

**ENG/CINE 381M Film, Media and Culture:  
“Otherness” in Speculative Film & TV  
Summer 2018 (CRN 42418/42420)**

Dr. Jenée Wilde  
Date: July 23-August 22  
Time: MTWR 2-3:50pm  
Class location: 214 MCK  
Email: jenee@uoregon.edu

Office hours: MTW 4-5pm\*  
\*Due to heat, office hours will be  
in McKenzie 101 Computer Lab  
Office location: 263 PLC  
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*Note: Your ongoing enrollment in this class means that you agree to abide by the policies and guidelines of this syllabus.*

**Course Description:** Aliens, monsters, killer androids, mutants.... Such metaphors may express cultural fears of the “other” that underlie social prejudice, intolerance, and discrimination. But viewers and fans may also read against the grain of normative cinematic images, finding identity and affirmation in the misunderstood and maligned. English 381 introduces students to critical thinking about the representation of “otherness” in speculative film and television media, including adaptations from comics. We will explore how binary structures of knowledge define social categories and how science fiction, fantasy adventure, horror, superhero and other non-naturalistic genres may simultaneously challenge and affirm what we “know” about gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, nationality, and ability. We also examine the contexts of media production and the diverse social positionings of viewers and fans that prompt (un)conventional readings of cinematic entertainment. The course incorporates a range of theoretical paradigms from film theory, queer theory, transgender studies, critical race theory, reception theory, and science fiction studies.

**Course Goals:**

1. To gain visual literacy through close reading practice in classroom and online discussions and in written analysis of film, comics, and the adaptation of comics into film.
2. To understand formal elements of and critical perspectives on non-naturalistic film and comics genres (i.e. science fiction, fantasy adventure, superhero, horror).
3. To analyze how non-naturalistic film and comics genres may allegorically represent complex and intersecting aspects of social identity (e.g. race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, religion, nationality, ability).
4. To apply a range of critical perspectives to film and comics analysis in order to interrogate binary frameworks of knowledge that underlie the distribution of power in U.S. society and other regions of the world.
5. To facilitate ethical student discussion of and reflection upon their own multiple social identifications in relation to (non)binary frameworks of knowledge and power relations in U.S. society.
6. To engage with industry, fan, and student cultural productions that may reflect, respond to, and/or resist such social locations and power relations.

**Majors and Minors:** ENG 381 satisfies the Arts and Letters group requirement, as well as the US: Difference, Inequality, Agency (formerly Identity, Pluralism, and Tolerance) multicultural requirement. It may also satisfy certain degree requirements in English, Cinema Studies, Comics Studies, Queer Studies, and Journalism (check with your advisor).

**Required Course Materials:** All readings are to be completed by the class period for which they are assigned.

- *V for Vendetta*, by Alan Moore and David Lloyd (DC Comics, 2005)
- additional readings provided in Canvas Files and online (see course bibliography)
- access to Netflix streaming for the duration of the course (recommended)

**Attendance:** Class periods are used for discussions, lectures, screenings, small group work, writings, and other activities. Because participation in these activities is fundamental to your success in this course, **attendance is mandatory**. If circumstances require your absence from class or prevent you from turning in an assignment or exam on time, you must inform me of the situation *before* class or an assignment due date/time via e-mail at [jenee@uoregon.edu](mailto:jenee@uoregon.edu). Be prepared to provide documentation. It is also your responsibility to obtain notes and materials and view any screened media that you missed. Behavior that disrupts a respectful learning environment will affect your attendance grade (see below).

**Grading:** Course grades are based on the following activities:

- **Attendance (10% of final grade).** Because attendance is mandatory, each absence will reduce your attendance grade by ten percent (no absences 100%, one absence 90%, two absences 80%, etc.). Any use of cell phones or disruptive behavior during class time will result in an automatic absence for the day (see Respectful Learning Community policy).
- **Class Participation (30% of final grade).** Students are expected to be active participants in the course both during and outside of class time. Participation grades will be based on homework assignments, preparedness, and class activities such as pop quizzes, short writings, or group work. (25 points possible)
- **Take-home Midterm Exam (30% of final grade).** Short-answer/essay exam over the first half of term. (50 points possible)
- **Take-home Final Exam (30% of final grade).** Short-answer/essay exam over the whole term. (50 points possible)

Please note grades on Canvas may not represent your final grade for the course. Final course grades are calculated based on the following percentage ranges:

A+	=98-100%	C+	=78-79%	F	=0-59%
A	=93-97%	C	=73-77%		
A-	=90-92%	C-	=70-72%		
B+	=88-89%	D+	=68-69%		
B	=83-87%	D	=63-67%		
B-	=80-82%	D-	=60-62%		

### **Readings, Class Discussions, and Pop Quizzes:**

These activities are designed to help students achieve Course Goals 1-6. While there will be some lecture in the course, most class days are structured around small and large group discussions of key concepts from the critical readings and their relation to screened films and episodes. All films, episodes, and written works listed in the schedule are *required materials* for the course. As such, **it is essential that you complete all readings by class time on the dates they are listed (see course schedule)**. Unless otherwise noted in the course bibliography, all readings are located in Canvas Files. Films and episodes will be screened in class. Use reading and screening questions to help you prepare for participation in these discussions. Pop quizzes are likely if participation in a class discussion is low (or only the same few people contribute).

All pop quizzes will be assessed for class preparedness, with failure resulting in a one-point deduction from your total Class Participation grade.

### **Original Postings on Canvas Discussion Board:**

Purpose: This assignment is designed to help students achieve Course Goals 1-4 through thoughtful written analysis of a critical reading that you found to be particularly engaging or enlightening. The assignment will also help students to prepare for class by writing in response to key ideas in a reading. As such, your weekly Original Posting must be completed *before* we discuss a particular reading in class; don't wait until the last minute on Thursday each week to complete your post! See Canvas Discussions for some model student Original Postings.

Task: **Students must write four (4) original 250-word Canvas discussion postings on four critical readings (one posting submitted per week by class time on the reading's due date).** Posts should be treated as *formal* opportunities (not informal blogging or journaling) to engage more deeply and critically with the materials of the course. You may use the reading's study guide (if available) as a prompt, or you may select a particular point or passage to analyze and discuss. The options are open so long as you are going beyond mere summary or personal response to grapple with important questions or concepts in the reading. The deadline for posting each week is flexible, but any Original Posting on a critical reading must be submitted on *the same date/time* that reading is due (see schedule). I recommend that you scan ahead in the weekly schedule for a reading that particularly interest you and plan to write about it for that day. (Remember, all readings are required whether or not you write about them.) NOTE: Once a particular reading's due date has passed, that reading is no longer eligible for posting.

Criteria for Grading: All posts should be submitted on the appropriate Canvas Discussion Board thread. Once you post (not before), you will be able to read and respond to other student posts as Follow-up. No late postings on a reading will be accepted for grading without prior authorization. All postings will be evaluated based on two sets of criteria:

A. **Quality** – Posts must demonstrate your thoughtful engagement with a specific critical reading's key concepts and ideas (e.g. discussing a reading question or selected passage, evaluating an author's main claims, etc.). They should *go beyond mere summary or personal response* to grapple with important questions and concepts in pursuit of a deeper understanding of the material.

B. **Precision** – Posts must be submitted on time and meet the minimum 250-word length requirement (quoted passages are excluded from word counts). Posts must use MLA style parenthetical citations (author and page number) for all paraphrased and quoted material from assigned readings. No Works Cited is necessary for assigned readings, but external sources consulted, paraphrased, quoted, or linked must be fully documented. Postings must be edited for grammar and mechanical errors. Plagiarism of any sort is unacceptable (see Academic Honesty).

Each posting will earn up to 3 points as follows (total 12 points for Class Participation):

- 3 points – satisfactory work for both criteria (A and B)
- 2 points – satisfactory work for only one criteria (A or B)
- 1 point – less than satisfactory work for both criteria
- 0 point – work unsatisfactory, plagiarized, or incomplete

### **Follow-up Postings on Canvas Discussion Board:**

Purpose: This assignment is designed to help students achieve Course Goals 5-6 by extending and reflecting upon our classroom and online discussions. Posts should be treated as opportunities to engage more deeply and critically with the materials of the course and with fellow students. See Canvas Discussions for some model student Follow-up Postings.

**Task: Students must write eight (8) 150-word follow-up commentaries (two submitted per week by Tuesdays and Thursdays at midnight).** In these Canvas discussion posts, you may choose to discuss a scene or character in relation to course concepts, follow-up on screening questions or class discussion, examine a specific aspect of a comic read for class, reflect upon your own intersecting social identifications in relation to power and agency, thoughtfully respond to a posting by another student, provide links to and discussion about related external source materials, etc. The possibilities are open so long as follow-up comments *go beyond mere summary* to positively contribute to the ongoing discussion and understanding of course content.

**Criteria for Grading:** All posts should be submitted on the appropriate Canvas Discussion Board thread. No late postings are accepted for grading without prior authorization. Each posting will be evaluated on Quality and Precision criteria (see above) and earn 1 point for satisfactory work (total 8 points for Class Participation). Plagiarism of any sort is unacceptable (see Academic Honesty).

### ***V for Vendetta* Page Tracing, Annotations, and Group Discussions:**

**Purpose:** This assignment combines creative and analytical work to help students achieve Course Goals 1-3 and to facilitate class discussions on comic book form (and its film adaptation) throughout the term. After the first week of class, one-third of the students will be assigned to trace and annotate selected pages from Moore's *V for Vendetta* for each of the following three weeks. Assigned students will also help to facilitate small group discussions of those pages in relation to course themes each week. Further discussion of this assignment, a sign-up sheet, and other details will be presented on Thursday of Week 1.

**Tasks: The assignment requires the following steps:** (1) trace in pencil or pen an assigned page from the graphic novel; (2) annotate the traced page to show your close reading of the panels' visual and textual elements using appropriate terminology; (3) write a 500-word analysis that explains your page annotations and close/distant reading of the page; (4) help to facilitate an in-class small group discussion of the page, the scene in which it appears, and the meanings they contribute to the developing story and themes in the graphic novel; and (5) write a 250-word follow-up summary of your group's discussion and reflections on what you learned in the process of doing this assignment. You will **print 6 copies** of your tracing for your small group; **submit** the original tracing and written analysis to the instructor in class; and **submit** a scan of the tracing, written analysis, and follow-up summary/reflection on Canvas (see schedule).

**Outcomes of Tracing and Analysis:** By tracing and annotating panels from *V for Vendetta*, students spend more time with images on a page, allowing for greater attention to visual and textual details within and among panels (close reading) as well as understanding how formal and thematic elements work together as a whole (distant reading). Not every detail needs to be traced (e.g. you can leave out shading and words in balloons), but include relevant panel elements that contribute to your analysis of what is said and done panel to panel. Annotations on your traced drawing may include notes and arrows that illustrate eye-line movement in and between panels, types of shots and cuts among panel sequences, allusions to creative works, and other formal elements relevant to your analysis. Along with the page tracing, your short written analysis should describe what is formally happening in each panel on the page (close reading) in order to express meaning (e.g. character development, emotional tone, social or historical significance) on the page and within the context of the scene as a whole (distant reading). Consider elements such as shots and cutting, motion lines and emanata, color and shading, images and details, dialogue and narration, uses of metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, and so on. See Bealer pages 171-174 for examples of close/distant reading of visual and textual elements of

comic panels. Use appropriate terminology from the Kleinhans and Molotiu suggested readings to assist in writing your annotations. For help identifying references in panels, see Madeline Bourdeaux's "An Annotation of Literary, Historic, and Artistic References in Alan Moore's Graphic Novel, *V For Vendetta*" at the following link:

<http://enjolrasworld.com/Annotations/Alan%20Moore/V%20for%20Vendetta/V%20for%20Vendetta%20Revised%20-%20Complete.html>

**Outcomes of Group Discussion:** On our three *V for Vendetta* graphic novel discussion days (see schedule), assigned students will **bring 6 copies of their traced page** to class and will help to facilitate small group discussions about those pages, the scenes in which they appear, and how they illustrate broader themes in the graphic novel. Each group will have 2-3 student facilitators. In addition, *all participants in each group* will contribute their observations about formal and thematic elements of the graphic novel that are linked to the traced pages they are discussing. Small group facilitators will then report the outcomes of their discussions to the class as a whole. After class, the week's assigned students will write a short summary of their group's discussion to submit with their traced page and written annotations for final grading. The summary should also include your reflections on what you learned through this process of tracing, annotating, and discussing the text.

**Criteria for Grading:** Grading is based on satisfactory Quality of analysis as well as Precision of effort, as related to the above Outcomes. Points will be awarded for completion of assignment tasks as follows: page tracing and annotations (2 points), 500-word written analysis (2 points), and 250-word group discussion summary and assignment reflection (1 point). (Total 5 points for Course Participation.)

**Midterm and Final Exams:** Exams for the course are open book take-home, comprehensive assessments of students' comprehension, analysis, and synthesis of all course materials. Exams include both short-answer and long-answer questions that ask students to analyze creative works and synthesize key concepts *across* readings, screenings, discussions, and lecture content.

**Respectful Learning Community:** It is important that we each contribute to creating an environment in which everyone feels free to express opinions while simultaneously respecting a plurality of perspectives and identities. This includes introducing yourselves in class and on discussion threads by your preferred name and gender pronouns (e.g. she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/their/theirs, ze/hir/hirs), pronouncing each other's names correctly, and asking politely to know a person's preferred pronouns before referring to her/him/them/hir in the third person.

In order to ensure that everyone is free from unnecessary distractions and disruptions in class, it is imperative that everyone in the course follows these rules:

- Come prepared: do readings and review other materials (e.g. discussion postings) before the class period for which they are assigned.
- Arrive 5 minutes before class begins to sign the roll sheet; class discussion and reading will begin on time, and habitual tardiness may affect your grade.
- Turn off and store cell phones (no using phones for anything during class).
- Listen, speak, and pay attention respectfully (no private conversation during class).
- Do not gather materials to leave until class is dismissed.

If a warning is necessary, your attendance grade may be affected. Students who fail to comply with a warning will be asked to leave the class and given an absence for the day.

**Communication:** Please feel free to contact me if you need additional help with any aspect of this course. In addition to seeing me during office hours or by appointment, email is the best way for students to contact me. On weekdays, I try to respond to all emails within 24 hours; on

weekends, I try to check email at least once, but response is not guaranteed so don't wait until the last minute to ask important questions. I regularly post announcements, assignment updates, and other vital information by email and on Canvas, so check both daily.

**Access:** If you have a disability (physical or learning) that you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of the term so we can make arrangements, if necessary, for your full access to all classroom activities. I also recommend that you contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or [uoac@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoac@uoregon.edu). If you have an accommodation, please provide your AEC letter or have AEC contact me during the first week of class.

My own access to the classroom may be affected at times due to a hearing condition that can make ordinary sounds uncomfortable. At times, I may wear acoustic filters to adjust sound levels for myself and I may speak more quietly. Normal speaking volume is usually audible to me but may be more difficult under some conditions, so I may ask students to speak louder. Quiet speakers or those with difficulty hearing may wish to sit near the front of class.

**Academic Honesty:** All work submitted in this course must be your own original work and must be written exclusively for this course. To avoid plagiarism, any use of printed or digital source materials for ideas, summaries, paraphrases, quotations, and graphics in Canvas postings and other class work must be properly documented. *Plagiarism of any kind will receive zero points for the assignment and undergo academic misconduct review by the Student Conduct office.* Please see me if you have any questions about documentation and your use of sources. If there is any question about whether use of sources, sharing of work, or other acts may constitute academic misconduct, it is the student's obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before performing the act. In cases where academic misconduct has been established, an F will be given for the final course grade. For more information on academic conduct, see the University Student Conduct Code or go to <http://dos.uoregon.edu/conduct>.

**Gender-based violence:** Any student who has experienced sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, coercion, and/or sexual harassment is encouraged to seek help. Please visit <https://safe.uoregon.edu/info> or call 541-346-SAFE. You are also strongly encouraged to contact Renae DeSautel, Director of Crisis Intervention and Sexual Violence Support Services, [desautel@uoregon.edu](mailto:desautel@uoregon.edu). She will keep your information confidential. You can also contact any member of the clergy. All of these people, including all UO faculty members, have an obligation *not* to reveal your name or other specific information without your permission, although faculty members do have to provide "general information" that will help us create a safer campus.

**Course Schedule (subject to change):** All **critical readings** are to be completed by class time on the days that they are listed in the schedule below. Deadlines for **Original Postings** on critical readings are flexible; however, *each weekly Original Posting you complete must be submitted by class time on the day a reading is due* (one submitted per week, four total). **Follow-up Postings** are due by midnight on Thursdays (two submitted per week, eight total). See assignments for details. No late assignments are accepted without prior authorization. Unless otherwise noted, submit all assignments on Canvas.

### **Week 1**

Monday, July 23 – Speculative Narratives and Representation

- Screening: *Steven Universe* episode 1.32, "Fusion Cuisine"; episode 1.38 "Alone Together"

Tuesday, July 24 – (Un)Doing Binary Epistemology

- **Reading:** Joyrich, “Epistemology of the Console”
- Screening: *Star Trek: The Animated Series* (1973), episode 1.6, “The Survivor”

Wednesday, July 25 – Queer Reading Practices and Fan Cultures

- **Reading:** Doty, “There’s Something Queer Here”
- Screening: *Star Trek* (1966), episode 1.4, “The Naked Time” (on Netflix as episode 1.5)
- Screening: “Star Trek + Nine Inch Nails = Closer” (YouTube)

Thursday, July 26 – Comics and Film: Some Formal Considerations; comic tracing assignment

- **Comic reading:** *Avengers Origins: Luke Cage*
- **Reading:** Bealer, “‘The Man Called Lucas’: Luke Cage, Mass Incarceration, and the Stigma of Black Criminality”
- *Also review comics and film terminology (not eligible for Original Post assignment):* Kleinhans “Cuts: Some Basic Considerations About Editing a Film to Dominant Norms”; and Molotiu, “List of Terms for Comics Studies” (online)

**Weekend comic reading** (and tracing assignment): *V for Vendetta*, “Book 1: Europe After the Reign” (1-86).

## Week 2

Monday, July 30 – movie day (plan to arrive 5 minutes early and stay to 4pm)

- **Reading:** Bakke, “Dead White Men: An Essay on the Changing Dynamics of Race in US Action Cinema”
- Screening: *Blade* (1998), 120 minutes

Tuesday, July 31 – (Un)Doing Race and Gender in Horror Narrative

- **Reading:** Dyer, “Ch. 1 Introduction”
- **Reading:** Sobchack, “The Fantastic”
- ***V for Vendetta* Book 1 page tracing (6 copies) and analysis due**
- **Group Discussion** of *V for Vendetta*, “Book 1: Europe After the Reign” pages 14, 41, 62, 83, 85 (bring 6 copies of page tracing for groups).

Wednesday, Aug. 1 – movie day (plan to arrive 5 minutes early and stay to 3:55pm)

- **Reading:** Russ, “Speculations: The Subjunctivity of Science Fiction”
- ***V for Vendetta* Book 1 group discussion follow-up due**
- Screening: *I, Robot* (2004), 115 minutes

Thursday, Aug. 2 – (Un)Doing Race and Gender in SF Narrative; midterm prep

- **Reading:** Gallardo, “Aliens, Cyborgs and Other Invisible Men: Hollywood’s Solutions to the Black ‘Problem’ in SF Cinema”

**Friday, Aug. 3: Midterm exam due by Noon on Canvas (12 p.m.)**

**Weekend comic reading** (and tracing assignment): *V for Vendetta*, “Book Two: This Vicious Cabaret” (89-179)

**Week 3**

Monday, Aug. 7 – (Un)Doing Race and Gender in Superhero Narrative

- **Reading:** de Casanova and Webb, “A Tale of Two Hoodies”
- **Reading:** Langford and Speight, “#BlackLivesMatter: Epistemic Positioning, Challenges, and Possibilities”
- Screening: *Luke Cage* (2016), episode 1.1 “Moment of Truth”

Tuesday, Aug. 8 – movie day

- **Short Story Reading:** Heinlein, “All You Zombies—“ (1959)
- **Reading:** Halberstam, “The Transgender Look”
- Screening: *Predestination* (2013, adaptation of Heinlein’s story), 97 minutes
- Also review Hayward, “Gaze/Look” and “Ideology” (*not eligible for Original Post assignment*)

Wednesday, Aug. 9 – (Un)Doing Trans\* and Queerness in SF Narrative

- **Reading:** Serano, “Ch. 1 Coming to Terms with Transgenderism and Transsexuality”
- **Reading:** Serano, “Ch. 8 Dismantling Cissexual Privilege”
- ***V for Vendetta* Book 2 page tracing (6 copies) and analysis due**
- **Group Discussion** of *V for Vendetta*, “Book Two: This Vicious Cabaret” pages 94, 116, 159, 161, 172

Thursday, Aug. 10 – (Un)Doing Trans\* and Queerness in SF Narrative

- **Reading:** Serano, “Ch. 7 Pathological Science: Debunking Sexological and Sociological Models of Transgenderism”
- ***V for Vendetta* Book 2 group discussion follow-up due**
- Screening: *Sense8* (2015), episode 1.2, “I Am Also a We”

**Weekend comic reading** (and tracing assignment): *V for Vendetta*, “Book 3: The Land of Do-As-You-Please” (182-288)

**Week 4**

Monday, Aug. 14 – (Un)Doing Identity and Power in Superhero Narrative

- **Reading:** Keller, “Ch. 5 *1984* and the Dystopian Genre”
- ***V for Vendetta* Book 3 page tracing (6 copies) and analysis due**
- **Group Discussion** of *V for Vendetta*, “Book 3: The Land of Do-As-You-Please” pages 189, 208, 215, 236, 258

Tuesday, Aug. 15 – (Un)Doing Identity and Power in Superhero Narrative

- **Reading:** Keller, “Ch. 1 Tyranny and the Powder Treason”
- ***V for Vendetta* Book 3 group discussion follow-up due**
- Screening: *V for Vendetta* (2005), part 1

Wednesday, Aug. 16 – (Un)Doing Identity and Power in Superhero Narrative; final exam prep

- **Reading:** Keller, “Ch. 2 V’s Terrorism: Power and Performance”
- Screening: *V for Vendetta* (2005), part 2

**Thursday, Aug. 17: Final Exam due by 4 p.m.**



**Course Bibliography:**

- Bakke, Gretchen. "Dead White Men: An Essay on the Changing Dynamics of Race in US Action Cinema." *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 83, no. 2, 2010, pp. 401-428.
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- Hayward, Susan. *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*, fourth edition, Routledge, 2013, pp. 173-176, 212-215.
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- Langford, Catherine L., and Montené Speight. "#BlackLivesMatter: Epistemic Positioning, Challenges, and Possibilities." *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric*, vol. 5, no 3/4, 2015, pp. 78-89.
- Molotiu, Andrei. "List of Terms for Comics Studies." *Comics Forum*, 26 July 2013, <https://comicsforum.org/2013/07/26/list-of-terms-for-comics-studies-by-andrei-molotiu/>
- Moore, Alan and David Lloyd. *V for Vendetta*, DC Comics, 2005.
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- Serano, Julia. *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*, Seal Press, 2007, pp. 23-34, 115-194.
- Sobchack, Vivian. "The Fantastic." *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, edited by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 312-321.