

HUMA 1301: Exploration of the Humanities **Fall 2018**

Course Information

HUMA 1301.006
JO 4.102 MWF 1:00 PM – 1:50 PM

Professor/TA Contact Information

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

This course requires no pre-requisite.

Course Description

For more than two decades, superheroes have soared, swung, leapt, and batgrappling-hooked their way across the big screen to such immense success that cinematic universes have now largely supplanted their print sources. In light of the tenth anniversary of Marvel's MCU, and in the wake of the undeniable success of such films as *Wonder Woman*, *Black Panther*, and *The Avengers: Infinity War*, all of which have cemented the prominence of the superhero in the cultural mainstream, now is an excellent time to examine superhero films not only as a means of entertainment but also as cultural narratives. We will examine our relationship to these narratives as both consumers and contributors. In focusing specifically upon *Superman II*, *Iron Man*, *The Dark Knight*, *The Wolverine*, *Man of Steel*, *Black Panther*, *Wonder Woman*, and *The Avengers*, we will consider the importance of cinematic superheroes to more fully understand our relation to these epic figures of contemporary myth.

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 third 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 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 second 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 film. The majority of these, such as *Superman II*, *Wonder Woman*, *Black Panther*, and *The Avengers*, we will screen in class. Other films, specifically *Man of Steel*, *Iron Man*, and *The Wolverine*, students will need to watch outside of class. **Students will be responsible for accessing these three films on their own at their own expense.**

How to Access E-Reserve Materials

Note that e-reserve and eLearning are not the same; this is a separate class resource from eLearning.

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.

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 "wakanda." 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 if you experience problems opening material placed on e-reserve.

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 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	Aug. 20		1. Distribute and discuss course syllabus and goals 2. Introduce and define "Humanities"
What is a Superhero?		Aug. 22	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" (e-reserve: required readings)	Comparison of definitions of what constitutes a superhero
What is a Superhero Film?		Aug. 24	Liam Burke's <i>The Comic Book Film Adaptation</i> , pages 23-83	Discuss Burke, pages 23-83
"You will believe a man can fly": Superman and Optimism	2	Aug. 27	Liam Burke's <i>The Comic Book Film Adaptation</i> , pages 84-128	1. Discuss Burke, pages 84-128 2. First quiz
		Aug. 29		Continue discussion of Burke, pages 84-128
	Aug. 31	Umberto Eco's "The Myth of Superman" and Gary Engle's "What Makes Superman So Darned American?" (e-reserve: required readings)	Discuss Eco and Engle to introduce Superman	
"I'm as American as you can get": Superman and Xenophobia	3	Sept. 3	NO CLASS; LABOR DAY	
		Sept. 5	Look over learning module notes related to the film before class	View <i>Superman II</i>
		Sept. 7		View <i>Superman II</i>
	4	Sept. 10		View <i>Superman II</i>
		Sept. 12		1. Discuss <i>Superman II</i> 2. Second quiz
Sept. 14	1. Patrick Egan's "A Flag with a Human Face" (e-reserve: required reading) 2. Look over learning module notes related to the film and view <i>Man of Steel</i>	Discuss Egan and <i>Man of Steel</i>		
Fandom and Fidelity	5	Sept. 17	Liam Burke's <i>The Comic Book Film Adaptation</i> , pages 129-168	Discuss Burke, pages 129-168
		Sept. 19		1. Continue discussion of Burke, pages 129-168 2. First exam review
		Sept. 21	Prepare for first exam	First exam

Thematic unit	Week	Date	Assignment to be completed by class meeting	Activity in class
A Darker Knight I: "Will the real Batman please stand up?"	6	Sept. 24	William Uricchio's and Roberta Pearson's "I'm Not Fooled by that Cheap Disguise" (e-reserve: required reading)	Discuss Uricchio and Pearson to introduce Batman
A Darker Knight II: "Either you die a hero, or you live long enough to see yourself become the villain"		Sept. 26	Look over learning module notes related to the film before class	View <i>The Dark Knight</i>
		Sept. 28		View <i>The Dark Knight</i>
"The Joke's on You, Batman": The Joker, Carnival, and Deconstruction	7	Oct. 1		View <i>The Dark Knight</i>
		Oct. 3	Greg Garrett's "Vigilante Justice" (e-reserve: required reading)	1. View <i>The Dark Knight</i> 2. Discuss Garrett and <i>The Dark Knight</i> 3. Third quiz
		Oct. 5	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 (e-reserve: required readings)	Discuss Brooker, pages 178-184 and 186-199; Derrida, pages 65-94; and <i>The Dark Knight</i>
A Darker Knight III: Batman and the War on Terror	8	Oct. 8		Continue discussion of Brooker, pages 178-184 and 186-199; Derrida, pages 65-94; and <i>The Dark Knight</i>
		Oct. 10	John Ip's "The Dark Knight's War on Terrorism" and Andrew Klavan's "What Bush and Batman Have in Common" (e-reserve: required readings)	1. Discuss Ip, Klavan, and <i>The Dark Knight</i> 2. Fourth quiz
		Oct. 12	1. Liam Burke's <i>The Comic Book Film Adaptation</i> , pages 228-262 2. Andreas Rauscher's "The Marvel Universe on Screen" (e-reserve: required reading)	Discuss Burke, pages 228-262, and Rauscher
Movies the Marvel Way: Iron Man	9	Oct. 15	Look over learning module notes related to the film and view <i>Iron Man</i>	1. Continue discussion of Burke, pages 228-262, and Rauscher with <i>Iron Man</i> 2. Second exam review
		Oct. 17	Prepare for second exam	Second exam
		Oct. 19		1. Short essay assigned 2. Begin work on short essay

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	10	Oct. 22	1. Betty Kaklamanidou's "The Mythos of Patriarchy in the <i>X-Men</i> Films" (<u>e-reserve: required reading</u>) 2. Look over learning module notes related to the film and <u>view <i>The Wolverine</i></u>	Discuss Kaklamanidou and <i>The Wolverine</i>
		Oct. 24		Introduction to Wonder Woman
Wonder Woman and Gender: The Compelling Truth of Women's Empowerment	11	Oct. 26	Look over learning module notes related to the film before class, and review notes from discussion of <i>The Wolverine</i>	View <i>Wonder Woman</i>
		Oct. 29		1. View <i>Wonder Woman</i> 2. <u>Short essay rough draft due</u>
		Oct. 31		View <i>Wonder Woman</i>
		Nov. 2	Nathan Miczo's "Wonder Woman: The Journey of a Female Superhero" and Katie Snyder's "Patty Jenkins' Wonder Woman: 'A Bridge to Greater Understanding'" (<u>e-reserve: required readings</u>)	Discuss Miczo, Snyder, and <i>Wonder Woman</i>
Wakanda Forever: The Black Panther and Afrofuturism	12	Nov. 5	Carvell Wallace's "Why 'Black Panther' is a Defining Moment for Black America" (<u>e-reserve: required reading</u>)	Discuss Wallace to introduce the Black Panther
		Nov. 7	1. Look over learning module notes related to the film before class 2. Angela Watercutter's "Behind the Scenes of 'Black Panther's' Afrofuturism" (<u>e-reserve: recommended reading</u>)	1. View <i>Black Panther</i> 2. <u>Fifth quiz</u>
		Nov. 9		1. View <i>Black Panther</i> 2. <u>Short essay rough drafts returned</u>
	13	Nov. 12	<u>NO CLASS: MEET WITH INSTRUCTOR AND TA TO DISCUSS SHORT ESSAY REVISIONS</u>	
		Nov. 14		View <i>Black Panther</i>

Thematic unit	Week	Date	Assignment to be completed by class meeting	Activity in class
“African-American” and the “Brutal History” In-Between: Black Panther, Afrofuturism, and the Diaspora	13	Nov. 16	Christopher Lebron’s “‘Black Panther’ is Not the Movie We Deserve” and Jelani Cobb’s “‘Black Panther’ and the Invention of ‘Africa’” (<u>e-reserve: required readings</u>)	1. Discuss LeBron, Cobb, and <i>Black Panther</i> 2. <u>Extra credit due</u>
	14	Nov. 19–23	<u>NO CLASS: FALL BREAK</u>	
Bringing It All Together: “ <i>Avengers Assemble!</i> ”	15	Nov. 26	Look over learning module notes related to the film before class	View <i>The Avengers</i>
		Nov. 28		1. View <i>The Avengers</i> 2. <u>Short essay final drafts due</u>
		Nov. 30		View <i>The Avengers</i>
	16	Dec. 3		1. Discuss <i>The Avengers</i> 2. Third exam review
		Dec. 5		1. <u>Course evaluations</u> 2. <u>Presentation of extra credit</u>
		Dec. 7	Prepare for third exam	<u>Third exam</u>

Grading Policy

Semester grades will be calculated in accordance with the total of number of points a student has the potential to earn during the semester:

Quizzes	40 points total
Short Essay	60 points
First Exam	100 points
Second Exam	100 points
Third Exam	100 points

Semester letter grades correspond to the total number of points that may potentially be earned during the semester as follows:

A+	390 +	points	C+	233 – 266	points	F	0 – 66	points
A	378 - 389	points	C	200 - 232	points			
A-	367 – 377	points	C-	167 - 199	points			
B+	333 – 366	points	D+	133 - 166	points			
B	300 – 332	points	D	100 - 132	points			
B-	267 – 299	points	D-	67 – 99	points			

Assignments cannot be made up except in the three instances discussed below in the “Attendance” section of this syllabus (note that the majority of these instances require documentation). Nevertheless, students should be aware that several instances to earn additional points in lieu of missed assignments do exist. Please see the section of the syllabus entitled “Extra Credit” for details.

Points earned on individual assignments (quizzes, the exams, and the short essay) will be posted to eLearning as we progress through the semester to help students keep track of how many points they have accumulated.

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 five total quizzes during the semester. Quizzes are announced on the "Daily Academic Calendar," though additional “pop” quizzes are possible. Quizzes may be given at the beginning, middle, or end of a class.

Students should bring nine Scantron sheets to class on August 24th. Please bring 100 O/5 C ALPH 2 SD Scantrons. From the total Scantron sheets collected from the class, students will be provided Scantrons for both exams and quizzes.

In addition to the exams and quizzes, students will be assigned a short essay of approximately four to five pages. Students will need to **select a superhero film not assigned in class** and create an argument concerning how the film comments upon contemporary social events such as immigration, responses to terrorism, critique of government policy, the empowerment of groups traditionally marginalized due to gender, race, and sexual orientation, and so on. A detailed assignment sheet for the essay will be distributed in class and discussed on October 19th, and has already been posted to eLearning. Students are encouraged to look ahead at the assignment.

Students will need to incorporate five sources not used in class in writing the short essay, though additional sources from class may be used. Of the five sources, only two may come from a general search of the Internet. All other sources should be “refereed” sources such as books, articles from academic journals, and so on.

If you encounter difficulty finding refereed sources about a particular film, then consider selecting a different film, or remember that you are creating an argument about the film in the context of a social issue. Since you will not want to write about the issue generally, research specific events upon which the film comments. For example, we will consider Nolan’s *The Dark Knight* as it comments upon the response of the Bush administration to the events of 9/11; in addition to research on the film, you could conduct research upon specific policies. As further example, instead of arguing generally how *Black Panther* speaks to African-American empowerment, consider how the film resonates specifically with events related to the Black Lives Matter movement. Taking such an approach gives more potential for more successful and less frustrating research. If you need help, please contact the instructor and TA. Remember that reference librarians are an invaluable resource for you.

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 zero out of sixty possible points for the short essay assignment as a whole; please note that is also 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.

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 and quizzes will ask questions that require specific answers to specific material presented during class time and on eLearning. Moreover, the short writing assignment 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.

- 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.

Only the three scenarios stated above constitute situations in which an absence will be excused and a make-up assignment offered. Documentation *must* be presented in the case of a University activity or illness. Documentation should be provided 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.

Students who miss a class for a reason other than a religious holiday, and who cannot provide documentation, should keep in mind that the course is designed to allow some points to be recovered. Nevertheless, this will not help in cases of chronic absence. Students should seek the help of the instructor and TA before absences reach this point.

Stark's Heads-Up 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 November 12th 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/>



Students have the potential to earn a total of fifty points of extra credit this semester in two ways:

- Thirty points of extra credit is available for students who produce a two-minute trailer for their own superhero film. Alternately, students may produce a poster advertisement for their own superhero film. Either of these two choices may be done individually or as part of a group.

Students may elect to work in a group to perform an approximately five-minute scene from their own superhero film for the class.

In all of the above cases, the superhero may be either an original creation, or a superhero **who we have not discussed in class** during the semester.

Trailers, posters, and 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, poster, or a short “script” to the instructor and TA no later than November 16th. Print copies of scripts are preferred; trailers and posters 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 December 5th.

- Students who have three or fewer unexcused absences at the conclusion of the semester, and who have participated in class throughout the semester, will earn twenty points of extra credit.

Computers in the Classroom

Students are welcome to use computers during class to access e-reserve readings, access media currently under discussion in class, 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.

Course Evaluations

Course evaluations are essential to the maintenance and furthering of successful and engaging learning environments at UT Dallas. For example, evaluations may influence primary texts used in a course. Previous evaluations of this course led this semester to the inclusion of a discussion of *Iron Man*, as well as to a more equitable adoption of films from the MCU and DCEU. **It is therefore of extreme importance to the instructor that students be present on December 5th to participate in the completion of course evaluations.** We will take fifteen minutes in class to complete evaluations, and the instructor and TA will leave the room during this time. Evaluations may be completed using either a computer or phone.

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 5th is the last day to drop this course without incurring a W.

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.

