Intro to Fiction — ENGL 2370 (CRN 20007) — Fall 2015
Tues. & Thurs. 9:25 - 10:40 a.m.
Irby 303

Professor: Dr. Katherine E.C. Willis
Office: Irby 414
Office hours: Mondays 2:00-3:30; Wednesdays 9:30-11:00, 2:00-3:30; Fridays 9:30-11:00; and by appt.
Office ph: 501-450-5135
Email: kwillis@uca.edu (allow 24 hours for response; see etiquette policy)

HOW TO CONTACT ME:

Email etiquette: I will respond to your email within 24 hours (if you do not hear from me in that time window, contact me again). That means you should not email last minute concerns about assignments. In addition, I only respond to emails that follow basic etiquette. That includes the following:
1. Salutation line with my name
2. Decent grammar and spelling
3. Signature line with your name

Office hours: My door is open for you during the office hours listed above, so you do not need an appointment to see me then. If you cannot make those times, however, just ask to set up an appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

The starting premise of this course is that speculative fiction (including sci fi, fantasy, post-apocalyptic fiction, and many other subgenres associated with those three) is the most “fictiony” fiction there is. Fiction is a broad category of literature. Unlike nonfiction — histories, biographies, diaries and journals, essays, etc. — which covers the world as we know it in its historical and present dimensions, fiction allows writers and readers to explore real ideas, principles, concepts, and truths in a setting that is not entirely real or even realistic. Speculative fiction pushes this “unreal” dimension of fiction to an even greater extreme, setting stories within made-up solar systems, featuring dragons and monsters, giving characters special powers and abilities, etc. Many modern works of speculative fiction draw on very old traditions of literature dating back to the classical period (specifically, the Epic) and the middle ages (specifically, the Romance). We will be reading major works from the middle ages to the 21st century, discussing their relationship to previous works, and working our way towards a better understanding of why fiction — with all its “falseness” — is every bit as important as factual, historical, nonfiction.

By the conclusion of the course, you will be to:
• explain how fiction, in all its diversity, is uniquely able to address the most important questions of human existence
• compare and contrast themes and styles across various axes of diversity: from the middle ages to the 21st century; from the cultural and social traditions of England, Ireland, America, and Japan; from a
variety of global values and perspectives, including ecological, technological, political, spiritual, and philosophical perspectives
• explain how particular texts and passages fit in broader personal, social, cultural, and historical contexts
• close read passages in order to connect specific details to themes in the text and to literary traditions
• define and characterize major genres and subgenres of fiction along with their major conventions
• recognize and identify stylistic and thematic properties of individual authors
• articulate your personal response to literature in the clear, fluid prose of literary analysis
• read for fun!

All the assignments for this class are meant to sharpen the top three skills every employer looks for: communication skills, writing skills, and analytical skills. Whatever career you have or plan to have after college, every employer is looking for those three skills. If you apply yourself in each reading and assignment, you will leave this class a better writer of literary critical prose—arguably the most challenging kind of nonfiction writing to master. Once you can write literary criticism, you can write anything.

UCA LOWER DIVISION CORE:

This course is part of the Diversity component of the Lower-Division Core. Diversity courses promote the ability to analyze familiar cultural assumptions in the context of the world’s diverse values, traditions, and belief systems as well as to analyze the major ideas, techniques and processes that inform creative works within different cultural and historical contexts. For more information, go to http://uca.edu/core.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Please note that some of the texts below have specific editions that are required:

• Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, by J.K. Rowling, any edition
• The Once and Future King, by T.H. White, any edition
• Le Morte Darthur (selections), by Sir Thomas Malory, 1st ed., Broadview Press
• Dr. Faustus, by Christopher Marlowe, 2nd ed., Broadview Press (1604 folio/A Text)
• Dracula, by Bram Stoker, 1st ed., Broadview Press
• A Canticle for Leibowitz, by Walter M. Miller, Jr., any edition
• The War of the Worlds, by H.G. Wells, Broadview Press edition
• Readings and materials distributed electronically (printed and brought to class)

Optional to purchase:
• Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind (Kaze no tani no Naushika), Hayao Miyazaki

BUILDING EMERGENCY PLAN:

An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.
TITLE IX DISCLOSURE:

If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to “student-on-student” or “employee-on-student”), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs, and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on the specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit https://uca.edu/titleix. Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity. Students should also familiarize themselves with the Sexual Harassment Policy included in the Student Handbook.

DISABILITY SERVICES & ACCOMODATIONS:

The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Disability Resource Center (450-3613). Any student with a documented disability requiring accommodations in the course should speak with me as soon as possible. Please be aware that it is in all cases the responsibility of the student to initiate such a discussion and to do so well in advance of assignments and activities for which accommodations might be needed. The discussion should yield a reasonable accommodation (in other words, an accommodation that does not “fundamentally alter a course, program, or academic requirement”). Please refer to the policies and procedures defined by UCA’s Disability Resource Center for more details. All information regarding an individual's disability is strictly confidential.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM:

UCA’s academic integrity statement reads as follows: “The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the University’s Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student’s acceptance of this university policy.”

Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, fabrication, and any act designed to give an unfair academic advantage to the student.

“Other forms of academic misconduct may include unauthorized collaboration or submitting the same paper or portions of the same paper to two different courses without the consent of both instructors . . . . The university’s academic integrity policy applies to all students enrolled in courses at the University of Central Arkansas. All forms of academic misconduct at the University of Central Arkansas will be regarded as serious” (qtd. from Student Handbook). Students should familiarize themselves with the Academic Policies, related to Academic Integrity and all other academic matters, included in the Student Handbook.
CLASSROOM CONDUCT:

Common courtesy and respect: I encourage you to share your opinions and engage in conversation with your classmates, because the more diverse points of view we consider, the more complete our learning will be. However, be courteous: disagreement can be a great way to start a discussion, but respect your classmates’ opinions and their right to express them. Any disruptions or displays of disrespect will result in a serious consideration of your placement in this class.

Electronic devices: The use of laptops, cell phones, tablets, e-readers, PDAs, music players and other electronic devices is prohibited in the classroom without express permission.

Students who violate these principles of conduct will be asked to leave the classroom and will not receive credit for in-class work that day.

ATTENDANCE:

Your attendance at each class meeting throughout the semester is the foundation of your grade in this course. As the Attendance section of the Student Handbook explains, “A student’s official program is regarded as his or her obligation to the institution, full performance of which requires regular and punctual class attendance and active participation. A student is responsible for coming to class prepared, completing any missed work, and knowing the dates and places of required course examinations." Absences that indicate negligence about class attendance may lead to cancellation of registration and a withdrawal grade of WF in the course. In flagrant cases, the student may be suspended from the university. Individual instructors may assign a withdrawal grade of WF for non-attendance to any student but must do so by the deadline date for a student to officially withdraw with a WP or WF specified in the academic calendar for the semester.”

Participation is part of your course grade, but in a larger sense, all of our other assignments and activities will require you to build on what happens in class. In other words, irregular attendance will affect not just participation but will also hinder your ability to complete major assignments and activities.

If you are absent or late for any reason, it is your responsibility first to acquire notes from a classmate and, second, to come see me with questions and concerns.

LATE WORK POLICY:

If you are unable to submit work on time due to an excused reason, it is your responsibility to contact me as soon as possible to document your reason and to make timely alternative arrangements (be aware that some in-class activities may not be possible to make up). Late work is never acceptable for unexcused reasons. As the Student Handbook specifies in the section on Attendance, “Make-up examinations and assignments are required only for valid absences as determined by the faculty member. Students who miss an examination or assignment without a valid excuse may receive a failing grade for that exam or assignment.”

Excused reasons include (but are not limited to): official university-sanctioned athletic or organizational events (requires appropriate documentation), severe illness, death of a family member, court appearances, jury duty.

Unexcused reasons include (but are not limited to): computer/printer malfunctions, traffic problems, family vacations/travel, or forgetfulness.
**EVALUATIONS:**

Student evaluations of a course and its professor are a crucial element in helping faculty achieve excellence in the classroom and the institution in demonstrating that students are gaining knowledge. Students may evaluate courses they are taking starting on the Monday of the thirteenth week of instruction (Nov. 23, 2015) through the end of finals week by logging in to myUCA and clicking on the Evals button on the top right.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:**

Below is an overview of the grade components for this course and the weight assigned to each. The descriptions for each category are an overview; any further requirements/details and information about grading will be distributed separately in assignment sheets. Be sure to save all of your work during the semester.

**10% Participation:** Come to class each day prepared to write and to discuss. This grade category includes not only your active, vocal participation in class, but also your completion of any in-class activities, such as free writing, worksheets, workshop/peer review, and other activities. Good participation means being regularly present and active in class, engaging with me and your classmates in generative, constructive discussion, and being prepared for each day of class (i.e., you completed the reading, finished the assignments, arrived with the text in hand, etc).

**15% Discussion Question:** We will have a discussion question for each class. I will provide the question one class in advance. Be sure to obtain the question and think about it in relation to the reading. At least one day of the semester, you will be responsible for starting class by presenting an original, thoughtful, evidence-based answer to the discussion question. Cite the text and close read in your answer. Your informal presentation will take 3-5 minutes. I will assign each student’s date approximately one week ahead of time throughout the semester. Keep track of your date and be sure to be in attendance; because of the tight schedule of the semester, there may not be an opportunity to make up this portion of your grade.

**25% Essays:** A total of 6 short essays (1.5 - 2 pages each in MLA formatting) submitted throughout the semester. We are reading 9 texts, so you will choose which 6 you wish to submit. The due dates are identified in the course schedule below; generally, the essay is due within 1-2 class periods after we finish discussing the work. Each essay will be an exercise in close reading a passage of your choice (about 3-4 sentences) from the text. The essay will be graded primarily on your ability to connect specific details in the passage to a larger theme within the work as well as to a broad concept in the course. Your writing must be concrete and analytical.

**15% Exam 1:** The exam will be composed of short answer questions. For a series of passages, you will need to identify the author and title of the work and then offer a paragraph of analytical close-reading. Think of the short answers as a condensed version of the essays.

**15% Exam 2:** The same format as exam 1.

**20% Final exam:** The same format as exams 1 and 2. The final exam will have a cumulative portion.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Readings and assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day on which they are listed. Some days below specify other materials you are required to bring. Note: I reserve the right to change the schedule below if it will help the class. I will announce any changes in class and via email.

Aug. 20  First day introductions and syllabus.

Aug. 25  Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind (Kaze no tani no Naushika), Hayao Miyazaki
Aug. 27  Nausicaä, cont.
Sept.  1  Nausicaä, cont.

Sept.  3  Dr. Faustus, by Christopher Marlowe, Prologue and Acts I - II
Sept.  8  Dr. Faustus, Acts III - IV
Sept. 10  Dr. Faustus, Act V
[Essay on Nausicaä due]

Sept. 15  Dracula, by Bram Stoker, chs. 1-9
Sept. 17  Dracula, chs. 10-19
[Essay on Dr. Faustus due]
Sept. 22  Dracula, chs. 20-27

Sept. 24  Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone, by J.K. Rowling, chs. 1-7
[Essay on Dracula due]
Sept. 29  Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone, chs. 8-13
Oct.  1   Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone, chs. 14-17

Oct.  6   EXAM 1

Oct.  8   Le Morte Darthur, by Sir Thomas Malory, “From the Marriage of King Uther unto King Arthur”
[Essay on Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone due]
Oct. 15   Le Morte Darthur, “The Death of Arthur” (pp. 246-284)
Oct. 20   Le Morte Darthur, “The Death of Arthur” (pp. 284-322)

Oct. 22   No class — Fall Break

Oct. 27   The Once and Future King, by T.H. White, Book I
[Essay on Le Morte Darthur due]
Oct. 29   The Once and Future King, Book II
Nov.   3   The Once and Future King, Book III
Nov.   5   The Once and Future King, Book IV

Nov. 10  EXAM 2
Nov. 12  
A Canticle for Leibowitz, by Walter M. Miller, Jr., Part I: Fiat Homo

Nov. 17  
A Canticle for Leibowitz, Part II: Fiat Lux

[Essay on The Once and Future King due]

Nov. 19  
A Canticle for Leibowitz, Part III: Fiat Voluntas Tua

Nov. 24  
A Canticle for Leibowitz, cont.

Nov. 26  
No class — Thanksgiving Break

Dec. 1  
The War of the Worlds, by H.G. Wells, Book I

Dec. 3  
The War of the Worlds, Book II

[Essay on A Canticle for Leibowitz due]

Dec. 8  
Final exam from 8:00-10:00 a.m.