**AMS 2040: The American Hero in Text & Image**

Mondays and Thursdays, 3:00 – 4:15 in Brownson 22

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Office Hours:

* Stop by or make an appointment through Starfish.
  + Wednesdays 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM
  + Thursdays 10:30 AM – 2:30 PM
  + Fridays 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

**Course Description**

This course will examine the concept of the ideal American in its various cultural representations, what these representations express about the ideological climate that produced them, and how our continuing reexamination of these images and ideals shape our understanding of our place in American society.

**Course Objectives**

* Comprehension of the foundations of major American ideas and values, as represented through shifting conceptions of American heroes.
* Understanding of iconic images and narratives in American history and culture.
* Understanding and application of interdisciplinary methods of study of American society and culture
* Ability to comprehend, synthesize, and analyze a range of primary and secondary texts, both orally and in writing.

**Required Books**

Crane, Stephen. *The Red Badge of Courage and Other Stories*. New York: Penguin, 2005. Print.

Moore, Alan. *Watchmen*. New York: DC Comics, 1987. Print.

Russ, Joana. *The Female Man*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1975. Print.

All other readings, videos, and audio recordings, will be available on Blackboard.

**Required Supplies**

Notebook

Folder

Writing utensil

Flashdrive or Cloud Account

**Online Platforms**

Blackboard

**Policies and Procedures**

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

*Academic dishonesty and/or plagiarism of any assignment will not be tolerated in this class.*

Manhattanville College defines plagiarism as: “offering as one’s own work the words, ideas or arguments of another. Appropriate citation (including page numbers) with quotation marks, references or footnotes, is required when using another’s work; the failure to do so constitutes plagiarism. Copying homework and answers on an exam or report, submitting a term paper from the archives of a group or from another student, procuring a paper from any source (electronic or otherwise) and submitting it as one’s own are further examples of plagiarism” (*2015 – 2016 Manhattanville College Student Handbook & Code of Conduct*, pg. 9, https://annex.mville.edu/images/stories/2015-2016\_Student\_Handbook-Code\_of\_Conduct.pdf).

Any act of plagiarism will result in a minimum of an unforgiveable F on the plagiarized assignment.

Attendance

You are required to attend all regular class sessions. Although there are no exams, you are still required to arrive on time and prepared for each and every class session, actively listen, take notes, and participate in discussion.

Failure to attend without prior consent of your instructor will result in an unexcused absence. You may take up to 3 unexcused absences throughout the semester. For each absence after the third, you will lose 10% of your final grade.

If you cannot come to class, you must notify the instructor by e-mail or in person before the beginning of the class period. Excused absences will be granted for: illness; death or illness of a family member; military duty; observation of a religious holiday; field trip for another class; extreme weather (heavy snow, severe thunderstorm, flooding, any other weather resulting in road closures).

**If you do need to miss class, it is your responsibility to notify your instructor, download any missed assignments from Blackboard, and get lecture/discussion notes from a classmate. Missing class does not excuse you from doing the assigned homework.**

Electronic Devices

*Please turn all cell phones to silent and store them in your bag or pocket at the beginning of each class period!* Texting, e-mailing, Instagramming, Facebooking, taking selfies, or any other activity not related to class is strictly prohibited. If you do need to answer an emergency phone call or text, please quietly step into the hallway to do so and return when you are finished. Any in-class material you miss as a result of attending to your phone is your responsibility to make up.

You may use a laptop or tablet in class *only* for the purposes of note-taking, reviewing assigned electronic readings, and working on your assigned essays.

**Assignments**

Readings, Listenings, and Screening

All readings, listenings, and screenings assigned as homework must be completed prior to class on the day listed in the schedule below. Remember: reading, listening, and watching are active processes. It is not enough to simply skim the material; you must take notes, underline important passages, write down important quotes or images, and generally be prepared to analyze each and every text.

It is your responsibility to access the assignments on Blackboard. You are required to bring an electronic or printed copy of each and every reading assignment along with your reading/screening/listening notes to class.

Participation/Discussion

Participation in class discussions and other in-class activities about readings, listenings, screenings, and lecture materials is mandatory. Participation may include answering questions, posing thoughtful questions, providing relevant comments, listening respectfully to the ideas of others, and participating in small-group activities.

Our classroom is a safe space. All perspectives, ideas, and beliefs are welcome, as long as they are respectful, thoughtful, and offered in a sincere spirit of academic exploration. In short, our classroom is not the internet. Disagreements are welcome, but trolling is not.

Participation will be graded holistically based on consistent level of engagement during class. It will be included in the In-Class Activities grade.

Reading Quizzes

On some days when readings are due, you will take a reading quiz. The quizzes will typically require you to write about a paragraph in response to a given prompt.

The goal of these quizzes is to ensure all students complete the readings on time and stimulate in-class discussion about the readings.

Quizzes will be graded holistically and will be included in the In-Class Activities grade.

American Hero’s Journal

Each week, you are required to write a short (1-2 page) essay in response to a given prompt (see schedule below). The goals of these journal entries are to synthesize the assigned readings/screenings, examine the relationships among the readings, in-class screening/lectures, and the overarching themes of the course, pose thoughtful questions, link the course material to other texts/images you may have encountered, and stimulate in-class discussion.

Journal Entries will be graded holistically using a rubric based on clarity of writing and thought as well as thoroughness in responding to the given prompt.

All Journal Entries are due by 3:00 PM on Blackboard and in hard copy on the dates listed in the schedule below. No late Journal Entries will be accepted without prior consent of the instructor.

Group Lesson

Throughout the semester, small groups of students will teach the class about an assigned article. The lesson be approximately 15-20 minutes, through which each group should clearly explain the salient terms, arguments, and analyses in their assigned article, relate the article to the course subject and material, and provide a brief example (exe: a video, song, image) that demonstrates the concepts discussed in the article. Typically, two groups will present in a single day; after each Lesson, they will come together to lead the class in a discussion of the day’s assigned readings.

Lessons will be graded holistically using a rubric completed by the instructor as well as peer feedback sheets.

Midterm Project

For your midterm project, you will write a 5-7 page essay in which you compare and contrast two fictional heroes: one whom we have discussed in class and one whom we have not discussed in class. Through this comparison/contrast, you should use textual analysis and a minimum of 3 scholarly sources in order to examine the ways in which these heroes exemplify the American culture and values of the time in which they were created. Please see the prompt sheet for further information.

The final project will be graded holistically using a rubric, based on thoroughness and clarity of analysis, evidence, and understanding of the concepts covered in class.

The midterm project is due on Blackboard and in hard copy by 3PM on Thursday, October 11. No late assignments will be accepted without prior consent of the instructor.

Final Project

For your final project, you will write an original short story (8-10 page minimum) about a fictional American hero. You should draw on the tropes, generic conventions, cultural metaphors, and narrative structures we’ve studied in class to craft your hero and his/her journey. In addition, you will include footnoted meta-commentary to indicate which sections of your story draw on which course materials. Please see the prompt sheet for further information.

The final project will be graded holistically using a rubric, based on thoroughness, creativity, and clarity in crafting an American hero’s journey.

The final project is due on Blackboard and in hard copy by the start of our Finals Week meeting. No late assignments will be accepted without prior consent of the instructor.

Extra Credit:

You may earn up to 10 points towards the American Hero’s Journal grade by submitting an original (made by you, specifically for this class) creative work inspired by one of the texts we’ve read/watched/listened to this semester. You may work in any medium (writing, visual art, video, audio, etc.), and you will be expected to present your project to the class during the Final Exam Week meeting.

Grade Distribution

In-Class Activities: 15%

Group Lesson: 10%

Midterm Project: 20%

Final Project: 20%

Short Essays: 35%

Grading Scale

A 93-100

A- 90-92.9

B+ 87-89.9

B 83-86.9

B- 80-82.9

C+ 77-79.9

C 73-76.9

C- 70-72.9

D 60-69.9

F 0-59.9

**Additional Resources**  
Your Professor:

This class is not easy, so I strongly encourage you to visit my office if you have any questions about the assignments and course materials.

The Andrew Bodenrader Center for Academic Writing and Composition:

Writing well is not easy, so students are encouraged to visit their instructors if they are having difficulties with the reading and/or writing assignments. Additionally, students are strongly encouraged to make use of the Writing Center (Library 122). Beginning the third week of the semester, professional and peer tutors will be available on a walk-in basis (Monday-Thursday from 10 AM- 9 PM; Friday 10 AM- 6PM; Sunday 5-9 PM). When visiting the Writing Center, students should bring a copy of the assignment guidelines as well as a copy of the essay. Writing tutors can assist students at any stage of the writing process from brainstorming and organizing to sentence-level concerns. Students are expected to actively engage in the tutoring and revision process; tutors will not edit or rewrite papers.

Accommodations:

If a student with a documented disability has registered with the Center for Student Accommodations (CSA) and has been approved to receive accommodations, the student will need to pick up copies of their “Approved Accommodations” letter from the Center. If a student is planning on using those accommodations for their classes, the student should provide a copy of their letter to each respective faculty member for each class for which accommodations will be utilized.  Please note, students are *not*required to disclose their disability to any professor, however, faculty members must be notified of student accommodations in order to implement and coordinate approved accommodations with the student and CSA. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, letters should be distributed promptly. Students should deliver “Approved Accommodations” Letters during professor office hours or by scheduling an appointment.

**Schedule**

The following schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

All homework assignments are due on the dates listed.

**Unit 1: Ideal Americans, American Ideals**

**Monday, August 27**—Introduction: the Monomyth

Homework:

* None! ☺

**Thursday, August 30**—American Archetypes

Homework:

* Read excerpt from *Heroes, Villains, & Fools* by Orrin E. Klapp
* Journal Entry 1: In your own words, explain each of Klapp’s 5 categories of heroes. Keeping in mind that Klapp’s book was first published in 1962, which of these categories do you think are most dominant in today’s hero narratives? Why? Do you think American heroes have changed much since Klapp’s writing? Why or why not? Then write about your own favorite fictional hero. Who is the hero? What movie, TV show, book, etc. are they from? Why are they your favorite fictional hero? What are their main qualities? What obstacles do they overcome? How do they overcome them? How do they treat other people? Which of the 5 categories do they most exemplify? Why? In what ways do you think your hero exemplifies American identity and values? (Feel free to include a picture of the hero!)

**Monday, September 3**—NO CLASS: LABOR DAY

**Unit 2: Great Men of Action—Masculine Heroes**

**Thursday, September 6**—American Masculinity (Group Lessons)

Lesson Articles:

* Group 1: Excerpt from *American Manhood* by Anthony Rotundo
* Group 2: “Man-of-Action Heroes” by Douglas B. Holt & Craig J. Thompson

Homework:

* Read *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane, chapters I – XI
* Journal Entry 2: So far in *The Red Badge of Courage*, how does the character Henry define American manhood and heroism? Does he live up to those definitions? Why or why not? Provide specific passages from the book to support your points. From the perspective of a 2018 college student, do you agree or disagree with Henry’s definitions? Why or why not?

**Monday, September 10**—Men of War

Homework:

* Read *The Red Badge of Courage*, chapters XII – end

**Thursday, September 13**—NO CLASS—DR. FABER IS OUT OF TOWN—THERE’S A GIANT ASSIGNMENT FOR MONDAY, SO START WORKING ON IT EARLY!

**Monday, September 17**— Cowboy Heroes

Homework:

* Read “The Evolution of the Western Genre Resulting from Social Changes in the USA” by Malgorzata Martynuska
* Watch *The Searchers* (posted on Blackboard)
* Read “Brokeback Mountain” by Annie Proulx
* Provide some kind of proof that you did the readings and watched the movie. Upload your proof to Blackboard.
* Journal Entry 3 (WORTH DOUBLE POINTS): Explain Martynuska’s definition of the Western genre. What are the typical characteristics of the Western, including characters, plot, and setting? Which American values and ideals do Western films represent? Then consider the heroes in the film *The Searchers* and the short story “Brokeback Mountain. Who are these heroes? As heroes in Western stories, do you think they exemplify the American values and ideals typically represented in Western films? Why or Why not? Provide at least 3 examples from each text to support your points. Then consider the three main fictional texts we’ve encountered so far: *The Red Badge of* Courage, *The Searchers,* and “Brokeback Mountain.” How do the main heroes in these stories compare to one another? What heroic qualities do they share? What plot points are similar? How do they treat other men and women? How does each character define and/or critique traditional notions of American masculinity and manhood? Overall, how have notions of ideal American masculinity changed over time, from *The Red Badge of Courage* in 1895 to *Shane* in 1953 to “Brokeback Mountain” in 1997? How have notions of American masculinity stayed the same? Why do you think this is so? Provide ample evidence to support all of your points.

**Thursday, September 20**— Deconstructing Masculinity

Homework:

* Read “Bloodchild” by Octavia Butler
* Journal Entry 4: Science Fiction stories set in the future may often be seen as social or political commentary on our present cultural experiences. So why do you think Butler would choose to depict a future world in which an alien species forcibly impregnates young men? Through “Bloodchild,” what social or political point do you think Butler is trying to make about American values, masculinity, colonialism, etc? (HINT: don’t just Google this. There’s no singular correct interpretation here, so just think about what we’ve discussed so far and what you already know about American history and culture.) Given everything we’ve learned about masculinity, heroism, and American values/ideals, is Gan a masculine hero in “Bloodchild”? Why or why not? Provide ample evidence to support your points.

**Unit 3: American Woman—Feminine Heroes**

**Monday, September 24**— American Heroines (Group Lessons)

Lesson Articles:

* Group 3: “Are Heroes Always Men?” by Joan Fayer
* Group 4: Excerpt from *The Female Hero in American and British Literature* by Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope

Homework:

* Read “Fame vs. Love. A Woman’s Choice.” by Mary F. W. Gibson (a.k.a. Winnie Woodfern) and “Sweat” by Zora Neale Hurston

**Thursday, September 27**— The Future Is Female?

Homework:

* Read *The Female Man* by Joanna Russ, Parts One through Three
* Journal Entry 5: Thus far, what do we know about Jeannine, Joanna, and Janet? Who are they? What are their qualities? How do they interact with others, both men and women? Of the three of them, whom do you think is most hero-like so far? Why? Provide ample evidence to support your points.

**Monday, October 1**— The Future Is Female?

* Read *The Female Man* by Joanna Russ, Parts Four and Five

**Thursday, October 4**—The Future Is Female?

Homework:

* Read *The Female Man*, Parts Six and Seven
* Journal Entry 6: Who are Jeannine and Joanna? In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different? Why does Jeannine agree to marry Cal? What does Joanna mean when she says she became a man? In what ways do they embody and/or critique American social norms for women? Are either of these women American heroes? Why or why not? Provide ample evidence to support your points.

**Monday, October 8**—NO CLASS—FALL BREAK

**Thursday, October 11**— The Future Is Female?

Homework:

* Read *The Female Man*, Parts Eight and Nine
* (No journal entry due)
* **Midterm Project**

**Monday, October 15**—Women Saving Themselves

Homework:

* Read “Woman Hollering Creek” by Sandra Cisneros and “The Palm Tree Bandit” by Nnedi Okorafor

**Thursday, October 18**—Women Saving the World

In Class: Watch *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

Homework:

Journal Entry 7: All of the texts we’ve encountered in this unit on American Heroines has in some way involved imagination, storytelling, mysticism, fantasy, and/or nature. Why do you think stories by and about heroic American women are so often couched in these themes? What do you think this tells us about American ideals and culture, definitions of American womanhood, and how women see themselves in society?

**Monday, October 22**— Girl Power

In Class: Watch *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

Homework:

* None! ☺

**Unit 4: As American As Baseball and Apple Pie—Athletic Heroes**

**Thursday, October 25**—American Baseball Heroes (Group Lesson)

Lesson Articles:

* Group 5: excerpt from *Seeking the Perfect Game* by Cordelia Candelaria
* Group 6: excerpt from *Making the Team* by Timothy Morris

Homework:

* Read “Casey at the Bat” by Ernest Lawrence Thayer and “Hurry Kane” by Ring Lardner, Jr.
* Journal Entry 8: When you picture a great baseball hero, what do you see? Who is that person? What are their qualities? How did they get started in baseball? What are their accomplishments? How do they treat others? What American value or quality do they most embody? (If you don’t know anything about baseball, that’s okay! Draw on what you know about sports heroes in general.) Then compare that image of a baseball hero to Casey from “Casey at the Bat” and Kane from “Hurry Kane.” In what ways do they differ? Why do you think Thayer and Lardner would have chosen to write these characters? What American values or qualities do they embody or challenge? Provide ample evidence from the texts to support your points.

**Monday, October 29**— New Classic Narratives

Homework:

* Read “A Young Man’s Game” by John D. MacDonald and “I Will Destroy You, Derek Jeter” by Chris Rylander

**Thursday, November 1**—Revising the Classic Narrative (Group Lesson)

Lesson Article:

* Group 7: Chapter 3 of “Media and Literary Representations of Latinos in Baseball and Baseball Fiction” by Mihir D. Parekh

Homework:

* Read “Chasing Chato” by Wayne Rapp and “So Much for the Cubs” by Melissa Hidalgo
* Journal Entry 9: Who are the heroes in “Chasing Chato” and “So Much for the Cubs”? In what ways are they similar to or different from the other heroes we’ve discussed, both in this baseball unit and in the previous two units? What American values do they embody and/or critique? Provide ample evidence to support your points.

**Monday, November 5**—“Girls can’t play ball!”

In Class: Watch *A League of Our Own*

Homework:

* None! ☺

**Thursday, November 8**—“Girls can’t play ball!”

In Class: Watch *A League of Our Own*

Homework:

* Journal Entry 10: Thus far, to what extent does *A League of Our Own* conform to or break free from the other hero narratives we’ve discussed in class, both in this baseball unit and the previous two units? Be sure to consider the qualities of the heroes, how they treat others, and their narratives. Provide ample supporting evidence from films, novels, short stories, and class Lessons.

**Unit 5: America’s Masked Avengers—Superheroes**

**Monday, November 12**—Truth, Justice, & the American Way! (Group Lessons)

Lesson Articles:

* Group 8: Excerpt from *Champions of the Oppressed* by Christopher Murray
* Group 9: “Superhero: The Six Step Progression” by Hal Blythe and Charlie Sweet

Homework:

* Read *Action Comics* (Superman) no. 1, *Wonder Woman* no. 1 and *Captain America* no. 1

**Thursday, November 15**—Truth, Justice, & the American Way!

Homework:

* Read *Avengers* No. 1 & 3, *The Brave & the Bold* No. 28, and *The Justice League* no. 4
* Journal Entry 11: Given everything we’ve learned about American hero stories this semester, why do you think Americans need superhero characters and narratives, culturally and politically? Why *super*heroes, instead of just regular heroes? Provide ample evidence from this week’s comic book readings and other readings/screenings from the semester to support your points.

**Monday, November 19**—Who Watches the Watchers?

Homework:

* Read *Watchmen* chapters 1-4

**Thursday, November 22**—NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK

**Monday, November 26**—Who Watches the Watchers

Homework:

* Read *Watchmen* chapters 5-8

**Thursday, November 29**—Who Watches the Watchers

Homework:

* Read *Watchmen* chapters 9-end
* Journal Entry 12: What do you think Moore is trying to say in *Watchmen* about American heroes and hero worship? Compare and contrast *Watchmen* to at least one other text we’ve encountered this semester. Consider in particular how the narrative, characters, imagery, and the “Under the Hood” aspects of *Watchmen* challenge or support traditional narratives about American Heroes. Do you agree or disagree with Moore’s assessment of American heroes and hero worship? Why or why not? Provide ample textual evidence to support your points.

**Monday, December 3**—Wakanda Forever!

In Class: Watch *Black Panther*

Homework:

* Work on your final! Make an appointment for Dr. Faber’s office hours! Take a draft to the Writing Center!

**Thursday, December 6**—Wakanda Forever!

In Class: Watch *Black Panther*

Homework:

* Journal Entry 13: Given everything we’ve learned this semester, re-analyze the hero you discussed in your first journal entry. Knowing what you know now, what more would you like to say about this hero? Are they still your favorite hero? Why or why not? In what ways do they exemplify American ideals? Compare and contrast the hero you discussed in your first entry with at least one of the heroes we’ve discussed this semester, focusing in particular on how heroes and hero narratives express different American values and ideals.

**Final “Exam” date TBA**

In Class: Wrap-up discussion + extra credit presentations

Homework:

* Final Project
* Extra Credit