

Department of English & Writing Studies

Speculative Fiction: Fantasy

English 2072F (650)

Fall 2025

Instructor: Dr. John Kelly

Office Hours: Zoom Friday 1:00

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:

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Think critically about fantasy fiction literature and understand the historical and literary contexts of works.
- Be able to distinguish between periods, movements, and styles of fantasy literature.
- Write an essay about a work of literature, containing an effective thesis supported by adequate evidence from the original text and documented following the Modern Language Association method.
- Organize and present ideas clearly and effectively.

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, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*.

* Peter S. Beagle Eric S. *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). Available on Kindle and Kobo.

* *Fantastic Worlds: Myths, Tales, and Stories*, ed. Rabkin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

Rabkin: *Fantastic Worlds : Myths, Tales, and Stories* is now available on both RedShelf and VitalSource.

<https://www.vitalsource.com/products/fantastic-worlds-v9780199839193?term=9780199839193>

<https://redshelf.com/book/1560361/fantastic-worlds-1560361-9780199839193>

The Fellowship of the Ring – 21.99

The Two Towers – 21.99

The Return of the King – 21.99

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone – 15.00

The Last Unicorn – 27.99

Grendel – 19.00

A Song for Kali – 25.99

The Man in the High Castle – 23.99

Crash – 21.99

Fantastic Worlds – 68.35

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. During the course, you are expected to read the relevant sections of the course package in combination with the texts. The lectures provide 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.

Methods of Evaluation

Essay # 1 (500 words / 2 pages) Sept. 24	15%
Essay # 2 (1000 words / 4 pages) Oct. 22	20%
Essay # 3 (1500 words / 5 pages) Nov. 12	25%
Forum Discussion	5%
Final Exam	35%

Late Papers will be penalized 1 point per day.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS: Western’s university-wide grade descriptor:

- **A+ 90–100** One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level.
- **A 80–89** Superior work which is clearly above average.
- **B 70–79** Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory.
- **C 60–69** Competent work, meeting requirements.
- **D 50–59** Fair work, minimally acceptable.
- **F below 50** Fail.

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.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

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.

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 use the link provided in the Resource tab 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.

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.

Generative AI

"In this course, the use of AI (such as automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT...) is prohibited, unless there has been discussion with and agreement by the instructor before beginning an assignment. If AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and/or other materials used in preparing assignments. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades have been entered. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students may be asked to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against them."

Accessible Education

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf. Please speak to me, either in person or via email, by the end of the second week in class to discuss any accommodations you may have.

Mental Health Supports

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519-661-3030 (during class hours) or 519-433-2023 after class hours and on weekends.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays and should give reasonable notice in writing (email), 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](#).

Statement on Gender-based and Sexual Violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Other Student 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/>

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

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 Holst's short story "The Zebra Storyteller."