

ENG257

Growing Up In Other Worlds: Fantasy and Children's Literature

CRN: 18519, Times: Monday, Wednesday & Friday 10:30–11:30 pm, Location: HODGES 223
Instructor: P. Brown, e-mail: piers.brown@mail.wvu.edu, Course Website: ecampus.wvu.edu
Office Hours: Mon & Wed: 1:30–3 pm, & by appointment, Office Location: COLSON 131

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF COURSE

As a genre, Fantasy Literature has seen a sudden leap in popularity over during the last two decades, primarily as a result of novels for children (the Harry Potter books, the novels of Philip Pullman) and of film adaptations of J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, and HBO's version of *Game of Thrones*. Despite these events it remains one of the most marginalized genre categories in fiction, both in academia and in culture more generally—a marginalization that is all the more striking considering the general acceptance of magic realist novels as part of the wider literary culture. In this course we will re-read the genre of fantasy for continuities with the wider history of the novel, focusing particularly on the bildungsroman, children's literature, and historical narratives.

REQUIRED READING:

Any version of the novels listed in the schedule should be adequate for the course. They should all be widely available at both first- and second-hand bookstores, as well as from most public libraries.

Ursula Le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea*.
George R. R. Martin, *A Game of Thrones*.
C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawntrader*.
Philip Pullman, *The Golden Compass*.
R. A. MacAvoy, *The Lens of the World*.
Lev Grossman, *The Magicians*.
Michael Swanick, *The Iron Dragon's Daughter*.
Neal Stephenson, *The Diamond Age*.
Tim Powers, *Last Call*.
Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*.
Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*.

The short-stories and articles marked † will be provided at the course website: ecampus.wvu.edu

METHOD OF INSTRUCTION

One three-hour classes per week, with each week usually devoted to a single novel or thematic topic. In the first two classes, we will cover the and in the final class.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Course Requirements: Four short assignments (500 words each.) 10% each; group presentation 15%; essay proposal (250 words) 10%; final essay (1500 words, due April 29th) 30%; Participation 10%.

Group Presentation (15 mins): 10%

During the second half of the course, we divide up into groups of 3-4. Each group will be responsible for introducing one of the novels in weeks 8-14 to the class as a whole. **Guidelines and sign up in Monday, February 11th.**

Short assignments (500 words): 10% each

Four short papers on different aspects of novels covered in the class: one on maps and mapping; an appendix; a symbolic or allegorical reading; and a biography of a character. Guidelines will be distributed in class. **Due: In class, Friday, February 1st & 15th, & March 1st & 15th.**

Final Paper (1500 words): 10% & 30%

A paper discussing a thematic topic in two or three works covered in the course. You may substitute a text from outside our readings with permission. Essay questions will be distributed in class, Monday March 4th. **DUE: Proposal (10%), Friday, April 5th. Paper, Friday, April 26th.**

Essays are to be submitted in hard copy only. Good practice requires that you keep all notes and working papers, as well as a duplicate of the final version, at least until the course is finished in December. Essays should be double-spaced, with 1" left and right margins, printed in minimum 12-point font.

Essays are due on Fridays, and are to be handed in in class. If not handed in on the date due, they are due at the next class. Do not hand essays in either at the department or under my office door. **Late essays will incur a penalty of ten percent (10%), and papers more than a week late will not be accepted.** If you need an extension for any reason, you should see me during

my office hours prior to the due date of the assignment. In all cases, it is better to contact me and discuss any difficulties you may have beforehand, rather than afterwards. If something happens which that drastically effects your attendance or your ability to complete work on time (serious illness, family tragedy, etc.), I would strongly encourage you to contact Dr. Thomas Sloane, Sr. Associate Dean of Students, at 293-5611 or tom.sloane@mail.wvu.edu.

When you begin work on the first assignment, you should take advantage of the resources of the English Department's Writing Center. There you will find essential advice on planning your work, using and documenting sources, avoiding plagiarism, style and editing, grammar and punctuation, and ESL questions.

Participation

As in any English class it is vital that you do two things: do the day's reading and bring the text to class so that we can discuss it in detail. In cases where there is an electronic text, you should print it out and bring it with you. If you do not have the assigned text with you during class, I may ask you to

Although this is a course about reading and writing, it is also more generally about communication. Your participation mark is based on your active engagement with the material in the course. You can participate by asking questions in class or during office hours, by demonstrating your understanding of the assigned readings, and by helping to foster an atmosphere in which all the other students in class are also able to contribute.

PART ONE: THE HISTORY OF FANTASY

Week 1: Beginnings

MONDAY, JANUARY 14TH: Introduction

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16TH

READING: *from*, Francis Spufford, *The Child that Books Built*.†

FRIDAY, JANUARY 18TH

READING: Ursula Le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea* (Chapters 1-4).

Week 2: Building Other Worlds

MONDAY, JANUARY 21ST

MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY, NO CLASS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23RD

READING: Ursula Le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea* (Chapters 5-7)

FRIDAY, JANUARY 25TH

READING: Ursula Le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea* (Chapters 8-10).

Week 3: High Fantasy

MONDAY, JANUARY 28TH

READING: George R. R. Martin, *A Game of Thrones* (pp. 1-292).

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30TH

READING: George R. R. Martin, *A Game of Thrones* (pp. 293-522).

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1ST

READING: George R. R. Martin, *A Game of Thrones* (pp. 523-807).

ASSIGNMENT 1: Map assignment due

Week 4: Fantastic Histories

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 4TH

READING: Tolkein, "Appendices," *The Return of the King*.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6TH

READING: "A Description of the Island of Numenor," *Unfinished Tales*.†

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8TH

READING: "Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age," *The Silmarilion*.†

PART TWO: FANTASY AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Week 5: Fairy Tales

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11TH: Fairy Tales

READING: Grimm, "Hansel and Gretel;" "Rumpelstiltskin." Hans Christian Anderson, "The Little Mermaid."†

SIGN UP: Group Presentations

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13TH

READING: Angela Carter, "The Bloody Chamber." Tanith Lee, "Red as Blood."†

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15TH

READING: C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawntrader*.

ASSIGNMENT 2: Appendix assignment due

Week 6: Fantasy and Allegory

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18TH

READING: C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawntrader*.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20TH

READING: C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawntrader*.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22ND

CLASS CANCELLED

Week 7: Liminal Spaces

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25TH

READING: Philip Pulman, *The Golden Compass*.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27TH

READING: Philip Pulman, *The Golden Compass*.

FRIDAY, MARCH 1ST

READING: Philip Pulman, *The Golden Compass*.

✍️ **ASSIGNMENT 3: Allegory assignment due**

PART THREE: *BILDUNGSROMANS*

Week 8: Seeing the World

MONDAY, MARCH 4TH:

READING: R. A. MacAvoy, *The Lens of the World* (pp. 1-92).

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6TH

READING: R. A. MacAvoy, *The Lens of the World* (pp. 93-160).

FRIDAY, MARCH 8TH

READING: R. A. MacAvoy, *The Lens of the World* (pp. 160-286).

Week 9: Anti-Potters

MONDAY, MARCH 11TH

READING: Lev Grossman, *The Magicians* (Book One).

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13TH

READING: Lev Grossman, *The Magicians* (Book Two).

FRIDAY, MARCH 15TH

READING: Lev Grossman, *The Magicians* (Conclusion).

✍️ **ASSIGNMENT: Biography assignment due**

Week 10: Fantasy, Cliché and Myth

MONDAY, MARCH 18TH

READING: Michael Swanick, *The Iron Dragon's Daughter* (Chapters 1-8).

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20TH

READING: Michael Swanick, *The Iron Dragon's Daughter* (Chapters 9-17).

FRIDAY, MARCH 22ND

READING: Michael Swanick, *The Iron Dragon's Daughter* (Chapters 18-24).

✍️ **LAST DAY TO DROP CLASSES**

Spring Break

Week 11: Future Fantasies

MONDAY, APRIL 1ST

READING: Neal Stephenson, *The Diamond Age* (Part One).

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3RD

READING: Neal Stephenson, *The Diamond Age* (Part Two).

FRIDAY, APRIL 5TH

READING: Neal Stephenson, *The Diamond Age* (Conclusion).

✍️ **ASSIGNMENT: Essay proposal due**

Week 12: Appropriating Modernism

MONDAY, APRIL 8TH

READING: Tim Powers, *Last Call* (Prologue and Book One).

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10TH

READING: Tim Powers, *Last Call* (Book Two).

FRIDAY, APRIL 12TH

READING: Tim Powers, *Last Call* (Book Three). Eliot, "Notes," *The Wasteland*. †

Week 13: Ecologies

MONDAY, APRIL 15TH

READING: Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (Chapters 1-10).

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17TH

READING: Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (Chapters 11-17).

FRIDAY, APRIL 19TH

READING: Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (Chapters 18-24).

Week 14: Fantasy and Magic Realism

MONDAY, APRIL 22ND

READING: Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (pp. 1-77).

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24TH

READING: Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (pp. 77-202).

FRIDAY, APRIL 26TH

READING: Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (pp. 203-335).

ASSIGNMENT: Final essay due.

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Week 15: Endings and Beginning Again

MONDAY, APRIL 29TH

READING: Chabon, "The Martian Agent." †

WEDNESDAY, MAY 1ST

READING: Gaiman, "The Problem with Susan." † Sady Doyle, "Hermione Granger." †

FRIDAY, MAY 3RD

READING: Course Wrap-Up and Evaluations