

Department of English and Writing Studies

Speculative Fiction: Fantasy

English 2072F (650)

Summer 2022

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%
Forum Discussion	5%
Final Exam	35%

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students’ personal use within the course, and remain the instructor’s intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor’s content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence:

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are *not* met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see:

[Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

For the **Student Medical Certificate (SMC)**, see:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

Religious Accommodation:

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

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:

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>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

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/>

Academic Support & Engagement <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.

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."