

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**

<https://uofa.ualberta.ca/modern-languages-and-cultural-studies>

2017-2018 MLCS 199 A1: Special Topics: Superheroes in Comics and Beyond
(Fall Term)

Instructor: Chris Reyns-Chikuma
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Time: MWF 11am-11:50am
Place: T 1 129
Office Hours: just after the class on M & W (12-13),
or by appointment
Course Website: /

Course Prerequisite: /

Course-based Ethics Approval in place regarding all research projects that involve human testing, questionnaires, etc.?

Yes No, not needed, no such projects approved.

Community Service Learning component

Required Optional None

Past or Representative Evaluative Course Material Available

- Exam registry – Students’ Union
<http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/infolink/exam/>
- See explanations below
- Document distributed in class
- Other (please specify)
- NA

Additional mandatory Instructional fees (approved by Board of Governors)

Yes No

Course Description and Objectives:

Superheroes have been around with us for a long time. From Hercules to Achilles, Zorro, Superman and Wonder Woman, they have been entertaining us yet they also move us and serve as strong models or counter-models. The persistence of their “myth” shows how meaningful they are. In this course, we will begin by studying the roots of superheroes in mythology, and then historicize their surrounding contexts, whether it is social, political or historical (WWII, the 60s, the 80s). We will also see the impact of these superheroes on real citizens (fans, vigilantes, ...). Additionally, we will then cover the new comics models, such as the ignored or marginalized superheroines (Wonder Woman, ...), superheroes from more diverse ethnicities/cultures/religions (Kamala Khan, ...) and non-American superheroes (Captain Canada, French, Japanese, Chinese versions of SH, ...). For the final project, students will be able to choose between three options: write a traditional essay, write a comics script about a

superhero/ine (in a group of two or three), and reaching out to other students and communities through CSL. As for the students who choose CSL, they will have to work 20 hours with one of the partners selected by CSL and write a 3-full page report to explain how what they did (being an “ordinary superhero” helping people in need of help and support) is related to the topic of the class (superheroism).

Objectives:

The objective in this course is to survey the phenomenon of the superhero over its almost 80 years of existence and to situate each one of the 8 superheroes studied in class within its historical context. We will especially focus on its slow but steady evolution towards more multicultural models.

Outcomes:

At the end of this course, successful students will be able to:

- understand the superhero phenomenon
- situate each occurrence of this phenomenon studied in class within a historical context
- work in groups to discuss ideas about historical context and multicultural diversity
- write an essay about one superhero and situate it within a precise historical context

Texts:

1. *Batman Celebration 75 years*, DC Comics.
2. *Watchmen*, Alan Moore, DC Comics; De Luxe edition ed.
3. *Next Year’s Man of Steele*, Belke, David, Samuel French Publisher.
4. *Superhero: A Reader*, Charles Hatfield & Alii, UP Mississippi.
5. *Astérix, Olympic Games*, Goscinny & Uderzo.
6. *Akira*, Vol. 1, Publisher: Kodansha Comics.
7. *Ms. Marvel: No normal*, Vol. 1 (*Kamala Khan*), Marvel (2014).
8. *Superman, Red Son*, Millar & Johnson, DC Comics.

All books are available at the campus bookstore and one copy is available at the Rutherford library.

Grade Distribution (see “Explanatory Notes”):

Attendance & Participation	20	
Quizzes 5	20	
Oral Presentation 1	10	TBD in class end of the first week
Final project	20	Due by the last class, Dec. 8th
Final exam	30	Dec. 18 th

Date of Deferred Final Exam (if applicable): /

Explanatory Notes on Assignments:

Attendance is required.

Participation means active involvement in the discussions, especially in the small groups.

Quizzes will be on 5 assigned textbooks. Each one should not take more than 5 minutes and will have 5 questions on the basic understanding of the assigned textbooks.

The final exam will be cumulative on the assigned textbooks and discussions in class.

As for the final project, students will have the choice between three options:

-a traditional 12-full-page essay (NYT, 12, double space).

-a CSL option (a full class will be dedicated to CSL in collaboration with a CSL member during the second week of the semester, explaining what are the options proposed by CSL and what are the commitments and steps to follow; more can be found about the CSL project for this course on the CSL website

<https://www.ualberta.ca/community-service-learning>

and on the page for this course:

<https://apps.arts.ualberta.ca/csl/Instructors/Courses?instructorId=816>)

-a creative project made of two parts: a 6-page comics that could be made in a group of two, and an individual 6-page essay reflecting on the comics created.

Required Notes:

“Policy about course outlines can be found in the [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#) of the University Calendar.”

Academic Integrity:

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.governance.ualberta.ca) and avoid any behaviour that could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

Learning and Working Environment:

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring all students; faculty and staff are able to study and work in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels that this policy is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that direct discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the [Office of the Student Ombuds](#). Information about the [University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures](#) is described in [UAPPOL](#).

Academic Honesty:

All students should consult the information provided by the [Student Conduct & Accountability Office](#) regarding avoiding cheating and plagiarism in particular

and academic dishonesty in general (see the [Academic Integrity Undergraduate Handbook](#) and [Information for Students](#)). If in doubt about what is permitted in this class, ask the instructor.

Students involved in language courses and translation courses should be aware that on-line “translation engines” produce very dubious and unreliable “translations.”

Students in languages courses should be aware that, while seeking the advice of native or expert speakers is often helpful, **excessive editorial and creative help** in assignments is considered a form of “cheating” that violates the code of student conduct with dire consequences.

An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. See the [Academic Discipline Process](#).

Recording of Lectures:

Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan.

Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections [Attendance](#) and [Examinations](#) of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

In this course, attendance is required and participation will count for 20%.

Participation means mainly to be actively involved in the regular small group discussions.

Policy for Late Assignments:

Students should consult in advance with the instructor regarding contingencies preventing the timely completion of an assignment. If so, the instructor may grant an extension just one time throughout the course with no penalty. However, if a second excuse is granted, half of the mark assigned for this particular work will be deducted. Otherwise all assignments should be handed in on the stated deadline. Any assignment not handed in in time or unexcused late assignments will not be given any marks. Late excuses will not be accepted for any reason.

Student Accessibility Services:

If you have special needs that could affect your performance in this class, please let me know during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you are not already registered with [Student Accessibility Services](#), contact their office immediately (1-80 SUB; Email sasrec@ualberta.ca; Email; phone 780-492-3381).

Grading:

Assessment of the individual course components may be in the form of numerical marks or letter grades. The final letter grade will be based on "a combination of absolute achievement and relative performance in a class" (University Calendar, [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#)). The University Grading Procedure mandates that "a student's level of achievement of the goals/outcomes of a course, their grade, and the descriptor of that grade must be aligned" (<https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/>). The following guidelines have been adopted by the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies:

“MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale”

Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	%
Excellent. A+, A or A- is earned by work which is superior in content and form and demonstrates an exceptional grasp of the subject matter. The grade of A+ designates work that far exceeds course expectations. Grades in the A range are normally achieved by a small number of students.	A+	4.0	97-100
	A	4.0	93-96
	A-	3.7	90-92
Good. B+, B or B- is earned by work that demonstrates a thorough comprehension of the course material and a good command of relevant skills. Grades in the B range are normally achieved by the largest number of students.	B+	3.3	87-89
	B	3.0	83-86
	B-	2.7	80-82
Satisfactory. C+, C or C- is earned by work that demonstrates an adequate grasp of the course material and relevant skills. Grades in the C range designate work that has met the basic requirements of the course.	C+	2.3	77-79
	C	2.0	73-76
	C-	1.7	70-72
Poor/Minimal Pass. D+ or D is earned by work that demonstrates minimal familiarity with the course material. Grades in the D range generally indicate insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.	D+	1.3	65-69
	D	1.0	60-64
Failure.	F	0.0	0-59