Heroes and Heroism
GS 1181
RAS 239

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Office Hours: M-Th, 10am-11:30am

The room being hung around with a collection of the portraits of remarkable men, among them were those of Bacon, Newton and Locke, [Alexander] Hamilton asked me who they were. I told him they were my trinity of the three greatest men the world had ever produced, naming them. He paused for some time: "the greatest man," said he, "that ever lived, was Julius Caesar."

- Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Rush, Jan. 16, 1811

Hero-worship means man despised.


Course Description

This course will take a look at hero stories in human history. It will look their ongoing relevance, usefulness, and even possibility. It will begin with a presentation of the ancient origins of heroism, continue with a study of a number emblematic examples of the hero in different times and places, and end with a discussion of the role of heroism in today’s world, the challenge of anti-heroism, and the rise and enduring attraction of the “superhero” in popular culture.

Required Materials

1. Composition notebook for writing -- available from bookstore.
2. Course Reading Packet (hereafter RP).
3. C.S. Lewis, The Abolition of Man, (Hereafter, AM)

Movies:

1. Time Bandits (1981)
2. A Man for All Seasons (1966)
3. The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (1962)
4. Man of Steel (2013)
Course Requirements

Journals
Students will keep a journal in Blackboard with weekly entries on all the readings and movies assigned during the semester. Further instructions will be posted on Blackboard.

Class Participation
Students are expected to be present and on time for all class meetings, to have read/watched all the assigned material, and to be prepared to discuss the material in class.
- Students will frequently be asked to read aloud and will be expected to intelligently discuss what they have read.
- Regular quizzes will be part of this grade. (Students should expect a quiz at the beginning of every class meeting.)

Movies
Four movies will be assigned in this class as part of your homework. Movie viewings will be scheduled (usually on a Monday night) and will be published on Blackboard. I will attempt to accommodate everyone’s schedule, but those who cannot be accommodated will be expected to rent and view the movies on their own. All but the first are available to rent on Amazon Video, and the library has dvd copies of some, if not all, of them.

Final Essay
Students will be given a number of essay questions to study and prepare for one week prior to the last day of the 8-week semester. The essay is due at noon on Friday, 10/20. Students will submit the essay on Blackboard. See Blackboard for further instructions.

Attendance
Students are expected to attend every class period and to be in their seats on time. Students not in their seat when the instructor takes role at the beginning of the class will be considered absent. Missing more than 3 class sessions will result in automatic failure for the course.

Course Grade
The final grade for the course will be based on the Course Requirements. Equal weight will be given to each of the three primary requirements: Journals, Class Participation, and the Final Essay.

Core Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to
- Develop, interpret, and express ideas through effective written communication
- Locate campus resources to solve problems/answer questions
● Gather, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information relevant to ---

**Method of Assessing Learning Outcomes**
Core student learning outcomes will be assessed through course assignments

**CLASSROOM POLICIES**

**Cell Phones and other Electronic Devices**
Use of cell-phones in the classroom for any purpose is **strictly forbidden**. If students own these devices, they are to be turned off and put away prior to entering the classroom. Students who use their phones in class for any reason will be asked to leave and counted absent. Laptops, tablets, and other devices fall under a similar prohibition. All note-taking will be done the old-fashioned way, with a writing utensil and a paper notepad. Exceptions will be made for students who demonstrate a compelling reason and who notify the instructor ahead of time. (See below for policy regarding students with disabilities.)

**Academic Integrity**
Angelo State University expects its students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits. Students are responsible for understanding the Academic Honor Code, which is contained in both print and web versions of the Student Handbook. This instructor has zero tolerance for cheating, plagiarism, or other infractions.

**Americans With Disabilities Act**
Persons with disabilities which may warrant academic accommodations must contact the Student Life Office, Room 112 University Center, in order to request and to implement academic accommodations.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

**8/28 - Introductions, syllabus overview, and discussion of heroism and the modern condition.**
**Syllabus; RP, 1-2**
- Hero definitions
- Tom Sawyer excerpts
- Begin *Time Bandits*

**8/30 - Time Bandits discussion**

**9/6 - Comparisons of Greek and Hebrew heroism and the challenge of Socrates. RP, 2-12**
- Achilles, Hercules, etc.
- David
- Socrates
- Begin *Antigone*
9/11 - Is female-heroism different than male-heroism?  
- Antigone  
9/13 - Antigone cont.  

9/18 - What does Christianity do to and with heroism?  
- Henry V  
- Joan of Arc  
- C.S. Lewis, “The Necessity of Chivalry”  
- A Man for All Seasons [Movie Night]  

9/20 - Discuss Saint Thomas More and the birth of democratic modernity.  
- Sir Walter Scott, Love of Country  
- Rudyard Kipling, If  
- Thomas Paine, Times that Try Men’s Souls  
- Patrick Henry, A Call to Arms  

9/25 - Democratic Citizens and Statesman.  
- Abraham Lincoln, Lyceum Address  
- Abraham Lincoln, Eulogy on the Life of Henry Clay  
- Lincoln, First Inaugural  
- Lincoln, Gettysburg Address  

9/27 - cont.  
- Lincoln, Second Inaugural  
- Frederick Douglass, Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln  
- Sir Winston Churchill, Their Finest Hour  
- Leo Strauss, Remarks on the Death of Winston Churchill  

10/2 - Democratic Citizenship and the Greatest Generation.  
- Dunkirk  
- John Kass, A soldier’s quiet reserve speaks volumes (11-11-11)  
- Clarence Thomas, “Victims and Heroes in the Benevolent State”  
- The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance Movie Night  

10/4 - Heroes, Victims, and Honor. What does the future hold for us?  
- William J. Bennett, “Does Honor Have a Future?”  
- “Our Heroes Are All Around Us”  

10/09 - Men Without Chests. AM, part I.  
10/11 - The Way. AM, part II  

10/16 - The Abolition of Man and The Tao. AM, part III and appendix.  
- Man of Steel [Movie Night]  

10/18 - Final discussion
The Oxford English Dictionary

Hero, n.

1. Antiq. A name given (as in Homer) to men of superhuman strength, courage, or ability, favoured by the gods; at a later time regarded as intermediate between gods and men, and immortal. The later notion included men of renown supposed to be deified on account of great and noble deeds, for which they were also venerated generally or locally; also demigods, said to be the offspring of a god or goddess and a human being; the two classes being to a great extent coincident.

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.

4. The man who forms the subject of an epic; the chief male personage in a poem, play, or story; he in whom the interest of the story or plot is centered.

Heroine, n. (a) A female hero.

1. In ancient mythology, a female intermediate between a woman and a goddess; a demi-goddess.

2. A woman distinguished by exalted courage, fortitude, or noble achievements.

3. The principal female character in a poem, story, or play; the woman in whom the interest of the piece centers.

4. Attrib. or as adj. Heroine-like, heroic.

5. Comb; as heroine-worship, -worshipper (cf. HERO-WORSHIP); heroine-like

Heroic, a. and n

1. Of or pertaining to a hero or heroes; characteristic of, or suitable to the character of a hero; of a bravery, virtue, or nobleness of character, exalted above that of ordinary men. A. Of actions, qualities, etc.

2. Of or pertaining to the heroes of antiquity. Heroic age or time: that during which the ancient heroes existed; the period of Grecian history preceding the return from Troy; also transf.

3. Having recourse to bold, daring, or extreme measure; boldly experimental; attempting great things.

Heroism
The action and qualities of a hero; exalted courage, intrepidity, or boldness; heroic conduct.

1789 BENTHAM Princ. Legisl. Xii. 27 note, Acts of heroism are in the very essence of them but rare: for if they were common they would not be acts of heroism. 1827 HARE Guesses (1859) 289 Heroism is
active genius; genius, contemplative heroism. Heroism is the self-devotion of genius manifesting itself in action.

**Mark Twain**  
*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

Just here the blast of a toy tin trumpet came faintly down the green aisles of the forest. Tom flung off his jacket and trousers, turned a suspender into a belt, raked away some brush behind the rotten log, disclosing a rude bow and arrow, a lath sword and a tin trumpet, and in a moment had seized these things and bounded away, barelegged, with fluttering shirt. He presently halted under a great elm, blew an answering blast, and then began to tiptoe and look warily out, this way and that. He said cautiously—to an imaginary company:

"Hold, my merry men! Keep hid till I blow."

Now appeared Joe Harper, as airily clad and elaborately armed as Tom. Tom called:

"Hold! Who comes here into Sherwood Forest without my pass?"

"Guy of Guisborne wants no man's pass. Who art thou that—that—"

"Dares to hold such language," said Tom, prompting—for they talked "by the book," *from memory*.

"Who art thou that dares to hold such language?"

"I, indeed! I am Robin Hood, as thy caitiff carcase soon shall know."

"Then art thou indeed that famous outlaw? Right gladly will I dispute with thee the passes of the merry wood. Have at thee!"

They took their lath swords, dumped their other traps on the ground, struck a fencing attitude, foot to foot, and began a grave, careful combat, "two up and two down." Presently Tom said:

"Now, if you've got the hang, go it lively!"

So they "went it lively," panting and perspiring with the work. By and by Tom shouted:

"Fall! fall! Why don't you fall?"

"I sha'n't! Why don't you fall yourself? You're getting the worst of it."

"Why, that ain't anything. I can't fall; that ain't the way it is in the book. The book says, 'Then with one back-handed stroke he slew poor Guy of Guisborne.' You're to turn around and let me hit you in the back."

There was no getting around the authorities, so Joe turned, received the whack and fell.

"Now," said Joe, getting up, "you got to let me kill you. That's fair."

"Why, I can't do that, it ain't in the book."

"Well, it's blamed mean—that's all."

"Well, say, Joe, you can be Friar Tuck or Much the miller's son, and lam me with a quarter-staff; or I'll be the Sheriff of Nottingham and you be Robin Hood a little while and kill me."

This was satisfactory, and so these adventures were carried out. Then Tom became Robin Hood again, and was allowed by the treacherous nun to bleed his strength away through his neglected wound. And at last Joe, representing a whole tribe of weeping outlaws, dragged him sadly forth, gave his bow into his feeble hands, and Tom said, "Where this arrow falls, there bury poor Robin Hood under the greenwood tree." Then he shot the arrow and fell back and would have died, but he lit on a nettle and sprang up too gaily for a corpse.

The boys dressed themselves, hid their accoutrements, and went off grieving that there were no outlaws any more, and wondering what modern civilization could claim to have done to compensate for their loss. They said they would rather be outlaws a year in Sherwood Forest than President of the United States forever.