

Carleton University
Winter 2026 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English

ENGL 1600A: Literature and Magic

Precludes additional credit for ENGL 1100, ENGL 1200, ENGL 1300, ENGL 1400, ENGL 1700, FYSM 1004.

Instructor: Professor B. Johnson
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***** This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change. A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term. *****

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course introduces students to the fascinating intersection between literature and magic, with an emphasis on nineteenth- and twentieth-century authors. We will study literary representations of alchemy and witchcraft in occult fiction and the weird tale; the emergence of modern fantasy out of the Irish literary revival; the links between poetry and ritual magic; the relation between stage magic and the unconscious mind; as well as the poetics and politics of contemporary magical realism. As we explore these and other topics, students will be introduced to techniques of literary analysis, research, and writing at a university level.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: Students will explore topics in the history of magic in Europe and North America, from the medieval period to the present; learn about the ways in which literary authors have represented magic in novels, short fiction, drama, and poetry; hone skills in comprehension and close reading; develop skills in literary analysis, critical thinking, and written expression.

TEXTS

M.R. James, “Count Magnus” and “The Ash Tree”
Edgar Allan Poe, “The Black Cat”
Arthur Machen, “The White People”
Mary Elizabeth Coleridge, “The Witch”
Anne Sexton, “Her Kind”
Lord Dunsany, *The King of Elfland's Daughter*
William Butler Yeats, selected poems
Algernon Blackwood, *The Centaur*
Robertson Davies, *Fifth Business*
Zalika Reid-Benta, *River Mumma*

EVALUATION

10% Attendance
20% In-class Writing
30% Mid-Term Test
40% Final Examination