

English 2072G Speculative Fiction: Fantasy Online (Section 650)
January-April 2015

Instructor: Dr. Mark Stephenson

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E-mail Policy: E-mail me for any course-related concerns; I should reply within 24 hours. If you

(email correspondence occasionally goes missing in cyber-space and/or I may have missed your initial email).

Office Hours

I am also available for **consultations on campus**, on Mondays and Wednesdays, between **12:00 and 1:30 p.m.**, in case you are in London. My office is **(Old) Ivey Building, 2G28L**.

Teaching Assistant: TBA

Be sure to read the following information completely and carefully. You are responsible for it.

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.

Note that English 134E is an anti-requisite to this course; hence, if you have taken English 134E, you cannot receive credit for English 2072F/G.

Course Objectives

- 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 and critics.

Course Texts

- * J. R. R. Tolkien, *The 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).

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.

Though it follows a rough historical narrative, the course develops thematically by

discuss a text with your classmates. Your participation in these discussions is worth 10% of your grade.

Discussion questions are posted in the forums. You may use these questions to get a discussion of a text started, although you may certainly raise other questions or issues not included in the questions. Once a discussion is posted, you may respond to it or raise another issue. Post as many discussions and responses as you like.

Remember, these discussions replace in-class discussions and should, therefore, be seriously considered and analytical. Avoid using the Forums just to state whether you liked or disliked a text or to simply agree or disagree with a previous post. I will be checking the Forums at least three times a week, and I expect you to do likewise. Posting responses to questions without first reading your fellow

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 a number of pages? If any of the suggested topics do not appeal to you, you can devise your own topic in consultation with me. 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

February 16-22 Reading Week

WEEK 7 February 23-March 1

Gardner, *Grendel*

End of Week: Last chance to submit Response Paper

WEEK 8 March 2-8

Fairy Tales

Beagle, *The Last Unicorn*.

FW 96-111)

WEEK 9 March 9-15

Alternate History: *The Man in the High Castle*.

WEEK 10 March 16-22

Horror Fiction:

*****Essay 2 Due*****

FW 214-256

WEEK 11 March 23-29

Simons, *Song of Kali*.

WEEK 12 March 30- April 5

Ballard, *Crash*

(Holst), FW 460-463.

End of Week: Last chance to submit Essay 2

April 11-30: Exam Period