

# *Moravian College*

## **SOC 370 – Seminar: Morality, Gallantry, and the Socio-Cultural Legacy of the Superhero Genre**

**Dr. Joel Nathan Rosen, Associate Professor of Sociology  
PPHAC 311**

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**Office Hours: W & F 1p – 2p/Th 4p – 5p or By Appointment**

***\*Check Email Frequently (and make sure that I have your best address)\****

### **Required Text:**

- Wright, Bradford W. *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.
- Supplemental readings to be distributed (electronically or otherwise) throughout the quarter.

### **Recommended Text:**

- List to be distributed

### **Miscellaneous Course Materials:**

- Documentary Films
- Excerpts from Radio's "Golden Age"

### **Course Objectives:**

- To trace the rise of the pre-WWII comic book tradition that parallels the rise of a post-WWII youth culture
- To define the notion of hero - then and now
- To think, write, and discuss about the role of the superhero genre in terms of its legal, ethical, and even literary place in contemporary life using a sociological imagination

### **Course Requirements:**

Students will be required to compile an annotated bibliography on a topic to be negotiated with the professor, write a fifteen to twenty page paper on that same topic, review a book/article (drawn from the above bibliography assignment), prepare and

implement a lesson on your topic, and perform other tasks including writing article reviews and participating in class-wide discussions, etc., as befitting this level of course. Fair warning will precede any due date.

The breakdown of final grades is as follows:

Misc. Work, i.e. Reviews, Participation, etc.	20%
Annotated Bibliography Assignment	20%
Book Review Project	20%
Term Paper (with oral component)	20%
Presentation	20%

As I typically employ letter grades on written assignments, I offer the below list of how each letter translates numerically:

- A+ = 100/A = 96/A- = 93
- B+ = 89/B = 86/B- = 83
- C+ = 79/C = 76/C- = 73
- D+ = 69/D = 66/D- = 63
- F = 59-50 [actual score depends on the severity of the error(s)/student will be notified]
- Failure to turn in work translates into a *ZERO*

### **Grade Scale:**

- A = 100-95/A- = 94-90
- B+ = 89-88/B = 87-84/B- = 83-80
- C+ = 79-78/C = 77-74/C- = 73-70
- D+ = 69-68/D = 67-64/D- = 63-60
- F = 59...

**Grade Advisory** – While I respect that students have to be grade conscious, it is imperative that students understand that:

### ***I treat evaluations as professional—not personal!***

Do not ask from me anything that steps outside the boundaries, and do not wait until *Zero Hour* to inquire as to your status. Moreover, it is your responsibility to keep abreast of your own grade calculations, and unless the circumstances are unique, I'll leave you to your own devices on that matter. Lastly, to save us all needless heartache, and in the interest of propriety and mental health, I also have to insist on a twenty-four hour grace period before I will speak to you about any returned work. You may find that this cooling off period is exactly what we both need to come together rationally and in the

spirit of liberal learning.

## **Classroom Decorum and Expectations:**

**Attendance** – Class attendance is mandatory and vitally important to your success. Failure to attend on a regular basis not only puts your grade in jeopardy but may also be met with a lowered mark for participation.

- There are no excused absences. If you have a legitimate emergency, it is your responsibility to bring it to the attention of your instructor at your earliest convenience.

**Tardiness** – Tardiness to class is not only detrimental to the learning process but quite disruptive and unfair to those who make it to class on time regularly. Recurring tardiness shows a lack of respect for the classroom, the instructor, and one's fellow students and will not be tolerated. Therefore, once the door has been shut, you will not be permitted to enter.

**Deadlines** – Assignment deadlines are exactly that. Students are expected to comply with deadlines in accordance with all rules, guidelines, and expectations of each assignment proffered. Failure to do so will result in a tendering of no-grade for work not done to expectation or submitted on time. The policy for late papers is as follows:

- On minor assignments, you will be allowed to turn in one late assignment as long as it is within twenty-four hours for a ten point deduction. After your one exception, you will no longer enjoy this luxury
- Do not expect me to have to chase you down in order to turn in assignments!

**Participation** – Classroom discussions are a big part of the learning process. Your participation is not requested—it is required. Failure to do so is both in bad taste and could conceivably be detrimental to your ability to learn effectively.

**Disruptions** – Disruptive behavior, including talking, unengaged behavior, i.e. reading a book, magazine, or newspaper, texting, sleeping, chronic tardiness alongside loud entrances, and any other unfortunate breach will not be tolerated. Learning is an active process, and failure to actively engage not only threatens the individual's ability to learn but also affects others.

**Academic Honesty** – You are all responsible for knowing and adhering to the code of academic honesty here at Moravian College. For those of you unfamiliar with this code, it can be found on pages fifty-two through fifty-seven in your student handbook.

**Please Note:** It is your responsibility to see to it that these expectations and guidelines are met satisfactorily and consistently. I take the classroom quite seriously, and I expect all of you to do the same as well.

## **Out of Class Submission Expectations:**

- a title page with a suitable title, your name, the course, section, and my name all spelled correctly
- 12 font (in black) with default margins and spacing set at 1.5 to double
- page numbers
- a *References* section (if necessary) at the end of the work done in the most recent citation form of your choice (depends on your major and other factors). The key here is fluidity and consistency.<sup>1</sup>
- for every unedited internet site there must be at least *two* published sources
- with few exceptions, single & two-digit numbers (zero *through* ninety-nine) are to be spelled out; three digits are to be written numerically
- be wary of overuse of abbreviations and/or contractions
- a staple in the upper left hand corner (no frilly covers)

**\*\*Please Note that all in-class work must be done in blue or black ink\*\***

## **On Writing and Research:**

As this is a designated writing intensive course, you should expect that there will be an emphasis placed on written expression in this course. I should also like you to know from the start that I spend a great deal of time pouring over your writing and expect that you will read and explore my commentary on all things ranging from content to grammar, punctuation, and syntax. Please try to check your ego at the doors and realize that this is a learning experience while convincing yourself that blips and missteps are all part of the process.

You should also note that where applicable, this instructor expects his students to deal directly with all matters relating to the citation process. Failure to do so will be dealt with harshly with penalties ranging from a zero on work not properly documented to a formal report to the proper academic disciplinary committee.

## **A Note on Individual Accommodations:**

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

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<sup>1</sup> Work not properly cited will not be graded and could be brought to the Academic Standards Committee under a charge of plagiarism. If you have questions, please seek me out. Also, *Wikipedia* and other types of non-academic encyclopedias will under no circumstances be considered legitimate sources!

Also, as the college's Writing Center is located in a building that is not accessible to persons with mobility impairments, those in need of further assistance or accommodation are encouraged to contact the center at 610/861-1392.

*In brightest day, in blackest night,  
No evil shall escape my sight!  
Let those who worship evil's might,  
Fear my power... Green Lantern's light!*

—Hal Jordan, the Most Recognizable  
of the many Green Lanterns

## **Course Sketch Outline:<sup>2</sup>**

**\*\*All Readings to be Announced throughout the Semester\*\***

### **Unit I: Heroes, Anti-Heroes, Vigilantes, and Cool Clothes: The Entirety of a Genre (Re)Visited** (Primary Text: Wright)

Topics to Be Covered:

- Establishing a Common Language, i.e. Comic Books? Really?
- Whither Superman, Captain American, and Wonder Woman
- Americanization and Children
- Art and the Nature of Mythology
- The Cold War and the Sussing out of Enemy Combatants
- Law and the Legality of Tales
- Stratification and Its Legacy in Comic Book Art and Literature
- The Graphic Turn
- Celluloid Heroes Abound
- What Does the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Have in Store for the Genre?

### **Annotated Bibliographies Due at Midterm (Thursday 3 March)**

### **Unit II: Presentations** (Order to Be Determined)

**Reviews Due (7 April)**  
**Papers Due (Thursday 26 April)**

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<sup>2</sup> I find that a sketch outline allows us to work to our strengths and our own rhythms as a group. I prefer not to be bogged down by day to day expectations, and I trust you'll get over your initial fears. Also, all due dates are subject to change.