



# ST. JEROME'S UNIVERSITY

**St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo**  
**Department of English**  
**ENGL 108A**  
**The Superhero**  
**Fall 2018**  
**T,Th 2:30-3:50 SJ2 2002**

## **Instructor and T.A. Information**

Instructor: J. Andrew Deman  
Office: SH 2107  
Office Phone: x28234  
Office Hours: T,Th 1-2:20 (or by appointment)  
Email: jademan@uwaterloo.ca

## **Course Description**

An examination of hero figures, ranging broadly from ancient characters such as Gilgamesh to the modern comic book superhero. Literary as well as nonliterary materials (e.g., film, comics, games) will be considered. The objective of this course is to track our cultural fascination with superheroes throughout the past century and place it within a broader literary context of the hero figure in general. Why are we drawn to the superhero? What cultural values are reflected through the superhero? What does the superhero say about us and our society in contrast to earlier societies? How does the superhero compare to older mythologies?

## **Course Goals and Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- A. Situate the figure of the superhero within a broader literary culture.
- B. Understand the superhero as a product of specific cultural and historical forces.
- C. Produce critical analysis on the subject of the superhero.
- D. Understand and appreciate multimodal storytelling

## **Required Texts**

- "Understanding Comics" by Scott McCloud
- "Amazing X-men vol. 2: World War Wendigo" by Yost et al
- "Mockingbird vol. 1: I Can Explain" by Cain et al
- "Superman: Birthright" by Waid et al
- "The Maxx: Maximized vol. 1" by Sam Kieth
- "Watchmen" by Moore et al
- "Black Panther" by Ryan Coogler (Film)

\*Please see the "course readings issues list" on LEARN for additional information on getting these texts.

## Readings Available on LEARN

- The Epic of Gilgamesh

## Course Requirements and Assessment

Assessment	Date of Evaluation (if known)	Weighting
Reading Quizzes	Varied	15%
Character Summary	October 4, 11:59pm	10%
Issue Summary	October 25, 11:59pm	10%
Content Test	November 29, 3:50pm	30%
Final Essay	December 5, 11:59pm	35%
Total		100%

### Reading Quizzes

A series of straightforward reading quizzes designed to test your ability to keep up with our reading schedule and your retention of pivotal information from the texts. These will be conducted online throughout the term.

### Character Summary

This assignment will require students to compose a character synopsis sheet that outlines the symbolic and literary thematic attributes of a particular superhero

### Issue Summary

This assignment will require students to compose an issue summary sheet that presents a critical and historical reading of a single-issue comic.

### Content Test

Straightforward questions that will address your understanding of both the readings, and of various concepts and perspectives discussed in class.

### Final Essay

This paper will be the culmination of the student's work in the course. It will be a comparison of two or more classroom texts with regard to an issue of relevance to in-class discussions. All topics must be approved by me prior to writing. Students will receive a detailed description of this assignment along with pre-approved essay topics well in advance of the due date. Essay length will be 1500-2000 words.

## Course Outline / Class Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	READING
Sept 6	Introduction	None
Sept 11	The Superhero in Western Culture	None
Sept 13	The Epic Hero	Gilgamesh
Sept 18	Establishing an Archetype	Gilgamesh
Sept 20	The Superhero Paradigm	Superman
Sept 25	The Rhetoric of the Superhero Narrative	Superman
Sept 27	Symbolic Vocabulary of Superheroes	Superman; McCloud Ch 1-2

Oct 2	The Superhero Group Dynamic	X-men
Oct 4	Personified Nationalism	X-men; McCloud Ch 3
Oct 11	Race & Ethnicity in Comics	X-men
Oct 16	Allegorical Heroes	Watchmen
Oct 18	Superheroes and Politics	Watchmen; McCloud Ch 4
Oct 23	The Philosophies of Agency	Watchmen; McCloud Ch 5
Oct 25	The Antihero	Maxx
Oct 30	Psychology and the Superhero	Maxx
Nov 1	The Comics Underground	Maxx; McCloud Ch 6
Nov 6	Essay-Writing Workshop	None
Nov 8	Gender & Comics Part I	Mockingbird
Nov 13	Gender & Comics Part II	Mockingbird
Nov 15	Comics & Humour	Mockingbird; McCloud 7-8
Nov 20	The Superhero Film	Black Panther (Film)
Nov 22	Transmediation Part I	None
Nov 27	Transmediation Part II	None
Nov 29	Content Test	Like all of them

### Late Work

All work submitted late will be subject to a penalty of 10% off per day.

### 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.