

## ***HUMA 1301: Exploration of the Humanities*** **Fall 2015**

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### **Course Information**

HUMA 1301.010  
JO 4.102 TR 10:00 AM – 11:15 AM

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### **Professor/TA Contact Information**

Dr. Ingrao  
Office: JO 5.306  
Office Hours: T 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM,  
W 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM, and by appointment  
Office Phone: 883 - 6089  
Email: [jingrao@utdallas.edu](mailto:jingrao@utdallas.edu)

TA contact information for this course is as follows:

TBA  
Office: TBA  
Office Hours: TBA  
Email: TBA



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### **Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions**

This course requires no pre-requisite.

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### **Course Description**

The American superhero represents a new and engaging manifestation of humankind's long association of visual and written narration not only for means of entertainment, but also as a stage for philosophical consideration where superheroes appear as reflections of or reactions to social and cultural standards. Beginning with the influence of dime and pulp novels of the 1930s upon the formation of such iconic superheroes as Batman and Superman, the importance of superheroes will be given treatment in terms of a variety of media, as well as from the perspective of a variety of viewpoints, to more fully understand our relation to these figures as they represent a continuing phenomenon. Films, such as *The Dark Knight* and *Man of Steel* will be integral to answering such questions as what makes someone a hero, and what makes that hero "super," while other films, such as *X-Men: First Class*, will propose to address the superhero as a response to historical social injustices. Ultimately, we will also consider how though we might not possess superpowers, superheroes inspire us to be responsible consumers of and contributors to culture.

## **General Education Core Objectives**

1. Critical Thinking Skills: Students will be given the potential to engage in creative and/or innovative thinking, and/or inquiry, analysis, evaluation, synthesis of information, organizing concepts and constructing solutions.
  2. Communication Skills: Students will be given the potential to demonstrate effective written, oral, and visual communication.
  3. Social Responsibility: Students will be given the potential to demonstrate intercultural competency and civic knowledge by engaging effectively in local, regional, national, and global communities.
  4. Personal Responsibility: Students will be given the potential to demonstrate the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequence to ethical decision-making.
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## **Course Objectives**

Using the following assignments as assessments, this course seeks to offer students the potential to meet the following objectives:

1. Critical Thinking Skills: Analyze connections between a variety of texts from the humanities (for example: fictional, critical, visual, and cinematic) and draw informed conclusions from said connections. This objective will be assessed via the second exam.
  2. Communication Skills: Apply considered analysis and respond to works in the humanities as examples of human expression and aesthetic and ideological principles. This objective will be assessed via the course project.
  3. Social Responsibility: Analyze and critically evaluate humanistic works in the context of culture and society. This objective will be assessed via the first exam.
  4. Personal Responsibility: Compare and contrast the works with each other in terms of ethics and values. This objective will be assessed via the short essay.
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## **Required Textbooks and Materials**

Textbooks are available at the UTD Bookstore, Off Campus Books, Stanza Textbooks, and commercially. Please use only the following editions:

Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (Harper Perennial, ISBN: 9780060976255)  
Bradford Wright, *Comic Book Nation* (John Hopkins, ISBN: 9780801874505, or 0801874505)  
John Layman and Jason Fabok, *Batman: Detective Comics Vol. 4: The Wrath* (DC Comics, ISBN: 9781401249977)  
Mark Waid and Alex Ross, *Kingdom Come* (DC Comics, ISBN: 9781401220341)  
Mark Millar and Steve McNiven, *Civil War* (Marvel Worldwide, Inc., ISBN: 9780785121794)

Films, such as *The Dark Knight*, *X-Men: First Class*, and *Man of Steel* will be incorporated in the course; in addition, the course may consider short animated excerpts of Superman, and excerpts from such television shows as the 1960s *Batman* serial.

Much of the required reading for this class, such as *Action Comics* #1, Greg Garrett's "Modern Heroes," and Roberta L. Pearson's "I shall become a bat!," will be available either through eLearning or on e-reserve.

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### How to Access E-Reserve Materials

1. Go to the following URL:

<http://utdallas.docutek.com/eres/courseindex.aspx?page=instr>

2. Search by instructor's last name: "Ingrao."

3. Click on the link for "HUMA 1301."

4. Next, you will be asked for a password. The password is "superheroes." After you enter the password, click "Accept."

A list of articles placed on e-reserve should appear. Click an article's title for a PDF version. Please contact the instructor at [jingrao@utdallas.edu](mailto:jingrao@utdallas.edu) if you experience problems opening material placed on e-reserve.

To facilitate in-class discussion of material placed on e-reserve, students should please either print the material to bring to class, or bring a computer to enable them access to specific passages.

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### eLearning

eLearning offers students a repository for class announcements, links to such readings as *Action Comics* #1, tools to facilitate communication in completion of the course project, completed course projects, and learning module notes.

Concerning *Action Comics* #1, students should please either print the material to bring to class, or bring a computer to enable access. The link to *Action Comics* # 1 will be posted on the "Course Content" page.

Concerning learning modules, note that among other pedagogical methods—such as in-class discussion and group exercises—this course utilizes lecture. Students are, of course, encouraged to ask questions concerning lectures during class. Students may also contact the instructor and TA, and are urged to take advantage of office hours. Though neither the TA nor the instructor will re-teach material presented during a specific date in its entirety as was originally presented in class, specific questions concerning material presented in class are welcome in order to promote the potential for student success in the course.

Though learning module notes posted to eLearning are intended to help students review such material as names, dates, and key terms mentioned during a lecture, they will not mention all the specifics of content covered during a given lecture. Learning module notes should not be taken as a substitute for attending class.

Some learning modules will include, or focus upon, discussion questions. Students do not necessarily have to write answers for discussion questions, but should review these questions before class as they may provide a rubric for in-class discussion and/or the viewing of films and media excerpts. Discussion questions also possess great potential to provide the basis for either announced or unannounced quizzes.

**Material from eLearning will be utilized in the instructor's composition of the two semester exams. The instructor and TA expect that students will be able to provide answers on exams specific to material posted on eLearning.**

To access learning module notes and discussion questions:

1. Go to the following URL:

<https://elearning.utdallas.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>

2. Enter UTD NetID and password.

3. A list of all courses in which a student has enrolled should appear. Click on the course title.

4. Click "Learning Modules" at the left of the screen on the "Course Content" page.

5. Learning modules are dated chronologically.

Please contact the instructor at [jingrao@utdallas.edu](mailto:jingrao@utdallas.edu) concerning problems accessing materials placed on eLearning.

Note that a copy of the syllabus is also available through eLearning in the event a printed copy is misplaced. To access the syllabus, click on "Syllabus" at the left of the "Course Content" page.



### Daily Academic Calendar

Thematic unit	Date	Assignment to be completed by class meeting	Activity in class
Course introduction	August 25	"Modern Heroes" <b>(e-reserve: recommended reading)</b>	1. Distribute and discuss course syllabus and goals 2. Introduce and define "Humanities" 3. Introduce and define "Archetypes"
A (super) heroic history: Defining "comics" as <i>Art</i>	August 27	<i>Understanding Comics</i> , pages 2-23, and 138-161	Group exercise to identify types of interaction between words and pictures
"Up, up and away!": The birth of the comic book industry in the United States	Sept. 1	1. <i>Comic Book Nation</i> , pages 1-13, 30-36, and 45-55 2. "What Makes Superman So Darned American?" <b>(e-reserve: required reading)</b>	View selection from <i>Superheroes: A Never-Ending Battle</i>
<i>Action Comics</i> #1	Sept. 3	1. <i>Understanding Comics</i> , pages 94-137, and 185-192 2. "Superman" in <i>Action Comics</i> #1 <b>(eLearning: required reading)</b>	



Thematic unit	Date	Assignment to be completed by class meeting	Activity in class
Icons able to leap the gutter is a single bound	Sept. 8	1. <i>Understanding Comics</i> , pages 24-93 2. "Voiceless" <b><u>(e-reserve: required reading; listed as "excerpts from batman the dark knight")</u></b>	Group exercise to identify types of transitions in comics
Comic books will rot your brain: Success and controversy in post-war America	Sept. 10	<i>Comic Book Nation</i> , pages 59-85, 88-108, and 154-179	<b><u>First quiz</u></b>
Who's your superhero?	Sept. 15	1. "The Hero Defines the Genre, the Genre Defines the Hero" 2. "More Than Normal, But Believable" <b><u>(e-reserve: required readings)</u></b>	<b><u>Course project assigned</u></b>
Marvel rises and superheroes question the status quo in Vietnam-era America (Meanwhile, Batman dances the <a href="#">Batusi</a> )	Sept. 17	1. <i>Comic Book Nation</i> , pages 201-225, and 243-253	View selections from <i>Superheroes: A Never-Ending Battle</i>
The Angel of Darkness gives voice to the voiceless: Writing about ideas in comics	Sept. 22	"Angel of Darkness" <b><u>(e-reserve: required reading; listed as "excerpts from batman the dark knight")</u></b>	<b><u>Second quiz</u></b>
(Super) Social commentary	Sept. 24	Look over learning module notes related to the film before class	View selections from <i>X-Men: First Class</i>
	Sept. 29		1. View selections from <i>X-Men: First Class</i> 2. Group exercise and discussion of X-Men 3. <b><u>Course project checked</u></b>
Superheroes and fandom grow up	Oct. 1	<i>Comic Book Nation</i> , pages 254-293	First exam review
	Oct. 6	Prepare for first exam	<b><u>First exam</u></b>

Thematic unit	Date	Assignment to be completed by class meeting	Activity in class
"I shall become a bat!": Introduction to Batman	Oct. 8	1. Look over learning module notes related to the film before class 2. <i>Comic Book Nation</i> , pages 13-26 3. "Who is the Batman?" 4. "'I shall become a bat!'" 5. "Angry All Your Life: Batman" ( <b><u>e-reserve: required readings</u></b> )	View <i>The Dark Knight</i>
Batman: Crusader, hero, villain	Oct. 13	"Hollywood Sniffs Blood" ( <b><u>e-reserve: required reading</u></b> )	View <i>The Dark Knight</i>
Batman: Vigilante, hero, crusader	Oct. 15	<i>Batman: Detective Comics: The Wrath</i> , pages 7-32, 41-48, 59-75, and 79-86.  NOTE: Two shorter inter-related storylines. The Man-Bat storyline is <i>Detective Comics</i> "The 900." The Emperor Penguin storyline includes Mr. Combustible in "Birdwatching," <i>Detective Comics</i> "King for a Day," and "Empire of the Son."	View <i>The Dark Knight</i>
	Oct. 20	1. <i>Batman: Detective Comics: The Wrath</i> , pages 49-56, and 159-178  NOTE: The first half of the Wrath storyline that includes Gotham's finest in "Through a Blue Lens" and <i>Detective Comics</i> "Targeting the Shield."  2. "Vigilante Justice" 3. "'... Batman only works if the world really sucks'" ( <b><u>e-reserve: required readings</u></b> )	

Thematic unit	Date	Assignment to be completed by class meeting	Activity in class
Batman: Vigilante, hero, crusader	Oct. 22	<i>Batman: Detective Comics: The Wrath</i> , pages 189-208, and 219-240  NOTE: The second half of the Wrath storyline that includes <i>Detective Comics</i> “Bat and Mouse” and “State of Shock.”	
Batman unmasked: Perspectives on Batman	Oct. 27		1. Group exercise and discussion of Batman 2. Second exam review 3. <b><u>Course project checked</u></b>
	Oct. 29	Prepare for second exam	<b><u>Second exam</u></b>
“I shall become a (all-American) god!”: Introduction to Superman	Nov. 3	1. “The Myth of Superman” 2. “A Flag with a Human Face” <b><u>(e-reserve: required readings)</u></b>	<b><u>Short essay assigned</u></b>
Kansas native: Superman, immigration, colonization, and xenophobia	Nov. 5	Look over learning module notes related to the film before class	View <i>Man of Steel</i>
	Nov. 10		View <i>Man of Steel</i>
“Truth . . . Justice . . . and a New American Way”: Archtypes re-imagined	Nov. 12	1. <i>Kingdom Come</i> , Chapter One: “Strange Visitor,” and Chapter Two: “Truth and Justice” 2. “The Aging Avenger” <b><u>(e-reserve: required reading)</u></b>	
	Nov. 17	<i>Kingdom Come</i> , Chapter Three: “Up in the Sky,” and Chapter Four: “Never-Ending Battle”	<b><u>Course project checked</u></b>
“Look up in the sky! It’s a bird! It’s a plane! It’s . . . ?”: Perspectives on Superman	Nov. 19		1. Group exercise and discussion of Superman 2. <b><u>Short essay due</u></b>
	Nov. 24 – Nov. 26	<b><u>NO CLASS; FALL BREAK</u></b>	



Thematic unit	Date	Assignment to be completed by class meeting	Activity in class
Sanctioning superheroes: Ethics, the law, and ideals in Marvel's <i>Civil War</i>	Dec. 1	<i>Civil War</i> , Chapters One, Two, and Three	
	Dec. 3	<i>Civil War</i> , Chapters Four, Five, and Six	
Challenging genre	Dec. 8	1. <i>Civil War</i> , Chapter Seven 2. "Girl Reporter" 3. "My Interview with the Avenger" <b><u>(e-reserve: required readings)</u></b>	<b><u>Course project due</u></b>
	Dec. 17	Review completed course projects for discussion	<b><u>Class begins at 11:00 AM</u></b>

### Grading Policy

Semester grades will be calculated in accordance with the following percentages:

First exam	25%
Second exam	25%
Short essay	25%
Course project	25%

Assignment letter grades correspond to the following numerical GPA values in calculating a student's semester grade:

A+	4.00	C+	2.33	F	0.00
A	4.00	C	2.00		
A-	3.67	C-	1.67		
B+	3.33	D+	1.33		
B	3.00	D	1.00		
B-	2.67	D-	0.67		

For each of the four major assignments (first exam, second exam, short essay, and course project), the numerical GPA value of the letter grade is multiplied by 25% (0.25). The four resulting numerical values are then added to determine the semester grade. Any applicable extra credit will be added to the lowest assignment grade of the semester **before** the numerical GPA value of the letter grade is multiplied by 25%. Quiz results will determine borderline grades.

**Two quizzes have been announced on the "Daily Academic Calendar" prior to the first exam; these quizzes seek to provide the potential for preparedness for the first exam. Additional quizzes following the first exam may be either announced or unannounced at the instructor's discretion.**

Quizzes will be graded on a check + (exceeds expectations), check (meets expectations), check - (does not meet expectations) basis, and will be instrumental in the determination of borderline grades at the end of the semester. Said determination will be made by weighing the cumulative total of earned check pluses and checks against the cumulative total of check minuses and missed quizzes.

At the end of the semester a student with a borderline grade and a cumulative total of more earned check pluses and checks than a cumulative total of check minuses and missed quizzes will be rounded up. For example, a student finishes the semester with a 3.41. This falls between a grade of A- at 3.67 and a grade of B+ at 3.33. If the student has a cumulative total of more earned check pluses and checks, the grade will be A-. If the student, in contrast, has a cumulative total of more earned check minuses and missed quizzes, the grade will be B+.

**Quizzes are applied to the semester grade only in those cases that a semester grade is borderline. A student who earns a B at 3.00 exactly will neither be rounded up to a B+ nor down to a B- in light of the cumulative result of quizzes.**

**Even in this scenario, quizzes remain important in their potential to refine a student's ability to harness class concepts and respond using specific examples in an analytical manner. The ability to analyze class concepts, use specific examples, and connect these to ideas will be important on both semester exams, the short essay, and the course project; in this way, quizzes offer the potential to help students prepare for the exams, essay, and course project.**

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## **Exams, Short Essay, and Course Project**

In-class exams will not be cumulative. Both exams will consist of a series of short answer questions that require specific responses to questions concerning course content, as well as to more analytical questions. To this end, both exams will consist of two sections. Both sections are to be completed during the same class period: a longer section for questions concerning content, and a shorter section for analytical questions. In light of the semester's topic, students may expect to answer questions that utilize images on both sections of an exam.

**Students should not bring notes or books for use during exams. Students are expected to take responsibility for bringing blue books to all examination periods. Blue books are available through the UTD Bookstore, Off Campus Books, the SGA, and other sources such as vending machines.**

In addition to the exams and quizzes (see "Grading Policy" for more information concerning quizzes), students will be assigned a short essay of approximately three to four pages. This essay takes the place of a third exam, and offers students the potential to compare and contrast works in a non-timed environment. Building upon the style of the shorter analytical questions answered in class, the essay will be graded in a similar manner but calls for sustained analysis in comparing two sources studied in class, and one source from the course project. Though students will not do

research for the short essay beyond that done to obtain the source to be also used in the course project, sources will require documentation. Students should further note that the short essay will ask for an argument based in academic analysis rather than a statement of personal or religious belief. A detailed assignment sheet for the essay will be distributed in class and posted to eLearning on November 3rd.

The course project gives students the potential to work with classmates to design an original superhero. Each group should address their superhero in three areas: 1) The hero's origin; 2) The hero's powers and costume; and 3) The hero's mission and how said mission expresses a particular cultural understanding of the importance of the hero.

**Each student will need to use five sources related to a "superhero"; these sources should not have been discussed in class.** Projects will be developed as informational wikis on eLearning. Each wiki should either include an original brief comic strip featuring the introduction of a supervillain to challenge the group's hero, or conclude with a link to the same. A detailed assignment sheet for the course project will be distributed and discussed in class on September 15th, and posted to eLearning. Students will also have time to introduce themselves to their groups and begin work on this date.

**Students will be graded as a group, and all group members are expected to contribute at each stage of the process of completing the project. Note that progress of the project will be checked three times after the course project is assigned; these dates are on the "Daily Academic Calendar." Work due on the date that a project is checked is due by 10:00 AM.**

**Though students will be graded as a group, the failure of any individual group member to contribute at any stage of completing the project will result in a penalty to that student's project grade of one letter grade for each instance that the student fails to participate. For example, a student has not completed work on the project by the deadline at 10:00 AM on September 29th, but the same student does complete work when the project is checked on all subsequent dates. Though the group receives a grade of A on the project, the student will receive a grade of B.**

Final course projects are due December 8th, and no changes to wikis will be considered after 9:30 AM the morning of the 8th. Students should review the findings of their own and other groups for the final exam period. Instead of a final exam, this time will be devoted to discussion of students' findings.

**In this case only, a student's grade will be posted on eLearning. This grade will be posted between the project due date of December 8th and December 17th.**

**Be sure to check dates for exams, the short essay, and the course project in the "Daily Academic Calendar."**

This course will be conducted according to strict codes of academic honesty. All cases of cheating will be fully investigated. Penalties for cheating may include failing an exam, failing the course or suspension and expulsion from the University. Students are expected to know the University's policies and procedures on such matters, as well as those governing student services, conduct, and obligations.

## Comet Creed

This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same: “As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”

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## Attendance

To facilitate the accuracy of the attendance record, this course will observe assigned seating. The instructor and TA expect that students will be present, seated, and ready to participate in class at the beginning of each scheduled class day. **Remember that all exams will ask short answer questions that require specific answers to specific material presented during class time and on eLearning. Moreover, the short essay will require thoughtful response to course content and discussion.**

**Students who arrive to class after the TA takes attendance will be counted absent for the day. Students who disrupt the classroom will be counted as absent for the day of the disruption. Students who leave before the end of class will also be counted as absent.**

Students who miss class must provide documentation of one of the following legitimate excuses to earn an excused absence:

- 1) Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their instructor in writing within the first two weeks of the semester (by September 8th) and should discuss with him, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence.
- 2) Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity will be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. Said participation must be documented with a note from a University official involved in the event. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed assignment for making up the work.
- 3) A documented illness. Documentation should clearly state that the student was instructed by a physician not to attend class on a specific date(s) for his or her health and/or for the health of others. The date(s) missed should be specifically stated in the note, as should physician contact information. Non-documented illness will not constitute a valid excuse for missing class.

Students must first present documentation of a legitimate excuse to both the TA (copy) and instructor (original) before a make-up assignment can be scheduled.

Students will have a maximum of one week (seven days; this does include weekends) from the original assignment date to complete the make-up assignment. Students should be aware that a make-up exam will differ from the in-class exam in content. Though the format of the exam will be the same, students seeking to make up the first exam, for example, should expect to be asked short answer questions that differ from those presented on the in-class exam.

Though missed quizzes can be made up with a valid excuse, students should remember that any individual quiz grade is less important than an overall pattern of participation at a level that exceeds (check +) or meets (check) course expectations.

In the majority of cases, the course TA will proctor make-up exams and quizzes.

**At the conclusion of the semester, students who have three or fewer unexcused absences will receive ten points of extra credit towards their lowest semester grade: first exam, second exam, short essay, or course project.**

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### Computers in the Classroom

Students are welcome to use computers during class to take notes, to access course materials on e-reserve, or to check notes, discussion questions, or additional course materials posted by the instructor to eLearning.

**Any student discovered to be using a computer for any purpose not related to taking notes or accessing course materials will be banned from using a computer in class for the remainder of the semester. This ban may be imposed by either the instructor or TA.**

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### Withdrawal from Class

The administration of this institution has set deadlines for withdrawal of any college-level courses. These dates and times are published in that semester's course catalog. Administration procedures must be followed. It is the student's responsibility to handle withdrawal requirements from any class. In other words, the professor cannot drop or withdraw any student. Students must do the proper paperwork to ensure that they will not receive a final grade of F in a course if they choose not to attend the class once they are enrolled.

**Note: September 9th is the last day to drop this course without incurring a W.**

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### Additional Important Policies

It is the student's responsibility to review additional University policies concerning services available through the Office of AccessAbility, avoiding plagiarism, resources to aid in the potential for success, incomplete grades, student conduct and discipline, academic integrity, technical support, email use, copyright notice, grievance procedures and religious holy days at <http://provost.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies/>

*These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor. Please contact us with any questions about this course via office hours, appointment, email, or Bat-Signal.*

