

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND WRITING STUDIES  
WESTERN UNIVERSITY  
ENGLISH 2072F/G (SPECULATIVE FICTION: FANTASY) ONLINE—2014—SECTION 650**

**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.

**COURSE 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 TEXTS**

- \* 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).

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. 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 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.

## COURSE OUTLINE

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.”

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION**

### **ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES**

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

### **COURSE WORK AND FINAL EXAM**

**Students must pass the course work and final exam to pass the course.**

## **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.**

## **ACADEMIC ACCOMODATION:**

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 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 Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medicalform.pdf>.

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.