

Contemporary American Fantasy
Syllabus and Policy Statement

Instructor: Robin Alvarez
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Office Hours
Cyber: Email, Phone, or Video Conference
Mon – Thurs
10am – 12pm

Required Texts, Materials, Supplies

Mexican Gothic by Silvia Moreno-Garcia (ISBN 978-0525620808)

Legendborn by Tracy Deonn (ISBN 978-1534441613)

Vicious by V.E. Schwab (ISBN 978-1250183507)

Critical Theory Today by Lois Tyson (Provided as a PDF)

Additional readings will be provided as digital files or internet links

Consistent access to a computer, internet, webcam with working mic

Course Description

Contemporary American Fantasy explores how modern fantasy literature uses the lens of the fantastical to engage with pressing social and political issues. Unlike traditional fantasy, which often creates entirely new worlds, contemporary fantasy frequently remains grounded in settings familiar to readers, using magic as a tool to challenge and reflect on current societal dynamics. Through the study of key texts, students will examine how these narratives address themes such as race, gender, colonialism, and power. The course will introduce and apply critical theories, including postcolonial criticism, African American criticism, and psychoanalytic criticism, to deepen the analysis of these works. Students will also explore the literary and cultural influences that shape contemporary fantasy, understanding how these modern stories reimagine and build upon traditional myths, legends, and gothic literature.

Objectives

- Analyze contemporary American fantasy literature using critical theories such as postcolonial criticism, African American criticism, and psychoanalytic criticism to understand how these texts critique issues like race, gender, colonialism, and power
- Explore how contemporary American fantasy authors draw upon and reimagine traditional myths, legends, gothic literature, and other historical sources to engage with and critique modern social and political issues

- Identify and interpret key themes, narrative structures, and the use of magical elements in contemporary fantasy, focusing on how these techniques serve as tools for social critique

Expectations

This course meets on Tuesday evenings from 6:00 to 8:45 PM via Blackboard Collaborate. To receive grades for discussions and participation, students are required to have their cameras and microphones on throughout the class session. Active participation is essential, as these discussions are a key component of your grade, replacing traditional discussion board participation. Students must complete all required readings before class to engage fully in these discussions. Additionally, students are expected to maintain journals, participate in peer reviews, and work effectively in group assignments.

Access to a computer with word processing software and proficiency in using Blackboard is mandatory for completing assignments. All final drafts must be typed in 12pt, double-spaced, Times New Roman font, adhering to Modern Language Association (MLA) formatting guidelines, and submitted through the assignments link in Blackboard. Submissions must be in Word document format; if using Google Docs or Apple Pages, the document must be exported as a Word file. PDFs will not be accepted under any circumstances.

Furthermore, students are required to use the university's writing center for their major papers. A sign-off form from the writing center tutor must be submitted with the paper in the gradebook before the paper will be graded. This ensures that students are taking advantage of available resources to refine their writing and produce high-quality work.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board has identified six core learning objectives

Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Teamwork, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility. Sul Ross State University is committed to the improvement of its general education core curriculum by regular assessment of student performance on these six objectives.

By enrolling in English 4307: Topics: Contemporary American Fantasy you are also enrolling in a Core Curriculum Course that fulfills the Communication component requirement. The chart below indicates:

- (a) The core objectives that are required to be taught in this course per the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB),
- (b) How the required core objectives will be addressed. Include only the core objectives that must be addressed by this course in the first column. Examples of the things that can be included in the final column are: Specific assignments, class module(s), chapter(s), strategies, activities, and/or techniques that address the core objectives.

Core Curriculum Objective Table

Core Objective	Definition	How the Core Objective Will be Addressed.
Critical Thinking Skills	To include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.	This will be addressed in all essays for this course.
Communication Skills	To include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.	This will be addressed in all essays in this course.
Teamwork	To include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.	This will be addressed in group exercises and by peer review.
Personal Responsibility	To include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.	This will be addressed in the Personal Narrative essay.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and participate actively in class activities. Regular attendance is crucial for understanding the material and achieving academic success. If a student is absent three or more times, they may be at risk of being dropped from the class.

First Class and Beyond

Monday, August 26, 2024 – Read and complete any tasks in the “Start Here” Module.

Tuesday, August 27, 2024 – First Lecture. Meet in Blackboard Class Collaborate. You will find the in the side panel of our class. Click on “Join Session” on Tuesday from 6pm to 8:45pm.

On the subsequent days - Attend lecture every Tuesday. Regularly check and complete tasks in your weekly modules.

Academic Ethics

It is the responsibility of students and instructors to help maintain scholastic integrity at the University by refusing to participate in or tolerate scholastic dishonesty. Any student who represents someone else’s work as his or her own will automatically receive a zero for that assignment, which will likely result in a failure for the course. Plagiarism can be purposeful or inadvertent, but either results in an unacceptable and unethical academic performance. Plagiarism will most likely result in a failure for the course.

“Cheating” includes:

1. Copying from another student's test paper, laboratory report, other report, or computer files, data listings, and/or programs, or allowing another student to copy from same.
2. Using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test.
3. Collaborating, without authorization, with another person during an examination or in preparing academic work.
4. Knowingly, and without authorization, using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, soliciting, copying, or possessing, in whole or in part, the contents of a nonadministered test.
5. Substituting for another student; permitting any other person, or otherwise assisting any other person to substitute for oneself or for another student in the taking of an examination or test or the preparation of academic work to be submitted for academic credit.
6. Bribing another person to obtain a non-administered test or information about a nonadministered test.
7. Purchasing, or otherwise acquiring and submitting as one's own work any research paper or other writing assignment prepared by an individual or firm. This section does not apply to the typing of a rough and/or final version of an assignment by a professional typist.
8. Students are not permitted to use or turn in A.I. (artificial intelligence) generated work in any capacity.
9. "Plagiarism" means the appropriation and the unacknowledged incorporation of another's work or idea in one's own written work offered for credit.
10. "Collusion" means the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work offered for credit.
11. "Abuse of resource materials" means the mutilation, destruction, concealment, theft, or alteration of materials provided to assist students in the mastery of course materials.
12. "Academic work" means the preparation of an essay, dissertation, thesis, report, problem, assignment, or other project that the student submits as a course requirement or for a grade.

Students With Special Needs

Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class.

Alpine students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mary Schwartz Grisham, M.Ed., LPC (Licensed Professional Counselors), SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203 (please leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as we can during working hours), or email mschwartz@sulross.edu

Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall (Suite 112), and our mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine. Texas, 79832.

Distance Education Statement

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as Smarthinking, library resources, such as online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login information to verify students' identities and to protect students' information. The procedures for filing a student complaint are included in the student handbook. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website.

Technical Issues

If a student experiences technical issues, it is their responsibility to alert the instructor immediately and not after the assignment is due. It is also their responsibility to reach out to tech support for help. Please contact Tim Parsons or the help line at SHSU if you have technical problems or questions. Their contact information is available on the Blackboard main pages. Blackboard works best in **Firefox, Safari, or Chrome** (rather than Explorer). It is free to download.**

Assignments

Major Assignment	% of Final Grade
Project – Podcast – Postcolonial Critical Theory	20%
Project – Marketing Campaign – African American Critical Theory	20%
Project – Psychological Profile – Psychoanalytic Critical Theory	20%
Discussions and Participation	15%
In-Class Work: Assignments / Journals / Quizzes	15%
Final Exam	10%
Total Points	100%

Grading Policy

1. All citations should be formatted using the Modern Language Association (MLA) manual. Papers with MLA citation errors will receive a reduction in points or no credit.
2. After 11:59 pm on the date for any assignment due is considered late.
3. Students who fail to participate during our class meetings on Tuesdays or fail to complete assignments may not pass this course.

4. No late assignments accepted

English 1301 Grading Scale

100-90% equates to an A

89-80% equates to a B

79-70% equates to a C

69-60% equates to a D

59-50% or less receives an F

Late Work

All major assignments and/or projects, etc. are due on the dates assigned by 11:59pm, unless otherwise noted. You are responsible for all assignments in this course and must complete all required work to receive a passing grade. I will not accept any late assignments under any circumstances. No exceptions! There is no make-up work in this course! **For school-related absences, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor within 24 hours after the missed class in order to make arrangements for missed work. If the student fails to contact the instructor, the grade will result in a zero. If you are struggling, please do not wait to contact me to discuss appropriate paths to your success!

Calendar

(Dues dates and assignments subject to change)

8/27 Introductions, expectations, what is contemporary American fantasy

9/3 The Yellow Wallpaper, Postcolonial Criticism, Mexican Gothic,

9/10 Mexican Gothic, Essay, Podcasts

9/17 Essay, Podcast scriptwriting

9/24 Podcast Project

10/1 Watch Podcasts, Arthurian Legend, Legendborn

10/8 Rootwork, African American Criticism Legendborn

10/15 Legendborn, Essay, Critical Essays and Reviews

10/22 Essay, Critical Marketing Campaign

10/29 Marketing Campaign

11/5 Marketing Campaign Presentation, Frankenstein, Vicious

11/12 Psychoanalytic Criticism, Vicious

11/19 Character Analysis, Id, Ego, Superego, Psychological Profiles

11/26 Psychological Profiles

11/27-29 Thanksgiving Holiday

12/3 (Last Lecture Class) Psychological Profiles, Final Essay

12/10 Final Essay