
ENGL 2202: Weird Fiction

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Office Hours	By appointment	Email Turn Around	6-24 hours

Prerequisites 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.

Course Description

This course introduces students to weird fiction through charting its history as a genre—a type of literature caught somewhere between horror and science fiction. Although weird fiction also takes the literary forms of the novel and poetry, its primary form is the short story. The reading list will thus consist of short stories and a few novellas—a novella being longer than a short story but shorter than a novel. Lectures will not only provide interpretations of individual tales but also situate them within their cultural and philosophical contexts, since writing belongs to an age, not just an author’s personal expression.

The course’s lecture schedule unfolds according to two pathways: its first half will proceed chronologically, mapping out the early history of weird fiction from ghost stories and supernatural tales to the fiction of Lovecraft—perhaps the greatest practitioner of classic weird fiction—as well as Kafka, Borges, and Márquez. The course’s second half orbits around themes that will allow lectures to explore the dominant ideas and patterns of weird fiction, while preserving a concern for situating individual stories within their cultural contexts and generic history. Other writers include Robert Aickman, Shirley Jackson, Neil Gaimen, and Thomas Ligotti. We will also study Ridley Scott’s film *Alien*, which is influenced by Lovecraft and the weird literary tradition.

Textbooks and Readings

The main textbooks that you will need to purchase are the following:

1. *The Weird: A Compendium of Strange and Dark Stories* edited by Jeff VanderMeer and Ann VanderMeer (Tor, 2012).
2. *Bloodcurdling Tales of Horror and the Macabre: The Best of H. P. Lovecraft* by H.P. Lovecraft (Del Rey, 2002).
3. *Songs of a Dead Dreamer and Grimscribe* by Thomas Ligotti (Penguin, 2015).

Please buy these texts right away. They are available online at Amazon.ca in both paper and e-book format. Other readings will be made available through ARES, which you can access in Carleton’s Learning Management System: cuLearn. This is a fairly intensive reading course. If

you do not keep up with lecture schedule, you will probably not receive a passing grade for the course.

Attendance and Engagement

Before committing yourself to taking this course, please note that I expect students to attend all classes. There's no formal attendance register, but the pop quizzes, none of which can be "made up," provide a major incentive for showing up to both lectures each week. I doubt that the challenging lecture material can be sufficiently grasped through someone else's class notes or the course's PowerPoint slides. I also expect students to have read the specific stories before the lecture that deals with them.

Evaluation	Due date	% of Grade
Online Quiz (cuLearn)	Jan. 22	2
Pop Quizzes		
First	In Class?	6
Second	In Class?	6
Third	In Class?	6
Fourth	In Class?	6
(Best of Three)	TOTAL	20
Minor Assignments		
Personal Reflection on the Weird	Jan. 24	2.5
Reflection on Weird Trope	Feb. 14	2.5
Reflection on Weird Concept	March 7	2.5
Composition of Weird Fable	April 2	2.5
	TOTAL	10
Major Assignments		
Midterm	March 21	30
Capstone: Take Home	April 26	40
	TOTAL	100

Assignments

This course has no final exam or major essay, but it does have an elaborate assignment structure. Please study this syllabus. You cannot write the take home unless you have submitted all four minor assignments on time. If you have received an extension on a minor assignment, you must submit the assignment by the last day of classes. Please familiarize yourself with the Late Assignment Policy below. Here are the explanations of the individual assignments:

- 1) Online Quiz (cuLearn): this quiz will be open when the course begins and will close 2 weeks later. It will deal exclusively with the syllabus and it is an easy activity for earning a full 2% of your final grade.
- 2) Pop Quizzes: a quiz can happen at any point in the course. It may appear at the beginning, middle, or end of a class. I will be administering 4 multiple-choice quizzes and will be taking your best 3 quizzes for your final grade. The quizzes help prepare you for

the questions on the midterm and deal with material covered in lectures. Each quiz will have 10 questions. You will have 30 minutes to do the quiz. Typical questions will deal with passages studied in lecture and the definitions of weird tropes and concepts. If you miss a quiz, there's no chance of a rewrite, so please note that it is your responsibility to use your fourth quiz wisely.

- 3) Minor Assignments: the 4 assignments will be simultaneously submitted in cuLearn and cuPortfolio. Two of them will be peer-graded in class, and so you will need to bring paper copies to class. Each assignment assesses your critical and creative engagement with course material. The take home's activities and questions will build upon the work of these assignments.
- 4) Midterm: 30 to 50 multiple choice questions based on lecture material.
- 5) Capstone—Take Home: this final assignment has a number of parts and questions, including a creative project. A full assignment sheet will be distributed in advance of the take home.

Lecture Schedule

Jan. 8: Introduction	Feb. 26: The Everyday Strange
Jan. 10: American Gothic	Feb. 28: Weird Families
Jan. 15: The Supernatural Tale	March 5: Dark Rituals and Strange Cults
Jan. 17: Lovecraft	March 7: Clowns? (3rd Reflection)
Jan. 22: Cthulhu Mythos	March 12: Dolls, Puppets, and Mannequins
Jan. 24: Lovecraft Circle (1st Reflection)	March 14: Undead Pets
Jan. 29: Cthulhu Mythos Today	March 19: Insects
Jan. 31: Eastern European Weird	March 21: <u>Midterm</u>
Feb. 5: Eastern European Weird	March 26: Sinister Gods
Feb. 7: Kafkaesque Fables	March 28: The Alien within Us
Feb. 12: Latin American Weird	April 2: The Body Weird (4th Reflection)
Feb. 14: Latin American Weird (2nd Reflection)	April 4: The Call
Feb. 19: FALL BREAK	April 9: Coda: The Weird Library
Feb. 21: FALL BREAK	

Learning Objectives

The course's overall learning objectives are as follows: by the end of ENGL 2202, students will have

1. read attentively a variety of weird fiction published between 1830 and 2015
2. gained a sense of the historical evolution of weird fiction from the nineteenth century to the present
3. understood how individual stories may be situated meaningfully within their respective cultures
4. gained the ability to identify the major conventions and tropes of weird fiction
5. developed and strengthened their knowledge of appropriate theories and concepts relevant to understanding individual stories
6. engaged critically, philosophically, and creatively with the individual stories on the reading list.

Late 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. The same goes for the pop quizzes: no missed quiz can be made up, unless the student has fallen seriously ill or experienced personal bereavement.

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.

Plagiarism and Instructional Offences

Carleton University has a clear policy on academic integrity, including procedures to address academic misconduct. See the Undergraduate Calendar under "Academic Regulations of the University" Section E14: <<http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/acadregsuniv14/>>. It is important that students understand and meet academic integrity standards, and are sure they do not violate these standards through 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:

1. 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;
2. 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;
3. using another's data or research findings;
4. failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;

5. 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 serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts 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 a final grade of "F" for the course. For more information please go to: <http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/academicintegrity/>.

Intellectual Property

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations, posted notes, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s). Occasionally I may use brief anonymous student examples to address writing issues. Longer samples will require the student’s consent.

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 see the Student Guide: <http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/academic/students/>.
- 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 see the Student Guide above.
- 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 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).