24/7

- **Good2Talk**: Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
- Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 519-749-433 ext. 6880
- **Here 24/7**: Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
- **OK2BME**: set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 extension 213

Territorial Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we are living and working on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River.

Schedule:

January 4: Introduction
January 11: *The Epic of Gilgamesh*
January 16: *The Epic of Gilgamesh*
January 18: Essay Workshop
January 23: “The Little Heracles,” “The Nemean Lion,” Theocritus (in course kit), **Reading Response Due**
January 25: Detective Comics (1937-2011) #27 (original 1939 version only), Superman (1939-2011) #1 (both located on Comixology), **Reading Response Due**
January 30: Superman (1939-2011) #1 (located on Comixology), **Essay #1 Due**
February 1: “Meet the Squiffles,” “Case of the Costume Clad Killers” (in course kit), **Reading Response Due**
February 6: “Introducing Wonder Woman” from All-Star Comics #8 (located on Comixology), **Reading Response Due**
February 8: Wonder Woman (1942-1986) #3 (first three comics only) (located on Comixology), **Reading Response Due**
February 13: “The Lady and the Lion” (in course kit), **Reading Response Due**
February 15: Batman (1940-2011) #153, Wonder Woman (1942-1986) #179 (both located on Comixology), **Reading Response Due**
February 27: Screening: Batman TV series and discussion
March 1: Batman TV series discussion and essay workshop on secondary sources
March 6: “Must There Be a Superman?” (in course kit), **Reading Response Due**
March 8: *The Dark Knight Returns*, **Reading Response Due**
March 13: *The Dark Knight Returns*, **Essay Proposal Due**
March 15: All Star Superman #1, All-Star Batman and Robin, the Boy Wonder #2 (both located on comixology), **Reading Response Due**
March 20: screening: *Wonder Woman*
March 22: screening: *Wonder Woman*
March 27: Wonder Woman movie discussion
March 29: Course Wrap-Up, Essay #2 due
April 3: Exam Review

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 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.)