

**Rutgers SAS Signature Course, Heroism 098:255**  
**Fall 2020**  
**MW 1:10-2:30 (Synchronous Remote)**

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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,” *hērōs* (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 extoling 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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. Lecture Attendance and Participation:** Lectures will be conducted through Zoom. Rutgers has provided a free Zoom account for each student. Please navigate to <https://netid.rutgers.edu/> and select Service Activation to activate Rutgers Zoom service. Listening to the lectures and participating in the polls and in the breakout sessions during lectures are expected. During lectures, students will learn historical contexts, background information, and interpretive frameworks that are necessary for critically understanding the assigned texts and films. Assigned film clips will be shown and discussed during lectures. Key discussion questions, which may serve as writing prompts for the Response Papers, are introduced in lectures. After viewing the film clips, students will have the opportunity to discuss the film in relation to the assigned text(s) with their peers in small breakout rooms. At the end of each lecture, time permitting, students will be asked to participate in a non-graded “quiz” on Canvas, in the form of either a multiple choice or a short-answer question.

Students with strong participation will earn bonus points on their final paper grade (enough to elevate the grade by one level; for example, from B to A, or C to B).

\*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/> and contact your instructor with a fuller explanation of the absence.

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

During the lectures, please turn off the audio function on Zoom, until you enter the breakout rooms. Students may choose whether or not to turn on their video functions.

You may take screenshots of the PowerPoint slides shown in class, as a way of taking notes. However, please do not record the lectures. These videocasts are protected by copyright laws. The copyright ownership of the videocasts vests in either the Professor teaching the course, or to Rutgers University to the extent applicable. Sharing them with others (including other students), reproducing, distributing, or posting any copyright protected part of the videocasts elsewhere—including but not limited to any internet site—will be treated as a copyright violation and an offense against the honesty provisions of the Code of Student Conduct.

**II. Response Papers (60%):** There are to be six response papers uploaded onto CANVAS Assignments by 8:00 am before the Thursday 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. Writing prompts will be provided in lectures, though students may choose to write about other issues raised by the assigned texts and films. 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 (20%):** There will be **six Thursday 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. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in group work activity in two of the six recitation sessions. Students will be grouped together in advance, are expected to prepare a 15-minute oral presentation as a group, and will lead the recitation discussion by presenting on the assigned texts and films. These group presentations may be based on the issues raised in the course lectures and/or the students' own interpretation of the works. They may answer the prompts provided in the lectures and they may also address larger issues or make comparisons with other course readings. There will be on average two group presentations per session. Everyone is required to come prepared for discussion whether or not her/his group is leading that week.

Each recitation will be graded using the following rubric:

1) Attendance and Participation (2% x 6= 12%): active presence during the entire duration of the recitation. Students will need to come to class having read and pondered the assigned texts. Participation does not mean just attendance; rather it requires active engagement in group discussion. Students are strongly encouraged to speak at least once during each recitation to demonstrate their active presence. Students may pose questions, express an interpretation or point of view, and/or respond to their classmates.

2) Group Presentations (4% x 2= 8%): clear presentation of interpretations, ideas or questions raised by the assigned works. These 15-minute presentations should be well coordinated, well organized and thought provoking.

The dates of the Recitation Sessions are:

*Recitation Session #1 (9/17)*

*Recitation Session #2 (10/1)*

*Recitation Session #3 (10/15)*

*Recitation Session #4 (10/29)*

*Recitation Session #5 (11/12)*

*Recitation Session #6 (12/3)*

**IV. Final Paper (due Tuesday, December 15, 12:00 Noon; 20%):** 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 CANVAS, under Assignments.**

**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/>

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### **Course Materials:**

Students enrolled in the course may access Course Readings on CANVAS, under "Files." Please read the assigned texts for each lecture before class.

## **Lecture & Recitation Schedule**

### **Lecture 1 (9/2): Introduction and Overview: The Enduring Appeal of the Hero Today**

#### **Weeks 2 and 3: Greek Epic Heroes**

### **Lecture 2 (Tuesday, 9/8): Homeric Heroes: Definitions and Background**

[Clips from Wolfgang Peterson (dir.), *Troy* (2004)]

Reading: Homer, *The Iliad*, Books 1, 3

### **Lecture 3 (9/9): The Trojan War: The Wrath of Achilles**

[Clips from Wolfgang Peterson (dir.), *Troy* (2004)]

Reading: Homer, *The Iliad*, Books 16, 19

### **Lecture 4 (9/14): The Trojan War: The Death of Hector**

[Clips from Wolfgang Peterson (dir.), *Troy* (2004)]

Reading: Homer, *The Iliad*, Books 22, 24

#### **Week 3: Early China's Assassin-Retainers**

### **Lecture 5 (9/16): Chinese Assassin-Retainers and 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)]

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]; Yuri Pines, "A Hero Terrorist: Adoration of Jing Ke Revisited," in *Asia Major*, THIRD SERIES, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2008), pp. 28-34

*Thursday Recitation Session #1 (9/17); Response Paper 1 due by 8:00 am*

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

### **Lecture 6 (9/21): A Literary Account of the Three Kingdoms: Historical Background**

Reading: Luo Guanzhong, *Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel*, Chapters 45-47

### **Lecture 7 (9/23): 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"]

Reading: Luo Guanzhong, *Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel*, Chapters 48-49

#### **Week 5: Real Life Game of Thrones**

**Lecture 8 (9/28): Hundred Years War: Warrior King Henry V**

[Clips from Kenneth Branagh (dir.), *Henry V* (1989)]

Reading: Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Acts 1-3

**Lecture 9 (9/30): Hundred Years War: Warrior King Henry V (Continued)**

[Clips from Kenneth Branagh (dir.), *Henry V* (1989)]

Reading: Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Acts 4-5

*Thursday Recitation Session #2 (10/1); Response Paper 2 due by 8:00 am*

**Weeks 6 and 7: Two Women Warriors**

**Lecture 10 (10/5): 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 11 (10/7): 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”)

**Lecture 12 (10/12): From Filial Daughter, Feminist Patriot to Disney Princess: The Legend of Mulan**

[Clips from Disney movie, *Mulan* (1998)]

Reading: Anonymous, “The Poem of Mulan” (5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century); Wei Yuanfu, “The Song of Mulan” (mid-8<sup>th</sup> c.); Anonymous, *Mu Lan Joins the Army*, Part 1 (1903)

**Lecture 13 (10/14): 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)

*Thursday Recitation Session #3 (10/15); Response Paper 3 due by 8:00 am*

**Week 8: All Too Human: The Shakespearean Tragic Hero**

**Lecture 14 (10/19): Romeo and Juliet, The Impulsive Lovers**

[Clips from Baz Luhrmann, *Romeo + Juliet* (1996)]

Reading: Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Acts 1-2

**Lecture 15 (10/21): 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 16 (10/26): 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 17 (10/28): Sacrifice and Death**

[Film clips from Kazuo Ikehiro (dir.), *Zatoichi and the Chest of Gold* (1964); Kenji Misumi (dir.), *Samaritan Zatoichi* (1968)]

Reading: "The Forty-Seven Samurai: Arguments," 322-338

*Thursday Recitation Session #4 (10/29); Response Paper 4 due by 8:00 am*

## **Week 10: World War II Heroes**

### **Lecture 18 (11/2): 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 19 (11/4): 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 20 (11/9): 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*, 239 (May 25, 1944)-268 (August 1, 1944)

### **Lecture 21 (11/11): 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*, 137-154

*Thursday Recitation Session #5 (11/12); Response Paper 5 due by 8:00 am*

## **Week 12: Civil Rights Heroes and Heroines**

### **Lecture 22 (11/16): From Ida Wells, Eleanor Roosevelt to Rosa Parks**

[Clips from Julie Dash (dir.), *The Rosa Parks Story* (2002)]

Reading: Lynne Olson, *Freedom's Daughters: Unsung Heroes of the Civil Rights Movement from 1830 to 1970*, 33-41, 52-64, 107-116

**Lecture 23 (11/18): An Inspiring Voice for Justice, Equality, and Love**

[Clips from Ava DuVernay (dir.), *Selma* (2014)]

Reading: *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 270-289

**Week 13: Women's Rights Crusaders**

**Lecture 24 (11/23): From Pioneers, Suffragists, Second Wave of Feminist Activism in the 1960's to the "Me Too" Movement**

[Clips from Betsy West and Julie Cohen (dirs.), *RBG* (2018); Mimi Leder (dir.), *On the Basis of Sex* (2018); interviews with Gloria Steinem and with Tarana Burke on the Me Too Movement]

Reading: Ruth Bader Ginsburg, *My Own Words*, 69-77 ("Women's Progress at the Bar and on the Bench"), 119-125 ("Women and the Law"), 139-149 ("The Need for the Equal Rights Amendment"), 150-153 ("The VMI Bench Announcement"), 154-164 ("Advocating the Elimination of Gender-Based Discrimination"); Gloria Steinem, *My Life on the Road*, 53-67

*November 25: Attend Your Friday Classes Instead; Happy Thanksgiving!*

**Lecture 25 (11/30): 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, 154-164, 227-234, 240-242, 303-313

**Week 14: Superheroes**

**Lecture 26 (12/2): Superman, Wonder Woman, Spider-Man 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*, 63-73, 75-79 ("Responsibility and the City: Batman versus Spider-Man")

*Thursday Recitation Session #6 (12/3); Response Paper 6 due by 8:00 am*

**Week 15: Popular Culture Heroes and Your Heroes**

**Lecture 27 (12/7): Popular Culture Heroes**

[Clips from Chris Columbus, Alfonso Cuarón, David Yates (dirs.), *Harry Potter* series; Gary Ross, Francis Lawrence (dirs.), *The Hunger Game* trilogy]

Reading: *Heroism in the Harry Potter Series*

**Lecture 28 (12/9): Design Your Last Class**

**Final Paper Due: Tuesday, December 15, 12:00 noon**