



Writing 3900F (Fall 2021)
Writing Fantasy
Thursdays 12:30-3:30
AHB-1B08

Instructor: Michael Fox
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Course description and objectives

Character wants a good job, plenty of excitement, quest, possible assistance from mentors and companions

Students in this course will work on various aspects of a fantasy novel, focusing on aspects of world-building, the use and transformation of common fantasy motifs, various ways to structure the narrative and tell the story, and how to devise the most affective and climactic scenes. We will read some secondary material (including Tolkien and others on the genre), and students will be required to read and report on a contemporary fantasy novel of their choice as we assess what makes fantasy successful. At the conclusion of the course, students will submit a portfolio of work that includes dialogue or myth that underpins their created world, character sketches, an outline of their novel, and an excerpt from it.

Required texts

None.

***Optional* texts (each student will be required to read one of contemporary work of fantasy and report on it; this is a list of some of the possibilities)**

- Joe Abercrombie, The Blade Itself, Half a King, or A Little Hatred
- Terry Brooks, The Sword of Shannara
- Christopher Buehlman, The Blacktongue Thief
- Jim Butcher, Furies of Calderon
- Justin T. Call, Master of Sorrows
- David Eddings, Pawn of Prophecy
- Jennifer Fallon, Wolfblade
- Raymond Feist, Magician [Apprentice]
- Terry Goodkind, Wizard's First Rule
- Robin Hobb, Assassin's Apprentice
- N.K. Jemisin, The Hundred Thousand Kingdoms, The Fifth Season (SF/F)
- Robert Jordan, The Eye of the World
- Mark Lawrence, Prince of Thorns
- Ursula K. Le Guin, The Wizard of Earthsea
- Jane Lindskold, 7 KURXJK : ROIV (HV)
- Jenn Lyons, The Ruin of Kings
- Scott Lynch, The Lies of Locke Lamora

Naomi Novik, *Spinning Silver*
Patrick Rothfuss, *The Name of the Wind*
Andrzej Sapkowski, *Blood of Elves* [this is the first full book of *The Witcher* series]
Samantha Shannon, *The Priory of the Orange Tree*
Sam Sykes, *Seven Blades in Black*
Brent Weeks, *The Black Prism*
Tad Williams, *The Dragonbone Chair*

Recommended further primary reading (secondary material below)

Byock, Jesse, trans. *U H W W L Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009*
---. *The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki* London: Penguin, 1998
Liuzza, R.M., trans. *Beowulf* (with facing page OE), 2nd edition. Peterborough: Broadview, 2013.
Pálsson, Hermann and Paul Edwards, trans. *Seven Viking Romances* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985.
[*The Saga of Arne Odd*, pp. 251-37]
Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit or There and Back Again* London: HarperCollins, 2006.

Old English (in general) and *Beowulf*
work. Because *The Hobbit* is his earliest novel, tracing the effect of *Beowulf* on it is easier than in *The Lord of the Rings*
Old Norse sagas are also excellent sources for ideas, characters, and mood.
modern translation of *Beowulf* instead of Liuzza

Headley, Maria Dahvana. *Beowulf: A New Translation* New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2020.

Read the following review of Headley and see if her work appeals to you:

<https://www.npr.org/2020/08/27/906423831/this-is-not-the-beowulf-you-think-you-know>

DeWitt, Patrick. *Undermajordomo Minor* Toronto: House of Anansy, 2016
Ishiguro, Kazuo. *The Buried Giant* Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2016

secondary worlds of magic and win treasure and love conflicts without nuance. Contemporary novelists have immersed themselves in the genre with great success, and DeWitt and Ishiguro are two superb (and hugely different) examples of how it works.

Course Requirements and Grade Allocations

Fantastic tale construction (ungraded; due September 16)

Students will devise a brief outline of a fantastic tale. The point of the exercise is to familiarize you with some basic concepts and tools.

Character Biographies (20%; due October 28)

Students will submit three character biographies (maximum 500 words each).

Book Report (15%; November 11/18; written version due November 21)

Students will present an oral report (maximum 15 minutes) on a fantasy novel (some options listed above) and a written summary of the oral report.

Final Project (40%; due Friday, December 10)

The final project will consist of five parts: 1) a language document; 2) at least three character biographies; 3) a one-page (single-spaced) synopsis of a full-length work of fantasy; 4) an explanation of how that full-length work of fantasy deploys the motifs, movements, and structures we have learned in the course with an introduction to

Attendance also extends to tardiness. If you are more than 20 minutes late you will be penalized an

than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is 30% or

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

Schedule

Week 1 (Sept 9): Introductions

Week 2 (Sept 16):

Miscellaneous other readings/resources (these are NOT necessarily appropriate or desirable for the critical reading assignment)

Aarne, Antti and Stith Thompson.

Mitteilungen89 (1988): 23751.