



# ST. JEROME'S UNIVERSITY

**St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo**  
**Department of English**  
**ENGL 108A**  
**The Superhero**  
**Winter 2022**  
**MW 2:30-3:50 SJ2 2002**

## Instructor Information

Instructor: Jesse Hutchison

Office:

Office Hours: MW 1:00-2:00PM (see Office Hours section below for details)

Email: [j6hutchi@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:j6hutchi@uwaterloo.ca)

## Teaching Assistant Information

Teaching Assistant: Toben Racicot

Office Hours: email for a Zoom appointment

Email: [tsracicot@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:tsracicot@uwaterloo.ca)

## Course Description

Holy superhero analysis, Batman! One of the things that this course should demonstrate is that superheroes tend to be very popular in times of crisis. This is potentially one of the reasons why the superhero genre has re-emerged in the last twenty years or so as powerfully as it has but it is also why this course is a particularly relevant one at this very moment, in the time of a pandemic that is keeping us all isolated from one another. One might say that if there was ever a need for a superhero, it would be now. 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.

## Required Text

Course Kit

The Epic of Gilgamesh

### Readings Available on Comixology

Detective Comics (1937-2011) #27  
 Superman (1939-2011) #1  
 Superman (1939-2011) #22  
 Detective Comics (1937-2011) #60  
 All-Star Comics #8  
 Wonder Woman (1942-1986) #3  
 Wonder Woman (1942-1986) #179  
 Batman (1940-2011) #153  
 Batman: The Dark Knight Returns - 30th Anniversary Edition  
 All Star Superman #1  
 All-Star Batman and Robin, the Boy Wonder #2

### Texts Available on iTunes (only if we are online – do not purchase until close to when they are scheduled for class...unless you want to!)

Episode One: “Hi Diddle Riddle,” from Batman, Season 1  
 Episode Two: “Smack in the Middle,” from Batman, Season 1  
 Wonder Woman (2017)

### Course Requirements and Assessment

Assessment	Date of Evaluation	Weighting
12 Quizzes	See dates in Schedule	15%
First Essay (900-1200 words)	January 31	15%
Final Essay (1800-2000 words)	March 30	30%
Introduction Assignment (1500-1700 words)	April 13	20%
Contributions to LEARN Discussion Board		10%
Attendance		10%

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

There will be a quiz that is due to be completed no later than 2:30PM on the day that we either have a lecture or I upload a video lecture on the text (with the exception of the Batman TV show and the Wonder Woman movie). In the event that we are doing online learning after January 27th, I will upload a lecture video on the material rather than do a live lecture. The lectures will be uploaded after the 2:30PM deadline. For texts that are expanded over two lectures (Gilgamesh and The Dark Knight Returns), the quiz will be due at the beginning of the second lecture on the text (see the schedule below that outlines when the quizzes are due). 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%.

### **First Essay (15%)**

For this essay, you will be asked to write a 900-1200 word (not counting the Works Cited) argument-based analysis of The Epic of Gilgamesh. Some topics to consider may be the hero's journey (though as I will point out in the lecture, it will not be enough to simply demonstrate that the text follows 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 model of behaviour. These are just suggestions, and you may also choose your own topics. The essay should be argumentative and thesis-driven. Papers should be typed and double-spaced using 12 pt Times New Roman font. Use proper MLA citation methods. See Owl at Purdue for citation methods, but especially see their sample paper that I have linked to on LEARN for their formatting guidelines. Due January 31.

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

For this essay, you will be asked to write an 1800-2000 word (not counting the Works Cited) argument-driven 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. 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, how they reflect conventional conceptions of masculinity, how they construct the superhero as a figure of authority, how they construct the superhero as a model of behaviour, how they potentially challenge previous conceptions/depictions of superheroes, etc. 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. The essay should be argumentative and thesis-driven. Papers should be typed and double-spaced using 12 pt Times New Roman font. Use proper MLA citation methods. See Owl at Purdue for citation methods, but especially see their sample paper that I have linked to on LEARN for their formatting guidelines. Due March 30.

### **Introduction to a Book on Comic Books (20%)**

In lieu of a final examination, this final assessment due on LEARN in the exam period, will ask you to imagine a particular scenario: a company is publishing a collection of superhero stories that span from

the Golden Age of comics to today. You have been asked by the publisher to write a 1500-1700 word introduction for the collection in which you discuss the history of the superhero and use the course texts as your examples. You are asked to address at least ten of the course texts that we read from January 26th onward. Only one of these 10 texts can be one that you wrote about on your final essay. The texts may include the episodes that we watched from the Batman TV series (they count as one text) and the Wonder Woman movie. Superman (1939-2011) #1 will count as one text even though it contains four comics and the same rule will hold for Wonder Woman (1942-1986) #3, Batman (1940-2011) #153, and Wonder Woman (1942-1986) #179. In addition to those ten texts, you may also discuss Gilgamesh, Heracles and the other text you discussed in your final essay, but it's not required. Secondary sources are also not required. Use proper MLA citation methods. See Owl at Purdue but especially their sample paper that I have linked to on LEARN for their formatting guidelines. Due April 13.

### **Contributions to LEARN Discussion Board (10%)**

I have created a forum on LEARN which will contain weekly questions related to one of that week's readings. To find the forum, click the Connect tab and then click on Discussions. You will be asked to contribute to a minimum of eight of these discussion threads. Feel free to debate the topic with your classmates. Just remember to be kind, courteous, respectful and friendly even if disagreeing. I will be putting up a new thread every Monday, so if you are contributing to that week's thread, you will need to respond by the Sunday evening before the next thread is due to go up. Your contributions to a thread will only be marked if you contribute to the discussion the week it has been made available. Write a paragraph or two (paragraphs should be between 100-250 words) where you address the question. Just remember to be kind, courteous, respectful and friendly even if disagreeing. You will therefore be graded in terms of frequency of posts (you will need to respond to all available questions), level of insight (within reason for an online discussion), clarity, and the tone of your writing. I may hop into the discussion at times to build and guide discussions and clarify information. That being said, this is not the space to direct questions or comments to me as I will be available for that over email and office hours.

### **Attendance (10%)**

We will be beginning the term online and potentially moving in-class after January 27<sup>th</sup>. The first classes up to January 27<sup>th</sup> will be live online lectures through LEARN's Virtual Classroom. If we are still online after that, I will be posting pre-recorded videos on that day's reading/topic. In both cases, LEARN provides me with a record of who has attended the live stream lectures and who has watched the pre-recorded videos and for how long. In order to get marked for attendance for online learning, you will need to attend the live stream when it is live on Mondays and Wednesdays at 2:30-3:50 PM or, after January 27<sup>th</sup>, watch the pre-recorded video within 24 hours of it being uploaded. All videos will be uploaded as per the Monday/Wednesday schedule and will be uploaded at roughly 2:30PM. If we are in class, you will be marked in terms of your attendance, punctuality, and focus.

### **Alternate Arrangements for Online Learning**

We are beginning this term online, but we may return to class during the term. It is also possible that once we come back to class, we may have to return online. While online, we will stick to our Monday/Wednesday routine and keep to the schedule outlined below. Rather than meet in class, I will lecture live in the virtual classroom up until January 27<sup>th</sup>. Please keep in mind that these live streams will

be recorded and kept on our LEARN site in case you have any privacy concerns. Though I am happy to have you participate in a class discussion during the live stream, you do not have to share your webcam or your mic if this is something that makes you uncomfortable. There is also the possibility of using a pseudonym if you wish

If we are ever online after January 27<sup>th</sup>, I will upload a video on the topic that is scheduled that day. Please see the above discussion on how I will assess your attendance grade for the live stream and the videos. On March 2<sup>nd</sup> and March 28<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> we will be watching episodes of the 1966 Batman series and the 2017 Wonder Woman movie. If we are in class, I will screen the series and the film. If we are not, you will have to purchase the episodes and film on iTunes. If you purchase the episodes and rent the movie, this should not come to more than ten dollars. There will be no video uploaded on those particular days and no attendance grade will be counted. If you are self-isolating at any point that we are in class, I can provide you with videos on the text/topic that we are discussing that day.

### **Late Work**

Both essays and the final introduction assignment are to be handed in on LEARN by 11:59PM of the due date. Microsoft Word documents are preferred over PDF and Pages (the latter I am unable to open on my computer). Marks will be returned on Learn. Late papers will be subject to a late penalty of 2% per day. Assignments more than 20 days late (or 7 days in the case of the introduction assignment due during the final exam period) will not be accepted.

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.

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 connect with AccessAbility Services, who are still available by phone or online during this period 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**

If we are meeting in class, attendance will be mandatory unless you provide documentation that excuses you from class or unless Accessibility Services contacts me to provide alternate arrangements. If you are unable to attend due to COVID-like symptoms and required self-isolation, you will need to self-declare your illness by filling out the University of Waterloo Verification of Illness form: <https://uwaterloo.ca/quest/help/students/how-do-i/self-declare-my-illness>

For more details on attendance, see my description for the attendance grade above.

### **Office Hours**

My office hours for this term, both online and in-person, will be Monday and Wednesday 1:00-2:00PM. When we are on campus, you can feel free to drop by my office during that time. When we are online,

please email me to book an appointment during that time and I will send you a Zoom link.

### **Email**

I respond to my emails every week day until 4:30PM. 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. Remember though that if you send an email regarding an assignment the day that assignment is due, that I may not see it until the following morning. If you have not received a response after 24 hours, or roughly 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.

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Check [www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/) for more information.

**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](#). When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome's Advising Specialist, Student Affairs Office, who will provide further assistance.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. Check [www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/) for more information. 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 instructor, 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 offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties, check the [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

**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:** [AccessAbility Services](#), located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, 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 AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

**Mental Health Support:** The Faculty of Math encourages students to seek out mental health support if needed.

On-campus Resources:

- Campus Wellness <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-wellness/>

- Counselling Services: [counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca)/ 519-888-4567 ext 32655
- MATES: one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services: [mates@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:mates@uwaterloo.ca)
- Health Services: located across the creek from the Student Life Centre, 519-888-4096.

#### Off-campus Resources:

- Good2Talk (24/7): Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
- 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

#### Course Outline / Class Schedule

January 5: Introduction

January 10: Discussion: What does it mean to analyze the superhero?/What is a superhero?

January 12: *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

January 17: *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, **quiz due before 2:30PM**

January 19: Essay Workshop

January 24: "The Little Heracles," "The Nemean Lion," Theocritus (in course kit), **quiz due before 2:30PM**

January 26: *Superman* (1939-2011) #1 (located on Comixology), **quiz due before 2:30PM**

January 31: *Detective Comics* (1937-2011) #27 (original 1939 version only) (located on Comixology), **quiz due before 2:30PM**

**Essay 1 due before 11:59PM on January 31**

February 2: *Superman* (1939-2011) #22, *Detective Comics* (1937-2011) #60 (both located on Comixology), **quiz due before 2:30PM**

February 7: "Introducing Wonder Woman" from *All-Star Comics* #8 (located on Comixology), **quiz due before 2:30PM**

February 9: *Wonder Woman* (1942-1986) #3 (first three comics only) (located on Comixology), **quiz due before 2:30PM**

February 14: "The Lady and the Lion" (in course kit), **quiz due before 2:30PM**

February 16: Discussion of the Comics Code (no reading)

February 19-February 27: Reading Week

February 28: *Batman* (1940-2011) #153, *Wonder Woman* (1942-1986) #179 (both located on Comixology), **quiz due before 2:30PM**

March 2: Class viewing and discussion of "Hi Diddle Riddle," and "Smack in the Middle" (episodes 1 and 2) from *Batman*, season one (available on iTunes if we are online)

March 7: Continued discussion on "Hi Diddle Riddle" and "Smack in the Middle"

March 9: Workshop on Secondary Sources

March 14: "Must There Be a Superman?" (in course kit), **quiz due before 2:30PM**

March 16: *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* - 30th Anniversary Edition (located on Comixology)

March 21: *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* - 30th Anniversary Edition, **quiz due before 2:30PM**

March 23: *All-Star Batman and Robin, the Boy Wonder* #2, *All Star Superman* #1 (both located on Comixology), **quiz due before 2:30PM**

March 28: Class viewing of *Wonder Woman* (available on iTunes if we are online)

March 30: Class viewing of *Wonder Woman*

**Final Essay due before 11:59PM March 30**

April 4: Discussion of *Wonder Woman*, final questions

**Introduction Assignment due before 11:59 PM April 13****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 the bottom of page 1 and the top of page 2 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.)