

ENG 1131: Writing Through Media

The Antihero in Popular Culture

Section 1788, Class #12890

Instructor Name: Erika Rothberg

Course meeting times & locations: Monday, Wednesday, Friday | Period 6 (12:50 PM - 1:40 PM), WEIL 408A

Screening times: Wednesday | Period 9 - 11 (4:05 PM - 7:05 PM)

Office Location and Hours: Mondays 1:50-3:50pm, TUR 4363

Course website: Canvas

Instructor Email: erikarothberg@ufl.edu

Course Description:

This course will trace the evolution of the antihero in literature, comics, and film, with particular attention to the superhero genre. We will begin with discussions around the nature of heroes, villains, and antiheroes. Initial focus will center upon Hamlet, perhaps one of the earliest antiheroes, for which we will read the *No Fear Shakespeare* graphic novel adaptation and watch the modern film adaptation, *Hamlet* (2000). We will chart the ways in which cultural moments shape how the world defines good and evil, using *Watchmen* to illustrate the changing nature of what it means to be a hero or villain. Students will also engage with texts like *Batman: The Long Halloween* (graphic novel), *Logan* (film), *Hellboy Vol. 1: Seed of Destruction* (graphic novel), and episodes of *Breaking Bad* (TV) as we seek to understand why we either condemn or praise actions of protagonists and consider what these reactions mean as they relate to the culture in which we live.

Throughout this course, students are asked to consider (and re-consider) notions of good and evil, and the gray area in between. We will seek to understand the notion that most people don't fit cleanly within "good" or "evil" boxes, and instead, consider the messiness surrounding human behavior. While this course does have a media component included, experience producing or reading comics, films, podcasts, etc. is not required.

General Education Objectives:

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) *or* Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

General Education Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Required Texts:

Comics:

- No Fear Shakespeare *Hamlet* Graphic Novel (2020) by Sparknotes and Neil Babra
- *Star Wars: Visions: Ronin* (2021) by Emma Mieko Candon (*This is a traditional novel—the only traditional novel we'll read)
- *Wolverine by Claremont & Miller* (1981-2) by Chris Claremont and Frank Miller
- *Watchmen* (1987) by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons
- *Spawn: Origins* (2009) by Todd McFarlane
- *Killmonger: By Any Means* (2019) by Bryan Edward Hill and Juan Ferreyra
- *Batman: The Long Halloween* (1992) by Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale
- *Hellboy Vol. 1: Seed of Destruction*, by Mike Mignola

You may use digital or printed versions of any texts, though *Wolverine* is much cheaper digitally. Many of these are available digitally free via Hoopla. We'll chat about accessing these on day one.

Films/TV Episodes (to be shown in screenings):

- *Hamlet* (2000) Dir: Michael Almereyda
- *Carrie* (1976) Dir. Brian De Palma
- *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope* (1977) Dir. George Lucas
- *Yojimbo* (1961) Dir. Akira Kurosawa
- *Star Wars: Visions* Episode: "The Duel" (2021)
- *Logan* (2018) Dir. James Mangold
- *Watchmen* (2019), episodes 1 + 2 ("It's Summer and We're Running Out of Ice" + "Martial Feats of Comanche Horsemanship")
- *Spawn* (1997) Dir. Mark A.Z. Dippé
- *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) Dir. Jonathan Demme
- *Black Panther* (2018) Dir. Ryan Coogler
- *The Dark Knight* (2008) Dir. Christopher Nolan
- *Hellboy* (2004) Dir. Guillermo Del Toro
- **Breaking Bad* (Season 1, Episodes 1-7)
- **Birds of Prey* (2020) Dir. Cathy Yan
- *Us* (2019) Dir. Jordan Peele

**Breaking Bad* episodes 5-7 and *Birds of Prey* will need to be accessed independently outside of screening times; I am happy to help if you have trouble accessing these.

Readings noted on the syllabus that are not listed here will be posted on Canvas.

Assignments (see below for grading scale):

The assignments in this course will be:

- Four entries to our course blog (300-500 words, or 100 words plus a comic/short video media contribution) (5% each, 20% total)
- Two 2-3 page responses papers (15% each, 30% total)
- A final project consisting of a 3-5 page paper accompanying a media component: a comic or short film which deals with the concept of antiheroism and morality. (30%)
- Participation (20%)

The course total will be equivalent to 6,000 words. Rubrics will be provided for each assignment.

COURSE PROJECTS/ASSIGNMENTS

1. Participation and In-Class Discussion (daily)

Students are expected to read/view the assigned texts before class. Consistent participation in class discussions and demonstrated knowledge of the assigned readings will also contribute to this portion of the final grade. This course thrives on class discussion, so please be prepared to share your thoughts with the class every period (be it in small groups or full-class discussions). Your thoughts make this class worth taking—please share them with us!

2. Brief responses (Four)

Four times over the course of the semester students are required to write a brief (300-500 word) response to the day's text(s). These responses must be uploaded to our course blog BEFORE class the day on which they are due (so: by 11:59pm Sunday for a Monday class, 11:59pm Tuesday for Wednesday's class, and 11:59pm Thursday for Friday's class). These responses should be practice for your longer-form analysis papers. This post should comment on a topic, theme, or element of the text; this post should enrich our understanding of the text in some way. You can also make connections to historical moments or events that shape the text or the text's notions of anti/heroism. Ideally, you will present this analysis during class time. The goal is to help each other learn more about these texts, and think deeply and critically as we engage with them. You should be spacing your four posts throughout the semester so that you can comment on a variety of texts and continuously engage with the course themes; as such, you will have points taken off if three or four of your four posts are all in the last two weeks of class.

3. Response papers (Two) 2-3 pages each

This assignment is an open-ended argumentation paper. You may select any text that we read and perform a longer, extended analysis that examines a theme, topic, or component of the text (similar to the course blogs, but on a deeper, larger scale). These will be due at the start of class on the class period after we wrap the text you choose. Ex: If you are writing about *Watchmen*, your response would be due by 12:50pm on Wednesday, February 23rd, as we finish our *Watchmen* discussions on Monday, February 21st. (You may turn them in sooner, but that is the deadline. Feel free to email me if you need date clarification about a particular text or need an extra class period.)

4. *Final paper (One): 3-5 pages + media component (comic, short film, podcast episode, etc.)*

This assignment will be two components: first, a 3-5 page paper accompanied by a media component, such as a comic, short film, podcast episode, or something similar. You will be asked to make an overall argument about heroism, antiheroism, and morality. You may base this on one or more texts we have looked at together. If you want to include a text or texts of your own choosing, consult with me for approval. The media component will be graded on theme and content rather than artistic or technical ability (i.e. don't stress if you want to do a comic but don't consider yourself an artist!)

Course Policies:

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance:* Your grade will be lowered course grade after **three** 50-minute absences + automatic failure if you miss **2 weeks** of class (failure *at* the sixth 50-minute absence). Please stay in touch with me if circumstances arise that necessitate time away (ex. student athlete commitments).
3. *Tardiness:* Latecomers receive partial absences (with three tardy arrivals equaling one absence), and must see me after class so I know you attended.
4. *Classroom behavior:* This class will cover some difficult subject matter, as we will be discussing ethics, morals, and the nature of good and evil. As such, we may disagree with each other at times. Disagreements are welcome in this course, but when we challenge each other, you are absolutely expected to be polite, open-minded, and generous in listening to one another. Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and bigotry in any format or fashion will not be tolerated.
5. *UF's policy on Sexual Harassment:* The University of Florida is committed to providing a safe educational, working, and residential environment that is free from sexual harassment or misconduct directed towards any and all members of the community:
<https://titleix.ufl.edu/about/title-ix-rights/>
6. *Paper Format & Submission:* You must turn in your paper digitally on Canvas the day it is due. (Tardiness will still be counted as a partial absence on dates when assignments are due, so keep this in mind as you turn in your work.) Physically printed papers will not be collected.
7. *Late Papers/Assignments:* I do not accept late papers. If you need an extension, you **MUST** contact me at least 24 hours prior to the deadline to make arrangements with me. Extensions requested day-of will not be approved.
8. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities.* Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
9. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism.* UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: 'On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.'" The Honor Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.>

UF's definition of **plagiarism**, from the current UF Student Honor Code:

A Student must not represent as the Student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- a. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.

- b. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
 - c. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
 - d. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.>
10. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>), which will provide appropriate documentation to give your instructor early in the semester.
 11. *Students who are in distress* or who are in need of counseling or urgent help: please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to you. UF's Counseling and Wellness Center offers additional support: 352-392-1575, or contact them online: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>
 12. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
 13. *Grade Appeals*. In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Please contact Ms. Blount at cblount@ufl.edu Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
 14. *Course Evaluations*. Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages requesting that you do this online: <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>
 15. *Policy on environmental sustainability*. Whenever possible, I will use paper-sparing electronic media to distribute our course materials. Consider purchasing electronic editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts. If you do not elect to keep your print books, consider sharing them with others after the semester ends. (For example, you could donate them to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) annual book sale.)

GRADING SCALE:

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|----|------|--------|----|------|-------|
| A | 4.0 | 93-100 | C | 2.0 | 73-76 |
| A- | 3.67 | 90-92 | C- | 1.67 | 70-72 |
| B+ | 3.33 | 87-89 | D+ | 1.33 | 67-69 |
| B | 3.0 | 83-86 | D | 1.0 | 63-66 |
| B- | 2.67 | 80-82 | D- | 0.67 | 60-62 |
| C+ | 2.33 | 77-79 | E | 0.00 | 0-59 |

A rubric will be provided for each assessment signifying what constitutes an A, B, C, D, and F level paper.

Note: A grade of C- is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, or College Basic distribution credit. For further information on UF's Grading Policy, see:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
<http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>

Schedule of Classes

*This is subject to change based on course needs, so pay attention to in-class announcements and emails to stay apprised of any changes. Readings/viewings are due on the day they are listed. All in-person screenings are optional; if you have access to the materials and would prefer to view them on your own, you are not required to attend (though you are required to view the materials). These are listed with a gray shadow.

Unit 1: Origin Story of the Anti-Hero

Week 1:

Wednesday, January 5th: Class introduction; syllabus review

Screening, Wednesday January 5: No screening for week 1!

Friday, January 7th: Introductory discussion on heroes, villains, and antiheroes

Week 2:

Monday, January 10th: No Fear Shakespeare *Hamlet*, Acts 1 & 2 (graphic novel)

Wednesday, January 12th: No Fear Shakespeare *Hamlet*, Acts 3 & 4 (graphic novel)

Screening, Wednesday, January 12th: Hamlet (2000) Dir: Michael Almereyda

Friday, January 14th: *Hamlet (2000)* + Hamlet wrap-up

Unit 2: 1960s and 1970s Upheaval

Week 3:

Monday, January 17th: No class—university holiday: Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Wednesday, January 19th: **Article TK: Will be posted to Canvas soon**

Screening, Wednesday, January 19th: Carrie (1976) Dir. Brian De Palma

Friday, January 21st: *Carrie*

Week 4:

Monday, January 24th: “We Found the Witch, May We Burn Her?” by Vicki Madden (via Canvas)

Wednesday, January 26th: *Star Wars: Visions: Ronin* (first third)

Screening, Wednesday, January 26th: Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope (1977) Dir. George Lucas

Friday, January 28th: Star Wars discussion (can incorporate other films too!)—continue reading *Ronin*

Week 5:

Monday, January 31st: *Star Wars: Visions: Ronin* (second third)

Wednesday February 2nd: *Star Wars: Visions: Ronin* (last third)

Screening, Wednesday, February 2nd: Yojimbo (1961) Dir. Akira Kurosawa, and Star Wars: Visions Episode: “The Duel” (2021)

Friday, February 4th: *Yojimbo* and “The Duel”

Unit 3: 1980s and 1990s Anxieties

Week 6:

Monday, February 7th: *Wolverine by Claremont & Miller*, first half

Wednesday, February 9th: *Wolverine by Claremont & Miller*, second half

Screening, Wednesday, February 9th: Logan (2018) Dir. James Mangold

Friday, February 11th: *Logan* and Wolverine (as a character) discussion

Week 7:

Monday, February 14th: *Watchmen*, Chapters 1-4

Wednesday, February 16th: *Watchmen*, Chapters 5-8

Screening, Wednesday, February 16th: *Watchmen* (2019), episodes 1 + 2 ("It's Summer and We're Running Out of Ice" + "Martial Feats of Comanche Horsemanship")

Friday, February 18th: *Watchmen*, Chapters 9-12 + discuss *Watchmen* episodes

Week 8:

Monday, February 21st: *Watchmen* wrap-up discussion

Wednesday, February 23rd: *Spawn: Origins* (1-3)

Screening, Wednesday, February 23rd: *Spawn* (1997) Dir. Mark A.Z. Dippé

Friday, February 25th: *Spawn: Origins* (4-6)

Week 9:

Monday, February 28th: *Spawn* film & graphic novel discussion

Wednesday, March 2nd: "The Matter With Mind," by Karen B. Mann (on Canvas)

Screening, Wednesday, March 2nd: *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) Dir. Jonathan Demme

Friday, March 4th: *The Silence of the Lambs*

Week 10:

Monday-Friday March 7th-March 11th: No classes—university holiday: spring break

Unit 4: 2000s and beyond: the Modern Anti(Hero)

Week 11:

Monday, March 14th: *Killmonger: By Any Means* (first half)

Wednesday, March 16th: *Killmonger: By Any Means* (second half)

Screening, Wednesday, March 16th: *Black Panther* (2018) Dir. Ryan Coogler

Friday, March 18th: *Black Panther* and "'Hi Auntie': A Paradox of Hip Hop Socio-Political Resistance in Killmonger," by Daniel White Hodge

Week 12:

Monday, March 21st: *Batman: The Long Halloween*, Ch. 1-5

Wednesday, March 23rd: *Batman: The Long Halloween*, Ch. 6-9

Screening, Wednesday, March 23rd: *The Dark Knight* (2008) Dir. Christopher Nolan

Friday, March 25th: *Batman: The Long Halloween*, Ch. 10-13

Week 13:

Monday, March 28th: *The Dark Knight*

Wednesday, March 30th: *Hellboy*, Ch. 1-2

Screening, Wednesday, March 30th: *Hellboy* (2004) Dir. Guillermo Del Toro

Friday, April 1st: *Hellboy*, Ch. 3-4 + film discussion

Week 14:

Monday, April 4th: No class: individual conferences to discuss final projects (sign-ups week prior)

Wednesday, April 6th: "Walter White(ness) Lashes Out" by Paul Elliott Johnson

Screening, Wednesday, April 6th: *Breaking Bad* (Episodes 1-4)

Friday, April 8th: *Breaking Bad* (Episodes 1-4); watch *Breaking Bad* Episodes 4-7 for homework

Week 15:

Monday, April 11th: *Breaking Bad* (Episodes 4-7); watch *Birds of Prey* for homework

Wednesday, April 13th: *Birds of Prey* (2020) Dir. Cathy Yan
Screening, Wednesday, April 13th: *Us* (2019) Dir. Jordan Peele
Friday, April 15th: *Us*

Week 16:

Monday, April 18th: Revisiting: what is the antihero?

Wednesday, April 20th: Course wrap-up

Screening, Wednesday, April 20th: No screening for last day of classes

Final paper due: Wednesday, April 27th at 1:00 pm (the time of our final exam)