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# ENGL 2202: Weird Fiction

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<b>Professor</b>	Grant Williams, English Department	<b>Email</b>	Ask the Teaching Team on cuLearn
<b>Office Hours</b>	Zoom: By Appointment	<b>Email Turn Around</b>	6-24 hours
<b>Days</b>	Tuesday and Thursday	<b>Class Times</b>	1:05-2:25
<b>Prerequisite</b>	Second-year standing or permission of the department		

**Trigger Warning:** This course examines graphic and potentially disturbing material. If you are triggered by anything you experience during this course and require assistance, please see me.

## Type of Online Learning

ENGL 2202 is “asynchronous.” This means that it is an online course where the instructor and students share information, ideas, and learning experiences in a virtual course space.

Asynchronous courses do not have live, scheduled meetings online. However, students are expected to remain up to date with the deadlines and due dates provided by the instructor. These courses require high-speed Internet access and a computer.

## Course Description

Weird fiction is a type of literature caught somewhere between horror and the supernatural, at times bordering upon science fiction and the gothic. This online asynchronous course consists of digesting and studying assigned short stories representative of the genre. Lectures and activities build upon students’ knowledge of the weekly readings by charting the development of weird fiction’s generic conventions, by analyzing writers’ implementation of narrative techniques, and by leveraging philosophical concepts and theoretical tools for making sense of the strange and the bizarre. This is a fairly intensive reading course. If you do not keep up with the schedule of readings, you will not be able to follow the lectures closely enough and will be ill-equipped to handle the assignments.

## Learning Outcomes

The overarching goal of the course is to understand weird fiction, its stories, its history, and its big ideas, so that you can transfer your understanding to your own critical and creative project—or exam—by the course’s end. By the end of the course students will thus be able:

1. to identify, explain, and analyze the major tropes and generic conventions of weird fiction and understand how they evolve from the nineteenth century to the present
2. to identify, define, and analyze the narrative techniques used by weird fiction writers
3. to identify, define, and analyze the philosophical and theoretical concepts for making sense of this fiction.

## Textbooks and Readings

The main textbook that you will need to purchase is the following:

*The Weird: A Compendium of Strange and Dark Stories* edited by Jeff VanderMeer and Ann VanderMeer (Tor, 2012). Purchase it online at Perusall, nowhere else, unless you want to pay for two copies.

Other readings at no extra cost will be made available through Perusall and ARES, which you can access in Carleton's Learning Management System: cuLearn.

## Course Design

This online course may be found on cuLearn. The course has been designed to facilitate your understanding of weird fiction, in terms of generic conventions, concepts, and narrative techniques, so that by the course's end you can transfer your rich understanding of the genre to your own critical and creative assignment: either a take-home exam or a customizable capstone project. The course consists of ten modules besides an introduction and conclusion, totaling 12 weeks of activities and assignments.

## Starting the Course

To start the course, you must complete the online quiz that tests your knowledge of this course outline; otherwise, you won't be able to unlock the introductory lectures and the first assignment.

Evaluation	Due date	% of Grade
Tell Us about Yourself		Bonus Mark
Participation (Perusall Annotation Activity x 20)		20
<b>Written Assignments</b>		
Reflection on the Weird	Sept. 18	5
Exercise on Narrative Technique	Oct. 2	5
Exercise on a Weird Trope	Oct. 23	5
Exercise on a Weird Concept	Nov. 13	5
Composition of a Weird Fable	Dec. 4	Bonus Marks
<b>Multiple Choice Tests</b>		
Mastery Quiz 1	Oct. 16-30	5
Midterm	Nov. 24	20
Mastery Quiz 2	Nov. 26-Dec. 10	5
<b>Final Assignment (One of the Following Two)</b>		
Take-Home Exam	Exam Period	30
Customizable Capstone Project	Exam Period	30
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>

## Tell Us about Yourself

For a bonus mark, introduce yourself to your instructor and your classmates on the cuLearn site. The short activity, worth a bonus mark, may be found under Course Resources. It allows you to make a personal statement on “the weird.”

## Participation and Engagement

For this online course, you will receive your participation and engagement mark through completing short annotation activities on the learning platform Perusall. Each activity involves writing several annotations (comments and questions) on a single short story and reading the annotations made by other students. 20% of your overall grade—as much as your midterm—falls within this evaluation category. If you put weekly work into the annotation activities, you have an opportunity to do quite well in the course.

Each activity is scored out of 3 and worth 1.0 on the year. Each comment or question in an activity is automatically scored by the system and rated as “below expectations” (1), “meets expectations” (2), or “exceeds expectations” (3). You receive points too for replying to others and upvoting others. Overall, the score on an activity is a wholistic assessment of your engagement, generated consistently and fairly by multiple algorithms.

Here are the ways in which the Perusall activities benefit you and your course:

1. It gives me a fair and consistent way of grading your participation that honours your engagement with the material without overburdening your time.
2. It allows you to learn from your peers, and your peers to learn from you, leveraging the power of social connectivity.
3. It gives you a single focus or cue for reading an individual story.
4. It motivates you to develop your notetaking skills when you read.
5. It gives me feedback on what passages, issues, and difficulties matter to the class so that I can address this feedback in later lectures and communications.

## Written Assignments

The five written assignments are not essays, but exercises, each of which is a paragraph or two in length. Each of these minor assignments is designed to build your understanding of weird fiction by focusing on important critical and creative categories in the course: the phenomenon of the weird; narrative techniques; weird generic conventions; weird concepts; and weird story-telling. The exercises prepare you not only for writing the tests and the midterm but also performing on the final assignment.

## Multiple Choice Tests

The tests constitute the most challenging aspect of the course’s evaluation scheme. They are offset by the participation activities and bonus-mark activities so that the latter allows you to recoup your grade if you do poorly on the former. I base my questions on lecture materials and draw from three basic categories: generic conventions, theoretical concepts, and narrative techniques. Some of each module’s “Review Questions” will be used for the midterm or the mastery quizzes.

The midterm, consisting of 40 multiple-choice questions, can be taken only once, but the two mastery quizzes may be rewritten several times over a two-week period. Each mastery quiz consists of fifteen questions. In both cases, the questions and options are randomized, so it is advisable that you review your notes and the course materials before retrying a quiz. The mastery quiz #1 is important to work through because it gives you a trial run of what to expect on the midterm.

## Final Assignment

The default final assignment is a take-home exam. It consists of short answer and essay-length questions. If you would like to do a customizable capstone project instead of writing an exam, you must fulfill the following two conditions: you must earn at least a C- on the midterm (60%) and complete all five written assignments by Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>. The customizable capstone entails designing and executing a creative and/or critical project that offers students several different media options, one of which includes writing a weird short story. (Students who want to write a weird short story for the capstone must earn at least a 70% on the midterm). In the past, ENGL 2202 students have loved finishing the course with the customizable capstone. But to do the capstone properly, you must have demonstrated an understanding of weird fiction by following through on earlier assignments.

## Late and Missed Assignment Policy

The ability to submit a particular assignment will be available until the due date and then it will be cut off. **Late assignments will not be accepted.** The only exception will be granted to students who experience serious illness or bereavement during the duration of the course; in each case, official documentation is required.

For medical conditions, please email me a signed Doctor's certificate, which needs to spell out how long the serious illness lasted or is expected to last. Where the death of a close relative is concerned, please email me an obituary notice in which your name appears, establishing your kinship. If you wish, you may, instead, email me a copy of the Death Certificate. Once I have the documentation, you will receive a new submission-deadline that cannot be missed.

With respect to timelines for completing missed assignments, please read Carleton's policy: "Students who claim illness, injury or other extraordinary circumstances beyond their control as a reason for missed term work are responsible for informing me as soon as possible and for making alternate arrangements to complete the missed work. In all cases this must occur no later than three (3) working days after the term work was due. The alternate arrangement must be made before the last day of classes in the term as published in the academic schedule."

Here's how my policy breaks down across the assignments:

1. Participation and Engagement: You can manage one to three missed activities yourself without contacting me. For each annotation activity, Perusall uses a three-point scale (one equals "below average"; two equals "average"; and three equals "above average"), but I will give 2 out of 3 as **full credit**. I will use 3's earned on two activities to make up for an occasionally missed activity; if you miss an activity, I will take any two scores of 3 on other activities as a sufficient "make up" for what you missed. So a student could earn full

credit on participation with twenty 2's; or if they missed one activity, they could still get full credit with 17 2's and 2 3's (and one 0 for the missed activity). However, if you miss more than three activities, there are no more make-ups simply because this method of evaluation rewards consistent engagement with the course.

2. Written Assignments: you may request one extension with a physician's note. Remember you must complete all 5 exercises if you want to do the customizable capstone. There must be a crisis to request another extension.
3. Mastery Quizzes 1 and 2: no extensions. The window for writing and rewriting each quiz is two weeks.
4. Midterm: no extension, unless there is a serious crisis (see above).

## Final Standing in Course

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

## Email Communication

Please use the discussion forum "Ask the Teaching Team" at the top of the cuLearn page if you have any questions relating to the course outline, the website, assignments, and course content. It has been my experience that if one student is puzzled, more students are bound to be puzzled. Of course, if you have a private question relating to your own circumstances, you may use the cuLearn email client to contact me. Students, too, are permitted to respond to one another in the forum.

## Course Modules

Module 1 (Sept. 9-13)	Introduction
<b>Module 2 (Sept. 14-20)</b>	<b>Precursors to Weird Fiction</b>
<b>Module 3 (Sept. 21-27)</b>	<b>Lovecraft: Progenitor of the Weird</b>
<b>Module 4 (Sept. 28-Oct. 4)</b>	<b>Lovecraft's Legacy I</b>
<b>Module 5 (Oct. 5-11)</b>	<b>Lovecraft's Legacy II</b>
<b>Module 6 (Oct. 12-18)</b>	<b>The Kafkaesque</b>
<b>Module 7 (Oct. 19-25)</b>	<b>The Postmodern Weird</b>
	Reading Week (Oct. 26-Nov. 1)
<b>Module 8 (Nov. 2-8 )</b>	<b>Everyday Strangeness</b>
<b>Module 9 (Nov. 9-15)</b>	<b>The Abject Maternal</b>
<b>Module 10 (Nov. 16-22)</b>	<b>Irresistible Fate</b>
<b>Module 11 (Nov. 23-29)</b>	<b>The Inhuman</b>
<b>Module 12 (Nov. 30-Dec. 6)</b>	<b>Conclusion: Call of the Weird</b>

## Plagiarism

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include failure of the assignment, failure of the entire course, or suspension from a program. For more information please go to:

<https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

## Requests for Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

### Pregnancy Obligation

Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details click [here](#).

### Religious Obligation

Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details click [here](#).

### Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520- 6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to

send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

### **Survivors of Sexual Violence**

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

### **Accommodation for Student Activities**

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>