

## ***HUMA 1301: Exploration of the Humanities*** **Spring 2017**

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### **Course Information**

HUMA 1301.003  
JO 4.102 MWF 10:00 AM – 10:50 AM

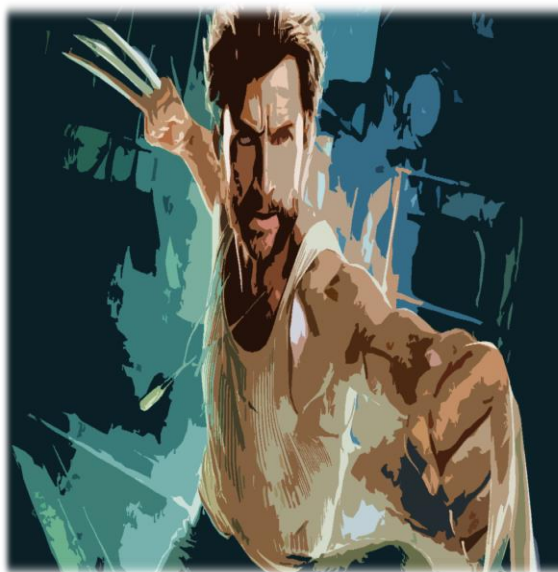
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### **Professor/TA Contact Information**

Dr. Ingrao  
Office: JO 4.636  
Office Hours: T 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM,  
W 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM, and by appointment  
Office Phone: 883 - 6089  
Email: [jingrao@utdallas.edu](mailto:jingrao@utdallas.edu)

TA contact information for this course is as follows:

Kristen Kelso  
Office: JO 5.410 D  
Office Hours: M 11:15 AM – 12:30 PM, and  
by appointment  
Email: [kxk165030@utdallas.edu](mailto:kxk165030@utdallas.edu)



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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**

For more than a decade, superheroes have soared, swung, and batgrappling-hooked their way across the big screen to such immense success that cinematic universes have begun to supplant their print sources. With Hugh Jackman allegedly ready to hang up his claws next year and both the DC and Marvel cinematic universes poised for further expansion, now is an excellent time to examine superhero films not only as a means of entertainment but also as cultural narratives. We will also examine our relationship to these narratives as both consumers and contributors. In focusing specifically upon such films as Christopher Nolan's Batman trilogy, *X-Men United*, *Man of Steel*, and *The Avengers*, among others, we will consider the importance of superheroes to more fully understand our relation to these figures.

## 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: critical and cinematic) and draw informed conclusions from said connections. This objective will be assessed via the first 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 short essay.
  3. Social Responsibility: Analyze and critically evaluate humanistic works in the context of culture and society. This objective will be assessed the second 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 third exam.
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## Required Textbooks and Materials

A textbook is available at the UTD Bookstore, Off Campus Books, and commercially. Please use only the following edition for more potential for success in the course:

Liam Burke, *The Comic Book Film Adaptation* (UP of Mississippi, ISBN: 9781496809704)

Additional readings from such authors as Stan Lee and Dennis O'Neil, among others, will be provided via e-reserve. **Please note that e-reserve is separate from eLearning.**

This course will focus upon films. Several of these, such as *Superman II*, *The Dark Knight Rises*, *The Wolverine*, and *The Avengers*, we will screen in class. Other films, such as *The Dark Knight*, *Man of Steel*, and *X-Men: The Last Stand*, among a few others, students will need to watch outside of class. **Students will be responsible for accessing these films on their own, for example, by renting them.**

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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 "superfilm." 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, media, the short essay assignment, and learning module notes.

Concerning learning modules, note that among other pedagogical methods--such as in-class discussion--this course utilizes lecture. Students are, of course, happily 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 have more potential for success in the course by reviewing these questions before class as they provide a rubric for in-class discussion.

**Material from eLearning will be utilized in the instructor's composition of the three 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	Week	Date	Assignment to be completed by class meeting	Activity in class
Course Introduction	1	Jan. 9		1.Distribute and discuss course syllabus and goals 2. Introduce and define "Humanities"
What is a Superhero?		Jan. 11		Complete survey
		Jan. 13	Peter Coogan’s “The Hero Defines the Genre, the Genre Defines the Hero,” Stan Lee’s “More than Normal, But Believable,” and Dennis O’Neil’s “Superheroes and Power” ( <b>e-reserve: required readings</b> )	Comparison of definitions of what constitutes a superhero
	2	Jan. 16	<b><u>NO CLASS; DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY</u></b>	
What is a Superhero Film?		Jan. 18	Liam Burke’s <i>The Comic Book Film Adaptation</i> , pages 23-83	1. Discuss Burke, pages 23-83 2. <b><u>First quiz</u></b>
		Jan. 20	Liam Burke’s <i>The Comic Book Film Adaptation</i> , pages 84-128	Discuss Burke, pages 84-128
	3	Jan. 23		Continue discussion of Burke, pages 84-128
“You will believe a man can fly”: Superman and Optimism		Jan. 25	Umberto Eco’s “The Myth of Superman” and Gary Engle’s “What Makes Superman So Darned American?” ( <b>e-reserve: required readings</b> )	1. Discuss Eco and Engle to introduce Superman 2. <b><u>Second quiz</u></b>
		Jan. 27	Look over learning module notes related to the film before class	View <i>Superman II</i>
	4	Jan. 30		View <i>Superman II</i>
“I’m as American as you can get”: Superman and Xenophobia		Feb. 1		View and discuss <i>Superman II</i>
		Feb. 3	1. Patrick Eagan’s “A Flag with a Human Face” ( <b>e-reserve: required reading</b> ) 2. Look over learning module notes related to the film and <b><u>view Man of Steel</u></b>	1. Discuss Eagan and <i>Man of Steel</i> 2. First exam review
	5	Feb. 6	Prepare for first exam	<b><u>First exam</u></b>
A Darker Knight I: Fandom and Fidelity		Feb. 8	Liam Burke’s <i>The Comic Book Film Adaptation</i> , pages 129-168	Discuss Burke, pages 129-168, and survey results from January 11th

Thematic unit	Week	Date	Assignment to be completed by class meeting	Activity in class
A Darker Knight I: Fandom and Fidelity	5	Feb. 10		1. Continue discussion of Burke, pages 129-168 2. <b><u>Third quiz</u></b>
	6	Feb. 13	Paul Levitz's "Man, Myth, and Cultural Icon" ( <b><u>e-reserve: required reading</u></b> )	Discuss Levitz
A Darker Knight II: Batman Among the Binaries		Feb. 15		Introduction to <i>Batman Begins</i>
		Feb. 17	1. Scott McCloud's <i>Understanding Comics</i> , pages 24-36, and William Uricchio's and Roberta Pearson's "I'm Not Fooled by that Cheap Disguise" ( <b><u>e-reserve: required readings</u></b> ) 2. Look over learning module notes related to the film and <b><u>view <i>Batman Begins</i></u></b>	Discuss McCloud, pages 24-36, Uricchio and Pearson, and <i>Batman Begins</i>
	7	Feb. 20		Continue discussion of McCloud, pages 24-36, Uricchio and Pearson, and <i>Batman Begins</i>
		Feb. 22	Glen Weldon's <i>The Caped Crusade</i> , pages 245-252 ( <b><u>e-reserve: required reading</u></b> )	1. Discuss Weldon, pages 245-252 2. <b><u>Fourth quiz</u></b>
"The Joke's on You, Batman": The Joker, Carnival, and Deconstruction		Feb. 24	1. Will Brooker's <i>Hunting the Dark Knight</i> , pages 134-141 ( <b><u>e-reserve: required reading</u></b> ) 2. Look over learning module notes related to the film and <b><u>view <i>The Dark Knight</i></u></b>	Discuss Brooker, pages 134-141, and <i>The Dark Knight</i>
	8	Feb. 27	Will Brooker's <i>Hunting the Dark Knight</i> , pages 178-184 and 186-199, and Jacques Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy," pages 65-94 ( <b><u>e-reserve: required readings</u></b> )	Discuss Brooker, pages 178-184 and 186-199; Derrida, pages 65-94; and <i>The Dark Knight</i>
		March 1		1. Continue discussion of Brooker, pages 178-184 and 186-199; Derrida, pages 65-94; and <i>The Dark Knight</i>
		March 3		1. Discuss <i>The Dark Knight</i> 2. Second exam review
	9	March 6	Prepare for second exam	<b><u>Second exam</u></b>

Thematic unit	Week	Date	Assignment to be completed by class meeting	Activity in class
A Darker Knight III: Batman and the War on Terror	9	March 8	John Ip's "The Dark Knight's War on Terrorism" and Andrew Klavan's "What Bush and Batman Have in Common" ( <b><u>e-reserve: required readings</u></b> )	Discuss Ip, Klavan, and <i>The Dark Knight</i>
		March 10	Will Brooker's <i>Hunting the Dark Knight</i> , pages 199-210 ( <b><u>e-reserve: required reading</u></b> )	Discuss Brooker, pages 199-210, and <i>The Dark Knight</i>
	10	March 13-17	<b><u>NO CLASS; SPRING BREAK</u></b>	
Out of the Shadows: Batman and Optimism	11	March 20	Look over learning module notes related to the film before class	1. View <i>The Dark Knight Rises</i> 2. <b><u>Short essay assigned</u></b>
		March 22	Paul Zehr's "The Aging Avenger" ( <b><u>e-reserve: required reading</u></b> )	1. View <i>The Dark Knight Rises</i> and discuss Zehr 2. <b><u>Fifth quiz</u></b>
		March 24		View <i>The Dark Knight Rises</i>
	12	March 27	Will Brooker's <i>Hunting the Dark Knight</i> , pages 211-219, and Greg Garrett's "Vigilante Justice" ( <b><u>e-reserve: required readings</u></b> )	View <i>The Dark Knight Rises</i> , and discuss Brooker, pages 211-219, and Garrett
The Marvel Way		March 29	1. Liam Burke's <i>The Comic Book Film Adaptation</i> , pages 228-262 2. Andreas Rauscher's "The Marvel Universe on Screen" ( <b><u>e-reserve: required reading</u></b> ) 3. Look over learning module notes related to the film and <b><u>view X-Men United</u></b>	1. Discuss Burke, pages 228-262, Rauscher, and <i>X-Men United</i> 2. <b><u>Short essay rough drafts due</u></b>
		March 31		Continue discussion of Burke, pages 228-262, Rauscher, and <i>X-Men United</i>
X-Men and Gender: A Woman in an X-Man's World	13	April 3	1. Betty Kaklamanidou's "The Mythos of Patriarchy in the <i>X-Men</i> Films" ( <b><u>e-reserve: required reading</u></b> ) 2. Look over learning module notes related to the film and <b><u>view X-Men: The Last Stand</u></b>	Discuss Kaklamanidou and <i>X-Men: The Last Stand</i>

Thematic unit	Week	Date	Assignment to be completed by class meeting	Activity in class
X-Men and Gender: A Woman in an X-Man's World	13	April 5	Look over learning module notes related to the film before class	1. View <i>The Wolverine</i> 2. <b><u>Sixth quiz</u></b>
		April 7		View <i>The Wolverine</i>
	14	April 10		1. View <i>The Wolverine</i> 2. <b><u>Short essay rough drafts returned</u></b>
		April 12		Discussion of <i>The Wolverine</i>
		April 14	<b><u>NO CLASS; MEET WITH INSTRUCTOR AND TA TO DISCUSS SHORT ESSAY REVISIONS</u></b>	
Bringing It All Together: Avengers Assemble!	15	April 17	Look over learning module notes related to the film before class	View <i>The Avengers</i>
		April 19		1. View <i>The Avengers</i> 2. <b><u>Short essay final drafts due</u></b>
		April 21		View <i>The Avengers</i>
	16	April 24		1. Discuss <i>The Avengers</i> 2. Third exam review
		April 26		Presentation of extra credit
		April 28	Prepare for third exam	<b><u>Third exam</u></b>

### Grading Policy

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

Quizzes	20%
First exam	15%
Second exam	20%
Short essay	20%
Third exam	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		



Instructions for calculating the semester grade are as follows: for each of the five major assignments (quizzes, first exam, second exam, third exam, and short essay) the numerical GPA value of the letter grade is multiplied by the percentage designated for the assignment.

For example, if a student receives a grade of A on the first exam, the student would multiply 4.00 by 0.15.

The five resulting numerical values are then added to determine the semester grade. Any and all applicable extra credit will be added to the lowest exam grade of the semester, or the short essay grade if this grade is lower than any of the three exam grades, **before** the numerical GPA value of the letter grade is multiplied.

For example, a student receives a C on the second exam. This grade is lower than the other two exam grades, as well as the short essay grade. Before the second exam grade is multiplied by 0.20, the extra credit would potentially raise the second exam grade to a B.

**Individual assignment (quizzes, each of the three exams, and the short essay) grades will be posted to eLearning.**

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### **Exams, Quizzes, and Short Essay**

In-class exams will not be cumulative. All three will consist of a series of multiple-choice questions. **Students should not bring notes or books for use during exams.**

**Students can expect at least six total quizzes during the semester. Quizzes are announced on the "Daily Academic Calendar," though additional "pop" quizzes are possible in classes where students demonstrate that films are not being viewed or readings left uncompleted.**

Quizzes will be graded on a check + (exceeds expectations), check (meets expectations), check - (does not meet expectations) basis. At the end of the semester, the remaining combined total of check plus and check quiz grades will be counted and applied to a letter grade as follows:

- Five or more combined check plus and check grades = A
- Four combined check plus and check grades = B
- Three combined check plus and check grades = C
- Two combined check plus and check grades = D
- One or no combined check plus and check grades = F

**With the exception of a grade of F, plus credit will be applied to the semester quiz grade in those cases that a student has earned more check pluses than checks.**

**Scantrons will be provided to students for both exams and quizzes.**

In addition to the exams and quizzes, students will be assigned a short essay of approximately three to four pages. This essay affords students the potential to develop ideas and discuss examples in a non-timed environment. Students will need to select a superhero film **not assigned in class**, and create an argument with the goal of analyzing how a reading of superheroes in the work is significant to us as engaged students of the humanities, and active agents of culture. A

detailed assignment sheet for the essay will be distributed in class and posted to eLearning on March 20th.

Though students should focus upon **one source not assigned in class** for the short essay, students should also plan to include **at least two critical sources assigned in class** to provide context for their analysis.

**All sources in the short essay should be cited both in-text and on a Works Cited page according to eighth edition MLA format. Students who elect to use additional sources from outside of class must cite these sources as well.**

**Moreover, students will submit a rough and final draft of the short essay. Students who fail to turn in a final draft of the essay will receive a grade of F; please note that is will also be true for students who fail to submit a rough draft.**

**Be sure to check dates for quizzes, exams, and the short essay 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.

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## Attendance

To facilitate the accuracy of the attendance record, the 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 questions that require specific answers to specific material presented during class time and on eLearning. Moreover, the course project will require thoughtful response to course concepts 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:

- Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their instructor in advance of the absence and should discuss with him acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence.
- 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. Students who must travel in association with a University athletic function should plan on completing any work prior to travel.

- 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 quiz or exam has the potential to differ from the in-class assignment in content. Though format will be the same, students seeking to make up the first exam, for example, might be asked different questions than those presented on the in-class exam.

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

**In the event of a borderline grade, for example, a grade that falls between an A- (3.67) and a B+ (3.33), students who have three or fewer unexcused absences for the semester will be rounded up. Students who have more than three unexcused absences, or who have been present but not participated in class by talking, sleeping, texting, surfing the Internet, and so on, will be rounded down.**

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## Extra Credit

Two extra credit opportunities are possible for this semester:

1. **Five points of extra credit is available to be applied towards the lowest semester grade earned on one of the following assignments: one of the three exams, or the short essay.**

Students seeking extra credit may elect to work singly or in a group to produce a two-minute trailer for their own superhero film. Alternately, students may elect to work in a group to perform an approximately five-minute scene from their own superhero film for the class.

Trailers or performances should reference class concepts, especially as will be discussed in relation to Burke's *The Comic Book Film Adaptation*. For example, trailers might make some reference to paratexts, and trailers or performances might consider the demands of fandom.

**Students planning to take advantage of the extra credit should have their completed trailer or a short "script" to the instructor and TA no later than April 5th. Print copies of scripts are preferred; trailers may be submitted via email to both the instructor and the TA.**

Depending upon the volume of submissions, select trailers and performances will be viewed by the class and discussed on April 26th.

**2. Five points of extra credit is available for attending a lecture sponsored by The Center for Values in Medicine, Science, and Technology, and writing a two-page response concerning what the student learned.**

Lectures planned by the Center for Values for the current semester comprise an exciting and diverse series focused upon the common theme of science fiction, a genre that often overlaps our study of superheroes. Information concerning specific speakers, dates, and times is available at <http://www.utdallas.edu/c4v/>

**Check the dates of lectures with care. Extra credit responses should be printed, stapled, double-spaced, and submitted at the beginning of the next class period following the lecture to be considered for credit.**

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### **Computers in the Classroom**

Students are welcome to use computers during class either to take notes, or check notes or discussion questions 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 also applies to students whose computer use is distracting other students, and 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: January 25th is the last day to drop this course without incurring a W.**

### The Eye of Agamotto's Tips for Super Success

- Students who attend class regularly tend to perform better than students who do not.
- Students who read and are familiar with the syllabus tend to perform better.
- Students who sit at the front of the class tend to perform well above students who sit in at the back.
- Students who come to each class prepared and avoid packing up early tend to perform better.
- Students who pay attention and participate in class rather than sleeping, texting, surfing the Internet, and so on, tend to perform better.
- Students who review previous assignments to prepare for future assignments tend to show improvement during the semester. For example, identifying areas of improvement on the first exam in preparation for the second exam.
- In line with the previous tip, students who regularly visit office hours to discuss material with the instructor, TA, or both, tend to perform better than students who do not. This might be especially important regarding the short essay. **Note that we will not have class on April 14th to allow students additional time to meet with the instructor and TA before the final draft of the short essay is due.**
- Students who keep in mind the “big picture” for the semester rather than allowing a single undesirable grade to defeat them tend to perform well.
- Consider trading contact information with a few other students in class in case you miss material; as stated above, students are happily encouraged to ask questions about course materials, but neither the instructor nor TA will re-teach a missed class. Watching films to be viewed outside of class and studying together for exams are also potentially effective strategies, and might even be fun.
- Though the use of laptops is allowed in this course to facilitate access to media and note-taking, they can be distracting. Students using laptops should stay focused on class lecture and discussion and resist the urge to multi-task. Concomitantly, students who silence and put away their smartphones tend to perform better than students who do not. Dr. Brewer offers the following website concerning the potentially damaging effects of attempting to multi-task in class:

<http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/multitasking-confronting-students-with-the-facts/>



**Additional Important Policies**

It is the student's responsibility to review additional University policies concerning services available through the Office of AccessAbility, sharing confidential information, 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://go.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.*

