

Comparative Literature

Fantasy and World Literature As taught by Jennifer Rodgers

Description:

Let's face it: sometimes real life just doesn't cut it. It gets too boring, rigid, confusing, difficult, painful, terrifying-whatever-and we have to get away for awhile. The place we go is the realm of fantasy, an alternative world beyond the confines of ordinary space and time.

In this course, we will read (or reread) both classics of the fantasy genre and some of the most popular works of contemporary fantasy. These fantastic works take many forms, from "fairy tales" to science fiction to horror, utopian literature, urban fantasy, and more. The thread which binds these very different texts together is the motif of the journey of knowledge, which often takes the form of a child's coming-of-age. From the study of these texts, I hope for us to come to appreciate more fully each of the works on the reading list, to explore the forms into which we channel our fantasies, and to examine why and how fantasy literature so frequently comes to function as an outlet for our deepest insights, desires, hopes, and fears.

Required Texts:

Orson Scott Card, *Ender's Game*; Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*; Neil Gaiman, *Season of Mists*; Mercedes Lackey, *Magic's Pawn*; Neal Stephenson, *The Diamond Age*

Also, Diana Hacker's *Pocket Style Manual* is highly recommended for this course.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and participation are mandatory. There will be one seven-page paper and one final exam, as well as occasional in-class essays, short (10 minute) quizzes, and short (1-2 page) take-home writing assignments.

This is a heavy reading course-Due to time constraints, you will only be reading five novels, each of which you will need to have finished by the day indicated for discussion. In addition, you will be reading many short stories which will be discussed in relation to one another and the novels. If you are having difficulty keeping up on the reading, come and speak to me before you get irreparably behind. This is, after all, your class, and I want it to be as valuable for you as possible.

Discussion:

Come to class each day with something to say, whether it's a question, a comment, or a topic for discussion. If an aspect of a work puzzles or interests you, let the rest of the class know about it; you probably aren't the only one confused or intrigued. Read actively, then be active in class.

In order to allow for open communication in the classroom, it is very important that each of us respect the right of others to have opinions contrary to our own. Remember that your classmates represent a variety of backgrounds, literary and otherwise, and make the most of your diverse experiences.

Absence Policy:

Students are allowed absences for religious purposes. If you will miss class due to religious observance, you are required by university policy to notify me in advance so that I can schedule any necessary make-ups.

If you miss class due to illness, you will be held responsible for assignments due or given during the class you miss, so make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible after your absence.

Office Hours:

If you have questions or concerns of any sort about the class, the readings, the papers, and the like, please come and talk to me. Should you be unable to attend office hours, I will be more than happy to make an appointment to meet with you at another time.

Grades will be determined as follows:

- 30% Class participation
 - 30% Paper
 - 20% Final Exam
 - 20% Quizzes and essays
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Syllabus:

Week 1

6/4 Introduction to fantasy
6/5 Children's fantasy-Film: *The Dark Crystal*
6/6 Children's fantasy-*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Week 2

6/11 Heroic fantasy-*Magic's Pawn*
6/12 Indo-European folk and fairy tales.
6/13 Excerpts from *The Arabian Nights*

Week 3

6/18 Science fiction-*Ender's Game*
6/19 Science fiction short stories
6/20 Science fantasy short stories

Week 4

6/25 Dark fantasy-*Season of Mists*
6/26 Classic horror (Poe and Lovecraft)
6/27 Vampire tales

Week 5

7/2 Magic realism (Cortázar, García Márquez, Garro, Sûmers)
7/3 Paper Due / Utopian fiction

7/4 HOLIDAY

Week 6

7/9 Cyberpunk-*The Diamond Age* / Papers returned

7/10 Cyberpunk-Film: *Bladerunner*

7/11 Review / **Final Exam**