First Year Seminar
Batman and Cultural History
Fall 2015
111 Howard
TTH 12:30-1:45
Dr. Jeff Karnicky

jeff.karnicky@drake.edu
271-2135
316 Howard Hall
Office Hours:

Course Objectives
Over the course of the semester students will acquire the skills to:

• Do cultural history
• Become close readers of comics
• Understand Batman as a historically and culturally specific character
• Use research to support and inform your writing
• Write analyses that understand the cultural function of Batman
• Discuss topics in a classroom with detail, focus, and nuance
• Creatively engage with the Batman canon to produce original work

Required Texts
Batman: The Dark Knight Returns, Frank Miller
Batman: The Long Halloween, Jeph Loeb
Batman Incorporated, Grant Morrison

Ebooks
(All of these can be accessed via Cowles Library)

EBook readings


You should also get a program that can read .cbr files. For Mac users, I recommend the free app “Simple Comic.” PC users might try CDisplay Ex. Both are free.

**Course Policies**

Attendance is required. Missing a significant number of classes will detrimentally affect your final grade. Doing non-class related things in class—including, but not limited to, surfing the web, texting, tweeting, snapchatting, instagramming, reading other texts, doing other work, writing in your daily planner, sleeping, nodding off—will also have grade-related consequences. Please remember that English classes are small, and it is obvious to the professor and your classmates when you are present in body but not in mind.

Participation is required. I will do my best to facilitate discussion, and I expect that all students enrolled in the class will do their best to actively participate in class discussion. If you are not willing to participate in class discussion, this class may not be for you. In order to be prepared for class discussion, you must do the assigned readings.

The College of Arts and Sciences’ “Academic Dishonest Policy” can be found here: [http://www.drake.edu/artsci/studentresources/policiesandregulations/](http://www.drake.edu/artsci/studentresources/policiesandregulations/)

Here is their definition of “academic dishonesty.”

“Academic dishonesty is an all encompassing term involving any activity that seeks to gain credit for work one has not done or to deliberately damage or destroy the work of others. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- **Plagiarism** - The misrepresentation, either by intent or negligence, of another’s ideas, phrases, discourse, or works as one’s own.

- **Cheating** - the act, or attempted act, of giving or obtaining aid and/or information by illicit means in meeting any academic requirements, including examinations.

- **Fabrication** - intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic sense in any academic exercise.
Facilitating Academic Dishonesty - intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.”

Any suspected case of academic dishonesty will be dealt with according to the College’s procedures and penalties, which can be found on the website linked above.

Michelle Laughlin (michelle.laughlin@drake.edu, 271-1835) is Drake’s Student Disability Services Coordinator. If you have a disability and will require academic accommodations in this course, please let me know. Accommodations are coordinated through Student Disability Services.

A note from Student Services: “The Coordinator for Sexual Violence Response and Healthy Relationship Promotion’s primary role is to act as a resource for students who have been subjected to interpersonal [gender] violence including sexual assault/harassment, dating/domestic violence, gender-based discrimination, and stalking and will advocate on behalf of the student victim’s requests if services are voluntarily initiated. The coordinator can explain how to initiate a complaint within the university and through criminal/civil processes, assist with referrals to a confidential crisis advocate and/or counselor and appropriate medical or legal professionals. The coordinator must report “known” student campus assaults to the Dean of Students and/or Title IX Coordinator, but the complainant still has rights to participate or withdraw from the university process. Other services include providing crisis intervention (safety plan, crisis counseling, rights information), and assistance in academic and housing accommodations as needed. To contact the coordinator, Alysa Mozak, call 515-271-4141 or email alysa.mozak@drake.edu. The Violence Intervention Partner (V.I.P.) program through this office provides peer-based 24/7 confidential advocacy services. To access a V.I.P. advocate call or text 515-512-2972. For more information about these services visit www.drake.edu/sexual-assault/.”

**Assignments and Grades**
I will provide detailed assignment sheets for each assignment.

**Assignments**
**Participation:** Participation is an important part of this class. It will be assessed in multiple ways. Discussion board posts, self-evaluation, in class writing, and active contributions to class discussion are all aspects of participation.
Cultural Readings: You will write three short (500 words) cultural readings over the course of the semester. These readings will closely examine a specific text.

Secondary Character Research Project: For this assignment, you will research a secondary character who appears in the Batman story. The list of secondary characters is quite long (Robin, The Joker, Catwoman, Batgirl, etc . . .), so each student will research a different character. Using good sources, you will write a report about this character’s history, and present this information in class. You will also use this information in the “Reimagining Batman” project.

Reimagining Batman Project: Working either alone or in a group of 2 or 3 students, your task will be to create a new version of Batman. The medium is up to you: comic, film, screenplay, story, video game, and so on. Your creation should be informed by our class readings and discussion; you should include you’re the secondary character you researched as part of your final project. Part of this assignment will ask you to document your process; that is, you will write up the choices you made and why you made them as you created a new Batman.

Assignment Submission
Please submit your assignments by email to me: jeff.karnicky@drake.edu. Submit your assignments as an attachment, preferably as a Microsoft Word document. (If you don’t use Word, be sure to submit your paper as a readable document, such as an .rtf, .pdf, or .html document.) Please use your last name as the first word of your document title; if your name is Joe Jones, your attachment should be named “Jones.docx” (or “Jonespaper1.docx” or something similar, as long as “Jones” is the first word. This makes filing and grading much easier for me.) Papers should be emailed before the class period in which they are due. I will email students whose papers I have not received.

Course Schedule
Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class

Sept. 1  Batman’s Origins: Detective Comics #27, “The Batman: The Case of the Chemical Syndicate;” Detective Comics #33 “The Batman and How He Came to Be”
Sept. 3  Batman’s Origins: read Jensen, “Batman’s Promise” (ebook)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 8</td>
<td>Batman and Cultural History; read “Batman’s Career Timeline” <a href="http://batman.wikia.com/wiki/Batman%27s_career_timeline">http://batman.wikia.com/wiki/Batman%27s_career_timeline</a> (Web)</td>
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<td>Sept. 10</td>
<td><strong>Q. What is Culture?</strong> read Raymond Williams, “Culture is Ordinary” (BB)</td>
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<td>Sept. 15</td>
<td><strong>Q. How do we read comics?</strong> read Wolk, chapters 4 and 5 (ebook)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 17</td>
<td><strong>Q. How do we read comics?</strong> read Crutcher, “Complexity in the Comic and Graphic Novel Medium” (BB)</td>
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<td>Sept. 22</td>
<td><strong>Comics are Dangerous, 1950s:</strong> read excerpt from Wertham, Seduction of the Innocent (BB)</td>
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<td>Sept. 24</td>
<td><strong>Comics are Dangerous, 1950s:</strong> World’s Finest Comics #71</td>
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<td>Sept. 29</td>
<td>Meet in Library for Research Discussion; Cultural Reading #1 due</td>
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<td>Oct. 1</td>
<td><strong>1960s camp and camaraderie:</strong> Watch Batman! Season 3, episode 1 (in class); read Medhurst “Batman, Deviance, and Camp”</td>
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<td>Oct. 6</td>
<td><strong>1960s camp and camaraderie:</strong> read The Brave and the Bold #28, Detective Comics #359, Batman #394</td>
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<td>Oct. 8</td>
<td><strong>The Dark Knight of the 1980s:</strong> Miller, Batman: The Dark Knight Returns</td>
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<td>Oct. 13</td>
<td><strong>The Dark Knight of the 1980s:</strong> Miller, Batman: The Dark Knight Returns</td>
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<td>Oct. 15</td>
<td><strong>The Dark Knight of the 1980s:</strong> Miller, Batman: The Dark Knight Returns</td>
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<td>Oct. 20</td>
<td>No Class—Fall Break</td>
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<td>Oct. 22</td>
<td><strong>Cultural Reading #2 due;</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 27</td>
<td><strong>1980s culture:</strong> Dubose, &quot;'Holding Out For A Hero: Reaganism, Comic Book Vigilantes, And Captain America.&quot; (BB)</td>
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<td>Oct. 29</td>
<td><strong>1980s culture:</strong> Tipton, &quot;'Gender Trouble: Frank Miller's Revision Of Robin In The Batman: Dark Knight Series.&quot; (BB)</td>
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<td>Nov. 3</td>
<td><strong>Batman Gets Cinematic:</strong> Loeb, Batman: The Long Halloween</td>
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<td>Nov. 5</td>
<td><strong>Batman Gets Cinematic:</strong> Loeb, Batman: The Long Halloween</td>
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<td>Nov. 10</td>
<td><strong>Batman Gets Cinematic:</strong> Loeb, Batman: The Long Halloween</td>
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<td>Nov. 12</td>
<td>Secondary Character Presentations; <strong>Secondary Character Research Paper due</strong></td>
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<td>Nov. 17</td>
<td>Secondary Character Presentations</td>
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<td>Nov. 19</td>
<td><strong>21st century, The Business of Batman:</strong> Morrison, Batman Incorporated</td>
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<td>Nov. 21</td>
<td><strong>21st century, The Business of Batman:</strong> Morrison, Batman</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Assignment</td>
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<td>Nov. 24</td>
<td>Incorporated</td>
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<td>Nov. 26</td>
<td>No Class—Thanksgiving Break</td>
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<td>Dec. 1</td>
<td><strong>21st century, The Business of Batman</strong>: Discuss film: <em>The Dark Knight</em>; read Zizek, “The Politics of Batman” (BB); <strong>Cultural Reading #3 due</strong></td>
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<td>Dec. 3</td>
<td>Research</td>
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<td>Dec. 8</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 10</td>
<td>Presentations; final project due</td>
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**Additional Resources for Batman and Cultural History**

I have the full run of *Detective Comics*, and *Batman*, and *World’s Finest Comics* as .cbr files. Let me know if you want any of these.

I have a copy of the *DC Encyclopedia* available in my office.

The following books may prove useful in your research and projects. I have provided the URL for Ebooks and the call number for books. All books are available from Cowles Library. (You will have to log into the library to access the Ebooks.) Please note: This is not an exhaustive list. You can find more by doing your own research.

Brooker, Will. *Hunting The Dark Knight: Twenty-First Century Batman*  

Dong, Lan. *Teaching Comics and Graphic Narratives*  

Edwards, Justin. *The Gothic in Contemporary Literature and Popular Culture*  

Fingeroth, Danny. *Superman on the couch : what superheroes really tell us about ourselves and our society* PN6714 .F54 2004

Hatfield, Charles. *The Superhero Reader*  

Hernandez, Elvin A. *Set the Action! Creating Backgrounds for Compelling Storytelling in Animation, Comics, and Games*
Morrison, Grant. *Supergods: what masked vigilantes, miraculous mutants, and a sun god from Smallville can teach us about being human* PN6725 .M67 2011


