

Eric Rabkin  
University of Michigan  
Ann Arbor, MI  
English  
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Rabkin F 91 TTh 1:10-2:30  
Office: 1632 HH TTh 3:00-4:00 & W 2:00-4:00 & By Appt 764-2553

## MODERN FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION ENGLISH 417 XX

This senior seminar, an intensive exploration of fantasy and science fiction prose published since 1960, is intended for students with prior knowledge of the field. The aims of the course will include at least enjoying the reading, learning about each work, studying the diverse forms these genres have recently taken, and understanding the reasons fantasy and science fiction are currently so popular. The course readings will begin with a set of works diverse in genre, in subject, and in the demographic characteristics of their authors. Throughout the course, students are to keep and exchange reading journals. Students will be assigned to reading groups that will study works of the students' own choice in order to widen each individual's background and to make that new knowledge available to the seminar as a whole. Each reading group will choose one work to add to our collective syllabus and will prepare a group paper explaining how and why that work was chosen. In the week for which we read those additional works, the choosing group will lead the seminar. Each student in that reading group will write an individual paper dealing with the recommended book. The course grade will come from the reading journal (30%), the group paper (20%), the individual paper (30%), and participation (20%).

Gabriel Garcia Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (Avon), 1967  
Stanislaw Lem, *His Master's Voice* (Harcourt Brace), 1968  
Philip K. Dick, *Bladerunner (Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?)* (Ballantine), 1968  
Doris Lessing, *Memoirs of a Survivor* (Random House), 1974  
Anne Rice, *Interview with the Vampire* (Ballantine), 1976  
Anne McCaffrey, *The White Dragon* (Ballantine), 1978  
Russell Hoban, *Riddley Walker* (Pocket Books), 1980

### SYLLABUS

**Th 5 Sep** Intro (review of syllabus and class structure; develop class roster of reading/leadership groups and phone numbers; discussion how groups may work together; explanation of grading criteria; discussion of short texts provided by the instructor)

**T 10 Sep** Discussion of short texts (up to 8 photocopied pages provided in class to each member of the seminar by each reading group); begin reading García Márquez

**Th 12 Sep** Discussion of texts previously provided by students; for seminar negotiation, bring copies for each person of tentative reading group lists; enumerate criteria of text acceptability

**T 17 Sep** Discussion of Garcia Márquez

**Th 19 Sep** Discussion of Garcia Márquez

**T 24 Sep** Discussion of Lem

**Th 26 Sep** Discussion of Lem; discuss how groups might lead class discussions

**T 1 Oct** Discussion of Dick led by Group A

**Th 3 Oct** Discussion of Dick led by Group A; **group pprs due in sufficient copies for everyone** (instructor copy should have individual drafts attached as appendices)

**T 8 Oct** Discussion of Disch led by Group B

**Th 10 Oct** Discussion of Disch led by Group B; discussion of group pprs & selection of remainder of syllabus led by instructor

**T 15 Oct** Discussion of Rice led by Group C; each group reports on how its book should be obtained

**Th 17 Oct** Discussion of Rice led by Group C

**T 22 Oct** Discussion of McCaffrey led by Group D; **ppr proposals for Group A due**

**Th 24 Oct** Discussion of McCaffrey led by Group D

**T 29 Oct** Discussion of Butler led by Group E; **ppr proposals for Group B due**

**Th 31 Oct** Discussion of Butler led by Group E

**T 5 Nov** Reading Group A leads discussion of its selection; drafts of individual Group A papers distributed to class; **ppr proposals for Group C due**

**Th 7 Nov** Reading Group A leads discussion of its selection; signed and annotated Group A draft papers returned

**T 12 Nov** Reading Group B leads discussion of its selection; drafts of individual Group B papers distributed to class; **ppr proposals for Group D due; individual pprs for Group A due**

**Th 14 Nov** Reading Group B leads discussion of its selection; signed and annotated Group B draft papers returned

**T 19 Nov** Reading Group C leads discussion of its selection; drafts of individual Group C papers distributed to class; **ppr proposals for Group E due; individual pprs for Group B due**

**Th 21 Nov** Reading Group C leads discussion of its selection; signed and annotated Group C draft papers returned

**T 26 Nov** Reading Group D leads discussion of its selection; drafts of individual Group D papers distributed to class; **individual pprs for Group C due**

**Th 28 Nov** **Thanksgiving break**

**T 3 Dec** Reading Group E leads discussion of its selection; drafts of individual Group E papers distributed to class; signed and annotated Group D draft papers returned

**Th 5 Dec** Reading Group E leads discussion of its selection; signed and annotated Group E draft papers returned; **individual pprs for Group D due**

**T 10 Dec** Last class: CRLT course evaluations, reflections on the semester's efforts; **individual pprs for Group E due; reading journals and self-evaluations due**

T XX Dec 4:00-6:00 Reading journals and uncollected papers available in 1632 HH

## **WRITTEN WORK**

**READING JOURNALS:** As understood in this course, a reading journal is a type of diary by means of which you focus your thoughts on the reading material, record references to key passages, articulate questions that the texts seem to raise, and sometimes try out answers to those questions. The reading journal should be kept in some sort of permanently bound, 8-1/2" x 11" notebook, such as a spiral-bound notebook, with your name and the course number prominently displayed.

A typical entry should be headed with the date of entry and objective data about the text, such as the author's name, the title of the work, the birth and death dates of the author, the language, nationality, and gender of the author, and the date of publication of the work. You should leave some space after these preliminaries since after reading the work, you might want to add other heading information, such as an indication of the type of work this is (for example, fairy tale or science fiction) or an indication of other works that seem particularly interesting to associate with it and the reasons for those associations (for example, similarity of narrative structure or of theme). As you read, of course, you ought to mark your texts, not only underscoring key passages but indicating in the book's margins why those passages are key or at least what they contain (for example, "typical style," or "plot twist"). In your reading journal you may want to record those comments by page number and amplify them. The process of writing as one reads often leads to promising stray thoughts that one doesn't want to forget but doesn't want to stop reading to pursue. These stray thoughts should also go in the reading journal. At least as important as the stray thoughts are the thoughts that arise after the reading is complete and one has had a chance to digest the work a bit, both by reflection and by looking back through it and through one's marginal notes. At that point, you ought to write down your observations about anything in the story that seems interesting (for example, style, characterization, setting, plot, moral, and so on) indicating whether those observations feel conclusive or provisional. If provisional, you ought to try to frame questions that might test those observations. And if you then find answers, they should be added too. If you have not yet done so, at that point you should also indicate pages on which important passages may be found, be they important for framing or answering the questions in the entry or simply important as examples of something that you find striking. Each such page reference should be accompanied by a few words indicating your idea of the passage's importance. These ideas, like all ideas in the reading journals, should be thought of as susceptible to revision as discussion, further reflection, and further reading suggest new understandings of individual texts and of fiction in general. Entries should be made with wide margins so that these second thoughts and later cross-references to other works noted in the journal can be made clearly and conveniently. A typical entry, then, will have heading information, a section of comparatively unorganized notes made during reading, and a section of somewhat more organized observations made after reflection and review of the text and the beginning of the journal entry.

In addition to thoughts on individual works made before, during, and immediately after the reading of each text, the reading journal should also record your more general observations and questions about fiction. These observations may well serve to focus class discussion and/or to lead you to your own

paper topics. By writing in the reading journal, you focus your ideas. Once written, those ideas can be shared and developed with others. At the beginning of each class, you should exchange your journal with a classmate. You should read your classmate's reading journal entries for the material for that day and then make a written response to one or more of those entries. Your response might comment on the virtues or weaknesses of each entry as a self-teaching tool; it might try to offer an answer to one or more of the questions posed; it might pose new questions in relation to the observations presented; and it might try to help in the development of such general ideas as possible paper topics. You should sign the comments you make in your classmate's reading journal. During the course of the semester, you should try to get written comments from each of your classmates. Each day, after you retrieve your journal and have had a chance to read your classmate's written commentary on your entries, we can begin class discussion of the texts indicated on the syllabus. This journal should be your record not only for the material listed by title on the syllabus but for all other reading work you do in this course. You should make journal entries here for the books you read toward the group paper (see below). You should make entries here for the book(s) you read for your individual paper (see below). You should record here observations and questions of use to you and to the class in response to reading drafts of your classmates' individual papers. You should take your class notes right in the reading journal too. This makes your own review easy. Whenever you do review, feel free to write cross-referenced further thoughts in your margins and to add new observations, ideas, and questions wherever they seem appropriate or at the end. Date all such additional entries for reference.

Since your reading journal will be read by others, please make sure to write very clearly or to print. Given the nature of the entries, fragment sentences may well be quite reasonable, but illegible words are of no help whatsoever. The typical entry for a short story probably should be about a handwritten page or somewhat more. Novels will obviously require longer entries made over more than one day. You should leave at least half a page after each entry both so that your classmate has room to write and so that you have room to jot further notes based on that response and/or on class discussion. I will look over your shoulders and comment on these journals in class each day. When the journals are turned in to me, they should be accompanied by a typed evaluation of the use the journal was to you. Please number the pages in your journal so that your own cross-references can be made easily and so that this self-evaluation can make concrete references to examples in your journal. The self-evaluation should include a suggestion of the reading journal grade you believe you ought to receive and your reasons supporting that belief. In developing this self-evaluation, feel encouraged to share advance drafts with classmates, and particularly with members of your Reading Group.

**PAPERS:** There will be two papers due for this course, a group paper and an individual paper. Each paper should be headed with the name(s) of its writers, the date, the course name, and the total number of words. For the purposes of this course, all pages must be double-spaced. Papers must fall within the required length limits to be acceptable.

**Group Paper:** Each reading group should pursue its own study of the field of fantasy and science fiction dovetailing with the study of the seminar as a whole and with the studies of the other reading groups. Each member of each reading group should read two books not on our initial syllabus. In order to do this, each reading group should bring to class copies for everyone of a book list long enough to provide at least three books for each of its members. These works can be located by browsing in the bookstore or library, by consulting secondary references, or by chatting with knowledgeable readers. Each person adding a book to this list must ascertain that that book is available. In class, we will negotiate reading group assignments in order to minimize duplications

among the lists. Each reading group will then proceed to assign two of its remaining works to each of its members for reading (including recording the reading process in the individual's reading journal).

Reading groups should meet periodically outside class to discuss their reading and the relation that reading has to the work going on in the seminar. In the normal course of seminar meetings, people from outside each reading group will be reviewing and commenting on reading journal entries on these outside books. After reviewing these comments, their own reading journal entries, and their collective sense of what the seminar is doing and what it might best do hereafter, each reading group should decide which of its books would be best to add to our syllabus, which second best, and which third best.

Each Group Paper should be a 1200-1800 word (approximately 4-6 page) argument making clear how each of these books would serve the needs of the seminar, why each of these and not others was chosen, and why they were so ordered. These arguments should reveal enough about each book to make it appealing but not enough to undermine the pleasures of reading it. These arguments might well include references to reading journal comments by classmates outside the reading group, to published reviews, to comparisons and contrasts with our seminar reading and discussion, and to facts about and analyses of the chosen books. If a reading group so wishes, it may support its main argument by up to 3000 words (approximately ten pages) of appendant excerpts from the chosen works and/or from secondary sources.

Each reading group should provide a copy of its paper for each member of the seminar. (The instructor copy should also have the individual drafts of each group's members appended.) Using what we learn from these papers, we will augment our syllabus. Group Papers should bear the names of all members of the group. The grade for the paper will be given to each member of the group.

**Individual Papers:** Each member of each reading group will write a literary argument for which (one of) its focal works will be the work chosen by that reading group to add to our syllabus. This paper may concern that work alone, that work and other works from the course, and even that work and (given permission of the instructor) other works not in the course. This paper may concern literary history, textual analysis, genre theory, or any other literary matter. However, each paper must carve out its own area such that while the papers from any given reading group may be complementary or even contradictory, they may not be substantially duplicative. Each reading group, then, should design a set of very brief paper proposals, one for each member, that together map out a range of treatment of the chosen work. Each proposal should list its paper's proposed author, likely focal work(s), its area of intellectual concern, and a set of questions to be explored and/or a set of hypotheses to be tested. This set of paper proposals is due on the dates mentioned on the syllabus. At the end of the session in which the set of proposals is submitted, the instructor and the reading group will meet briefly to agree on topics for each member of the reading group.

Each individual paper should be 3600 to 4500 words (approximately 12-15 pages) long. A draft version should be distributed to each member of the class the first day that the individual's reading group is leading the seminar. The signed, class-annotated copies of those drafts should be returned to their writers on the next class day. On the basis of seminar discussion, colleague annotation, and further reflection and research, individuals may well want to revise their papers. Final versions of these papers are due according to dates on the syllabus. The final versions should have the signed topic proposal sheet attached. One copy of each of these final drafts is sufficient.