Course Description
In both its classical and modern contexts, the hero is considered the model of humanity. This course will trace how the concept of the hero and its myths have evolved over time and has influenced the popularization of the figure of the superhero in contemporary culture. Through various generic forms, including poetry, drama, film, comic books, and television, students will consider representations of the superhero through such critical lenses as colonialism, gender, race, class, and sexuality. Divided into four main units, it is designed to introduce students to perspectives that may differ from their own and to illustrate the extent to which superheroes embody the fears, anxieties, desires, and fantasies of a specific cultural moment. This course will also consider such figures as the anti-hero and super-villain in their examination of what it means to be a superhero.

Required Texts: Note about the required readings: The readings can be found in the bookstore and (in some cases) online.


**Online texts:**
William Moulton Marston, Wonder Woman
The following issues of Wonder Woman can be purchased from the following website:
http://www.comixology.com
1. All-Star Comics No.8
2. Sensation Comics No.1
3. Sensation Comics No.2-3
4. Sensation Comics No. 4-5
5. Sensation Comics No. 6-7
6. Sensation Comics No. 8-9
7. Wonder Woman #1

**Course Evaluation**
Participation 10%
Short Essay (Hero Analysis, 3pages) 15%
Term Essay Abstract 15%
Term Essay (6pages) 30%
Final Exam 30%

**Learning Objectives:**
1. To demonstrate an understanding of the graphic novel genre.
2. To demonstrate an understanding of the role of the superhero in contemporary American culture.
3. To identify, compare, and contrast characteristics of various models of heroism.
4. To provide students with knowledge of the historical and classical literary sources and influences of the modern superhero.
5. To enhance student ability to read these works through various and intersecting critical perspectives (historical, psychological, philosophical social, cultural, literary).
6. To create a critical course vocabulary to ground students’ readings of the texts.
7. To foster an understanding of the ways in which the superhero embodies the fears, desires, values, ideologies, and anxieties of the cultural moment.
8. To enhance students’ analytical, critical, and written skills.

**Description of Assignments and Value**

**Participation (10%)**: This is a discussion-centred class, and you are expected to attend each class and engage thoughtfully in the discussion.

**Hero Analysis Paper (15%)**: Due Thursday January 30 (Week 4)

Students will select one of the following texts: Gilgamesh, Oedipus the King, or Beowulf and write a 3 page, double-spaced paper relating the chosen adventure to the heroic or anti-heroic characteristics discussed in class. More detailed instructions to be provided in class. Essays handed in on time (i.e., before or on the due date) will be given a grade and written commentary.
**Term Essay Abstract (15%):** Due in-class on Thursday February 13 (week 6)

This one-page document provides a preliminary plan of research for your term essays. It will detail your thesis statement as well as provide a minimum of 2 academic citations that support your argument. The purpose of this assignment is to have you thinking about your papers well in advance, to the point that you have already started your secondary research well before you sit down to write your essay.

**Term Essay (30%):** Due Thursday March 27 (Week 12)
Your essay will be 6 pages in length, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font. You are required to use 2 secondary sources, and they must be cited in the essay and documented on a Works Cited list in accordance with MLA format. You will be required to choose a topic from a selected list (to be provided by the instructor). Essays handed in on time (i.e., before or on the due date) will be given a grade and written commentary.

**Final Exam (30%)**
TBA

**A Note on Extensions:**

**Course Policies & Other Important Matter:**

**Contact Policy**
Please feel free to make contact with me during my office hours, by appointment, or via email. Please reserve emails to quick concerns or questions. I will try to respond to all emails within 48 hours.

**Assignment Policies:**
Assignments handed in via email will NOT be accepted. Each student in the class the option to exercise a one-week extension on any of the written assignments. If you do so, you will not receive any written commentary or feedback, but will not be deducted any marks. You must let me know if you are using your extension before the assignment is due. If your assignment is late for any other reason, and you are not using your extension, you will lose 2% per day, including weekends and holidays.

**Classroom Etiquette:**
You are expected to show respect and consideration towards your instructor and fellow classmates. Respect and consideration involves NOT talking while others are talking, actively listening, and NOT using any electronic devices (excluding lap-tops for note-taking) during class time. This means, cell-phones are turned off, NO text-messaging, NO internet browsing, and NO social networking. If you are caught using electronic devices in any of these ways, you may be asked to leave the classroom.

***PLEASE NOTE*** The use of any electronic devices or any type of behaviour that is distracting or disrespectful to others (i.e., chatting, texting, facebook, etc..) will be noted and will
detract from your participation grade. In other words, I will be keeping track of each incident that takes away from the others’ engagement in class and will evaluate the degree to which your participation grade will be penalized.

**Reading Schedule:** This schedule is subject to slight modifications.

### UNIT ONE: Literary Heroes

**Week 1: (January 7 & 9):** *Introduction and Course Orientation*  
Review syllabus; course expectations  
Discussion: What is a hero? Complete and discuss questionnaire.  
Characteristics of the Hero and the Heroic Journey

**Week 2: (January 14 & 16):** *Ancient Heroism*  
The Epic of Gilgamesh

**Week 3: (January 21 & 23):** *Greek Heroic Tragedy*  
Oedipus The King

**Week 4: (January 28 & 30):** *Medieval Heroism*  
Beowulf  
**Hero Analysis due January 30th**

### UNIT TWO: Superheroes and Supervillains

**Week 5 (February 4 & 6):**  
Batman: The Killing Joke  
Film Screening: The Dark Knight

**Week 6: (February 11 & 13):**  
Batman: The Dark Knight Returns  
Film Screening: The Dark Knight Rises

**Week 7: (February 17-21)**  
READING WEEK

**Week 8: (February 25 & 27):**  
Superman: Red Son

### UNIT THREE: Girl Power & Wonder Women: Feminism and Heroism

**Week 9: (March 4 & 6):**  
Wonder Women

**Week 10: (March 11 & 13)**
UNIT FOUR: Reading Race and Resistance in the Superhero Tradition

Week 12: (March 25 & 27)
Tarzan of the Apes
Term Essay Due March 27

Week 13: (April 1 & 3)
Marvel Masterworks: The Uncanny X-Men Volume 1
Course Conclusion & Review

UW POLICY REGARDING ILLNESS AND MISSED TESTS

The University of Waterloo Examination Regulations (www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf) state that:

- A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the “University of Waterloo Verification of Illness” form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from Health Services or at uwaterloo.ca/health-services/student-medical-clinic/services/verification-illness.
- If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor.
- The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may on religious grounds require alternative times to write tests and examinations.
- Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time.

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Federated University and Affiliated Colleges are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

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 Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under St. Jerome’s University Academic Discipline Policy and UW Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71.

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. In such a case, contact the St. Jerome’s University Grievance Officer.

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under St. Jerome’s University Academic Discipline Policy or Grievance Policy if a ground for an appeal can be established. In such a case, contact the St. Jerome’s University Appeals Officer.
**Academic Integrity website (Arts):** [http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html)

**Academic Integrity Office (UW):** [http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/](http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/)

**Note for students with disabilities:** The AccessAbility Services (AS) Office, located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, 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.