

This syllabus has been provided as a reference tool for students considering this course. It has been modified to follow Senate regulations. Current students enrolled in any undergraduate course must obtain the most recent syllabus from their course instructor or from their course website. This is not the latest version.



Department of English & Writing Studies

Speculative Fiction: Fantasy **English 2072G (650)** Winter 2014

Instructor: Cristina Ionica

Antirequisite(s): The former English 134E.

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:

Successful students who complete the course will be better able to:

Place individual texts in their context within the historical development of fantasy as a genre;

Recognize and understand the features of genres and subgenres such as fantasy, horror fantasy, sword and sorcery, heroic romance, etc.;

Analyze texts employing the skills of literary analysis, considering features such as narrative technique, symbolism, structure, etc.;

Understand the political, religious, moral, and philosophical underpinnings of the texts studied;

Communicate ideas effectively in writing (through discussion posts and persuasive essays);

Develop a specific, focused argument and support it with textual evidence;

Approach the fantasy genre as readers, critics, and perhaps creators.

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,

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

Note on 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, E2072F/G, focuses specifically on fantasy literature though it touches upon materials that are examined more fully in the other two courses: Science Fiction, English 2071 F/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” 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).

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy,