FYS 012 (6967): Comics and Social Diversity
Fall 2017
Howard 212
TTH 12:30-1:45
Dr. Jeff Karnicky
jeff.karnicky@drake.edu
271-2135
316 Howard Hall
Office Hours: T 11:00-12:15; W 11:30-1:00; TH 8:15-9:15; 11:00-12:15

COURSE OBJECTIVES
• UNDERSTAND THE HISTORY OF COMICS AS IT RELATES TO RACE, ETHNICITY,
  CLASS, GENDER, NATION, AND OTHER FORMS OF IDENTITY
• BECOME CLOSE READERS OF COMICS
• USE RESEARCH TO SUPPORT AND INFORM YOUR WRITING
• ENGAGE IN CLASS DISCUSSION IN A FOCUSED, SERIOUS MANNER
• EXAMINE THE RACIAL AND GENDERED STEREOTYPES THAT MID-20TH CENTURY
  COMICS EMPLOYED, AND THINK ABOUT HOW THESE COMPARE TO
  CONTEMPORARY COMICS
• THINK ABOUT THE WAYS COMICS HAVE ENGAGED SOCIAL ISSUES AND
  INSTIGATED FOR CHANGES IN SOCIAL NORMS
• EXAMINE HOW THE COMICS INDUSTRY HAS BECOME MORE DIVERSE IN ITS
  CREATORS AND ITS AUDIENCE, AND THINK ABOUT HOW THIS AFFECTS THE
  PRODUCTION OF COMICS

Required Texts
G. Willow Wilson, *Ms. Marvel: No Normal (Vol 1)*
Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Black Panther: A Nation Under Our Feet (Vol 1)*
Kwanza Osajyefo, *Black (Vol 1)*
Gail Simone, et al. *Sensation Comics Featuring Wonder Woman (Vol 1)*

Other readings will be on Blackboard (Bb) or accessible as ebooks through Cowles
Library (ebook)
Ebook: *Studying Comics and Graphic Novels*

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/

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.

**English Department Statement on Sensitive Classroom Materials**

Your instructor will make appropriate accommodations for documented disabilities. If you have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and know that specific subjects elicit an uncontrollable emotional response, and you want advance warning about classroom material, please contact Michelle Laughlin, Student Disability Services coordinator, who will work with you to make your instructor aware of your request.
Your instructor will then work with you to determine what the appropriate accommodation might be.

If you have not been diagnosed but find a certain topic so distressing that you are unable to perform academically, we encourage you to consult Ms. Laughlin; her office can refer you to the appropriate resource.

Advance warning is not always possible. Literature represents the full spectrum of human experience and no subject matter is off-limits in a literature, writing or film course. English faculty strive to create a classroom environment in which potentially volatile material can be viewed, read, discussed and written about in a thoughtful and mature manner and in which the perspectives of all participants are listened to and respected. Students may expect to experience a certain amount of productive discomfort when confronting uncomfortable topics. Classrooms are not necessarily "safe spaces," but they can be spaces in which we support each other in confronting life's most difficult issues.

Assignments and Grades

Assignments

Research Assignment Presentation
Research a DC or Marvel comic character in relation to some kind of social or cultural diversity. You will then do a 10-minute in class presentation (using PowerPoint or some other visual aid) on your findings.

You should talk about some of the following, depending on what is most relevant.

- What is this character’s history? When did the character first appear?
- Who has written and drawn this character?
- How has this character changed over the years?
- What are some different versions of this character?
- What social issues has this character addressed?

After discussing the above questions, you should develop an argument that answers the following.

- What does this character say to you about social and cultural values? Why is this character interesting to you? Why should we care about this character?

Research Assignment Essay
For the end of the semester, you will turn your research presentation into an essay of at least 1200 words. You should focus your essay with a thesis statement. That is, you should make a claim about how you see your character relating to a specific social
and/or cultural value. Your essay should be organized coherently and clearly written. You should use and cite sources correctly.

**Discussion leader for Comics**
Twice during the semester, you will lead 10-minutes of class discussion on a specific aspect of a comic we are reading. You will sign up for these assignments during the first week of classes.

**Close Reading Essays**
You will write a 500-word close reading for each comic collection we read. I will give you a prompt for each book.

**Participation on discussion boards and in class**
For each class when we read an essay, you should post a response and a reading question to the discussion board. You should be prepared to discuss the essay in class.

**Grading**
Research Assignment Presentation: 20%
Research Assignment Essay: 20%
Discussion leaders for comics 1: 5%
Discussion leaders for comics 2: 5%
Close reading Essay 1: 10%
Close reading Essay 2: 10%
Close reading Essay 3: 10%
Close reading Essay 4: 10%
Participation on discussion board and in class: 10%

**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.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aug 29</td>
<td>Course introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug 31</td>
<td><em>Studying Comics and Graphic Novels</em>: chapter 5, pages 106-122 (ebook)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep 5</td>
<td><em>Studying Comics and Graphic Novels</em>: chapter 1 (ebook)</td>
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<td>Sep 7</td>
<td>Library Session: meet in Cowles 201</td>
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<td>Sep 12</td>
<td>“They Myth of ‘Forced’ Diversity in Comics;” Hudson, “It’s Time to Get Real;” Cambro, “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly” (Bb) Elbein, “The Real Reasons;” Kanayama, “Marvel is Wrong” (Bb)</td>
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<td>Sep 26</td>
<td>Ms. Marvel; <strong>Close Reading #1 due</strong></td>
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<td>Sep 28</td>
<td>Presentations 1-5; <strong>Close Reading #1 due</strong></td>
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<td>Oct 3</td>
<td>Facciani, “Content Analysis”; Lund, “Introducing . . . Black Panther” (Bb)</td>
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<td>Oct 17</td>
<td><strong>Fall Break: No Class</strong></td>
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<td>Oct 31</td>
<td>Presentations 6-10; <strong>Close Reading Essay #3 due</strong></td>
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<td>Nov 2</td>
<td>Lepore, “Wonder Woman’s Secret Past,” “Wonder Woman’s Unwinnable War” (Bb)</td>
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