Course Description

This course is designed to introduce you to a variety of narrative forms and styles, as well as to introduce you to the basic tools necessary to understanding, analyzing, and writing about complex texts. The particular focus of this course is on a range of fiction that can be defined as speculative: works that contain elements of unreality or works that tweak, overtly or subtly, reality as we think we know it. The fiction we will read is also loosely related to the theme of exploration or discovery: of a new world, a secret, one's home or one's own life. Some of these stories introduce you to new worlds complete with fantastic or alien beings. Others make seemingly familiar locales and situations appear utterly strange and unfamiliar.

We will study the basic elements that make up works of fiction, including plot, setting, point of view, and more. Because every text we read in some way bends the laws of reality, we will examine how they produce cultural commentary and ultimately develop, through reading, writing, and discussion, a working definition of speculative fiction: what it is, what it does, and the kinds of meanings it can generate.

Learning Outcomes

English 238 is a three-credit course designed to teach students how to read fiction critically. It promotes understanding and appreciation of the range, values, techniques, and meanings of genres of fiction. By the end of the semester, you will be able to do the following:

- Define "fiction" along with other key literary terms and identify significant features of literary styles and genres;
- Discuss significant social and cultural functions of fiction;
- Draw on relevant cultural and historical information to situate texts within their proper contexts;
- Adopt methods such as argumentation and analysis to interpret assigned texts and understand how those methods contribute to understanding the meaning of literary works;
- Use logic and creativity to produce original, persuasive arguments;
- Articulate the importance of speculative thinking and speculative literary texts to broaching cultural, political, and historical questions.

Required Texts/Materials

Texts

Jeff Vandermeer, *Annihilation* (FSG, 2014): 9780374104092
Hiroko Oyamada, *The Factory* (New Directions, 2019): 9780811228855
Marie Ndiaye, *Self-Portrait in Green* (Two Lines, 2014): 9781931883399

William Beckford, *Vathek* (Oxford UP, 2013): 9780199576951
*All other course readings will be available as PDFs via the course website.

Materials
A reliable internet connection
A computer
A program that can open PDFs such as Adobe Acrobat
Word-processing software such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs

Course Expectations
Virtual courses differ considerably from in-person courses. Class discussion takes place entirely on the discussion board forums on Brightspace. My lectures for each set of texts and literary terms will likewise be available on the course's Brightspace page at least one week before we are scheduled to discuss them.

 Most of your communication with me and with your classmates will happen via email or webchat. Make sure to use appropriate conventions—such as a subject line, salutation, and professional signature—when communicating with your instructors and peers. You must check your email frequently, engage with the discussion boards regularly (as required according to course guidelines), and ask questions as needed.

 Please note that the discussions we will have in this class are intended to replicate in-person discussions. I encourage polite academic debate. But remember to be civil and professional when discussing course texts. Do not insult, harm, or threaten to harm others; offensive language and hostility will not be tolerated. The first instance of inappropriate behavior/language will result in an email discussion with me; if the behavior persists, more serious action will be taken.

 This is a condensed course, which means that it is intensive and fast-paced. We have a lot of material to cover. You will need to use your best time-management skills to stay on top of the reading and meet the deadlines for all of the assignments. I encourage you to ask questions or otherwise communicate with me as often as necessary and as soon as possible; this will help you to avoid falling behind and ensure that you engage with the course as much as you can.

Assignments/Grading
Note: more detailed guidelines for these assignments are available on the course website. See the class schedule below for each assignment's due date.

Weekly Discussion Board Posts: 1/week (20%)
These 500-750-word reading responses ask you to get thinking about and discussing the assigned texts. In your posts, you will practice using terms and concepts that are central to interpreting fiction. Following the PEACH (Passage, Explication, Analysis, Connection, and Hook) format, you will analyze and interpret one work of fiction each week. Your post should quote a particularly pertinent passage in a literary text; explain how it fits into the broader text; develop an idea or comment

you have about this passage; trace connections between this reading and other readings we've already completed; and articulate how and why examining this passage provides vital information about this particular text.

Discussion Board Response Posts: 2/week (10%)

In these short, 150-word discussion board posts, you will engage with your peers' longer responses. You can ask questions, offer additional/alternative interpretations and commentary, identify other relevant passages, make connections with other readings, and so on. These response posts offer the opportunity to strengthen each other's interpretive abilities and push class members to continue to think critically about the assigned texts.

Reading Journal: weekly (10%)

The weekly reading journals (500 words each) offer the opportunity to think more deeply about the assigned texts and to practice making connections among them. Each week, you'll submit a journal entry in which you explore ideas related to our readings and discussions. These relatively informal responses will help you to express your ideas about the texts in ways that should inform your discussion board posts and responses, as well as the biweekly essays.

Biweekly Essays (15% each x 4 = 60%)

The biweekly essays (1,000-1,200 words; 12 pt Times New Roman; double-spaced; 1" margins) serve as a more formal and lengthier engagement with course readings. Each essay has a different focus. Note that you may not select the same text for multiple papers: if you write your first paper about *Annihilation*, *Annihilation* cannot be the subject of the other three papers.

1. Literary Device Analysis: Select one literary text and one literary device that we have discussed during weeks 1 and 2. (You cannot pair the same text and term from class discussion.) Analyze how the author employs that particular literary technique/device to achieve a particular effect in the text.
2. Close Reading: Select a passage in one of the texts we've read during weeks 1, 2, 3, and 4. Interpret that passage as a microcosm for the broader concerns of the text—the text's speculative elements and worldbuilding.
3. Comparative Analysis. Select one of the texts inspired by the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. Discuss how the author reimagines the plot and themes of the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, focusing on a few literary devices to prove your point.
4. Creative Interpretation:
   - Option A: Select one of the assigned readings and rewrite its conclusion. In addition, you must write a brief cover letter explaining your rhetorical choices in the context of the literary devices and texts that we've discussed this semester.

- Option B: If you'd prefer not to do a creative option, you may write a literary analysis using one of the methods of literary criticism discussed in the final weeks of the class. You must select one method of literary interpretation and use it as your approach for interpreting one of our assigned readings.

Course Policies
To ensure your success in this course, please keep the following policies in mind.

Assignments
I will post detailed assignment instructions on Blackboard. You can email me, set up a Webex meeting, or schedule an appointment to visit me during office hours if you have any specific questions or concerns about the assignments. All written assignments are due by 5:00 pm on the specified dates. Keep in mind that due dates are set in stone. Because this is a condensed, virtual course, I will not accept late papers or grant extensions except in emergency situations. You must contact me at least 48 hours prior to the due date if you need an extension.

Statement on Academic Honesty
Academic dishonesty is absolutely unacceptable. This includes submitting someone else's work as yours; using words, phrases, or sentences from the work of others; and using materials written by others after making slight changes (paraphrasing). Any amount of plagiarism, even a short phrase that you've copied from a webpage without attribution, will result in an automatic zero on the assignment and may be reported to the Dean of Students. Please note that a 0% is far more damaging than an honestly earned F (up to 60%). I am available for questions if you have concerns about academic honesty.

Statement on Disability
Students who are eligible for academic accommodations due to a disability must be registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) before any classroom accommodations may be provided. Please schedule an appointment with me as early in the semester as possible if you have documented needs you would like to discuss.

Statement of Emergency Preparedness
In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, assignments, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to change due to circumstances beyond the instructor's control. Should such an event occur, I'll be in touch with necessary changes.

Course Schedule

Monday, 6/15	Thursday, 6/18	Saturday, 6/20
Reading: • VanderMeer, *Annihilation*, pp. 3-119 • Module 1: Intro to ENGL 238; What Is Fiction?; Point of View Due: • Reading Journal Entry due by 5:00 pm	Reading: • VanderMeer, *Annihilation*, pp. 121-95 • Module 2: Setting Due: • Discussion Board Post due by 5:00 pm	Due: • DB Response Posts due by 12:00 pm (noon)

Week 2		
Monday, 6/22	Thursday, 6/25	Saturday, 6/27
Reading: • Oyamada, *The Factory*, pp. 3-57 • Module 3: Characterization Due: • Reding Journal Entry due by 5:00 pm	Reading: • Oyamada, *The Factory*, pp. 58-116 • Module 4: Tone, Mood, and Style Due: • Discussion Board Post due by 5:00 pm	Due: • DB Response Posts due by 12:00 pm (noon) • Essay #1 due by 11:59 pm

Week 3		
Monday, 6/29	Thursday, 7/2	Sunday, 7/5
Reading: • Kiernan, "Onion" • Seong-nan, "Flowers of Mold" • Module 5: Theme Due: • Reading Journal Entry due by 5:00 pm	Reading: • Cortázar, "Axolotl" • Ocampo, "Thus Were Their Faces" • Module 6: Symbols and Motifs Due: • Discussion Board Post due by 5:00 pm	Due: • DB Response Posts due by 12:00 pm (noon) *Note that I've changed the due date; Saturday is a holiday.

Week 4		
Monday, 7/6	Thursday, 7/9	Saturday, 7/11
Reading: • *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, excerpt • Module 7: Genre Due: • Reading Journal due by 5:00 pm	Reading: • Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths" • Gaiman and Russell, *The Sandman*, #50: "Ramadan" • Module 8: Adaptation and Audience Due: • Discussion Board Post due by 5:00 pm	Due: • DB Response Posts due by 12:00 pm (noon) • Essay #2 due by 11:59 pm

Week 5		
Monday, 7/13	Thursday, 7/16	Saturday, 7/18
Reading: • Beckford, *Vathek*, pp. 3-48 • Module 9: Allegory and Allusion Due: • Reading Journal due by 5:00 pm	Reading: • Beckford, *Vathek*, pp. 46-94 • Module 10: Ways of Reading I Due: • Discussion Board Post due by 5:00 pm	Due: • DB Response Posts due by 12:00 pm (noon)

Week 6		
Monday, 7/20	Thursday, 7/23	Saturday, 7/25
Reading: • Kafka, "The Metamorphosis" • Module 11: Ways of Reading II Due: • Reading Journal due by 5:00 pm	Reading: • Dávila, "The Houseguest" • Module 11: Ways of Reading II Due: • Discussion Board Post due by 5:00 pm	Due: • DB Response Posts due by 12:00 pm (noon) • Essay #3 due by 11:59 pm

Week 7		
Monday, 7/27	Thursday, 7/30	Saturday, 8/1
Reading: • Ndiaye, *Self-Portrait in Green*, pp. 3-53 • Module 12: Ways of Reading III Due: • Reading Journal due by 5:00 pm	Reading: • Ndiaye, *Self-Portrait in Green*, pp. 55-103 • Module 12: Ways of Reading III Due: • Discussion Board Post due by 5:00 pm	Due: • DB Response Posts due by 12:00 pm (noon)

Week 8		
Monday, 8/3	Tuesday, 8/4	
NO READING: WORK ON YOUR FINAL PAPER	Due: • Essay #4 due at 5:00 pm *Note that the final day of our class is a Tuesday.	You're done! Congratulations!

List of Student Resources at Purdue

EMERGENCIES: 911
Purdue Police: (765) 494-8221
24/7 help line: (765) 495-4357

Academic Success Center (ASC)
Krach Leadership Center, 4th Floor
765-494-9328
http://www.purdue.edu/asc/

Advocacy and Support Center
Schleman Hall of Student Services, 207
765-494-1747
http://www.purdue.edu/advocacy/

Asian American and Asian Resource and
Cultural Center
Stewart Center, 162
aaarcc@purdue.edu
http://www.purdue.edu/aaarcc/

Black Cultural Center
1100 Third St.
765-494-3092
http://www.purdue.edu/bcc/

Center for Career Opportunities (CCO)
Young Hall, Room 132
765-494-3981
http://www.cco.purdue.edu/

Counseling and Psychological Services
(CAPS)
Student Health Center (PUSH) Room 246
Psychological Sciences (PSYC) Room 1120
765-494-6995
http://www.purdue.edu/caps/

Disability Resource Center (DRC)
Young Hall, Room 853
765-494-1247
https://www.purdue.edu/disabilityresourc
es/

Diversity Initiatives (CLA)
https://www.cla.purdue.edu/diversity/
Center for Diversity and Inclusion
https://www.cla.purdue.edu/crdi/

International Students and Scholars (ISS)
Schleman Hall of Student Services, 136
765-494-5770
https://www.iss.purdue.edu/

International Student Organizations
http://www.iss.purdue.edu/current/univlif
e/studentorgs.cfm

Humanities, Social Sciences, and
Education Library
Stewart Center
765-494-2831
https://www.lib.purdue.edu/libraries/hsse

Information Technology at Purdue (ITAP)
HSSE Library in Stewart Center
itap@purdue.edu
765-494-4000
https://www.itap.purdue.edu/student/

Latino Cultural Center
600 N. Russell St.
http://www.purdue.edu/lcc/

LGBTQ Center
Schleman Hall of Student Services, 230
http://www.purdue.edu/lgbtq/

Native American Educational and
Cultural Center
503 Harrison Street
http://www.purdue.edu/naecc/

Office of the Dean of Students
Schleman Hall of Student Services, 207
765-494-1747
https://www.purdue.edu/odos/

Office of Institutional Equity
Ernest C. Young Hall, 10th Floor
765-494-7255
https://www.purdue.edu/oie/

Office of the Registrar
HOVD Room 45

765-494-8581
http://www.purdue.edu/registrar/

Office of Student Rights and
Responsibilities
Schleman Hall of Student Services, B50
765-494-1250
https://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/

PUSH (Purdue Student Health Center)
601 Stadium Mall Dr.
765-494-1700
https://www.purdue.edu/push/

Sexual Harassment Advisors' Network
(SHAN)
network@purdue.edu
https://www.cla.purdue.edu/facultyStaff/S
HAN

Sexual Violence Awareness and Advocacy
Title IX Coodinator: bloom@purdue.edu
765-494-7255
http://www.purdue.edu/sexual_assault/

Writing Center
Heavilon Hall 226
765-494-3723
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/writinglab/