The Politics of the Batman
Class Sessions: MTWRF 9:30-10:45 Screenings: TR 2:00-4:45 Location: CSE E211A

Instructor: Mrs. Mel Loucks   Office Hours: MT 11:00-12:00
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Since his first appearance in 1939, Batman has been synonymous with vigilante justice. But the villains he has confronted have not been limited to the cast of fictional, caricatured madmen normally associated with the Batman franchise. Rather, the character has taken on cultural and political "villains" plaguing American society, with each new iteration of Batman corresponding to the fears and crises of its historical moment. This course will examine a variety of media including cinema, television, radio, video games, comics, Web media, and fan art in order to unmask these abstract "villains" and situate them within a broad cultural discourse. Students will develop and employ strategies for reading, analyzing, and interpreting both image and text within these forms in order to explore the production of meaning in various contexts. Required compositions will include narrative and images, in both conventional and digital formats.

This course places significant emphasis on analysis, research, synthesis, and rhetorical approach. You will be expected to conduct close readings of each text, participate in weekly online discussions, lead class discussions, present research findings, and compose a research paper, a media review, and a digital media project. You will also be expected to submit multiple drafts of your work and participate in workshopping and peer review exercises.

This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities. For more information, see https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-educationrequirement.aspx.

This course can provide 6000 words toward fulfillment of the UF requirement for writing. For more information, see https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/gordon.aspx.

This is a General Education course providing student learning outcomes listed in the Undergraduate Catalog. For more information, see http://catalog.ufl.edU/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-educationrequirement.aspx#learning.

Required Texts
- Miller, Frank and Haus Janson. *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns.*
- Moore, Alan and Brian Bolland. *Batman: The Killing Joke.*
- Morrison, Grant and Tony Daniel. *Batman R.I.P.*
- Stariin, Jim and Marv Wolfman. *Batman: A Death in the Family.*

Other Texts (provided electronically)
- Brooker, Will. *Batman Unmasked: Analyzing a Cultural Icon.* Excerpts.
- Burton, Tim, dir.. *Batman.*
- Dozier, William, prod. *Batman.*
- Finger, Bill and Bob Kane. *Detective Comics #27* and *Detective Comics #35.*
- Greene, Joe and Bob Kane. *Detective Comics #69.*
- Hill, Sefton, dir. *Batman: Arkham Asylum* and *Batman: Arkham City.* Excerpts.
- Hillyer, Lambert, dir. *Batman.* Excerpts.
- Nolan, Christopher, dir. *Batman Begins.*
- Timm, Bmce and Eric Radomski, prods. *Batman: The Animated Series.* Excerpts.
- Wertham, Fredric. *Seduction of the Innocent.* Excerpts.
- Various fan- and franchise-developed web media

COURSE SCHEDULE

May 13
Lecture: Syllabus & Intro

May 14
Detective Comics #27
Screening: Hillyer

May 15
Detective Comics #35

May 16
Detective Comics #69
Groups: Context Workshop
Discussion Post

May 17
Lecture & Discussion: "Who is the Bat-Man?"

May 20
Wertham
Begin Media Review

May 21
Wertham Continued
Screening: Dozier
Continue Media Review

May 22
Moore
Continue Media Review

May 23
Stariin (part 1)
Screening: Burton
Discussion Post
Complete Media Review

May 24
Due: Media Review
Stariin (part 2)

May 27
No Class: Memorial Day

May 28
Miller (part 1)

May 29
Miller (part 2)

May 30
Morrison (part 1)
Screening: Nolan
Discussion Post

May 31
Morrison (part 2)
Begin Research Project

June 3
Lecture & Discussion: "Why so serious?"
Continue Research Project

June 4
Interactive Batman
Screening: Hill
Continue Research Project

June 5
Batman on the Web
Continue Research Project

June 6
Due: Research Project
Screening: Presentations
Discussion Post

June 7
Presentations Continued

June 10
Brooker

June 11
Fan Art
Fan Art Project

June 12
Fan vs. Franchise
Discussion Post
Franchise Art Project

June 13
Screening & Discussion: Franchise Art

June 14
Lecture & Discussion: "Who is Batman?"
Digital Project Work

June 17
Digital Project Workshop
Digital Project Work

June 18
Digital Project Workshop
Digital Project Work

June 19
Digital Project Presentations

June 20
Digital Project Presentations
Screening: Digital Projects

June 21
Wrap-Up

Participation
You are expected to be an active participant in our class discussions. This means contributing to conversations in meaningful ways, voicing thoughtful opinions, asking relevant questions, offering insights, and listening to others respectfully.

Online Discussion Posts
Each week, you will be expected to participate in an online discussion in which you will pose and respond to questions provoked by our texts. I will also offer questions to be considered in these discussions. Your posts should vary from personal reflections to (minor) philosophical deliberations. They are to be carefully-crafted, succinct, well-written approaches to what you have read or viewed. In many ways, your task is to prove yourself a careful reader of the texts and an engaged participant in the direction our course takes. You must post at least once, no later than 11:59pm each Thursday, but I encourage you to do so more often.

Media Review
You will complete a review of three Batman texts of your choice. You may use any traditional print, digital, fan-created, or franchise-related texts, provided they are not already included on our course syllabus. Each text should be addressed with a summary, a critical analysis, and a description of how it conforms to or defies the overarching political, cultural, or social constructs we observe in assigned texts. I will provide additional details for this assignment as it approaches.

Research Presentation
To help incorporate diverse approaches, each student will research and find an article pertaining to Batman and investigate a particular political, cultural, or social issue it raises. You will compose a written analysis of the article (in conversation with texts from our course) and lead a 20-minute presentation and discussion about the research article, book chapter, or other scholarly source. You should provide the class with (either) a link to the source or a PDF of the article, including bibliographic information and talking points you would like your colleagues to think about, on the class eLearning site. Articles and discussion points must be posted the day before presentations begin. You will be responsible for not only conveying important information from your research, but also leading the class in a discussion about your article. You are free to use any means available for the discussion, including visual aids and/or technological components.

Digital Media Project
Students will write and produce a project that imagines a new version of Batman: one that identifies a contemporary political, cultural, or social "villain" and attempts to bring the villain to justice. The project should take a digital form (film, video game, app, web comic, etc.), but must be accompanied by a written analysis of the problem at hand, the rebooted character, and his (or her!) contextual value.

GRADING RUBRIC

Evaluation of written work will focus primarily on organization, thoughtfulness, and clarity. Specifically, I will grade based on the following: a clear and focused thesis/main argument; a well supported and logical argument; a clear expression of ideas; an engagement with the course texts and themes; and a respectful engagement with oppositional arguments.

An "A" paper states the author's topic clearly and demonstrates a thorough familiarity with the sources. The topic must be an arguable one. The paper is a thoughtful, careful overview of the topic. An "A" paper elaborates on a range of scholarship with relevant examples. The paper is well organized and each paragraph has a clear topic sentence. The sentence structure is direct, active, and concise, with appropriate word choice. The tone and diction are formal. The paper uses effective transitions and contains few—if any—grammar or

punctuation errors; the piece will have no obvious proofreading errors. The writer uses correct MLA formatting and an appropriate works cited page.

A **"B" paper** may not clearly state the research issues specifically in the introduction. However, the writer demonstrates a command of the sources and has a debatable topic. The writer has relevant, recent, and scholarly sources, if applicable. The works cited may be incorrect in places, but is correctly executed otherwise. The paper has a few passive, wordy sentences and some minor grammatical errors but overall demonstrates mechanical competence. The overall argument is supported and apparent, if not clearly communicated.

A **"C" paper** contains an organizing statement that needs clarification and more development. The writer may not adequately engage evidence from the source text and/or research. The tone and diction may be informal at times. The paper lacks effective transitions and consistently strong topic sentences. It has some grammatical and mechanical errors such as fragments and comma splices as well as some passive, wordy sentence structure.

A **"D" paper** does not have an arguable topic. The writer does not use significant or scholarly sources and fails to show a mastery of the sources. A "D" paper has little textual evidence. It may contain many and distracting grammar and punctuation errors. A "D" paper has style problems: repetitive, passive, and choppy sentence structure, informal language, and poor phrasing. It will give the impression of having been written quickly with little revision or proofreading.

An **"F" paper** does not meet the <u>mini</u>mum assignment criteria. It may be off-topic, incomplete, or nonsensical, or it may contain significant ethical problems such as instances of plagiarism or an obviously apathetic approach.

In addition to these general standards, particular attention will be given to:

Organization
- Creative and clear thesis that posits a theory (not a fact) about the text
- Itinerary statement (how you will prove your claim/thesis)
- Topic sentences for paragraphs
- Introductory and concluding paragraphs that do not consist of redundant thoughts

Clarity
- Attention to language (use formal language choices and no "slang"
- Limited number of errors relating to grammar and punctuation
- Clear syntax (sentences structure) and lack of passive voice

Grading

<u>Your final grade will be weighted as follows:</u>   <u>Grading Scale:</u>

10%	Discussion Posts	A	90-100
15%	Class participation	B	80-89
25%	Media Review (2000 words)	C	70-79
25%	Research Presentation (2000 words)	D	60-69
25%	Digital Media Project (2000 words)	F	0-59

Final Grade Appeals
Students may appeal a grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, English Department Program Assistant.

Absences/T ardiness
Active participation is crucial to learning in this course. You are expected to be in class and on time. Excessive absences will result in grade penalties as follows:

4th Absence Loss of one letter grade for the course
7th Absence Loss of two letter grades for the course
10th Absence Failure of course

2 Tardies = 1 Absence

Students who participate in athletics, band, or theater will be excused for university-sponsored travel and events. However, you are responsible for making up any work you miss for participation in these events. Failure to consult me about an absence and/or how to make up work will be reported to the appropriate sponsoring department.

Retention of Graded Assignments
I will keep electronic copies of all papers.

Late Work
All written work must be submitted electronically **prior to thebeginning of class**   on itsrespective duedate. Any paper not submitted on time will be penalized one letter grade.   An additional loss of oneletter grade will result from each subsequent day the paper is late.

Should you have an extenuating circumstance that prevents you from submitting an assignment on the day it is due, please contact me in advance or within 24 hours of the scheduled class meeting. Documentation will be required.

Special Note Regarding Electronic Submissions
Papers must be submitted in Microsoft Word format (.doc or .docx). Any file that cannot be opened due to corruption or improper extension will be considered late. **Check your files before submitting them!**

Student Disability Services
The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/

Harassment
UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/

Academic Honesty
All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php

IMPORTANT DATES

Withdrawal
The last day to drop a class with a full refund is May 14. The last day to take the S/U grade option is May 22. The last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of W is June 14.

Holidays
May 27 : Memorial Day

CHANGES TO SYLLABUS

This document is intended to provide you with guidance for success in the course. It is subject to change according to the class's needs. You will be notified of any changes and provided with updates in a timely maimer, and you are responsible for the information in the most recent version.