

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 2072G (650)
Speculative Fiction: Fantasy
Winter 2025

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Office Hours: T, Th: 3:30-4:30 pm

Course Description

Wizards, vampires, fairies, and the Chosen One – these figures are no longer confined to a genre ghetto but have instead moved to the mainstream. This course examines the roots of the fantasy genre in novels such as *Dracula* and *The Lord of the Rings* and considers how the tropes of the genre have been reproduced and transformed by authors like J.K. Rowling and Susanna Clarke. We will examine the continuing appeal of stories about magic, whether they involve supernatural intrusions, visits to the realm of faerie, or extraordinary powers hidden in apparently ordinary places.

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 Fellowship of the Ring* (Harper)

The Two Towers (Harper)

The Return of the King (Harper)

C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (Harper)

The Magician's Nephew (Harper)

Lev Grossman, *The Magicians* (Penguin)

Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Penguin)

Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber* (Penguin)

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

If you have a text in a different edition, then inform me what edition you will be using in your essays by including this information in your Works Cited list. The UWO Bookstore will have these texts in stock, or you may find the books at another bookseller.

Methods of Evaluation

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|---------------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------|
| Essay # 1 (1000-1250 words / 4 pages) | 25% | Due end of Week 5 (Feb. 7) |
| Essay # 2 (1500-1750 words / 6 pages) | 35% | Due end of Week 10 (March 21) |
| Final Exam | 30% | |
| Discussion Posts | 10% | Due weekly by Sunday night |

Discussion questions are posted on the Discussions board, found under Communications in the Brightspace OWL site. You may post your answers any time prior to the end of the week on which that text is scheduled; each discussion topic will be locked shortly after the end of that week. For full credit, you must post a total of 10 responses in 10 different weeks (as there are two questions posted for each week, this means you can choose one of the two to answer). In order to receive credit you must include at least one **quotation from the text**. Since you can fulfill this requirement by posting in only 10 out of the 12 weeks of the course, no additional academic consideration will be given for discussion posts.

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 11:59 pm on the due date. Email is not an accepted method of submission. No essay will be accepted beyond two weeks after the due date.

Late Assignments

Essays submitted late will receive a penalty of 1% per day (that is, one mark out of 100), including weekends. This is a flexible deadline; late penalties will not be deducted for a period of 48 hours after the due date (essays submitted on the third day will receive a 3-mark deduction). These assignments are not eligible for additional academic consideration without supporting documentation. Students can obtain additional academic consideration by submitting appropriate documentation to the academic counsellor in their home faculty (see page 5 of this syllabus for more details). Please email me only after you have contacted academic counselling.

Reading Schedule

Introduction

WEEK 1: J.R.R. Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories” (posted on OWL)

Immersive Fantasy

WEEK 2: J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship of the Ring*.

WEEK 3: Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings – The Two Towers*.

WEEK 4: Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings – The Return of the King*.

Portal Fantasy

WEEK 5: C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* – **ESSAY 1 Due February 7**

WEEK 6: Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*

WEEK 7: Lev Grossman, *The Magicians*

Intrusive Fantasy

WEEK 8: Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Chapters 1-16)

WEEK 9: Stoker, *Dracula* (Chapters 17-27)

WEEK 10: Charles Perrault, "Bluebeard," Angela Carter, "The Bloody Chamber" and "The Lady of the House of Love" (from *The Bloody Chamber*) – **ESSAY 2 Due March 21**

Hidden World Fantasy

WEEK 11: J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

WEEK 12: Eliezer Yudkowsky, *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality* (Chapters 1-10, link on OWL)

How to Proceed

Each week, you should begin by reading the primary text listed in the schedule (in most cases, these are books you must obtain on your own, either by purchasing them from the Western Bookstore or from some other retailer, or by borrowing them from the library; where noted, some texts may be posted on OWL). After you have completed the reading, you should read the lecture for that week. These are Word documents posted on OWL, and they are meant to take the place of an in-class lecture; you can find them in the weekly lesson areas on OWL. At the end of each lecture, you will find some self-testing questions; these are designed to help you assess your grasp of that week's readings – in some cases, the answer to these questions will be found explicitly in the lecture, while in other cases, the questions prompt you to think more deeply about the ideas presented in the course.

The final step each week is to answer one of the two questions posted in the Discussions area; these posts count for 10% of your final grade.

Academic Integrity Tutorial

All students are required to enroll in and complete the Centre for Teaching and Learning's Academic Integrity Tutorial. To access the tutorial, please follow the instructions in the course OWL site. Once the tutorial has been completed, you will receive a downloadable certificate. You must upload the certificate and submit it through the course Assignments tab in order to complete this assignment. The tutorial must be completed by Friday in the second week of term. This tutorial is mandatory in order for you to complete and pass the course. If you have completed the tutorial already for another course, you may upload the same certificate for this course; you do not need to repeat the tutorial.

Essay Format and Citation

Your essays must follow MLA (Modern Language Association) format. There is a guide on page 9 of this syllabus that covers some of the common elements of MLA citation; if you have questions that are not answered in that guide, you can consult the Purdue OWL MLA guide at the following address: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Please use a 12-point Times Roman font.

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.

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 (and/or your T.A.) for any questions you might have.

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. Your thesis should also be a statement about the meaning of the text, rather than a statement about readers or about the world. 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 introductory and concluding paragraphs; as well, your body paragraphs should follow a logical order of argument, covering specific points and/or ideas that 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 has read 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 five or six pages? 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.

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.

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.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

The use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools/software/apps is unacceptable in this course.

Academic Consideration

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a **substantial but temporary** impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of the student's Faculty of Registration.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant.

Requests without supporting documentation are **limited to one per term per course**.

Instructors may designate one assignment or assessment as exempt from this allowance. In this course, all assignments have built-in consideration, as the essays have flexible deadlines and the discussion posts already allow for two missed weeks per term, so I am not making use of this designation.

Assignments with flexible deadlines and any term work that does not count towards the course grade are **not** eligible for additional consideration.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner.

Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term **always** require formal supporting documentation.

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](#).

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 and Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

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

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.

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)

Sample

Surname 1

Your Name

Name of T.A./Professor

English 2072G

12 February 2020

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 five spaces (one tab) 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.