

Department of English & Writing Studies

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

Fall 2020

Instructor: Dr. Gabrielle Ceraldi**Delivery Type:** OnlineCourse 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.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the course, the successful student will be able to:

- Place individual texts into the context of the fantasy genre as a whole;
- Identify and analyze the basic elements of literature such as plot, character, point of view, theme, setting, imagery, and diction;
- Understand the political, religious, moral, and philosophical underpinnings of the texts on the course;
- Write an essay about a work of literature containing an effective thesis supported by adequate evidence from the original text;
- Offer independent insights, beyond those outlined in class;
- Organize and present ideas clearly and effectively.

Course Materials

* J. R. R. Tolkien, *The 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, *Song of Kali* (horror).

* Lev Grossman, *The Magicians* (portal fantasy).

* *Fantastic Worlds: Myths, Tales, and Stories*, ed. Eric S. Rabkin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

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 by including this information in your Works Cited list. The UWO Bookstore will have these texts in stock, and you can order them on-line from the Bookstore. For more information, go to <http://www.bookstore.uwo.ca>. You may also find the books at a local bookseller.

During the course, you are expected to read the lectures in combination with the texts. The lectures provide important background information on and interpretations of the texts in order to guide you through the readings.

Readings

This course is one of a package of three derived from the former English 134E “Science Fiction, Fantasy, Utopian and Other Forms of Romance and Satire.” This course, English 2072F/G, focuses specifically on fantasy literature though it touches upon materials that are examined more fully in the other two courses: Science Fiction, English 2071F/G, and English 2073F/G, a course which considers texts that are principally utopian.

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” 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.

Though it follows a rough historical narrative, the course develops thematically by examining related themes and concerns. The short stories examined in the course are situated between the novels to function as segues between texts in order to either introduce a new thematic concern or to examine a particular theme or issue. In addition, many of the short stories are accompanied by contextual information used to establish the historical or cultural context of a particular theme, image, preoccupation, or concern. These stories are meant to be in active dialogue with the novels that surround them. As well, though many of the stories and novels are given fairly precise interpretations, these interpretations are meant to offer examples on how to approach the texts and not to foreclose discussion. Hence, in the preparation of your responses to the texts and the organization of your essays, you should draw upon your readings of the texts, the course lectures, and your own analysis of the materials. An analogy that may aid you throughout the course is to remember to read like a detective—searching for clues, contradictions, subtleties, and problems—and write like a lawyer by constructing a clear and cogent case supported with evidence from the texts.

While reading the lectures, you will discover that for the most part I include few detailed references to illustrate my argument. The point of the lectures is to provide some literary analysis, some context, and some theory in order to provide students a perspective into the texts under discussion. In contrast, when writing your essays, you need to prove your points by direct reference to the text under discussion. Students sometimes make one of the two following errors: either they assume that if they read the course package itself they will not need to read the books assigned for it; or, they assume that in their essays all they need to do is demonstrate that they have read the books by summarizing the texts. These choices lead to two major problems that can undermine the strength of an essay. In the first case, the essay will be too abstract and unfocused, one which engages entirely in the analysis of ideas but does not clearly

demonstrate how the ideas relate to literature. The second, and equally grave problem, is many students believe that if they demonstrate, over and over, that they have read the text than they will achieve a passing grade. This problem is identified as description or plot summary. In contrast to these two common errors, you need to be both judicious and selective, reorganizing your material into a set of arguments and developing a sharp and focused thesis statement.

Schedule

Each week ends on a Wednesday (Reading Week thus occurs in the middle of Week 8).

WEEK 1: September 9-16

Introduction. "Genesis" and Morris, "Golden Wings."*

WEEK 2: September 17-23

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*.

WEEK 3: September 24-30

Tolkien.

WEEK 4: October 1-7

Tolkien.

WEEK 5: October 8-14

J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*.

WEEK 6: October 15-21

Kafka, "The Judgment" and Schulz, "Cockroaches."* **ESSAY 1 Due: Oct. 21**

WEEK 7: October 22-28

John Gardner, *Grendel*.

Fairy Tale Literature

WEEK 8: October 29-30

Grimm, "Little Red Cap," "The Sleeping Beauty," and "Hansel and Grethel," Landolfi, "Pastoral" and Warner, "The Five Black Swans."*

READING WEEK – November 2-6

November 9-11

Peter S. Beagle, *The Last Unicorn*.

Portal Fantasy

WEEK 9: November 12-18

Lev Grossman, *The Magicians*.

Dark Fantasy

WEEK 10: November 19-25

Hoffmann, "The Sandman," Poe "The Black Cat" and "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar."*

ESSAY 2 Due: Nov. 25

WEEK 11: November 26-December 2

Dan Simmons, *Song of Kali*.

WEEK 12: December 3-9

MacDonald, "The Tale of Cosmo" and Hawthorne, "The Birthmark."*

*all stories are taken from *Fantastic Worlds: Myths, Tales, and Stories*, edited by Eric S. Rabkin

Methods of Evaluation

Essay # 1 (1000-1250 words / 4 pages)	25%	Due Oct. 21, 2019
Essay # 2 (1500-1750 words / 6 pages)	35%	Due Nov. 25, 2019
Final Exam	30%	
Forum Posts	10%	Due Dec. 11, 2019

Discussion questions will be posted on the Forums board each week, and you may post your answers anytime during that week; each discussion topic will be locked a few days after the end of that week. For full credit, you must post a total of 10 substantial posts. A substantial post is one in which you discuss something specific about the text at hand (ideally using quotations and/or specific details and commenting on their significance). There is no penalty for contributing less substantial posts (such as expressions of agreement with another student or general reflections about the fantasy genre), but these posts do not count towards your grade.

All grades, once assigned and/or posted, are final. While formal appeal processes do exist in the Department of English and Writing Studies, grades will not be changed after the fact in response to emailed requests and/or GPA requirements, nor will the weighting of assignments be altered for individual students.

Please note: The Department of English & Writing Studies does not release final grades. All undergraduate grade reports will be available online from the Office of the Registrar.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at

<https://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>

Submitting Assignments

Submit your essays online using the "Assignments" tool before 11:55 pm on the due date.

Late Assignments

Essays submitted late will receive a penalty of 1% per day, including weekends. Requests for extensions will be handled according to the practices recommended by the university; these may evolve based on the COVID-19 pandemic, but currently, requests based on mental health or family emergency should still be directed to the academic counsellor in your dean's office, while requests based on illness can be emailed to me directly (gceraldi@uwo.ca). If you are ill, please use the self-reporting tool as well. If any of these practices change, I will post an announcement on the OWL.

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

Plagiarism

There is ZERO tolerance for plagiarism in this course.

Please read the official University of Western Ontario notice below. A first offence will result in a mark of zero on the assignment, and the Department of English as well as your Faculty will be notified (this is the minimum penalty); a second, or very blatant, offence will result in failure of the course and debarment from all further Department of English courses. The Department of English also takes seriously internal plagiarism; you should be aware that the department keeps a database of all internet essay sites. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to consult with the instructor or the English Undergraduate Office.

Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking: The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.

If you have any questions and / or concerns about plagiarism, make sure to contact me as soon as possible, especially before submitting your essay. For some discussion of proper referencing, see "Essay Format and Citation" below.

Last, there are many websites dedicated to fantasy writers and the fantasy genre. The popularity of fantasy is reflected in the intensity of its many fans. Unfortunately, the vast majority of websites associated with fantasy writers and writing, though enthusiastic, can be misleading or inaccurate. Though the biographical information is generally accurate, most do not move beyond plot summary. Hence, you need to be careful when using a website. First, if you consult a website you need to document it correctly. Second, most criticism on websites tends to be naïve and lacking in analysis.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are temporarily unable to meet academic requirements (e.g. attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) may submit a self-reported absence form online (available on your Student Center) provided that the absence is 48 hours or less and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy are met. Students can self-report only two absences per academic year. See policy here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Consideration_for_absences.pdf.

Students whose absences are expected to last longer than 48 hours, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds) to Academic Counselling. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. The Student Medical Certificate is available online at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation.

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.

Essay Format And Citation

Your essays must follow MLA (Modern language Association) format, as detailed in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6th edition (Joseph Gibaldi, 2003). I strongly suggest consulting a copy of the MLA Handbook while writing your essays, as it contains important information regarding essay format and the citation of sources.

Please use a 12-point Times Roman font.

There is a useful online guide to MLA format at the following address:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Regarding citations and avoiding plagiarism, the basic rule to follow is that you must indicate the source of any idea and any worlds that are not your own—whether you are quoting directly or paraphrasing. As well, your Works Cited list should include all sources that you cite in and consulted for your essay, including footnotes/endnotes, dictionaries, and internet material (for citing sources, you will need to look at the MLA Handbook).

Since English 2072F/G is an English literature course, you will be evaluated based on your ability to write clear, well-argued essays. Elements such as grammar, organization, argumentation, citation, and editing are all important and will affect your grade.

While planning and writing your essays, as always, feel free to get in touch with me for any questions you might have. Here are a couple of handbooks that I recommend:

- * The Little Brown College Handbook has a section devoted to MLA essay and citation format.

Below are a few tips for writing effective essays.

- * Your essay must have a clear thesis. A thesis is a statement of what you are trying to prove in the essay—your argument, your point, your stance or position. It should be something with which your reader can potentially agree or disagree; it should not be a statement of fact or general knowledge. In general, your thesis is most effective as the last sentence of your introductory paragraph.
- * Your essay must have a clear structure. This means that you need definite introductory and concluding paragraphs; as well, your body paragraphs should follow a logical order of argument, covering specific points and/or ideas that support and work to support your thesis. Make sure that each paragraph has a topic and concluding statement, and that you establish smooth transitions between paragraphs. Attention to good structure helps your reader follow your argument, and helps you keep your thoughts and evidence organized.
- * Always be specific. Do not assume that your reader will “get” what you are alluding to (think of a theoretical reader who may be a little familiar with the topic or the text in question, but needs specific information in order to engage fully with your argument). Quoting from or at least citing the primary text—the novel or short story, for instance—is always a good idea to give your reader a definite context for what you are saying.
- * Use the present tense whenever you are writing about events in a novel or story.

* Take time to plan and outline. Before writing the first words of your essay, spend time planning and outlining it. Gather your evidence and look for patterns, similarities, and differences. Remind yourself what it is that you want to discuss and prove, then think about the best way to organize your essay accordingly. What is your point? What is your argument or position? What evidence will you need to support your thesis? What is the most effective way to structure the essay—what argument should come first and what is your most important evidence? Essentially, when you sit down to write, you should have a firm idea of what you want to do in your essay and how the parts will fit together. Good planning and outlining will save you tension and frustration.

* Write about what interests and excites you. When considering a topic, think of what you liked most in the texts on the course—issues, ideas, passages, and so forth. What would you like to explore further? What would you find interesting to write about for six or eight pages? If any of the suggested topics do not appeal to you, you can devise your own topic in consultation with me? If you enjoy what you are writing about, your essay will show it.

* Finally, reread and edit. Before submitting your paper, reread it and revise it as necessary, looking for everything from typos to potentially unclear sentences to improper essay format. Having someone else look at a draft is always a good idea, particularly if you trust that person to be honest and helpful. The value of a “clean” essay to a reader cannot be underestimated, for it shows that you care about your writing, which in turn encourages the reader to care about what you are saying.

Finally, if you have previously taken an English course, you are probably familiar with the basic technical vocabulary of English literary studies. If not, though I have attempted to be as clear as possible and have affixed a glossary of some terms at the end of the text, you may want to consult a handbook of literary terms when in question. M. H. Abrams *A Glossary of Literary Terms* offers an excellent source book for literary terms.

For some tips on MLA format, as well as a snapshot of what the front page of your essay should look like, see the guide on the final page of this document.

Grading Rubric

THESIS

- Is there a unifying idea in this paper?
- Is this idea specific, original, and argumentative?
- Is this idea explained clearly near the beginning of the paper?

ARGUMENT

- Does the material in this paper go beyond description to explore the implications and meaning of the text(s)?
- Have opposing ideas been acknowledged and given a convincing response?

ORGANIZATION

- Do paragraph breaks reflect a meaningful shift in topic?
- Does the opening sentence of each paragraph identify the central idea of that paragraph and its relationship to the thesis?

USE OF SOURCES

- Is there textual evidence to back up each claim in the paper?
- Is there an attention to detail (word choice, imagery, etc.) that adds intricacy to the argument?
- Are quotations integrated smoothly and cited correctly?

STYLE

- Is the writing style clear, concise, and readable, so that the focus falls on the ideas in the paper?
- Are sentences punctuated correctly?

A+ (90-100) = Excellent ("Yes, absolutely!" in all categories)

A (80-89) = Very Good ("Yes" in almost all categories)

B (70-79) = Good ("Yes" or "Somewhat" in all categories)

C (60-69) = Satisfactory ("Somewhat" in most categories OR "No" in one category)

D (50-59) = Poor ("No" in several categories)

F (49 or below) = Unsatisfactory (does not meet the requirements for the assignment)

Surname 1

Your Name

Name of T.A./Professor

English 2072G

February 12, 2018

Diary of a Young Girl

First-Person Narration in Jo Walton's *Among Others*

If you have a snappy, attention-grabbing title, follow it with an informative subtitle that indicates your topic as well as the work(s) you will be discussing. Titles of books should be *italicized*. Titles of articles and short stories should be put in "Quotation Marks." Introduce quotations in your own words, identifying the speaker and context: EXAMPLE: As Morwenna points out, "If you love books enough, books will love you back" (300). Use ellipses to indicate where you have omitted words from the quotation, and put any changes in brackets: EXAMPLE: The White Witch is described as "a great lady ... covered in white fur up to her throat [who] held a long straight golden wand in her right hand" (33).

If the quotation is longer than four lines, do not use quotations marks; instead, indent the passage ten spaces from the left and continue to double space.

EXAMPLE: Walton offers a sceptical take on the boarding-school novel:

My popularity, bizarrely, goes both up and down slightly because of the marks. They don't care about lessons, and they hate me for beating them, but you get house points for exceptional marks, and they care a lot about house points. It's depressing how much boarding school is just like Enid Blyton showed it, and all the ways it's different are ways it's worse. (35-36)

At the end of the essay, list all the works you have discussed or used in the preparation of your paper. Staple the top left hand corner.

Works Cited

Lewis, C.S. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. HarperTrophy, 1950.

Walton, Jo. *Among Others*. Tor, 2010.