Course Description:

Comic book adaptations to film and television are at an all time high. Between Warner Brothers and Disney there are 20 large budget motion pictures to be released between 2015-2018. What's this all about? Why are superhero films such guaranteed money makers? And more importantly, what are the elements of these comic book stories that work so well in other media?

We will screen films and television episodes tracing the history of superhero adaptations from the cartoons and serials of the 1940’s through the most recent canon of Marvel and DC, as well as the best of the independents. We will also spend an evening doing an overview of video game adaptations.

Following our screenings we will discuss the elements of the screenplays that both work and don't work. We will also have guests who have contributed to many of the productions we screen. They will share with us their experiences of adapting some of the more notable comic heroes of the last thirty years.

Meeting Information:

The class will meet once a week for three hours. Generally, the first two hours of each class will be spent viewing a motion picture or television episodes from the superhero genre. There will usually be a guest to share their experiences translating these comic books to film.
Required Texts:

Students will be required to read the following graphic novels.

- *The Rocketeer: The Complete Adventures* by Dave Stevens with Danny Bilson and Paul DeMeo
- *The Dark Knight Returns* by Frank Miller, Klaus Jansen, and Lynn Varley
- *The Watchmen* by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons.
- *Hellboy Vol. 1 Seed of Destruction* by Mike Mignola
- *The New Frontier* by Darwin Cooke
- *Red Menace* by Danny Bilson, Paul DeMeo and Adam Brody.
- *Iron Man: Extremis* by Warren Ellis and Adi Granov

Evaluation of student performance:

- Mid Term: 40%
- Final: 60%

The two exams will be short essays and reviews on adapting specific books from the list above.

Course content (summarized by class meeting)

**8-26 Week 1: Introduction- Superman**

*The coming of age of the super hero film, Richard Donner’s Superman.* We will screen the film and discuss the adaptation.

**9-2 Week 2: Superman II**

*The good guy is only as good as the bad guy is bad.* Screening followed by discussion of “worthy adversaries” and the power of a narrative series.

**9-9 Week 3: Spiderman**

Screening of Sam Raimi’s, Spiderman. Discussion of the Marvel character breakthrough in the silver age.

**9-16 Week 4: Batman**

Screening of the Tim Burton film followed by a discussion on the influence of *The Dark Knight Returns*, and “world building”.

USC School of Cinematic Arts: CTWR 431
9-23 Week 5: The Rocketeer
Screening followed by discussion with co-writer of the film and comic book, Paul DeMeo.

9-30 Week 6: X2- XMen United
Screening X-Men 2 followed by a discussion on super hero team up films.

10-7 Week 7: Watchmen
Screening of Watchmen followed by a discussion with the film’s producer, Lloyd Levin

Mid-Term Due

10-14 Week 8: Hulk
Screening of Ang Lee’s, Hulk. We will discuss what worked and what didn’t in this dark adaptation.

10-21 Week 9: Kickass
Screening and discussion of “real superheros”. Costumed avengers played without powers or magic, just character and attitude.

10-28 Week 10: Hellboy
Screening of Hellboy followed by discussion with Andrew Cosby who is currently adapting Hellboy 3.

11-4 Week 11: Dick Tracy
Screening followed by discussion of adapting the classic comic strip from screenwriter Jack Epps.

11-11 Week 12: The Flash
Screening of the two “Trixter” episodes featuring Mark Hamill and written by legendary comic book creator and artist, Howard Chaykin, who will be our guest.

11-18 Week 13: Super Hero Video Games
Demos of various super hero games from Marvel Lego to the Batman Arkham series as well as previews of the upcoming Arkham Knight. Ames Kerschen VP of DC for Warner Bros. Interactive will be our guest.
11-25 Week 14: The early years

Screening Max Fleichser Superman Cartoons, Batman serial episode, George Reeves Superman, and a two part Batman from 1966.

12-2 Week 15: Iron Man (or The Dark Knight)

Screening the first Iron Man film that launched the Marvel Universe series of linked motion pictures. We will discuss the strategy of tying films together to build loyal fan engagement.

Final Paper Due

Additional speakers not yet confirmed:
Guillermo Del Torro
David Hayter
David Goyer
Jonah Nolan

Writing Division Attendance Policy:

Students are expected be on time and prepared for each class. Two unexcused absences will result in your grade being lowered by one full point (ex: A to a (A-). A third unexcused absence will result in your grade being lowered another full point (ex: B to a (B-). Your grade will be lowered by one point for every absence after. Two late arrivals equates to one full absence.

In order for absence to be excused the student must have approval from the professor and provide documentation at the next attended class session.

Please note that if you are a Writing for Screen and Television major/minor you must receive a grade of a C or better in order to receive degree credit. If you have any questions about the minimum grade required for credit please check with your home department.

If you have an emergency and must miss class please contact your professor prior to class or contact the Writing Division at 213-740-3303.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP:

USC School of Cinematic Arts: CTWR 431
Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, (www.usc.edu/scampus or http://scampus.usc.edu) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/. Information on intellectual property at USC is available at: http://usc.edu/academe/acsen/issues/ipr/index.html.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

Disruptive Student Behavior

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students’ ability to learn and an instructor’s ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.