

# Welcome to The Superhero!

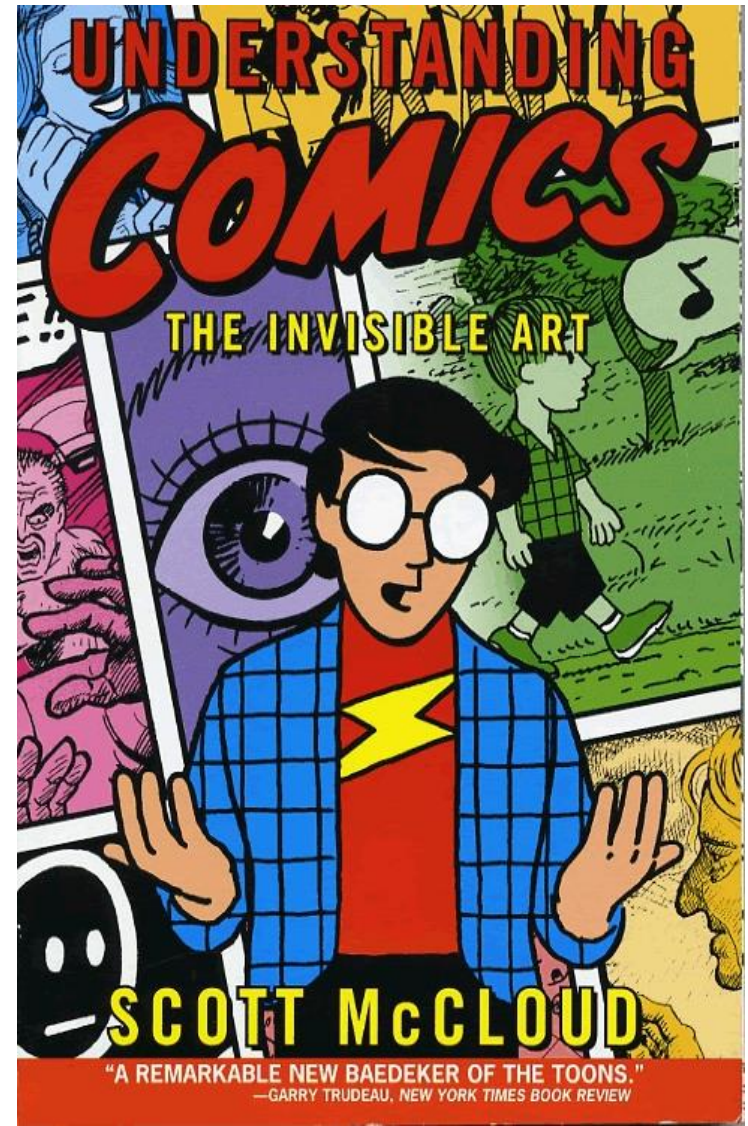


# Instructor's Info

- Dr. Sylvia Terzian
- Email: [sterzian@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:sterzian@uwaterloo.ca)
- Office hours: Mondays, 5:00pm – 6:00pm (and by appointment)
- Office location: SH 2044

# Evening contemplation

- Why read or study comics?



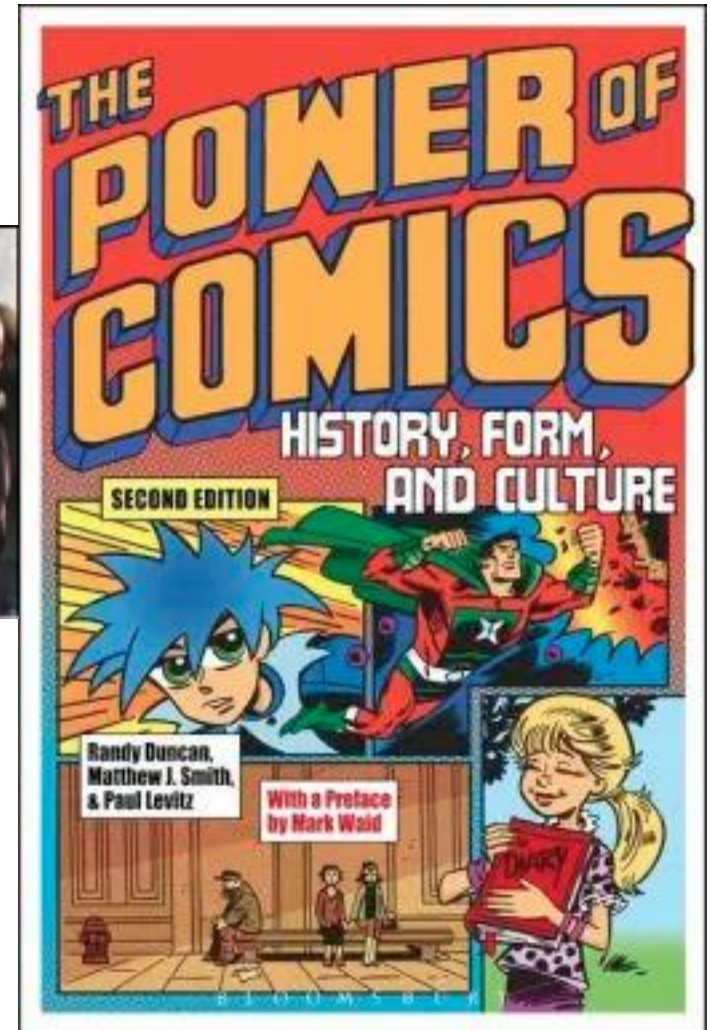
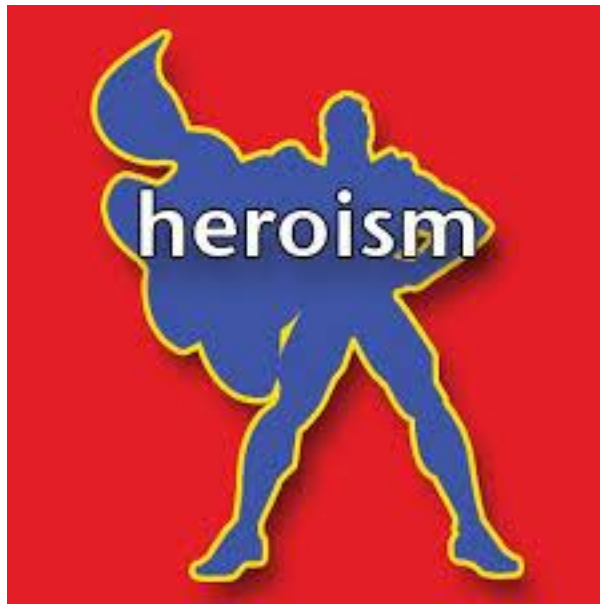
# Agenda: Monday May 1

1. Course Orientation; Syllabus
2. In-class Activity
3. What is/makes a hero?
4. Joseph Campbell, Hero's Journey

# In-class activity

- Each table is now a group: call yourselves something heroic
- Each table must discuss and answer the question provided by the instructor
- Each table must introduce themselves to the class and present their reflections to the class

# This class is about 3 things:



# What makes a Hero?

- Act of bravery
- Overcome adversity
- Persist in the face of fear
- Strong moral compass (moral code)
- Empathic
- Nurturing
- Selfless
- People of action
- “nobility of purpose”

## Friedrich Nietzsche puts it best:

To wrench the human soul from its moorings, to immerse it in terrors, ice, flames, and raptures to such an extent that it is liberated from all petty displeasure, gloom, and depression as by a flash of lightening: what paths lead to this goal? And which of them do so most surely?

From *The Superhero Reader* (*On the Genealogy of Morals*, 1967 [1887]: 139)



# Heroic Models:

## 1. Greek Myth (demi-god)

Hercules / Herakles



Achilles

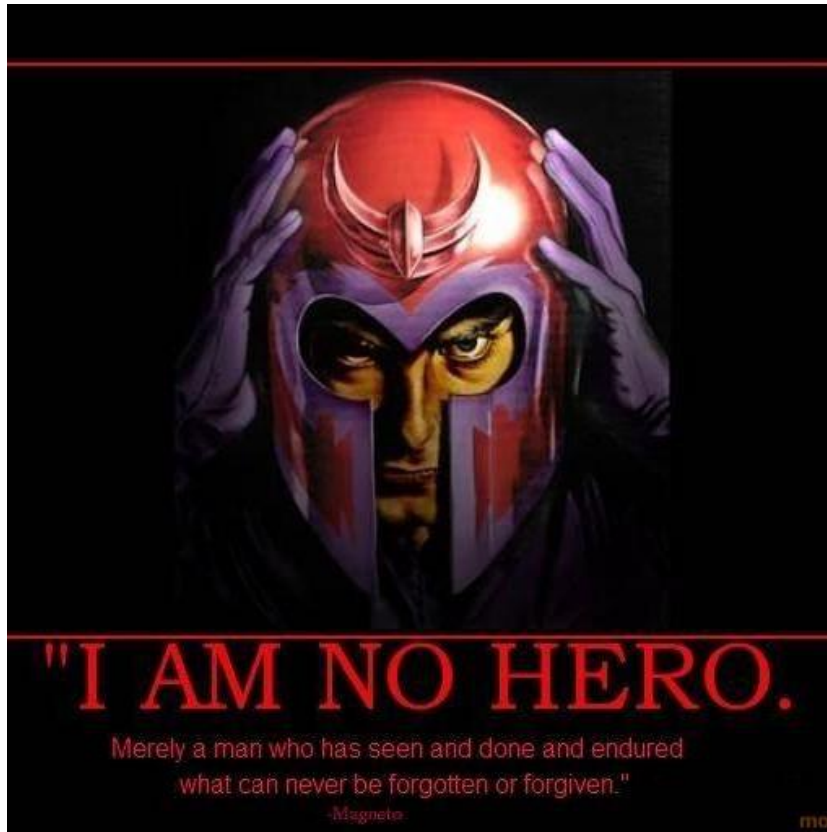


## 2. Warrior hero /epic hero (divine and mortal)

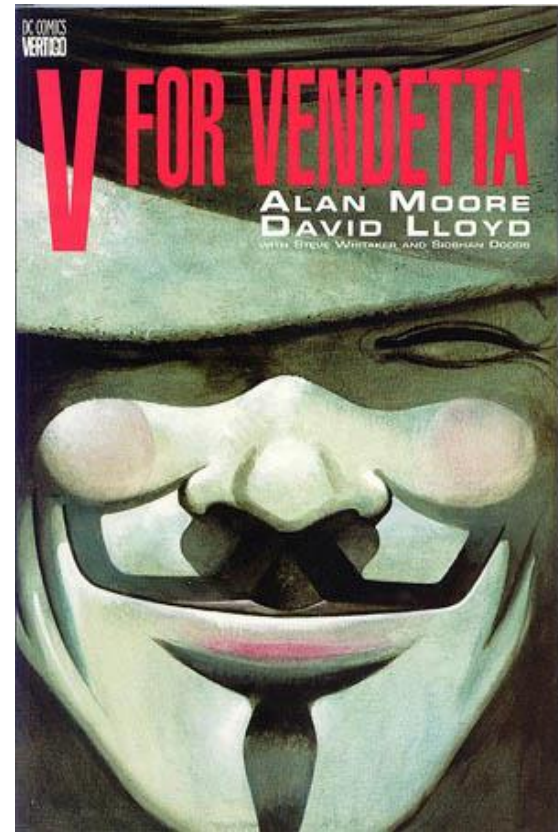


### 3. Anti-hero (questionable morality)

Magneto



V for Vendetta





# Anti-hero



## 4. Tragic Hero (fallen gods)

Oedipus the King



Prometheus



# Tragic Hero: The Myth of Frankenstein



# Defining a Hero (OED Online)

- 1. A name given (as in Homer) to men of superhuman strength, courage, or ability, favored by the gods; at a later time regarded as intermediate between god and men, and immortal.
- **2.** A man distinguished by extraordinary valour and martial achievements; one who does brave or noble deeds; an illustrious warrior.
- **3.** A man who exhibits extraordinary bravery, firmness, fortitude, or greatness of soul, in any course of action, or in connection with any pursuit, work, or enterprise; a man admired and venerated for his achievements and noble qualities.

# Defining a Human

- 1a. Of the nature of the human race; that is a human, or consists of human beings; belonging to the species *Homo sapiens* or other (extinct) species of the genus *Homo*.
- 1b. Chiefly *fig.* Designating a person who takes on the appearance or form, or who performs the function of a specified (esp. inanimate) thing; (also) designating a person who assumes the appearance, role, or abilities of a specified creature.



# Defining a Human

- **2.** Of, relating to, or characteristic of humans as distinguished from God or gods; secular, not divine; (also) of or relating to the abilities or sphere of activity of human as opposed to supernatural beings; mundane, worldly; imperfect, fallible.

# Defining a Human

- **3.** Of, relating to, or distinctive of people as distinguished from other animals; of, relating to, or characteristic of the species *Homo sapiens* or other (extinct) species of the genus *Homo*.

# Defining a Human

- 4. Of the nature of, relating to, or concerning human beings and their activities, as contrasted (both positively and negatively) with things commonly regarded as impersonal or mechanical, as machines, systems, processes, etc.

# Key Underlying Questions / Concerns

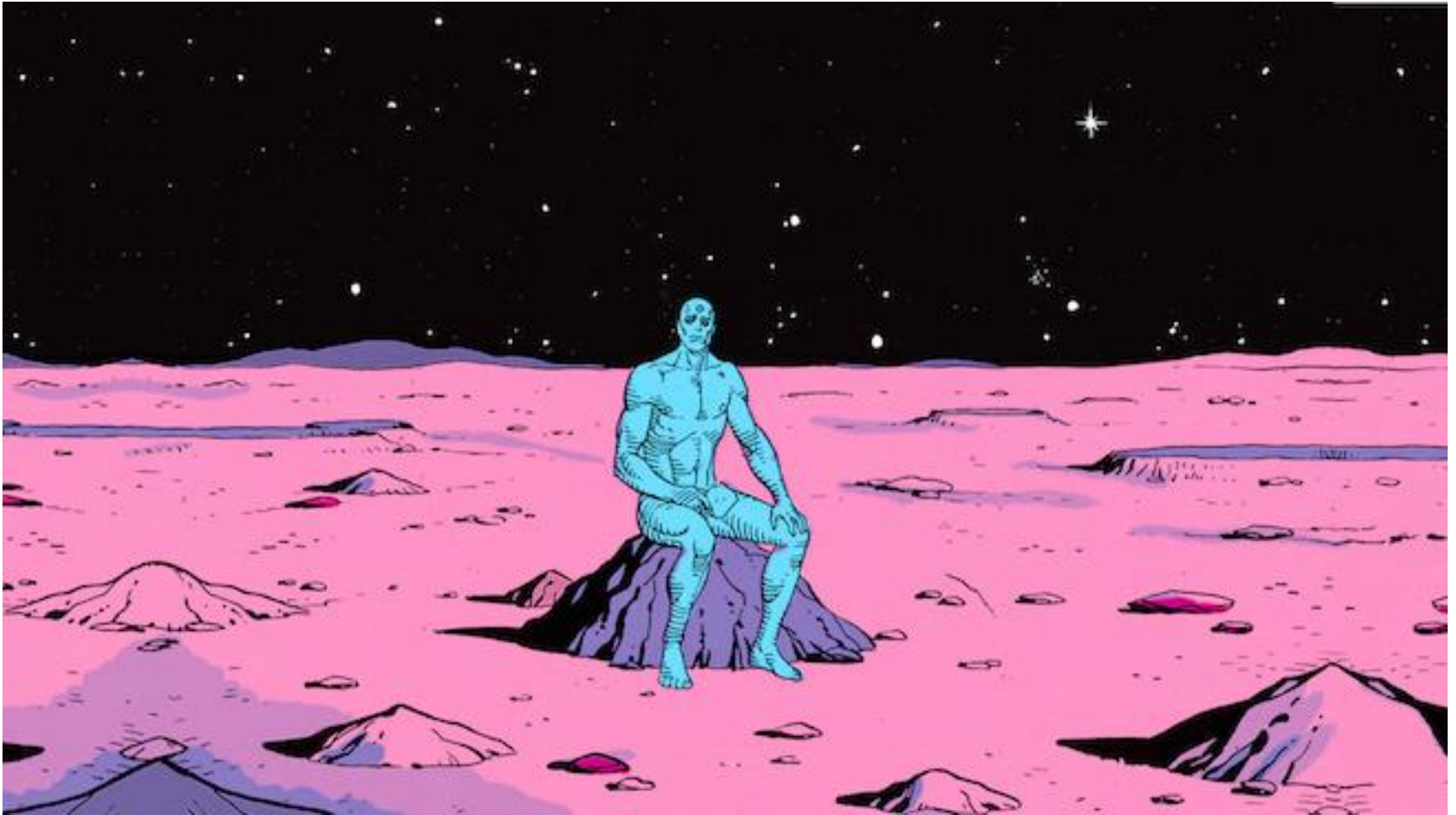
The differences  
between human and  
non-human

**Cyborg:**

Superhero of the  
modern Age?



# Unbeatable Bad Guy?



# Other questions

- How is the superhero set apart from ordinary humanity?
- Why have Superheroes stood the test of time?
- Do they convey meaningful ideas?

# Why should we take them seriously?

- Ideological meaningful
- Culturally meaningful
- Socially meaningful
- Artistically/aesthetically meaningful
- Historically meaningful

# Can we Learn to be Heroes?

- Or are we born heroes?
- Heroic elect?

