



Department of English
English 208A (001): Forms of Fantasy (Fall 2021)

Instructor: Mark Spielmacher
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Office hours: by e-mail or by on-line appointments.

The class schedule is on the last page of this syllabus.

Course Description

In this course we will examine classic and contemporary works of fantasy literature, primarily written for an adult audience, to consider many of the stylistic and thematic features of the genre, to get a sense of its development, to explore the relationship between fantasy and our social and political realities, to develop analytical skills, and to present our own arguments about the stories and characters in persuasive ways. Some of these arguments may deal with the functions of fantasy in literature, the ways in which fantasy influences our individual perceptions of our world, attitudes about fantasy literature, and how different media change our engagement with the genre.

In online discussions and in written work, students will develop a vocabulary for identifying the generic conventions of fantasy literature and for analyzing texts, consider the application of critical approaches, and compare and discuss literary works confidently and clearly, with the aim of contributing and defending well-reasoned arguments. Students will also improve their skills in organization, composition, and expression of ideas.

Required Texts

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

Anne McCaffrey, *Dragonflight*

Peter S. Beagle, *The Last Unicorn*

Terry Pratchett, *Small Gods*

Neil Gaiman, *The Sandman, Volume One* (graphic novel)

Jo Walton, *Among Others* **available as a Kindle edition on Amazon.ca. The Kindle app is free to download.

Alternate editions of course novels should be okay. Other texts (short fiction) will be available on Learn.

Course Requirements and Assessment: Read all texts in advance of class and be prepared to discuss the assigned readings with your peers. I will outline my expectations with respect to written assignments in the lectures before their due dates, but for now see the brief descriptions below. Written assignments must be entirely the student's own work, with all citations properly referenced.

Assessment	Date of Evaluation	Weighting
Participation in discussion forums	Throughout the term	15%
First text analysis, draft 1	Oct. 21	5%
First text analysis, draft 2	Oct. 28	15%
Second text analysis, draft 1	Nov. 11	5%
Second text analysis, draft 2	Nov. 18	15%
Text Recommendation	Any time from Oct. 1	10%
Term Paper Outline	Nov. 30	5%
Term Paper	Dec. 9	30%

Participation: At the start of each week, a new discussion forum will open with guiding questions about the text(s) for that week. I will monitor and occasionally join in these discussions. Feel free to initiate discussions, but strive also to respond to what your classmates are saying about the texts in a respectful way. On the Thursday of each week I will upload a video lecture with my own thoughts and summation. Feel free to return to earlier discussions to add your additional notions.

First Text Analysis, draft 1: You will select a passage to analyze from any of the course texts (feel free to read ahead); the first draft will involve the completion of a handout designed to guide your thinking. Additional guidelines will become available for all assignments.

First Text Analysis, draft 2: Use the feedback from your returned draft to compose a formal written analysis (500 words) or video.

Second Text Analysis, drafts one and two: as above.

Brief Oral or Written Text Recommendation: Choose a work of fantasy literature that is not on the course list – a favourite novel or series – and make a

recommendation (350-500 words) to the class that describes basic story details (without giving away the ending, of course) and that compares elements in the story to one or more texts studied in the course. For example, explain how the main character is very similar to a character we have already encountered in our course reading; explain how the two texts have similar thematic elements. The due date is flexible so you can work on and submit the paper at a time that works best for you.

Term Paper Outline: This 1-2 page document will provide me with a few ideas about what you have in mind for your term paper, and how you will structure your arguments. More details will be provided.

Term Paper: Based on written feedback, compose a 1,500-2,000 word paper. If I indicate concerns, I encourage you to get in touch with me to discuss your ideas further.

POLICY ON LATE WORK AND MISSED ASSIGNMENTS

Based on experience teaching remotely during the pandemic, I plan to be reasonably flexible with due dates. However, if you find that you will be unable to submit assigned work by the listed deadlines, I would appreciate being informed as reasonably in advance as possible. Any other issues will be considered on a case-by-case basis. It is your responsibility to make sure that all work is completed; although I *may* send one reminder e-mail if I notice something has not been submitted, I will not generally send repeat reminders.

CORRESPONDENCE

Students using e-mail to contact me must include their first and last names, student number, and course section in which they are enrolled in the e-mail subject line. E-mails composed in this course must be formally and professionally written.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility; see www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/upload_file/PLCY_AOM_Student-Petitions-and-Grievances_20151211-SJUSCapproved.pdf. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome's Advising Specialist, Student Affairs Office, who will provide further assistance.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean.

[Policy 71](#) allows for instructors who discover or are provided with evidence of academic offences to seek an informal resolution directly with the student. If an agreement is reached, the proposed resolution must be reported to the Integrity Officer at integrity.officer.math@uwaterloo.ca, and is still subject to the approval of the Assistant Dean for Students (or, in cases involving graduate students, the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies). Note that this approval may depend upon how closely the proposed resolution matches established precedent, the [Guidelines](#) attached to Policy 71, and whether the student has any previous offences on their record.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to

the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Appeals,
www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Appeals_20131122-SJUSApproved.pdf.

Note for students with disabilities: AccessAbility Services, located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term, www.uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/.

Mental Health Support: The Faculty of Math encourages students to seek out mental health support if needed.

On-campus Resources:

- Campus Wellness <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-wellness/>
- Counselling Services: counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca 519-888-4567 ext 32655
- MATES: one-to-one peer support program offered by Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) and Counselling Services: mates@wusa.ca
- Health Services: located across the creek from the Student Life Centre, 519-888-4096.

Off-campus Resources:

- Good2Talk (24/7): Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454 (Ontario and Nova Scotia only)
- Here 24/7: Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247 (Waterloo Region only)
- OK2BME: set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning teens. Phone: 519-884-0000 extension 213 (Waterloo Region only)
- EMPOWER ME 1-833-628-5589 for Cdn./USA other countries see: http://studentcare.ca/rte/en/IHaveAPlan_WUSA_EmpowerMe_EmpowerMe
 - EMPOWER ME in China:

China North 108007142831	China South 108001402851
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Diversity: It is our intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, and that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class. We recognize the immense value of the diversity in identities, perspectives, and contributions that students bring, and the benefit it has on our educational environment. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let us know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In particular:

- We will gladly honour your request to address you by an alternate/preferred name or gender pronoun. Please advise us of this preference early in the term so we may make appropriate changes to our records.
- We will honour your religious holidays and celebrations. Please inform of us these at the start of the course.
- We will follow AccessAbility Services guidelines and protocols on how to best support students with different learning needs.

ACCOMODATIONS/VERIFICATION OF ILLNESS FORMS (VIF)/SELF-DECLARATION UPDATES

Review the Faculty of Mathematics' [Accommodations](#) webpage, which was updated in fall 2020 and maintains current and clear information for students about the process.

Class Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignment Due
Sept. 9	Course introduction		
Sept 13-16	Conventions of Fantasy Literature	Read, in advance, a selection of short texts available on Learn	<i>Remember to post regularly in the discussion forums!</i>
Sept. 20-23	Tolkien	<i>The Hobbit</i>	
Sept. 27-30	McCaffrey	<i>Dragonflight</i>	
Oct. 4-7	Various authors	Selection of short texts to be made available on Learn	
Oct. 18-21	Beagle	<i>The Last Unicorn</i>	Text Analysis draft 1 (Oct. 21)
Oct. 25-28	Pratchett	<i>Small Gods</i>	Text Analysis draft 2 (Oct. 28)
Nov. 1-4	Various authors	Selection of short texts available on Learn	
Nov. 8-11	Gaiman	<i>The Sandman, vol. 1</i>	Text Analysis draft 1 (Nov. 11)
Nov. 15-18	Various authors	Selection of short texts to be made available on Learn	Text Analysis draft 2 (Nov. 18)
Nov. 22-25	Walton	<i>Among Others</i>	
Nov. 29 - Dec. 2	Various authors	Selection of short texts to be made available on Learn	Term paper outline (Nov. 30)
Dec. 6-7	Course conclusion		Term paper due Dec. 9

Don't forget about the "text recommendation" assignment, which can be turned in any time after Oct. 1.