

INTERPRETATION OF LITERATURE

ENGL:1200, Spring 2018

0060: M/W: 3:30-4:45, 205 EPB

0071: M/W: 5:00-6:15, 205 EPB

The University of Iowa, Department of English

Instructor: Enrico Bruno

Office Hours: M/W, 2-3:30 and by appt., 70 EPB

Department Chair: Claire Fox

Department Main Office: 308 EPB

Course Supervisor: Barbara Eckstein



Gustave Dore (1864)

COURSE TEXTS

Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (Anchor, 978-0-385-49081-8)

Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber* (Penguin, 978-0-140-17821-0)

Octavia E. Butler, *Kindred* (Beacon, 978-0-807-08369-7)

Texts available at the Hawk Shop; all other course readings available on ICON and should be printed out, annotated, and brought to class.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

We've all heard the stories before: a young girl travels to her grandmother's house, unknowingly followed by a cunning wolf; citizens in the distant future wake up to a new world order in which their freedoms are no longer guaranteed; brave explorers set out into space to discover alien worlds. Speculative fiction is sometimes seen as escapist, or written solely for the purpose of simple entertainment. But fairy tales and other imaginative works don't always conform to stereotypes or reinforce dominant ideologies of gender, class, or politics. In fact, many of these works provide critiques of the world we live in, even if they take place long, long ago or in the imagined future, and whether they are set in a faraway land or an imaginary world.

This course highlights texts that delight us with imaginative scenarios and outlandish twists, but that do so in the service of a subversive agenda. Together we will look not only at fairy tales, but texts in genres such as magical realism and science fiction, and scrutinize how the writers use fabulist tropes to send important messages about the real world in which the authors lived.

Although our readings span several centuries and some were written over 400 years ago, we'll also think about how the themes and messages connect to our lives today. By allowing you to use and refine your skills of reading, speaking and writing to respond critically and sensitively to literary texts, you will be able to see yourselves as readers, recognizing the influence of individual differences (such as gender, ethnicity, geography) and experiences on interpretation. Class discussions and additional reading assignments will also prompt you to consider the connections between individual texts and their broader cultural contexts. In addition to this interpretive work, we'll take time to appreciate the joy of these stories, including the humorous situations, emotional appeals, and the simple fun of reading about interesting characters doing magical things.

WORKLOAD EXPECTATIONS

For each semester hour credit in this course, students should expect to spend two hours per week preparing for class sessions. This is a three credit hour course, so your average out-of-class preparation per week is six hours. This will fluctuate throughout the semester; some weeks will be a bit lighter and others more intense.

GRADING

Final grades will be determined on the University's A-F grade scale, with A as the highest possible grade. Course grades depend mainly on a series of major and informal writing assignments. The rest of your grade depends on engaged and respectful participation, misc. assignments recorded in your class notebook (see more details below), weekly reading quizzes, and a class portfolio.

Final Grade Percentages:

15%	Essay #1
20%	Essay #2
20%	Essay #3
10%	Reading Quizzes
15%	Engaged and respectful daily participation
15%	Notebook (homework, in-class assignments, etc.)
5%	Final portfolio

Accessing Grades:

Grades for major assignments will be posted on ICON under "Grades" approximately two weeks after the due date. Your participation grades will be posted once at midterm and once at the end of the semester. Informal assignments will be mostly recorded in your class notebook, which will be collected at least twice during the semester. Your notebook grade will be posted once at the midterm and once at the end of the semester. **Note that a missed assignment is marked as a zero, so it's important to complete all homework assignments and attend every class to avoid bringing down your grade.**

My detailed grading policy is as follows:

A grade of C: You can earn a C by attending class regularly and punctually, completing with competence all of the work assigned and participating regularly in class activities. This requires 1) adequately meeting all criteria for assignments, and 2) completing reading assignments on time and being prepared to share your opinions on the texts in class and during discussions.

A grade of B: You can earn a B by fulfilling all of the C requirements while demonstrating a significantly higher level of effort and competence on all work assigned for the class. To earn a B you must show an interest in energetically, creatively, and critically engaging with the material and assignments. B work typically reflects independent thinking. The B student is self-reflexive and often asks questions such as "How can I make my work better? How can I revise this? How can I make my work unique and interesting? How can I help the class have productive and energetic discussions?"

A grade of A: To receive an A in the course, you must surpass the requirements for B work as well as demonstrate high-level critical thinking and original analysis. A students interrogate all sides of issues enthusiastically in order to clarify their own opinions. A students don't skip class, fail to honor deadlines for any reason, or show up unprepared to discuss the reading. A students will, instead, be willing to make intellectual discoveries and demonstrate an effort to inquire further into commonly understood issues.

A grade of D: You can earn a D by not fulfilling your responsibilities outlined under "Grade of C" criteria, and/or failing to show respect for or interest in your fellow students' presentations of ideas. A D student is a student who has many excuses but few completed assignments. For example, D students often fail to turn in reading responses or other informal work. D students are generally disinterested students who refuse to take an active role in making the class energetic and productive.

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY

The three essays assigned in this course can be submitted late, but will be marked down by one full letter grade for each day the essay is late (e.g. a paper that earns a B will receive a C if it is one day late, a D if it is two days late, etc.). If the due date for one of these essays is nearing and you do not feel capable of turning in a completed assignment, please set up a meeting with me to discuss potential solutions. If you are in class on the day class notebooks are collected, you must turn yours in to me; if you are absent, you must turn it in during our next class meeting, or may leave it in my mailbox in EPB 310.

ABSENCES

Students are expected to attend all classes and arrive on time. That said, I understand that occasionally, everyone needs to miss class. Therefore, I will allow each student two unexcused absences without penalty to his or her participation grade. You do not need to provide any excuse for these absences, though if you know ahead of time you will be missing class, an email is always appreciated.

Absences cause you to miss out on instruction, learning time, and thinking opportunities. Consequently, absences will negatively affect your grade; after two absences, each one will reduce your class participation grade by 1/3 of a letter grade. You also cannot earn points for reading notes, participation, or in-class activities on days when you are absent. Being late to class or leaving class early will also negatively impact your class participation grade, as each instance will result in a 1/3 letter grade reduction. Please make an effort to be in class on time, ready to participate as soon as class begins. You will earn a zero on any reading quiz given on a day in which you are either absent to class or arrive after the quiz has already been administered.

TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

I expect that you will turn off/silence and put away all of your electronic devices (cell phones, iPads, iPods, etc.) before class begins. This includes laptops and e-readers unless otherwise specified. Inappropriate use of electronics during class time will negatively affect your participation grade. If, for any reason, you have a particular need for iPads, cell phones, or laptops during class time, please come talk to me during office hours. There will be class periods, activities, and peer review sessions for which I allow and often encourage technology use. I will notify you of these moments as necessary.

CALENDAR OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS

This is a tentative calendar and is **subject to change**. Updates will be posted to ICON and/or shared in class. Students are responsible for tracking course activities, readings, and assignments as the semester progresses.

A NOTE OF CAUTION: Many of the texts we are reading depict or discuss violence. Every person in our class brings years of lived experiences with them into the classroom, and all class discussions should be respectful of this fact. If you are at all concerned about reading certain texts, please don't hesitate to discuss your concerns with me. Taking care of yourself is crucial for academic success. I have listed confidential resources beneath the university's "Sexual Harassment" policy.

SPRING 2018 COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1:

W, 1/17: Introductions to course, readings, and each other

Week 2:

M, 1/22: The Skills of Close Reading

Eula Biss, "Time and Distance Overcome"; Sherwood Anderson, "Hands"

W, 1/24: The Handmaid's Tale (pp. 3-66); Assign Essay #1

Week 3:

M, 1/29: The Handmaid's Tale (pp. 69-159)

W, 1/31: The Handmaid's Tale (pp. 160-217)

Week 4:

M, 2/5: The Handmaid's Tale (pp. 218-311)

W, 2/7: Essay #1 Workshop [Bring draft of Essay #1 to class]

Week 5:

M, 2/12: Once Upon a Narrative Tradition: The Birth of the Literary Fairy Tale

Giambattista Basile: "The Tale of the Ogre"; "The Seven Little Pork Rinds"; "The Goose"; "Sun, Moon, & Talia"

W, 2/14: Fairy Tales for the Masses

Selections from Grimm and Propp; Hans Christian Andersen: "The Little Mermaid"

Week 6:

M, 2/19: Poetics of Tales; Assign Essay #2

Marie De France: "Bisclavret"; Selections from Anne Sexton: *Transformations*

W, 2/21: The Roots of the Bluebeard Tale Type

Charles Perrault: "Blue Beard" and other Bluebeard tales

Week 7:

M, 2/26: Bluebeard in the 21st Century
The Blood Chamber (pp. 7-40)

W, 2/28: Rethinking The Big Bad Wolf
The Bloody Chamber (pp. 108-118); Brothers Grimm: "Little Red Cap"

Week 8:

M, 3/5: The Postmodern Fairy Tale
The Bloody Chamber (pp. 41-107)

W, 3/7: Story Time! [Bring draft of Essay #2 to class]

Week 9: Spring Break (No Class)**Week 10:**

M, 3/19: Introduction to Science Fiction Writing
Joanna Russ: "When It Changed"; Shirley Jackson: "The Lottery"

W, 3/21: Blurring Reality on the Stage
Amiri Baraka: *Dutchman*

Week 11:

M, 3/26: Matters of Life, Death, and the Afterlife
George Saunders, "Sea Oak"; Aimee Bender, "The Rememberer"

W, 3/28: Conjure on the Plantation
Charles W. Chesnutt: "The Goophered Grapevine"; "Po' Sandy"

Week 12:

M, 4/2: (Neo-)Slave Narratives
Harriet Jacobs: Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (excerpts)

W, 4/4: Kindred: Prologue; The River; The Fire (pp. 9-51); Assign Essay #3

Week 13:

M, 4/9: Kindred: The Fall (pp. 52-107)

W, 4/11: Kindred: The Fight I (pp. 108-154)

Week 14:

M, 4/16: Kindred: The Fight II (pp. 154-188)

W, 4/18: Kindred: The Storm (pp. 189-239)

Week 15:

M, 4/23: Kindred: The Rope; Epilogue (pp. 240-264)

W, 4/25: Essay #3 Workshops/Meetings

Week 16:

M, 4/30: The Postplantation Today

Thirteenth (documentary); passages from The New Jim Crow

W, 5/2: The Voyage Out

Ben Loory: "The Book"

CLAS CODE OF ACADEMIC HONESTY

All CLAS students have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty: "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others, nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled. To find the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Code of Academic Honesty go to the website: <http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code>

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES

The University of Iowa is committed to providing an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (which include but are not limited to mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related conditions). A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet with the course instructor privately in the instructor's office to make particular arrangements.

Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between the student, instructor, and SDS. See <http://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/> for information.

UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Office of the Sexual Misconduct Response Coordinator for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AND DATING VIOLENCE

All of you in this classroom and all of your classmates, professors, and staff are part of an inclusive community. We intend to provide a safe and nurturing environment for each of you and for us. This community is home to straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students, faculty, and staff, and it is home to every race and many nationalities. But sexual violence strikes at the heart of this community. In collaboration with the University of Iowa Rape Victim Advocacy Program, we faculty wish specifically to repudiate the often-unstated premise that sexual violence of some kind is simply part of the societal status quo.

Sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and other forms of sexual misconduct, including catcalling and other verbal abuse, are serious issues and subvert the mission of the University of Iowa. The only person responsible for sexual misconduct is the perpetrator. It is a violation of university policy to engage in

sexual activities without clear consent from your partner. Someone incapacitated due to alcohol or drugs cannot consent to sexual activity.

Perpetrators face consequences that may include expulsion from the university and incarceration.

If you have been the victim of a sexual assault or domestic violence on or off campus or you know someone who has been assaulted and you want to find out more about available resources, please contact the Rape Victim Advocacy Program (RVAP), the Domestic Violence Intervention Program (DVIP), or the UI Campus Police. The RVAP will also provide further guidance and information to any interested member of the community.

Resources: RVAP: (319)335-6000 rvap.uiowa.edu; DVIP: (319)351-1043; Campus Police: (319) 335-5022 <http://police.uiowa.edu/be-proactive/reporting-sexual-assault/>; Office of the Sexual Misconduct Response Coordinator (OSMRC): <http://osmrc.uiowa.edu/report-problem>; University of Iowa Sexual Misconduct Policies: <http://osmrc.uiowa.edu/policy>; University of Iowa Threat Assessment Team: uitat@uiowa.edu; 319-384-2955.

****Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits gender discrimination in all programs and activities of the university. It applies to admissions, financial aid, academic matters, career services, counseling and medical services, employment, and all other programs, events, and activities available at the university. It states: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Title IX makes it clear that violence and discrimination based on sex and/or gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, or if you want to become better educated about your rights, you can find resources here:**
<http://diversity.uiowa.edu/policies/title-ix>

Title IX Coordinator:

Georgina Dodge, phone: (319)-335-3565, email: georgina-dodge@uiowa.edu

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

<http://counseling.studentlife.uiowa.edu>

<http://studenthealth.uiowa.edu/services/psychiatry>

<https://www.uihealthcare.org/behavioral-health-services/>

<http://jccrisiscenter.org/pages/what-we-do/24-hour-crisis-line.php>

24-Hour Crisis Line via The Johnson County Crisis Center

Hours: Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

Phone: (319) 351-0140

ADMINISTRATIVE HOME

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook at <http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook>.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences (Operations Manual, III.15.2, k.11).

MAKING A SUGGESTION OR A COMPLAINT

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the Director of Undergraduate Studies in English (Matthew-P-Brown@uiowa.edu) for majors courses, the Director of General Education Literature (Barbara-Eckstein@uiowa.edu) for GEL courses, or the Director of Graduate Studies (Bluford-Adams@uiowa.edu) for graduate courses, before appealing, if need be, to the Chair of the English Department (Claire-Fox@uiowa.edu). Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

GRADE CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

Students should always first bring such concerns to their instructor. If no satisfactory resolution is gained from discussing the problem with the instructor, students should contact the General Education Literature Director, Professor Barbara Eckstein, by e-mail to schedule an appointment to discuss the grading concern or complaint. This e-mail should specify the student's section and instructor and should briefly outline the nature of the concern or complaint.

CLAS FINAL EXAM POLICIES

The final examination schedule for each class is announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the date, time, and location of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's website and will be shared with instructors and students. It is the student's responsibility to know the date, time, and place of the final exam. Final exams may not be rescheduled for any individual student without permission. The scheduled day and time for the final exam for each section may not be changed. The General Education Literature Program requires that the final exam be comprehensive in scope and does not allow take-home final exams.

REACTING SAFELY TO SEVERE WEATHER

In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Department of Public Safety website.