

Course number and section: ENGL 395C.001
Course Topic: Popular Literature: Superheroes
Credits: 3
Term: Winter T1, 2021 (Sept.-Dec., 2021)
Instructor: Dr. Marie H. Loughlin

Course Description:

Beginning in the patriotic propaganda of WWII, superheroes have been present during every North American social, cultural, and political crisis, including the atomic age and the Cold War of the 1950s, the struggle for racial and gender equality of the 1960s and 70s, and the events of 9/11 and ‘the War on Terror.’ Although this figure reaches back to ancient myth, legend and history, the North American superhero charts the shifting fantasies and anxieties of the modern age. Examining comic books, movies, and popular literature, this course will explore the origins and development of seminal American superheroes, such as Wonder Woman, Batman, Black Panther, and Doctor Strange, analyzing how these figures have changed in response to major social, cultural, and political movements.

Tentative Reading and Viewing Lists:

Required Reading:

-selected critical essays [online at UBCO Library]
-brief excerpts from the Bible, ancient myth, and epic (pdf documents, free via Canvas)
-selected comic books (Marvel & DC online platforms: free to \$5.99 per issue or by subscription)
Grossman, Austin. *Soon I Will Be Invincible* [2008, novel: ebook, Kindle]
Kaufman, Andrew. *All My Friends Are Superheroes* [2013, novella: UBCO Library, e-book]

Required Viewing: With the exception of *X-Men* (2000), all movies are available free to students through our library’s streaming services: Criterion-on-demand and Audio Cine Film.

Superman (1978) & *Superman Returns* (2006)
The Dark Knight (2008)
Spider-Man: Homecoming (2017)
Wonder Woman (2017)
Dr. Strange (2016)
The Avengers (2012)
X-Men (2000) [UBCO Library: DVD on reserve; Youtube rental, \$3.99; Disney+]
Black Panther (2018)

Other: While Kaufmann’s *All My Friends Are Superheroes* is very short (just under 110 small illustrated pages), Grossman’s *Soon I Will Be Invincible* is a much more regular novel length (310 pp.). Try reading the latter in chapters over the course of the term; it is the last work we will be examining.