

Course Syllabus

Course Information

Course Number/Section	LIT 3317.501
Course Title	The Literature of Fantasy: The Weird
Term	Spring 2017
Days & Times	Mondays, 7:00-9:45pm

Professor Contact Information

Professor	Sabrina Starnaman
Email Address	sabrina.starnaman@utdallas.edu
Office Location	JO 4.634
Office Hours	Wednesday, 10:00 am-12noon, and by appointment

Teaching Assistant	Alisa Bovda
Email Address	ayb091020@utdallas.edu
Office Location	JO 5.206
Office Hours	Wednesday, 1-3pm and by appointment

Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

HUMA 1301 or a course that can be substituted for HUMA 1301.

Course Objectives

- Students will be able to identify aspects of fantasy literature that define it as a unique genre in classroom discussion.
- Students will be able to apply their knowledge of literary themes covered in this course to the assigned texts in classroom discussion.
- Students will be able to write a short essay that uses appropriate examples from the text to make an argument about themes and ideas related to Lovecraftian, Magical Realist, Weird, and other fantasy literature covered in this course.
- Through reading texts that are new to them and through class discussion, students will find one or more texts that they enjoy reading and which stirs a personal desire to read more literature.

Course Description

From H. P. Lovecraft and Franz Kafka to Haruki Murakami and China Mieville, this course explores weird, dark fantasy. This course will cover the last hundred years of weird fiction from its early beginnings in *Weird Tales* magazine to the present day. We will discuss literary movements or styles that are loosely identified as Lovecraftian horror, Kafkaesque fiction, Magical Realism, and the New Weird. We will discuss the social context of the fiction, conventions of genre, and literary history. Students will be expected to use this historical and literary knowledge to write analytically about the short stories and novels. We will also try our hands at creating our own weird fiction. Be prepared for an exploration of dark, creepy, and horrific.

Required Textbooks and Materials

<i>The Weird: A Compendium of Strange and Dark Stories</i> , Ann and Jeff VanderMeer, editors. (2011) ISBN 13: 978-0765333629	<i>The Dream-Quest of Vellitt Boe</i> , Kij Johnson. (2016) ISBN-10: 0765391414 ISBN-13: 978-0765391414
<i>The Metamorphosis</i> , Franz Kafka. (1915) (translated by David Wyllie) ISBN-10: 9176371085 ISBN-13: 978-9176371084	<i>The Ballad of Black Tom</i> , Victor LaValle (2016) ISBN-10: 0765387867 ISBN-13: 978-0765387868

Copies of the texts are available at Off Campus Books.
 Off Campus Books (located behind Fuzzy's Tacos)
 561 W. Campbell Road, #201
 Richardson, TX 75080

Suggested Course Materials

Recommended, but not required:

Wonderbook: The Illustrated Guide to Creating Imaginative Fiction. Jeff VanderMeer. (2013)
 ISBN 13: 978-1419704420

Check out these Podcasts:

Drabblecast: Strange Stories, By Strange Authors, for Strange Listeners
<http://www.drabblecast.org/>

Welcome to Night Vale
<http://www.welcometonightvale.com/>

Assignments & Academic Calendar

Week	Day & Date	In Class— Have Read & Prepared for Discussion	Assignments Due & Work in Progress
1	M 1/9	Introduction Syllabus overview “What is ‘Lovecraftian?’” essay Radio play: “The Shadow Over Innsmouth,” (1936) Lovecraft A <i>Wired</i> article about Lovecraft’s legacy from January 6, 2017! https://www.wired.com/2017/01/geeks-guide-writers-of-color-lovecraft/	
2	M 1/11	Student Introductions Lovecraftian Weird Tales “The People of the Pit,” (1918) Merritt “Unseen-Unfeared,” (1919) Stevens “The Dunwich Horror,” (1929) Lovecraft Discuss Paper 1	
3	M 1/16	NO CLASS—MLK Day	
	W 1/25	Last Day to Drop with a “W”	
“Science Fiction Prototyping: Designing the Future with Science Fiction” Center for Values in Medicine, Science, and Technology Lecture Brian David Johnson, Futurist in Residence at Arizona State University’s Center for Science and the Imagination. 7:30pm, Wednesday, January 25 th , 2017 in Jonsson Performance Hall - Admission is Free			
4	M 1/30	Discuss Final Project & Creative Project Lord Dunsany “How Nuth Would Have Practised His Art Upon the Gnoles,” (1912) Dunsany “The Man Who Sold Rope to the Gnoles,” (1951) St.	Paper 1 on Lovecraft due by 6pm via Turnitin assignment link in eLearning

		Clair Introduction to Kafka and Kafkaesque literature	
5	M 2/6	Kafka <i>The Metamorphosis</i> , (1915) Kafka Review Paper 1 Introduction to Magical Realism Discuss Paper 2A	
<p align="center">“Brain Control: The Science and Fiction of EEG Wearables” Center for Values in Medicine, Science, and Technology Lecture Associate Professor Melissa Littlefield at University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana 7:30pm, Wednesday, February 8th 2017 in Jonsson Performance Hall - Admission is Free</p>			
6	M 2/13	Magical Realism “The Aleph,” (1945) Borges “Axolotl,” (1956) Cortázar	Rewrites of Paper 1 Due
7	M 2/20	Nnedi Okorafor’s Magical Realism and New Lovecraftian Fiction “The Palm Tree Bandit” from <i>Kabu-Kabu Stories</i> (.pdf on eLearning) From the “Lost Diary of TreeFrog7” First published at Clarkesworld (May 2009): http://clarkesworldmagazine.com/okorafor_05_09/ Listen in class to Drabblecast podcast of “Lost Diary of TreeFrog7” in class. Available at: http://www.drabblecast.org/2012/03/29/drabblecast-238-from-the-lost-diary-of-treefrog7/ Discuss Paper 2B	Paper 2A on Magical Realism due by 6pm via Turnitin assignment link in eLearning
<p align="center">Center for Values in Medicine, Science, and Technology Lecture Author and Associate Professor Nnedi Okorafor 7:30pm, Wednesday, February 22nd in Jonsson Performance Hall - Admission is Free</p>			
8	M 2/27	Weird Modernity “Genius Loci,” (1933) Smith “Smoke Ghost,” (1941) Leiber “The Crowd,” (1943) Bradbury Recommended: “Chapter 2: The Ecosystem of the Story” from <i>Wonderbook</i> (41-72)	Paper 2B on <i>Kabu-Kabu Stories</i> due by 6pm via Turnitin assignment link in eLearning
	Sa 3/4	Midterm Grades Due—Based on Paper 1, quizzes, & in-class writings	
9	M 3/6	New Weird “The Beautiful Gelressh,” (2003) Ford “The God of Dark Laughter,” (2001) Chabon “Feeders and Eaters,” (2002) Gaiman “The New Weird: ‘It’s Alive?’” VanderMeer (.pdf on eLearning) New Weird Readings from eLearning folder	

		<p style="text-align: center;">Worldbuilding</p> <p>Recommended: “Chapter 6: Worldbuilding” from <i>Wonderbook</i> (211-244) Discuss Creative Project</p>	
10	M 3/13	<p>NO CLASS--SPRING BREAK</p> <p>For Creative Project students: complete draft of short story over Spring Break</p>	
11	M 3/20	<p style="text-align: center;">Weird Science</p> <p>“The Dissection,” (1913) Heym “Unseen-Unfeared,” (1919) Stevens “The Autopsy,” (1980) Shea Discuss Paper 3A</p>	Workshop Group Sign-up: MUST be present to sign up AND Exchange stories in class
12	M 3/27	<p style="text-align: center;">Weird, Kafkasque, Magical Realist stories by Japanese Authors</p> <p>“The Hell Screen,” (1918) Akutagawa “The Town of Cats,” (1935) Sakutaro “The Ice Man,” (1991) Murakami</p>	Paper 3A on weird stories by Japanese authors due Workshop Meetings this week
13	M 4/3	<p style="text-align: center;">New Lovecraftian Weird</p> <p>“Details,” (2002) Miéville “Tsathoggua,” (2008) Shea (.pdf on eLearning) “The Call of the Pancake Factory,” (2013) Liu. Listen to “The Call of the Pancake Factory,” Drabblecast podcast in class. Available at: http://www.drabblecast.org/2013/08/22/drabblecast-293-the-call-of-the-pancake-factory/</p> <p>Discuss Paper 3B</p>	Exchange stories in class
14	M 4/10	<p style="text-align: center;">New Lovecraftian Weird</p> <p><i>The Dream-Quest of Vellitt Boe</i>, (2016) Johnson</p> <p><i>Wired</i> article and interview with Kij Johnson about <i>The Dream-Quest of Vellitt Boe</i>. https://www.wired.com/2016/08/geeks-guide-kij-johnson/</p>	
15	M 4/17	<p>Skype visit with Kij Johnson, author of <i>The Dream-Quest of Vellitt Boe</i></p> <p>Discuss: <i>The Dream-Quest of Vellitt Boe</i>, (2016) Johnson <i>The Ballad of Black Tom</i>, (2016) LaValle</p> <p>NPR interview with Victor LaValle about <i>The Ballad of Black Tom</i>. http://www.npr.org/2016/02/29/468558238/the-ballad-of-black-tom-offers-a-tribute-and-critique-of-lovecraft</p>	Paper 3B <i>Dream-Quest of Vellitt Boe</i> is due Workshop Meetings this week Exchange stories in class
16	M 4/24	<p><i>The Ballad of Black Tom</i>, (2016) LaValle</p> <p>Final discussion—course overview.</p>	Workshop Meetings this week

“The Power of Science Fiction”
Center for Values in Medicine, Science, and Technology Lecture
Author Kim Stanley Robinson
7:30pm, Wednesday, April 26th 2017 in Jonsson Performance Hall or TBD - Admission is Free

FINAL EXAMS T 5/2-M 5/8
Final Analytical Paper and Creative Project Due by 11:59pm Friday, May 5th via the Turnitin link on eLearning.
All extra point assignments (Center for Values lecture essays) due by 11:59pm Friday, May 5th via the Turnitin link on eLearning.

Assignments

Quizzes (5+ @ 20 points each) Given in class. Cannot be made up if you miss it. 100+ points

In-Class Writings (5+ @ 10 points each) 50+ points

Given in class. Cannot be made up if you miss it.

Short Papers: See pages 10-12 of syllabus (3 @ 50 points each) 150 points

No late papers accepted.

Papers submitted through Turnitin link on eLearning.

Final Project or Creative Project: See pages 13-15 of syllabus 100 points

Final/Creative Project submitted through Turnitin link on eLearning.

Additional Points:

You may attend any of the Center for Values in Medicine, Science, and Technology Lectures and write a 250-350 reflection essay about it for 10 pts. You may complete all 4 if you wish. 10-40 points

Papers submitted through Turnitin link on eLearning.

****Attendance is mandatory and excessive absences (3 or more) will result in a loss of points toward your final grade. -50 pts.**

Total 400+ points

Grading Policy

How to Calculate your Grade:	267-299 pts. = B-
401+ points = A+	233-266 pts. = C+
380-400 pts. = A	200-232 pts. = C
367-379 pts. = A-	167-199 pts. = C-
330-366 pts. = B+	123-166 pts. = D
300-329 pts. = B	< 124 pts. = F

This is a reading-intensive course. Please make sure that you are prepared to invest a lot of time in reading outside of class.

This course is run as a discussion intensive seminar, so attendance and participation is *very important*. If you want to do well in, or just pass, this class you must attend all the classes. There will be **NO** make-ups or late submissions for missed assignments or quizzes, but there will be opportunities to earn extra points toward your overall grade. You make the decisions about how many points you wish to earn and therefore what grade you get in this class. The responsibility is in your hands.

Course and Instructor Policies

As an upper-division literature course, LIT 3317 is a discussion-intensive seminar. Thus, whole group discussions will dominate our class periods, though there will be some lecture and small group discussions. Active class participation is very important to the success of the course and to the quality of your experience in this class. If you are present and engaged, our class will be productive and enjoyable. That means everyone needs to come to class **on time** and **be prepared**.

Anyone who uses a laptop, tablet computer, electronic reader, or cell phone for activities not related to our work in class (activities like checking Facebook, sending texts, watching a ballgame, IMing, etc.) will have their behavior identified publicly, recorded, and their grade lowered accordingly. This behavior is disrespectful to your classmates and professor.

You must bring your texts to class. This class may ask you to read more than you are used to reading in other courses. You may find that you need to reread passages multiple times in order to understand them. Start early and give yourself time to enjoy these books and stories. I wholeheartedly recommend taking notes in your books, flagging important passages, and coming to class with questions or comments about the texts.

No late assignments are accepted. You may turn in assignments early though. You cannot make up missed quizzes. There are opportunities to earn points to offset points missed. Quizzes may be given at the beginning, middle, or end of class. Quizzes will cover texts assigned for that night's discussion, as well as any previous texts.

Recent studies suggest that students who bring laptops to class perform worse (on average) than their non-laptop using peers, and are much less likely to pay attention in class. [Feel free to check the research: e.g., <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1078740> or any of the vast literature on the detriments of multitasking for performance.] Laptops and other electronic devices can also be a distraction for other students. You may read texts on computers, tablets, Kindles, etc., but I don't recommend it. Taking notes on digital texts is generally less effective than taking notes on paper texts.

We will use our full course time. (FYI: Packing up early is a pet peeve of mine).

PRO TIPS

You want to do well in this class?

- Read the syllabus carefully and refer to it often.
- Write in your books and/or take notes while you read! Pose questions and make observations as you read and write them down.
- Come to *every* class *prepared*. Read the stories and books carefully and take time to skim them before class to refresh details that you may have forgotten or details that you may have overlooked the first read-through. Reflect upon the discussion questions and jot down notes and page numbers that you think are relevant to the questions.
- Consider using an audiobook version of the texts alongside the print texts if you think it would help you.
- Come to class with questions, sections of texts you want to discuss already flagged, and comments to make.
- Listen and contribute actively to the conversation.
- Know where my office is. Know where the TA's office is. Know when we have our office hours.
- Visit us in Office Hours, especially if you have a question or observation that you did not get to make in class. Visit us in Office Hours even if you don't have questions.
- Complete every assignment on time.
- If you have concerns or questions about your work or performance (at any stage in the process), come see us. We are happy to work with you.

- Get the email addresses or phone numbers of a couple of students in case you need to find out what you missed. Consider discussing your project or the readings with each other before they are due.
- Take your papers to the Writing Center or find a quality proofreader to edit your project.
- Come to class on time and do not pack up early. If something comes up and you have to be absent or leave early, please talk to me about it. Life happens.
- If you are having difficulties (in life, class, etc.) talk to me before you get too far in a hole. Everyone has a tough semester.

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

Disability Services

It is the policy and practice of The University of Texas at Dallas to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. However, written notification from the Office of Student AccessAbility (OSA) is required. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation and would like to request it for a course, please discuss it with an OSA staff member and allow at least one week's advanced notice. Students who have questions about receiving accommodations, or those who have, or think they may have, a disability (mobility, sensory, health, psychological, learning, etc.) are invited to contact the Office of Student AccessAbility for a confidential discussion.

The primary functions of the Office of Student AccessAbility are to provide:

- academic accommodations for students with a documented permanent physical, mental or sensory disability
- non-academic accommodations
- resource and referral information and advocacy support as necessary and appropriate.

OSA is located in the Student Services Building, suite 3.200. They can be reached by phone at (972) 883-2098, or by email at disabilityservice@utdallas.edu.

Academic Integrity

The faculty expects from its students a high level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic degree depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student for that degree, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work.

Scholastic Dishonesty: Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline.

Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, submitting for credit any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, or any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Plagiarism, especially from the web, from portions of papers for other classes, and from any other source, is unacceptable and will be dealt with under the university's policy on plagiarism (see general catalog for details).

Please see the section about Avoiding Plagiarism on the UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures page:

<http://coursebook.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies/>

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus.

Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.

FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) for LIT 3317 The Literature of Fantasy

Missing Class

Q: I am . . . standing up in my sister's wedding / taking my parent/partner/pet to the doctor / scheduled for a Caesarian Section / picking up The Pope/President Obama/my kid at the airport / bound to some obligation that will keep me from attending class . . . can I take the quiz before class?

A: No. Everyone takes the quiz in class at the same time. This is why there are extra points built into the course.

Q: I missed the quiz earlier because I . . . got into a car accident / was abducted by aliens for 35 Earth minutes (4 days in alien time) / birthed a baby at 6:30pm this evening, but rushed to class immediately afterwards / was trying to submit my paper on eLearning but my computer crashed and I had to stay there and keep trying / some other unexpected event that made me miss part of class . . . can I take the quiz during break?

A: No. Everyone takes the quiz in class at the same time. This is why there are extra points built into the course.

Q: I work full time . . . so I will be late for class a lot / and will be traveling out of town on 4 Mondays during the semester / so I won't give your class much attention . . . what advice do you have for me?

A: Maybe you shouldn't take this class this semester. If this class is really important to you maybe you can change your work schedule.

Q: What if I bring you a note that proves that my absence is valid then can I make up the quiz?

A: No. This is why there are extra points built into the course.

Q: I am super sick and am . . . running a fever / vomiting / in the hospital . . . should I come to class?

A: No. This is why there are extra points built into the course.

Q: Should I tell you why I missed class?

A: Not unless you really want to. If there is some unexpected, ongoing reason that arises during the semester that will make you miss more than one class come speak with me/contact me.

Q: Are you mad at me because I had to miss class?

A: No. This is why there are extra points built into the course.

Fear & Insecurity

Q: I am . . . an ATEC major not a Literary Studies Major / a Literary Studies major not some freaky fantasy literature nerd / a Computer Science/Neuroscience/Performing Arts major / a person enrolled at UTD and in this class . . . and I am worried that I won't do well because I don't have the required skill set for LIT 3317 Literature of Fantasy.

A: I know. This course does not expect that you already 1. know how to do upper-division literary studies analysis (like those advanced Literary Studies majors) or 2. already have an encyclopedic knowledge of fantasy literature (like those awesome nerds). In this class we will build a set of critical skills (reading and thinking) and technical skills (discussing and writing) from the ground up, while simultaneously developing a common set of texts that we can all talk about. This course is designed so that you can fail an assignment early in the semester and then get better at the task (with effort) and still do well in the class. This is not my first rodeo—don't worry. After a couple of weeks we will all be on common ground. The TA and I are here to help you. Don't fret in isolation, come fret with us. We can help you improve.

Q: I am returning to school after . . . 25 years in the work force / being a theoretical physicist/surgical nurse/hermit in the desert / some set of events that mean I am not a 20-year old college junior . . . and I am worried that I don't know how to be a successful student.

A: If you are worried about this you will likely work much harder than the 20-year old college junior who is smug about their mastery of university. Consider asking someone in this class who seems really good at

college to be your study partner. Put together a small group of interested students who will meet for coffee/wine/ice cream each week and discuss the readings and paper assignments before class (It isn't cheating. It is fulfilling your professor's greatest dream in life—the creation of a self-motivated student discussion group based on the professor's course. *a beam of light breaks through the clouds, somewhere a choir sings*). The TA and I are here to help you. Don't fret in isolation, come fret with us. We can help you improve.

Q: I am . . . shy / quiet / not a shameless participator like the person sitting behind me . . . and therefore I don't feel comfortable speaking up in class, but I want to participate actively. What should I do?

A: Talk to me directly, perhaps after one of the first days of class. Come to my office hours or the TA's office hours and speak to us one-on-one. Write down your thoughts and share them with us. Make an appointment to see one of us. Make good use of the small group discussions that is why we have them.

eLearning

Q: I am . . . technophobic / positive that eLearning doesn't work on my computer / sure that I cannot figure out how to get to the online readings/submit my papers / technoaggressive . . . and therefore have trouble with eLearning. What should I do?

A: 1. You should have faith that you will make it work and 2. do not give up until you have made eLearning submit to you. There are links to online tutorials all over the eLearning page to help you. Use them. You should go explore eLearning before the eleventh hour when you need it to work perfectly for you. There is a virtual helpdesk on eLearning, if you have trouble ask them for help. However if it is 25 minutes before your paper is due and you want them to help you submit it before it is late, your expectations are unreasonable.

Q: I just finished my paper, it is 5:57pm on the day it is due at 6:00pm, I am trying to submit my paper via the eLearning/Turnitin.com link, but it isn't uploading! What do I do!

A: Build a time machine. If you wait until the last minute to submit your paper the odds of being thwarted by technology skyrocket. This is a big class and many other people have waited until the last minute. Instead submit your paper on Sunday afternoon or some other time well before the due date. This is your warning. I don't accept late work. This is why there are extra points built into the course. On the off chance that you are trying to turn it in early and it is still not uploading, send the TA an email explaining your distressing state of affairs with a .pdf attachment of your paper EXACTLY AS IT WILL BE UPLOADED to the eLearning/Turnitin.com site and keep trying to upload it before it is late. Obviously if you have evidence that you tried to submit your paper well before the 6:00pm cut off and you sent the TA an email with a .pdf of your paper in it well before the 6:00pm cut off, then I will work with you about the late submission of your paper.¹ I am not a monster, . . . probably.

Quizzes

Q: Will there be a quiz . . . today / next week / on the Monday after break?

A: Quizzes are unannounced and cannot be made up.

Q: Will the quiz be at the beginning of class because I . . . have to pick up my kid at the airport / am in labor / am bound to some obligation that will keep me from staying in class?

A: Quizzes may be given at the beginning, middle, or end of class. If you are not in the classroom when the other students complete the quiz then you have missed it and it cannot be made up.

Q: What material will the quiz cover?

A: Most likely the texts that you were supposed to read for class that day, plus text or films from the previous class if we did not have a quiz on them.

Miscellaneous

Q: If a book or story is listed on the syllabus calendar next to a certain date does that mean I should be reading it that week or that I should have finished reading by class that day?

A: You should have read the book in its entirety before you come to class that day.

¹ a screenshot or email exchange with the helpdesk are excellent evidence.

Q: If a book, story, or book chapter is listed on the syllabus calendar on two sequential days does that mean that I should read the first half for the first date and have it finished for the next class?

A: No. You should have read the book, story, or book chapter in its entirety before you come to the first class. If a book is listed next to two sequential dates it means we will likely discuss the book over two class meetings.

Q: I am . . . claustrophobic and the size and intensity of this class is freaking me out / pregnant and about to hurl / a person who needs to get out of class in a hurry. What should I do?

A: Plan ahead if possible. Choose a seat at or near the end of the aisle. If you need to step out do so as quietly as possible and reenter as quickly and quietly as possible. Everyone here is human, . . . probably.

Short Papers**Requirements:**

- Paper 1 is required.
- Students may complete paper 2A OR 2B, but cannot complete both.
- Students may complete paper 3A OR 3B, but cannot complete both.
- Papers are due by 6pm via Turnitin assignment link in eLearning on the days they are due. See Assignment Calendar for due dates. LATE PAPERS ARE NOT ACCEPTED. See FAQ sheet or Course Policies for further information on this.
- Papers must be between 400-500 words. Put the word count in the header of the paper.
- Papers are graded holistically. See rubric below.

Grading:

Each paper is worth 50 points.

Criteria	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Developing	Unsatisfactory	Failing
	A	A-	B-	C+	C-	F	F
Thesis Statement of a clear thesis that guides the entire argument of the essay.	10	9	7	6	4	3	0
Evidence Effective and proper use of textual examples.	10	9	7	6	4	3	0
Organization Effective building of an argument that supports the thesis. Movement from one idea to the next makes sense--use of transitional words and phrases.	10	9	7	6	4	3	0
Writing Quality Quality of the writing in terms of syntax, grammar, punctuation, flow, etc. There should be few if any errors in spelling, grammatical structure, problems at the sentence level that hinder understanding, etc.	10	9	7	6	4	3	0
Format Proper format as outlined by the assignment. Must meet and not exceed the word length requirement.	10	9	7	6	4	3	0

Paper Prompts

Paper 1: DUE Monday, February 2nd by 6pm via Turnitin link on eLearning

Prompt: Merritt and Stevens were influential on Lovecraft. In Paper #1 use the essay “What is ‘Lovecraftian?’” and Merritt or Stevens’ stories to explore an aspect of “The Dunwich Horror.” For instance your paper may explore one of the following topics:

Example A.

S. T. Joshi argues that Lovecraftian fiction presents a world in which the universe is indifferent to the lives of man. Stevens’ “Unseen-Unfeared” the doctor shows the protagonist a miniscule world that is both diabolical and unconcerned with the world of humans. Part of the horror of “The Dunwich Horror” is the revelation that the universe is replete with entities and forces that are disinterested in the lives of humans.

Based on the claim above you would do the following things in this paper:

- Paraphrase Joshi’s statement about a sense of cosmicism in Lovecraft
- Identify an example of cosmicism in Stevens’ story. You will provide a specific example from the story and then explain how this example is shows cosmicism according to Joshi’s definition.
- Identify two specific examples of cosmicism in “The Dunwich Horror” and then explain how this example is shows cosmicism according to Joshi’s definition.
- Lastly you will explain why these examples create a sense of horror in the story.

Example B.

Lovecraftian fiction is known for its well-developed New England backdrop (Joshi). While Lovecraft wrote many stories in his own depiction of New England, Stevens’ “Unseen-Unfeared” is set in the Lower East Side of New York City. Stevens’ characters, like Lovecraft’s characters, are natives of the location and navigate it with familiarity. The settings in these stories are depicted as familiar and normal, but are simultaneously horrific. In “The Dunwich Horror,” Lovecraft juxtaposes otherworldly entities against a recognizable, commonplace environment. Thus, Stevens and Lovecraft create stories in which diabolical life forms emerge into ordinary communities. This suggests that the horrific can exist within mundane locales.

Based on the claim above you would do the following things in this paper:

- Paraphrase Joshi’s statement about setting in Lovecraft
- Identify the setting in both “The Dunwich Horrors” and “Unseen-Unfeared.”
- Explain how Stevens’ setting is similar to the New England setting in “The Dunwich Horrors”
- Explain the purpose of the setting in creating a weird horror story.
- Provide specific examples how the setting contributes to the sense of horror in the story.
- Explain how the specific examples you have described create a sense of horror in the stories.

**If you do poorly on Paper 1 (earned less than 30 points on it) you may rewrite it. If you wish to rewrite it you *must* meet with Dr. Starnaman or Alisa to review your paper. You should attend office hours or make an appointment to see one of us. Bring the hard copy of your paper with the comments on it from eLearning with you. If you do not meet with us you may not submit a rewrite.

Rewrites of paper 1 are due Monday, February 13th by 6pm via the Turnitin link on eLearning. No late papers accepted. You may only rewrite paper 1.

Paper 2A: DUE Monday, February 20th by 6pm via Turnitin link on eLearning

Prompt: Use our class discussion of magical realism to analyze how Borges and Cortázar's "The Aleph" and "Axolotl." Focus on ONE aspect of magical realism discussed and provide specific examples (not plot summary) from both texts. Make sure to explain how the examples from the stories create the aspect of magical realism that you have identified. Use material from the class lecture to support your analysis. You may find that both stories do not enact the aspect of magical realism that you are examining in the same manner. This is fine just explore that difference. Please avoid plot summary and keep in mind our in-class discussions of how to construct a well-crafted paragraph in the body of an analytical literary essay. A solid body paragraph in an essay like the ones you are writing in this class generally requires that you:

1. describe the claim you are trying to make in the paragraph(s)
2. identify a concrete example from the text—you may choose to describe the scene in your own words or include a short bit of text (if necessary) and then paraphrase what happens the selection you have chosen
3. explain what the selection shows, according to the criteria or analytical frame that you are using to analyze it
4. describe the significance of the example or how the example proves the claim you are trying to make in your essay, or at least in this part of the essay.

Paper 2B: DUE Monday, February 27th by 6pm via Turnitin link on eLearning

Prompt: Choose one of the stories by Okorafor, "Lost Diary of TreeFrog7" or "The Palm Tree Bandit" and discuss if that story is more like a Lovecraftian story or a story from the Magical Realist tradition. Make sure to provide specific examples (not plot summary) and use material from the class lecture to support your argument. Please avoid plot summary and keep in mind our in-class discussions of how to construct a well-crafted paragraph in the body of an analytical literary essay. A solid body paragraph in an essay like the ones you are writing in this class generally requires that you:

1. describe the claim you are trying to make in the paragraph(s)
2. identify a concrete example from the text—you may choose to describe the scene in your own words or include a short bit of text (if necessary) and then paraphrase what happens the selection you have chosen
3. explain what the selection shows, according to the criteria or analytical frame that you are using to analyze it
4. describe the significance of the example or how the example proves the claim you are trying to make in your essay, or at least in this part of the essay.

Paper 3A: DUE Monday, March 27th by 6pm via Turnitin link on eLearning

Prompt: Choose one of the three stories "The Hell Screen," "The Town of Cats," or "The Ice Man," and explain how the story works. Papers 2A and 2B ask you to analyze how the stories represent particular stylistic expectations. At this point in the semester we have taken apart many stories and identified what the author did in the story and we have discussed why the choices made by the writers worked to create the kind of story it is—how the parts make the story a working whole. In this paper you will identify how the story works. You will want to think about the language that we have been using in our class discussions, from my lectures, and from the handouts you have read about different approaches to weird fiction. This paper will probably challenge your

ability to be concise. Spend a lot of time figuring it out what is happening the story and then explain it in the most direct fashion.

Paper 3B: DUE Monday, April 13th by 6pm via Turnitin link on eLearning

Prompt: Analyze Johnson's story "The Dream Quest of Vellitt Boe" as a neo-Lovecraftian story. Choose one or two aspects of the story to discuss in detail. Make sure to use concrete examples from the text and then offer a focused explanation about how these aspects constitute a neo-Lovecraftian story. You may choose to identify a category of Lovecraftian fiction in "The Dream Quest of Vellitt Boe" and then discuss how Johnson overturns it. Please avoid plot summary and keep in mind our in-class discussions of how to construct a well-crafted paragraph in the body of an analytical literary essay.

Creative Final Project (100 points total)

In this Literature of Fantasy class you may choose to complete a creative project instead of writing an analytical paper. **Please know the Creative Project is *always more work than the Analytical Paper*.** If you cannot commit the time necessary to do this project, be honest with yourself and choose to write the short paper.

Structure: Students write a weird short story. Sometimes they illustrate it as well. There are other possibilities negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

Requirements:

- A short story of about 1500-2100 words and not to exceed an unreasonable length (this will be determined as we go along).
- Writing: Timely production of story drafts that are shared with group members. You will distribute *hard copies* to your groupmates the Monday before your workshop.
- Workshopping: Attendance at writing workshops is required. You must attend the workshop dates that you have signed up for. If you cannot attend, then you cannot do the project.
- Reading & Responding: Timely revision comments on the work that your groupmates create.
- Your story must be turned in by the due date and time noted on the calendar of assignments. You may turn your final story in early if you wish.
- A short reflection paper to accompany your final story. This reflection will discuss how your story relates to the topic/stories from the course. It should be 400-600 words long. --Please put it after your story in the same document when you turn in to eLearning.

Point Distribution:

Each workshop: 20 points (10 for the completion of your draft/revisions; 10 for your comments on your groupmates work.) 60 points total for all workshops.

Final product: 40 points. (This is a grade for the story and the final reflection essay)

***Missing a workshop, not completing your story on time, or failing to make comments on your groupmates' stories may result in forfeiting the opportunity to do the creative project or it may result in a loss of points. It is at the discretion of the professor.

Due: Friday, May 5th by 11:59pm via Turnitin link on eLearning

Workshops:

Workshop groups will meet every other week (see calendar). You will sign up for dates and times on Monday, March 20th. You **MUST** be present to sign up. Bring 7 copies of your story to exchange that night (Monday, March 20th).

A week before your first meeting:

You must have a draft of a project that can be completed in eight weeks and about seven pages.

At each meeting:

You must have read each group member's story carefully and completed a revision rubric/questionnaire.

Final Analytical Project (100 points total)

In this Literature of Fantasy class you may choose to complete a final analytical paper instead of a creative final project.

Structure: Students write extended analytical paper based on Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915) OR LaValle's *The Ballad of Black Tom* (2016). This paper will be similar to the three papers they have already completed in class. However, this paper will be longer to allow for more in-depth and original exploration of the text.

Prompt: Considering all the different kinds of weird fantasy that we have read this semester you will discuss how *The Metamorphosis* or *The Ballad of Black Tom* fits within the larger collection of stories and novellas that we have discussed. Your analysis will be based in the discussions about literary styles that we have covered throughout the course. I suggest that you identify one or two aspects of the weird fiction genre that you think are especially prominent in the text you have chosen and then focus your discussion. Now, *The Metamorphosis* was written by Kafka—the author whose work defines Kafkaesque literature and *The Ballad of Black Tom* is clearly a neo-Lovecraftian work based on “The Horror at Red Hook,” so saying that the first story is Kafkaesque and the second is neo-Lovecraftian is not a sufficient argument for this paper. I want you to go beyond the level of showing how you can apply stylistic conventions. For this paper you will need to push yourself into the realm of original analysis.

Please feel free to come and speak with Alisa and I about your ideas—talking with others can you clarify your thoughts and help your argument begin to take shape.

Requirements:

- An analytical paper of 1500-2100 words (5-7 pages)
- You must choose one of the texts to analyze.
- You must discuss how the novella that you choose fits within the genre of Weird Fiction.
- In this paper you are expected to have a claim or thesis, use examples from the texts chosen, reference information from class discussion and handouts, and make a cohesive, well-supported argument about the texts chosen. This is simply an expansion of the kind of work you did in Papers 1, 2, and 3.

Due: Friday, May 5th by 11:59pm via Turnitin link on eLearning. No late papers accepted. You may turn this assignment in early if you wish.

Grading:

Criteria	Excellent A+	Very Good A	Good B	Satisfactory C	Developing D	Unsatisfactory F	Failing F
Thesis Statement of a clear thesis that guides the entire argument of the essay.	20	15-19	13-15	10-12	7-10	3-6	0-2
Evidence Effective and proper use of textual examples.	20	15-19	13-15	10-12	7-10	3-6	0-2
Organization Effective building of an argument that supports the thesis. Movement from one idea to the next makes sense--use of transitional words and phrases.	20	15-19	13-15	10-12	7-10	3-6	0-2
Writing Quality Quality of the writing in terms of	20	15-19	13-15	10-12	7-10	3-6	0-2

syntax, grammar, punctuation, flow, etc. There should be few if any errors in spelling, grammatical structure, problems at the sentence level that hinder understanding, etc.							
Format Proper format as outlined by the assignment. Must meet and not exceed the word length requirement.	20	15-19	13-15	10-12	7-10	3-6	0-2

What is “Lovecraftian”?

There’s a great deal of scholarly debate on the question, but I’ll provide some generalities.

S.T. Joshi, in *The Rise and Fall of the Cthulhu Mythos*, identified four broad components of what he terms the “Lovecraft Mythos”:

- *A fictional New England topography.* (This eventually became a richly complex, historically grounded—if fictional—region.)
- *A growing library of “forbidden” books.* (Rare tomes holding secrets too dangerous to know.)
- *A diverse array of extraterrestrial “gods” or entities.* (Often symbols of the “unknowability or an infinite cosmos, or sometimes the inexorable forces of chaos and entropy.”)
- *A sense of cosmicism.* (The universe is indifferent, chaotic, and humans are utterly meaningless nonentities within it.)

A fifth element—a scholarly protagonist or narrator—is not unique to Lovecraft, but is another identifiable motif.

Even though not all of Lovecraft’s work falls within these boundaries, his best fiction usually differed from earlier supernatural fiction. In his introduction to *At the Mountains of Madness: The Definitive Edition*, China Miéville points out: “Traditionally genre horror is concerned with the irruption of dreadful forces into a comforting status quo—one which the protagonist scrambles to preserve. By contrast, Lovecraft’s horror is not one of intrusion but of realization. The world has always been implacably bleak; the horror lies in us acknowledging the fact.”

“Lovecraft’s stories were noticeably devoid of vampires, werewolves, ghosts, and other traditional supernatural monsters appearing in the work of his pulp contemporaries,” noted Stefan Dziemianowicz in a *Publishers Weekly* article. “Though written in a somewhat mannered gothic style and prose empurpled with words like ‘eldritch’ and ‘squamous,’ his atmospheric tales strove to express a horror rooted in humanity’s limited understanding of the universe and humankind’s arrogant overconfidence in its significance in the cosmic scheme.”

The story “The Call of Cthulhu” (1928) is probably the best example Lovecraft’s idea of “cosmicism.” Cthulhu is a monstrous entity so alien and incomprehensible even his name can not be pronounced by human tongues. A priest of “the Great Old Ones who lived ages before there were any men, and who came to the young world out of the sky” and who are gone but still reside “inside the earth and under the sea . . . their dead bodies had told their secrets in dreams to the first men, who formed a cult which had never died.” This cult “had always existed and always would exist, hidden in distant wastes and dark places all over the world until the time when the great priest Cthulhu, from his dark house in the mighty city of R’lyeh under the waters, should rise and bring the earth again beneath his sway. Some day he would call, when the stars were ready, and the secret cult would always be waiting to liberate him.”

As Lovecraft himself wrote, such stories conveyed “the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the cosmos-at-large.”

Other writers of the era, with Lovecraft’s blessing, began superficially referencing his dabblers in the arcane, mentioning his unhallowed imaginary New England towns and their strange citizens, alluding to cosmic horror, mentioning his godlike ancient extraterrestrials with strange names, and citing his fictional forbidden books of the occult (primarily the *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred): the Cthulhu Mythos—or, rather, anti-mythology—was born.

Lovecraft never used the term “Cthulhu Mythos” himself. It was probably invented by August Derleth or Clark Ashton Smith after HPL’s death. They and others also added their own flourishes and inventions to the mythology, sometimes muddling things with non-Lovecraftian concepts. Authors like Robert Bloch (now best known as the author of *Psycho*), Robert E. Howard (creator of Conan the Barbarian), Clark Ashton Smith, August Derleth, and younger writers such as Henry Kuttner, Fritz Leiber, and Ramsey Campbell all romped within the Lovecraftian milieu and added elements to it. Later writers with no direct connection to HPL joined in as well.

Of the hundreds of stories written since 1937 in Lovecraft’s style, or based on his bleak cosmicism, or alien entities, or occult books, or any of the signifiers of a “Lovecraftian” tale—whether based on true elements conceived by HPL or the sometimes spurious inventions of others—many were derivative, formulaic, or simply ineffective. Some simply haven’t stood up well over the years. Others have become classics. But this anthology is not about fiction written in H.P. Lovecraft’s day or even in the twentieth century.

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NEW CTHULHU: THE RECENT WEIRD



Edited by Paula Guran

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