

LIS 446LE: Fantasy Literature & Media for Youth

Summer 2015

Instructor: Alaine Martaus

Class Meetings: Thursdays, 6:00-8:00

Office Hours: Online after class, and by appointment

Course Description

This course covers the selection and evaluation of historical and contemporary fantasy literature and media for library collections aimed at children and young adults. Texts examined will include books, movies, and games. [2.0 credits]

Course Objectives:

- To identify characteristics of fantasy literature and media for youth
- To gain an understanding of the genre of fantasy literature
- To develop an understanding its appeal to child and young adult readers
- To become familiar with a range of authors, works, genres, media, and forms of popular culture oriented toward children and young adult
- To gain experience in discussing and evaluating fantasy literature and associated resources
- To identify and discuss trends that impact contemporary fantasy literature for youth

Communication

I will do my best to communicate clearly all course requirements and material in a timely manner. This will include announcements at the beginning of class and via the Moodle. Please make sure to arrive in class on time and check the Moodle regularly so that you do not miss announcements.

If you have questions, concerns, problems, or conflicts, please feel free to email me. I will try to reply to any emails within 48hrs, so if you haven't heard back from me in that time, feel free to drop me a reminder. I also welcome you to schedule appointments with me to ask questions or get clarifications outside of class.

Class Work and Readings

You are expected to do the readings and engage with them in a reflective and critical manner. Read the assigned texts before each class meeting, as it will make both class activities and your participation in class more meaningful.

You must complete all required assignments in order to pass this class; however, completing all required assignments does not guarantee you will receive a passing grade.

Please review and reflect on the academic integrity policy of the University of Illinois, http://admin.illinois.edu/policy/code/article1_part4_1-401.html In submitting assignments for LIS506, you certify that all work presented is your own and has been done by you independently or as a member of a designated group for group assignments.

I will happily accommodate any students with disabilities, but students must be registered and assessed by the UIUC's Disability Resources and Educational Services.

Participation and Attendance

You are expected to attend the course and participate in discussions and activities. Classroom discussion should be civilized and respectful to everyone. It should be relevant to the topic we are discussing. Classroom discussion is meant to allow us to hear a variety of viewpoints. This can only happen if we respect one other and our differences. ***If you need to miss a class, please email me so we can arrange for you to make up missed content.***

Evaluation

Assignment grades will be based on:

- Demonstrated attention to the content/topic and to assignment requirements
- Clarity of writing (professional, grammatically correct writing is expected)
- Quality of work and demonstration of thought, effort, and attention to details of composition and presentation

Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due by midnight on the assigned day. Extensions are available only when an agreement is made in advance with the instructor, preferably at least a day ahead of time.

Assignment	Due Date	Percentage Value
<i>Fantasy Fandom Paper</i>	<i>July 10</i>	<i>15pts</i>
<i>Fantasy Media Evaluations</i>	<i>June 25, July 9, July 23, August 6</i>	<i>20pts (5pts each)</i>
<i>Reading Responses</i>	<i>Weekly (Before class)</i>	<i>20pts (2pts each)</i>
<i>Fantasy Subgenres Group Assignment</i>	<i>Wiki Entry: August 7 (by noon) Class Presentation: During class on assigned day</i>	<i>Wiki Entry: 20pts Class Presentation: 10pts Total: 30pts</i>
<i>Participation</i>	<i>Weekly</i>	<i>15pts</i>

FANDOM AND FANTASY PAPER

LENGTH: 1000-1500 words

DUE: July 10, Midnight

WORTH: 15pts

Assignment Overview

For this assignment, you will identify a particular group (online or face-to-face) within a larger fandom. The fandom may be based on a particular book, author, game, movie(s), or fantasy series of any kind created for youth. Then you will explore that fan culture as thoroughly as you can. You can base your paper on websites or other online media devoted to this fan base. If you are also able to talk to, email with, or chat with members, that would be a bonus.

Questions to Consider

Your paper should include answers to the following questions (but you are not limited to answering only these questions). Create your paper by synthesizing a coherent narrative about this fandom, using these questions as a guide. (Do not simply list questions and answers!)

- What are the boundaries of this fan community?
- What can you tell about the shared interests of participants?
- Who participates, and how do they participate?
- What are their shared activities, online and offline?
- How is this fan community connected to (or disconnected from) the publishing market?
- What, if any, connections or tensions exist between fans and publishers/creators?
- What can you tell about the history of this fan community?

FANTASY MEDIA EVALUATIONS

LENGTH: 500 words each

DUE: June 25, July 9, July 16, July 23 (Midnight)

WORTH: 20pts (5pts each)

Assignment Overview

For this assignment, engage with an example of four of the media forms listed below, and then consider that example within the context of content from the course (the form and formula of fantasy and current trends). Use this as a chance to consider the relationship between fantasy books and non-traditional media forms.

Each reflection should include a very brief description of the content, game, object, etc. that you explored and a reflection/evaluation of it as fantasy media for youth, including possible connections to course content and issues of youth appeal.

You will also be asked to post your brief description to the Moodle, so that other students can gain from your experiences.

Choose four of the following (from different categories - don't just watch four films or read four examples of fanfic).

1. Movies/TV Shows
2. Fanfic
3. Video Games
4. Non-Computer Games (Tabletop/Live Action RPG/other)
5. Cons
6. Cosplay
7. Anime/Manga

Questions to Consider

In crafting your evaluation and reflection, consider some of the following questions. (You are not limited to these questions though.)

- How does this media connect to the genre of fantasy literature for youth?
- Are there similarities in terms of character, theme, world-building, etc?
- What are the differences? Why are those differences important?
- What might youth gain from experiencing the fantastic in this way, as opposed to text?
- What is the appeal of this form, both specifically and in general? (For example, what is the appeal of this particular film and fantasy films in general, this particular video game and fantasy video games in general, this particular costume and fantasy cosplay in general).

READING RESPONSES

LENGTH: 250 words each

DUE: Weekly (By noon before class)

WORTH: 20pts (2pts each)

Assignment Overview

For this assignment, write a brief reader response to 10 of the novels we read for the course. Post your responses to the moodle by noon on the assigned day for each book. (For example, if you choose to post a response to Howard's *Splintered*, you'll need to post it to the moodle by noon on July 16.)

You will, of course, need to respond to more than one book on certain weeks, and can choose to skip certain weeks - as long as you respond to a total of 10 books.

Questions to Consider

In crafting your response, go beyond simply considering if you liked the book or not (e.g. listing all the elements you liked or disliked).. Consider questions like:

- Is this what I think of when I think of fantasy literature? Why or why not?
- Would I want to read more of this kind of fantasy? Why or why not?
- What about the book really stuck with me? Why?
- What about the book didn't work for me? Why not?

You can choose to focus on specific elements (characters, world-building, use of magic, themes, literary allusions, etc) or talk about the book as a whole, as long as the focus is on the content of the book and your response to it.

Responding to Other Responses

You are encouraged but not required to read and/or respond to other students' responses. If you do choose to respond, please keep the following in mind:

1. Responses do not count toward your required total, but can be used to supplement participation if you aren't comfortable chatting in class.
2. Responses are personal and subjective. You are welcome to disagree, but avoid trying to "correct" other people's impressions or opinions.

FANTASY SUBGENRES (GROUP PROJECT)

LENGTH: Wiki - Varied; Presentation - 20 minutes

DUE: Wiki - August 7; Presentation - As Assigned

WORTH: 30pts (Wiki - 20pts; Presentation - 10pts)

Assignment Overview

For this assignment, work in groups to create an online reading resource and an approximately 20-minute presentation on one of the following subgenres of fantasy literature for youth:

1. Animal Fantasy
2. Arthurian Myth Fantasy
3. Dragon Fantasy
4. Fantasy Graphic Novels
5. International Fantasy
6. Myth-Based Fantasy I (Non-Arthurian)
7. Myth-Based Fantasy II (Non-Arthurian)
8. Pirate Fantasy

Sign-ups will occur at the end of class on the first day. You will be given an opportunity to provide topic preferences and will be assigned to groups by the instructor.

Online Reading Resource

For this part of the assignment, you will be asked to contribute to an online resource for readers about your group's subgenre. The resource should include:

- (1) a history and overview of the subgenre;
- (2) an explanation of its defining characteristics;
- (3) an annotated bibliography of at least 10-15 titles for children and young adults, including a mixture of core titles and less well-known works, and assorted quotes from professionally published reviews;
- (4) links to relevant outside sources, including online articles (professional and/or peer-reviewed), booklists, author websites, etc.

The instructor will provide a wiki base on which to build your resource.

Class Presentation

For this part of the assignment, provide a brief overview of your work for the rest of the class, including a brief powerpoint presentation (submitted to the instructor by 4pm the day of class). Good presentations will:

- Provide an introduction to what readers (and those working with readers) need to know about the subgenre;
- Show or describe selected examples of the subgenre;
- Describe the likely appeal or probable readership for books in the subgenre.

Weekly Reading List

WEEK 1 – Considering Genre: World-Building & Fuzzy Boundaries

The Golden Compass (His Dark Materials, Book 1), by Philip Pullman
City of Bones (The Mortal Instruments, Book 1), by Cassandra Clare

WEEK 2 – Considering Form & Formula: Quests & the Sword-Wielder

Alanna: The First Adventure (The Song of the Lioness, Book 1), by Tamora Pierce
Graceling, by Kristin Cashore

The Ruins of Gorlan (Ranger's Apprentice, Book 1), by John Flanagan

WEEK 3 – Considering Form & Formula: Sorcery & the Magic-Wielder

Sabriel (The Abhorsen Trilogy, Book 1), by Garth Nix

Midnight for Charlie Bone (Children of the Red King, Book 1), by Jenny Nimmo
So You Want to Be a Wizard (Young Wizards, Book 1), by Diane Duane

WEEK 4 – Considering Form & Formula: Monsters & Mythical Beasts

Daughter of Smoke & Bone, by Laini Taylor
Artemis Fowl: The Graphic Novel, by Eoin Colfer
How to Train Your Dragon, by Cressida Cowell

WEEK 5 – Exploring Trends: Adaptations

Peter and the Starcatchers, by Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson
Splintered, by A.G. Howard

Choose ONE of the following:

Rapunzel's Revenge, by Shannon Hale and Dean Hale

The Fairy Tale Detectives (The Sister's Grimm, Book 1), by Michael Buckley
Cruel Beauty, by Rosamund Hodge

WEEK 6 – Exploring Trends: Dark & Urban Fairy Tales

Welcome to Bordertown, edited by Holly Black & Ellen Kushner

The Darkest Part of the Forest, by Holly Black

The Field Guide (The Spiderwick Chronicles, Book 1), by Tony DiTerlizzi & Holly Black

WEEK 7 – Exploring Trends: Hauntings, Ghosts, & Possession

Lockwood & Co.: The Screaming Staircase, by Jonathan Stroud

The Name of the Star (Shades of London, Book 1), by Maureen Johnson

WEEK 8 – Exploring Trends: Diversity in Children's Fantasy

Summer of the Mariposas, by Guadalupe Garcia McCall
Huntress, by Malinda Lo