



**MERCER**  
COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## COURSE OUTLINE

**Course Number**  
**ENG 256**

**Course Title**  
**Fantasy Literature**

**Credits**  
**3**

**Hours:**  
**Lecture/Lab/Other**  
**3**

**Co- or Pre-requisite**

**Minimum C grade in ENG 102**

**Implementation**  
**Semester & Year**  
**Spring 2023**

**Catalog description:**

Explores fantasy literature through a study of genre elements and the challenge this genre presents to readers of mainstream literature. By examining works written in and translated to English participants better appreciate and interpret such works and how they represent an increasingly important sub-section of literary expression.

**General Education Category:**  
**Not GenEd**

**Course coordinator:**  
Edward Carmien, [carmiene@mccc.edu](mailto:carmiene@mccc.edu), X3306

**Required texts & Other materials:**

In addition to critical works as appropriate by authors such as Tom Shippey (Tolkien) and chapters from *A Handbook on Critical Approaches to Literature*, ed. Guerin et al, a selection of works like those appearing below serve as the material for the course. Typically students read one or two longer novels (such as *The Lord of the Rings*) and a selection of shorter items, including short stories from an anthology such as *The American Fantasy Tradition* and shorter novels such as J.K. Rowling's *The Sorcerer's Stone*. At most, one cinematic text shall be selected.

Sample Bibliography of Potential Texts:

*Thieve's World*, ed. Aspirin & Abbey  
*Excalibur*, dir. John Boorman  
*Jherag*, Steven Brust  
*The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, Michael Chabon

*Fortress in the Eye of Time*, C.J. Cherryh  
*Little, Big*, John Crowley  
*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, dir. David Fincher  
*American Gods: A Novel*, Neil Gaiman  
The Conan texts, Robert E. Howard  
*Assassin's Apprentice*, Robin Hobb  
The Earthsea Trilogy, Ursula K. LeGuin  
*A Game of Thrones*, George R. R. Martin  
*Dragonslayer*, dir. Matthew Robbins  
The Harry Potter Novels, J.K. Rowling  
The Emberverse Novels, S. M. Stirling  
*Heroes Die*, Matthew Woodring Stover  
*The American Fantasy Tradition*, ed. Brian M. Thomsen  
*The Lord of the Rings*, J.R.R. Tolkien  
*The Hobbit*, J.R.R. Tolkien  
*Wings of Desire*, dir. Wim Wenders

**Course Student Learning Outcomes (SLO):**

***Upon successful completion of this course the student will be able to:***

1. Demonstrate and express knowledge of the fantasy genre [Supports ILG 1,6, 8, 11; PLO 1]
2. Identify various elements of structure in fiction and other expressive modes of storytelling [Supports ILG 1, 6, 11; PLO 1, 3]

3. Analyze fantasy works using one or more critical frameworks [Supports ILG 1, 6, 8, 10, 11; PLO 1, 2, 3]
4. Understand and express knowledge of the scope and flow of fantasy literature in a global and historical context [Supports ILG 1, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11; PLO 1, 2, 3, 4]
5. Assess and express the relative merits of a variety of fantasy works [Supports ILG 1, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11; PLO 1, 2, 3, 4]
6. Analyze literature using close reading and research-based evidence in a formal essay [Supports ILG 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11; PLO 1, 2, 3, 4]

### **Course-specific Institutional Learning Goals (ILG):**

**Institutional Learning Goal 1. Written and Oral Communication in English.** Students will communicate effectively in both speech and writing.

**Institutional Learning Goal 4. Technology.** Students will use computer systems or other appropriate forms of technology to achieve educational and personal goals.

**Institutional Learning Goal 6. Humanities.** Students will analyze works in the fields of art, music, or theater; literature; philosophy and/or religious studies; and/or will gain competence in the use of a foreign language.

**Institutional Learning Goal 7. History.** Students will understand historical events and movements in World, Western, non-Western or American societies and assess their subsequent significance.

**Institutional Learning Goal 8. Diversity and Global Perspective:** Students will understand the importance of a global perspective and culturally diverse peoples

**Institutional Learning Goal 10. Information Literacy:** Students will recognize when information is needed and have the knowledge and skills to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information for college level work.

**Institutional Learning Goal 11. Critical Thinking:** Students will use critical thinking skills understand, analyze, or apply information or solve problems.

### **Program Learning Outcomes for the Liberal Arts Program (PLO)**

1. **Concept Knowledge.** Understand the vocabulary, methods, and major concepts presented in the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences.
2. **Communication.** Articulate complex ideas clearly and effectively, both verbally and in writing.
3. **Critical Thinking.** Perform a series of thinking tasks including speculation, analysis, and synthesis (i.e., abstract reasoning)
4. **Research Methods.** Utilize research materials and methodologies.

### **Units of study in detail – Unit Student Learning Outcomes:**

#### **Unit I      Fantasy in Historical and Cultural Context [Supports Course SLO 1, 2]**

##### **Learning Objectives**

##### ***The student will be able to:***

- Demonstrate familiarity with the history of fantasy in world culture
- Identify the characteristics of fantasy
- Understand basic terminology applicable to the discussion of fantasy works, for example how the concept of “setting” means something very different in a fantasy text
- Explore the link between fantasy and existing cultural myth forms, as in Campbell’s *Hero with a Thousand Faces* and Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*

#### **Unit II      American Fantasy [Supports Course SLOs 1-5]**

##### **Learning Objectives**

##### ***The student will be able to:***

- Demonstrate familiarity with swords & sorcery, “magic portal,” epic quest, and other conventions of fantasy literature.

- Discuss novels and other works of fantasy in a critical context, that is, not merely as escapist or “trash” works but as genuine expressions of cultural messages
- Analyze fantasy works using appropriate critical terminology
- Understand the development of American fantasy during the past 100+ years, especially in the context of Tolkien’s landmark contribution to the field

**Unit III**      **Fantasy in a Literary Context** [Supports Course SLOs 1-6]

**Learning Objectives**

***The student will be able to:***

- Demonstrate an understanding of fantasy’s place in the larger literary landscape, for example its role as Romantic literature in a generally modernist context (and in more contemporary work perceive that there are modernist tendencies in some current fantasy)
- Express at an appropriate level of mastery in research-based writing complex ideas engaging the subject matter of the course
- Produce critical material of a useful quality for the benefit of the larger literary community, for example via postings to online repositories of relevant scholarly organizations
- Research, plan, and carry out a rigorous oral presentation at the same intellectual level as the research-based writing students perform in the course

**Evaluation of student learning:**    Evaluates SLOs 1-6

- |                                                                                |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| • Four or five formal MLA papers based on outside research, a minimum 18 pages | 50% |
| • One oral presentation based on outside research                              | 10% |
| • Mid-term and final exams                                                     | 20% |
| • Contribution to the field (adding to electronic resources)                   | 10% |
| • Attendance, participation, and reading comprehension quizzes                 | 10% |