

**INDEPENDENT STUDY—RHETORIC OF VILLAINS, SPRING 2016
COMMRC 1902**

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COURSE DESCRIPTION/OBJECTIVES

The Rhetoric of Villains course is designed to produce a large research project, with steps and tasks taken along the way.

The bulk of the course will focus on persuasive messaging and social construction stemming from DC villains, though other villains will be studied and brought into discussion in order to nuance the conversation.

REQUIRED TEXT

Hoppenstand, G. (Ed.). (2014). *Critical insights: The graphic novel*. Ipswich, MA: Salem Press. ISBN: 978-1619252622

New 52 Villain Books

-Additional readings as discussed/assigned

GRADING SCALE

Final grades will be calculated utilizing the following scale:

A+	98 - 100%
A	93 - 97.9%
A-	90 - 92.9%
B+	88 - 89.9%
B	83 - 87.9%
B-	80 - 82.9%
C+	78 - 79.9%
C	73 - 77.9%
C-	70 - 72.9%
D+	68 - 69.9%
D	63 - 67.9%
D-	60 - 62.9%
F	0 - 59.9%

COURSE POLICIES

Cell Phones/Electronic Devices. If you are caught text messaging or taking or making a call or otherwise engaging a phone or other electronic device during an exam, you will receive an automatic zero for the exam and procedural process may be initiated.

Use of Email. If you do not access your Pitt email on a regular basis, please redirect the Pitt account to the one you do access on a daily basis. I may occasionally provide course information through Pitt email.

I expect professionalism in all emails, so make sure to include an appropriate subject line, a greeting, and a closer whenever emailing me. Any emails not including both written text and your name in the email body will be disregarded and deleted; this is especially important to consider if you are sending me assignments.

Use of Blackboard/Courseweb. Blackboard (Courseweb) will be used for various purposes through the duration of the course. Please check Blackboard for course information, updates, documents, and course grades.

Academic Accommodations . If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Health and Counseling Services, G-10 Student Union, 814-269-7119, as early as possible in the term. The Office of Health and Counseling Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. Accommodations will not be granted retroactively.

Academic Integrity and Using Sources. Unless otherwise instructed, all assignments are to be completed as your original, individual work. Threats to academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating (copying from someone else, using electronic devices or notes to cheat), plagiarizing (using another person's ideas and stating their words as your own), fabricating of information or citations (making up sources), facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others (letting someone copy your paper or test), having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, and tampering with the academic work of other students. Any information obtained from the Internet or any other source must be cited or it will be considered plagiarism. Academic dishonesty simply will not be tolerated.

In the event that a student plagiarizes and/or commits an academic integrity violation (see above), he or she will automatically fail the applicable assignment (zero grade). In the case of a second violation, the student will automatically fail the course. Note that procedural process will be initiated in any plagiarism or academic integrity case, which can result in additional consequences.

Failing to properly cite sources in text, in the Works Cited or References, or verbally in presentations will result in deductions to the applicable assignment.

Wikipedia, other Wikis, Encyclopedias/Encyclopedia Websites, and/or Dictionaries/Dictionary Websites should never be used as sources for information in this course—with the one exception of operationalizing terms through Encyclopedia or Dictionary definitions in speeches or presentations. Wikis are not credible sources, and dictionaries and encyclopedias lack the communication application and theoretical depth we are looking for in the course. Utilizing such sources, except in the cases of Encyclopedias or Dictionaries used to operationalize terms in speeches or presentations, will result in a deduction in points on the assignment.

Submission of Course Papers and Projects. Unless otherwise directed by the instructor, all assignments are to be submitted in class on the date indicated in the schedule. Stapled, hard copies (8.5x11 paper) are expected for submissions. Double-sided is great!

All course papers and assignments need to be typed, 12-pt. font, Times New Roman or Calibri, and double-spaced. Presentation outlines may be single-spaced. You must abide by either MLA or APA for the Works Cited or References pages and in text citations. Headers and margins must also abide by MLA or APA standards. Any listed page or word count lengths in the syllabus or rubrics do not include References pages, Works Cited pages, or title pages. Listed minimum page lengths mean you must get onto that page in order to meet the requirement.

I do understand that printer malfunctions can occur and students can sometimes run late. If that happens, I want you to attend class on time. In such events, do not send me anything by email attachment unless and until specifically directed to do so—in other words, please speak to me or email me first; in that case, the email is due no later than 11:59 pm on the due date. A hard copy will then be required by the start of the next class meeting. Be sure to cc yourself on the email submission in case you/we need to verify the time stamp and

that the email was actually sent. Also, be very mindful of the use of email policy (name and text in the body of the email) should you submit material this way. Speeches, presentations, exams, and any exam time activities cannot be submitted this way and must be completed in the class period.

Do not place late assignments under my office door assuming I will accept them—I will not.

Regarding Rubrics: I do not require you to submit rubrics with your assignments; however, I am happy to fill them out if you like. If rubrics are provided for an assignment and you would like the rubric given to you with your grade and feedback, please print the rubric and attach it to your assignment. Otherwise, I will just return the assignment with feedback, grading according to the established rubric criteria.

Late Assignments. Late work will not be accepted unless accompanied by documentation for an excused absence, and not all excused absences warrant an extension—you will need to contact me about the specific circumstance. Unless appropriate documentation is provided, papers, speeches, presentations, exams, and exam time activities must be completed on time. Deadlines are listed as weeks ending on Fridays.

Queries Regarding Grades. If there comes a time when you disagree with the grade you have earned on an assignment, you may come to me to argue your side. I will not hold conversations regarding grades or feedback until at least 48 hours after the assignment is handed back to you. I will never discuss grades or feedback before, during, or after class in the classroom. You will need to schedule an appointment with me to discuss any grade or feedback in my office. I will certainly not entertain any discussions about grades posted to courseweb prior to you getting feedback.

After 48 hours, you are to construct a one page, written request, submitted in hard copy form, clearly stating the reason for your appeal with a well-reasoned argument. **By requesting this appeal, you agree to disregard the contested grade entirely.** On appeal, the assignment will be graded again according to the criteria originally established for the assignment. **The new grade may be the same, higher, or lower than the original, contested grade.** The grade determined on review is then final.

Keep in mind! I will not entertain any subjective requests to alter or round grades at any point during or after the semester. I do not change grades because students feel they should be changed, and I do not round scores—ever!

Extra Credit. If interested in extra credit, I can provide an extra credit assignment. Please contact me if at any point you would like to discuss extra credit. Once I establish an assignment and point value, I will make the assignment available.

GRADING/ASSIGNMENT LIST

This course grades on the point system, allowing you to calculate your grade and determine what you will need to achieve.

<u>Assignment Name</u>	<u>Points Possible</u>
Opening Villain Paper	10
Annotated Bibliography	10
Literature Review	20
Villain Paper	25
Final Exam	15
Summaries (4 @ 5 points each)	20
TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE	100

ASSIGNMENTS (If desired, specific rubrics can be provided)**Opening Villain Paper (10 points)**

Near the start of class, the student will identify villains to work with. This opening paper will select at least five prominent DC villains to focus on. There is no source requirement for this paper, but the student will need to provide a rationale for each villain. Paper should be 3-5 pages in length.

Annotated Bibliography (10 points)

As a second step, the student will conduct research on villains/persuasion/social construction. The student will provide a listing for relevant literature, annotating summaries and critiques to include at least 10 sources, with one page devoted per source.

Literature Review (20 points)

As a starting step to the final paper, the student will complete a literature review. The literature review should be as exhaustive as possible, providing insight, connections, critiques, and gaps warranting further study. At this stage, I will work with the student to generate ideas and topics for the final paper's contributions to the field. Paper should be 5-8 pages in length, with at least 10 sources.

Villain Paper (25 points)

The final paper in the course will propose ideas and vantage points relevant to persuasion and the selected villains. As much as possible, the student should intertwine claims regarding social construction across the villain choices. The goal of this paper is presentation at a conference in the future. Paper should be 8-10 pages in length.

Final Examination (15 points)

The final examination is comprised of multiple choice questions covering material from the semester. A review guide will be provided.

Summaries (20 points)

At four points in the semester, chapter summaries will be due. Impressions and critique will be part of the summaries; summaries do not require sources outside the textbook and should be at least two pages each.

COURSE CALENDAR*

*Note: Course calendar/due dates are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Additional readings to be completed according to student preference. Meetings TBD.

Week ending 1/22:	<i>Read: Sandman Chapter</i> <i>Read: Sin City Chapter</i>
Week ending 1/29:	<i>Summary of Superhero Narrative Chapter Due</i> <i>Opening Villain Paper Due</i>
Week ending 2/5:	<i>Read: A Contract with God Chapter</i> <i>Read: A Survivor's Tale Chapter</i>
Week ending 2/12:	<i>Summary of Horror Narrative Chapter Due</i>
Week ending 2/19:	<i>Read: Watchmen Chapter</i> <i>Read: V for Vendetta Chapter</i>
Week ending 2/26:	<i>Read: Batman Chapter</i> <i>Read: Road to Perdition Chapter</i> <i>Annotated Bibliography Due</i>
Week ending 3/18:	<i>Summary of Crime Narrative Chapter Due</i> <i>Literature Review Due</i>
Week ending 3/25:	<i>Read: Persepolis Chapter</i> <i>Read: Walking Dead Chapter</i>
Week ending 4/1:	<i>Summary of Reality/Fantasy Chapter Due</i>
Week ending 4/22:	<i>Villain Paper Due</i>
Week ending 4/29:	<i>Exam Deadline</i> <i>Extra Credit Due</i>