

Department of English and Writing Studies

**Speculative Fiction: Fantasy**  
**English 2072F (650)**  
Summer 2020

**Instructor:** John Kelly

Course Description

This course presents a study of the purposes and historical origins of fantasy, and modern developments in fantasy: alternate worlds, horror or ghost stories, sword and sorcery, and heroic romance.

**Objectives:**

- Write an essay about a work of literature, containing an effective thesis supported by adequate evidence from the original text.
- Organize and present ideas clearly and effectively.

Course Materials

- \* J. R. R. Tolkien, *Lord of the Rings*, including *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King*.
- \* J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*.
- \* Peter S. Beagle, *The Last Unicorn* (ironic fantasy).
- \* John Gardner, *Grendel* (fantasy retelling).
- \* Dan Simmons, *A Song for Kali* (horror).
- \* Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* (alternate history).
- \* J. G. Ballard, *Crash* (postmodern fantasy).
- \* *Fantastic Worlds: Myths, Tales, and Stories*, ed. Eric S. Rabkin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

Rabkin: *Fantastic Worlds : Myths, Tales, and Stories* is now available on both RedShelf and VitalSource. I've added the links below.

<https://www.vitalsource.com/products/fantastic-worlds-v9780199839193?term=9780199839193>

<https://redshelf.com/book/1560361/fantastic-worlds-1560361-9780199839193>

Reading and working with these specific editions is preferred, especially for essays and in discussing the texts. If you already have some or all of the texts in different editions, then inform me what edition you will be using on your essays. During the course, you are expected to read the relevant sections of the course package in combination with the texts. The package provides important background information on and interpretations of the texts in order to guide you through the readings.

**Readings:**

The course explores a wide range of fantasy texts and focuses primarily upon materials from the Twentieth century. Rosemary Jackson, in *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, provides a general schema for distinguishing different kinds of the fantastic. Her first category of the marvelous includes the world of the fairy tale, romance, magic, and supernaturalism. The marvelous is characterized by a minimal narrative whose narrator is omniscient and has absolute authority. This form discourages reader participation and represents events which occurred in the past and are assumed to be no longer relevant (33). The mimetic are narratives that claim to imitate an external reality, but which also distance experience by shaping it into meaningful patterns and sequences (or in other words, events that are claimed to be real but are in fact fictional) (34). The fantastic includes narratives that confound elements of both the marvelous and the mimetic. These texts assert that they are real—relying upon all the conventions of realistic fiction to do so—and then they proceed to break that assumption of realism by introducing that which is manifestly unreal. Stories like Poe’s “The Black Cat” or Jorge Luis Borges’ “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote” pull the reader from the apparent familiarity and security of the known and everyday world into something strange, into a world whose improbabilities are normally associated with the marvelous (34). The readings in the course span the categories described above and attempt to illustrate not only the wide range of fantasy works, but to offer a diversity of interpretations to illustrate the many functions fantasy texts can perform.

Methods of Evaluation

Essay # 1 (1,500 words / 6 pages)	25%
Essay # 2 (2,000 words / 8 pages)	35%
Discussion bonus points	1.5%
Final Exam	40%

Timetable

**WEEK 1— INTRODUCTION:** Introduction and Introductory stories. Begin *Lord of the Rings*.

**WEEK 2—** *Lord of the Rings*.

**WEEK 3—** *Lord of the Rings*.

**WEEK 4—** *Lord of the Rings*.

**WEEK 5—** Kafka and Shultz stories and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*.

**WEEK 6—** Stories.

**WEEK 7—** *Grendel*.

**WEEK 8—** Fairy Tales and *The Last Unicorn*.

**WEEK 9—** *The Man in the High Castle*.

**WEEK 10—** Horror Fiction--Poe and Hoffmann stories.

**WEEK 11**— *Song of Kali*.

**WEEK 12**— *Crash* and closing story, Holst—“The Zebra Storyteller.”

#### Accommodation

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at [http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

#### **Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC):**

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf)

#### Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

#### **Plagiarism:**

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

#### **Plagiarism Checking:**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

#### Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.