Rutgers SAS Signature Course, Heroism 098:255
Fall 2019
Academic Building (East) Room 2225
TR 1:10-2:30

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Are heroes and heroines born or made? What makes ordinary people do extraordinary things? What defines a hero or heroine? Are heroes and heroines defined differently? What role do cultural and historical contexts play in these definitions? How do fictional heroes and heroines compare with historical ones? What turns rebels, agitators, iconoclasts, or even fools into heroes? Considering the Greek etymological origin of the word “hero,” ἥρως (literally “protector”), what and who do we see heroes and heroines defending?

This course offers a global and comparative examination of different conceptions of heroism across cultures, time, and gender. Since the beginning of written records, heroic acts and gestures have had an enduring appeal. Shrines and monuments, epics and songs, paintings and films have been dedicated to extolling heroic figures—real, idealized or legendary. What can a culture’s heroes or heroines tell us about its values, expectations, and ideals? What motivates one to go beyond the individual and ordinary to sacrifice for a community, country or humanity? We will explore the cultural conditioning, ethical reasoning, and moral compass behind some of the greatest heroes and heroines in history and literature, from Greek epic heroes to Chinese assassin-retainers, women warriors to samurais, Shakespearean tragic heroes to contestants in the real life Game of Thrones in medieval Europe, civil rights leaders to women’s rights crusaders, and comic superheroes to modern day heroes. By examining heroism from a historicizing, multicultural, and gendered perspective, students can with greater knowledge and power view their choices and determine their actions as global citizens in the 21st century.

Students will explore different examples of heroism and are encouraged to think critically about the past and how that past is mediated through contemporary culture in the forms of Hollywood and international movies, documentaries, and video games. The lectures, recitations sessions, and writing assignments are designed to enable students to connect the past and today in a broadly-based examination of heroic action. The six response papers offer students the opportunity to contemplate relevant issues raised by historical or literary cases for today’s society and analyze heroic figures or actions from the past in relationship to their modern or contemporary interpretation or adaptation. In the final paper, students will critically analyze an aspect of heroism in relation to its historical, cultural or gendered contexts.

“Heroism” fulfills the SAS Contemporary Challenges (CC) requirement: Analyze a contemporary global issue from a multidisciplinary perspective (CCO-1); and the SAS Arts and
**Humanities (AH)** requirement: Analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies (AHp)

**Requirements and Grading:**

I. **Attendance:** Attending the lectures is expected. More than 3 unexcused absences will affect your grade: after the third unexcused absence, the final grade will be lowered by one letter; six or more unexcused absences will result in a failing grade.

*Religious holidays will not be counted as absences; in such cases, please let your instructor know that you will not be attending class.

**To report other absences, please use the Rutgers online system at [https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/](https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/) and contact your instructor with a fuller explanation of the absence.

***Generally, documented illness, intercollegiate athletic events, and court appearances may be excused.

**Top Hat Attendance Tracker**

We will be using the Top Hat ([www.tophat.com](http://www.tophat.com)) classroom response system in lecture. You will be able to confirm attendance using Apple or Android smartphones and tablets, laptops, or through text message.


An email invitation will be sent to you by email. If you do not receive this email, you can register by simply visiting the Top Hat webpage for our course: [https://app.tophat.com/e/047288](https://app.tophat.com/e/047288)

**Our Course Join Code is 047288.**

Top Hat may require a paid subscription; a full breakdown of all subscription options available can be found here: [www.tophat.com/pricing](http://www.tophat.com/pricing).

Due to the fact that Top Hat requires specific user information to troubleshoot any issues, should you require assistance with Top Hat at any time, please contact directly their Support Team via email ([support@tophat.com](mailto:support@tophat.com)), the in-app support button, or by calling 1-888-663-5491.

II. **Response Papers (60%):** There are to be six response papers uploaded onto SAKAI Assignments by 8:00 am before the Friday Recitation Sessions. Each response paper is worth 10%. The analytical response should consist of close analysis of the assigned texts and selected film clips, with the citation of textual support and reference to film scenes or documentaries to support your main points. These response papers should include your own ideas and questions
that arise during your reading of the works. Students must demonstrate that they have read the texts carefully and thoughtfully and that they are able to connect it with contemporary issues as raised by recent interpretations or adaptations in popular culture. Each reflection should be titled, approximately but not exceeding 400 words, using a 12 point font.

III. Recitation Sessions (25%): There will be six Friday recitations sessions, during which students have the opportunity to exchange their ideas from the weekly responses, discuss in greater depth the assigned works and the issues raised by them. Each recitation session is worth 5%, with the lowest score dropped.

*Attendance and participation in the recitation sessions, as in the lectures, is required. Students will need to come to class having read and pondered the assigned texts. Students must bring a copy of the reading assignment to class. Participation does not mean just attendance; rather it requires active engagement in group discussion.

**Students are to lead the discussion during recitation sessions in turn and present on the assigned texts over the course of the semester. These group discussions may be based on the issues raised in the course lectures and/or the students’ own interpretation of the works. They may also address larger issues or make comparisons with other course readings. There will be 3-4 discussion leaders per session. Everyone is required to come prepared for discussion whether or not s/he is leading that week.

Each recitation will be graded using the following rubric:

1) Attendance (1%): presence during the entire duration of the recitation

2) Participation (4%): active engagement in group discussion, offering own interpretation and ideas, posing questions

3) Discussion leaders automatically receive 5% for that recitation for leading the group discussion

IV. Final Paper (due Monday, December 16, 11:00 AM; 15%): Paper should be titled, approximately though not exceeding 1000 words, using a 12 point font. Discuss your understanding of heroism by drawing from the course lectures, assigned readings and film clips, comparing or contrasting different examples, and constructing an argument using support from assigned works. Focusing on an aspect of heroism, your paper should analyze the issues through a careful interpretation of the texts and/or films. A list of thematic aspects and suggested questions to explore will be provided in advance. Students must retain a copy of each paper. Written work for this course must be entirely your own and careful citation of credible sources should conform with a style manual of your choice. For example, APA (American Psychological Association) is used by students in Education, Psychology, and Sciences; MLA (Modern Language Association) and the CMS (Chicago Manual of Style) are used by students in the humanities. Please use consistently the style manual of your choice.
Submission of all written work (in Word or PDF) must be made through SAKAI, under Assignments, using Turn-it-in.

Students are expected to turn in written work on time. Late submissions, unless accompanied by a note from a doctor or dean, will be subject to the following penalty: for each day that the work is late, 1/3 of a letter grade for the assignment will be deducted. If the paper is one day late, an A- becomes a B+. If the paper is three days late, a B becomes a C.

Violations of academic integrity, such as cheating, plagiarism, helping others to violate academic integrity, or submitting another’s work as your own, will not be tolerated. Any violation will result in zero credit for that assignment and will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. Ignorance of the rules and conventions of attribution and citation is not considered a mitigating factor. See Rutgers University guidelines on academic integrity at: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers/

Note on civility in the classroom: students are expected to uphold basic standards of classroom decorum, which means arriving to class on time, no texting or surfing the internet, no chatting with your neighbors, and no eating during class. Cell phones should be set to silent mode or turned off during class; if a student needs to be told a second time not to use his/her cellphone during class, then his/her grade will be affected.

Course Materials:

A course reader will be made available to students enrolled in the course on SAKAI.
Lecture & Recitation Schedule

Lecture 1 (9/3): Introduction and Overview: The Enduring Appeal of the Hero Today

Weeks 1 and 2: Greek Epic Heroes

Lecture 2 (9/5): Homeric Heroes: Definitions and Background
Reading: Homer, *The Iliad*, Books 1, 3

Lecture 3 (9/10): The Trojan War: The Wrath of Achilles
[Clips from Wolfgang Peterson (dir.), *Troy* (2004)]
Reading: Homer, *The Iliad*, Books 16, 19

Lecture 4 (9/12): The Trojan War: The Death of Hector
[Clips from Wolfgang Peterson (dir.), *Troy* (2004)]
Reading: Homer, *The Iliad*, Books 22, 24

*Friday Recitation Session #1 (9/13)*

Week 3: Early China’s Assassin-Retainers

Lecture 5 (9/17): Historical Contexts of Chinese Assassin-Retainers
Reading: From the *Records of the Grand Historian* of China: The Biographies of Ts’ao Mo/Mei [pinyin romanization: Cao Mo], Chuan Chu [Zhuan Zhu], Yu Rang, Nieh Cheng [Nie Zheng], and Ching K’o [Jing Ke]

Lecture 6 (9/19): The Jing Ke Story in Chinese Popular Culture
[Clips from Zhang Yimou (dir.), “Hero” (2002) and Chen Kaige (dir.), “The Emperor and the Assassin” (1998)]

Week 4: Warriors and Strategists of the Three Kingdoms in Medieval China

Lecture 7 (9/24): A Literary Account of the Three Kingdoms: Historical Background

Lecture 8 (9/26): Narrative, Filmic and Video Game Adaptations of the Battle of Red Cliffs
[Clips from John Woo (dir.), “Red Cliff” (2008) and Demonstration of “Dragon Throne: Battle of Red Cliffs”]

*Friday Recitation Session #2 (9/27)*
Week 5: Real Life Game of Thrones

Lecture 9 (10/1): Hundred Years War: Warrior King Henry V
[Clips from Kenneth Branagh (dir.), Henry V (1989)]
Reading: Shakespeare, Henry V, Acts 1-3

Lecture 10 (10/3): Hundred Years War: Warrior King Henry V (Continued)
[Clips from Kenneth Branagh (dir.), Henry V (1989)]
Reading: Shakespeare, Henry V, Acts 4-5

Weeks 6-7: Two Women Warriors

Lecture 11 (10/8): From Peasant Girl to Savior-Saint: The Rise of Joan of Arc
[Clips from Luc Besson (dir.), The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc (1999)]
Reading: Willard Trask, Joan of Arc: In Her Own Words, 93-111 (“The Trial”)

Lecture 12 (10/10): From Peasant Girl to Savior-Saint: The Rise of Joan of Arc (Continued)
[Clips from Luc Besson (dir.), The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc (1999)]
Reading: Willard Trask, Joan of Arc: In Her Own Words, 111-132 (“The Trial”)

Friday Recitation Session #3 (10/11)

Lecture 13 (10/15): From Filial Daughter, Feminist Patriot to Disney Princess: The Legend of Mulan
[Clips from Disney movie, Mulan (1998)]
Reading: Anonymous, “The Poem of Mulan” (5th or 6th century); Wei Yuanfu, “The Song of Mulan” (mid-8th c.); Anonymous, Mu Lan Joins the Army, Part 1 (1903)

Lecture 14 (10/17): From Filial Daughter, Feminist Patriot to Disney Princess: The Legend of Mulan (Continued)
[Clips from Disney movie, Mulan (1998)]
Reading: Anonymous, Mu Lan Joins the Army, Part 2 (1903)

Week 8: All Too Human: The Shakespearean Tragic Hero

Lecture 15 (10/22): Romeo and Juliet, The Impulsive Lovers
[Clips from Baz Luhrmann, Romeo + Juliet (1996)]
Reading: Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, Acts 1-2

Lecture 16 (10/24): Romeo and Juliet, The Impulsive Lovers (Continued)
[Clips from Baz Luhrmann, Romeo + Juliet (1996)]
Reading: Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, Acts 3-5
Week 9: The Code of the Samurai Warrior

Lecture 17 (10/29): Loyalty and Revenge
[Clips from Kenji Mizoguchi (dir.), The 47 Ronin (1941) and Carl Rinsch (dir.), 47 Ronin (2013)]
Reading: “The Forty-Seven Samurai: An Eyewitness Account,” 304-321

Lecture 18 (10/31): Sacrifice and Death
[Film clips from the series Zatoichi]
Reading: “The Forty-Seven Samurai: Arguments,” 322-338

Week 10: World War II Heroes

Lecture 19 (11/5): Sacrifice
[Clips from documentary, Heroes of World War II, presented by Walter Cronkite]
Reading: Kathryn Atwood, Women Heroes of World War II: 26 Stories of Espionage, Sabotage, Resistance, and Rescue, 193-203

Lecture 20 (11/7): The Courage of Survival
[Clips from Angelina Jolie (dir.), Unbroken (2014)]
Reading: Laura Hillenbrand, Unbroken, 236-253, 282-299, 322-325

Week 11: The Holocaust

Lecture 21 (11/12): The Extraordinary Courage of an Ordinary Young Girl
[Clips from Robert Dornhelm (dir.), Anne Frank: The Whole Story (2001)]
Reading: Anne Frank, Diary of a Young Girl, 1 (June 14, 1942)-21 (July 11, 1942), 239 (May 25, 1944)-268 (August 1, 1944)

Lecture 22 (11/14): Courageous Acts of Defiance
[Clips from Steven Spielberg (dir.), Schindler’s List (1993)]
Reading: Eric Silver, The Book of the Just: The Unsung Heroes Who Rescued Jews from Hitler, 32-42, 137-156

Week 12: Civil Rights Heroes and Heroines

Lecture 23 (11/19): From Ida Wells, Eleanor Roosevelt to Rosa Parks
[Clips from Ava DuVernay (dir.), Selma (2014)]
Reading: The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr., 218-228, 270-289

Friday Recitation Session #6 (11/22)

Week 13: Women’s Rights Crusaders

Lecture 25 (11/26): From Pioneers, Suffragettes, Second Wave of Feminist Activism in the 1960’s to the “Me Too” Movement
[Clips from interviews with Susan Brownmiller, Gloria Steinem, Tarana Burke on the Me Too Movement]  
Reading: Susan Brownmiller, In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution, 35-58, 194-224

No lecture on Thursday, November 28: Happy Thanksgiving!

Lecture 26 (12/3): A Girl’s Right to Education
[Clips from Davis Guggenheim (dir.), He Named Me Malala (2015)]
Reading: Malala Yousafzai, I Am Malala, 3-9, 69-72, 77-79, 154-164, 227-242, 256-57, 303-313

Week 14: Superheroes and Heroes Today

Lecture 27 (12/5): Superman, Wonder Woman, Spiderman and Batman
[Clips from History Channel’s documentary, Superheroes Decoded; Sam Raimi (dir.), Spiderman trilogy; Christopher Nolan (dir.), Dark Night trilogy]  
Reading: Travis Smith, Superhero Ethics, 63-87 (“Responsibility and the City: Batman versus Spider-Man”)

Lecture 28 (12/10): Conclusions and New Directions: What are the Different Notions of Heroism? What Does Heroism Mean Today?

Final Paper Due: Monday, December 16, 11:00 AM