HL 2043 Fantasy Literature
Semester 2, AY2024-2025

Instructor: Kevin Teo

Course Description

This course seeks to instill an understanding of the evolution of modern fantasy literature, its generic distinctions and the theoretical frameworks through which it has been interpreted. In addition to the predominantly nineteenth-, twentieth- and twenty-first century texts themselves, the course will explore the modern fantasy genre as a product of histories of ideas stretching from centuries past to the present day. With a syllabus spanning from medievalism to modernity via magic, the course invites students to engage with fantasy as both a literary form and a mode of thought—one that reimagines belief, world-making, and the limits of the real. In addition to exploring the farthest reaches of the literary imagination, you will also gain an understanding of how these authors and texts negotiate universal themes relating to the realities of human existence, including coming-of-age, history and myth-making, reader response theories of storytelling, modernisation and the environment, gender and disability, and systems of belief.

Reading and References

Primary texts (subject to change):

- *Boccaccio, *The Decameron* (selected stories) and *Thousand and One Arabian Nights* (selected stories)
- *Brother Grimm, *Fairy Tales* (1812) (selected tales)
- JRR. Tolkien, *The Silmarilion* (sections) (1977)
- _____, *The Hobbit* (1937)
- _____, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954)
- AS Byatt, *Ragnarok* (2019)
- Alan Garner, *The Owl Service* (1967)
- Guy Gavriel Kay, *The Fionavar Tapestry: The Summer Tree* (1984)
- Stephen Donaldson, *Lord Foul's Bane* (1977)
- M.D. Lachlan, *Lord of Slaughter* (2013)

*Texts indicated with an asterix will be provided by the instructor accordingly. (You do not need to have read all of it, because we will only read excerpts.)

Course Content

Each week, we will read excerpts from one or two texts closely. Please refer to the planned weekly schedule below for the list of key topics.

Precursors to modern fantasy (fairy tales/medieval narrative/fabliaux)
High fantasy
Mythic fantasy
Utopian/ Dystopian Fictions
Modernity and Low Fantasy
Fusion genre fantasy

Assessment (includes both continuous and summative assessment)

Continuous Assessment 1 (CA1) Mid-term Essay - 40%:
This extended essay must defend an original thesis about one of the texts read in class and engage with the socio-cultural and historical contexts of the fantasy genre. Marks are awarded for knowledge and understanding; originality; close reading; engagement with secondary criticism; structure; presentation; style and expression; grammar and spelling; referencing and bibliography. The mid-term essay assesses the work done over the semester and demonstrates your skills in literary analysis.

Continuous Assessment 2 (CA2) Final Essay - 40%:
This extended essay must defend an original thesis about two of the texts read in class – which cannot be by the author written on in the first essay – and engage with the socio-cultural and historical contexts of the fantasy genre. Marks are awarded for knowledge and understanding; originality; close reading; engagement with secondary criticism; structure; presentation; style and expression; grammar and spelling; referencing and bibliography. The final essay marks the culmination of all the work done over the semester and demonstrates your skills in literary analysis.

Continuous Assessment 3 (CA3) Participation - 10%:
This component will be based on participating in class discussions, in the form of responding to points put forward by teacher or classmates.

Continuous Assessment 4 (CA4) Presentation - 10%:
The oral presentation, approximately ten minutes in length, will explore an assigned facet of the text(s) being read that week, demonstrating an understanding of the fantasy dynamics within the texts and their relation to the broader genre. Marks are awarded for knowledge and understanding; originality; close reading; engagement with secondary criticism; structure and presentation.

Formative feedback

Written feedback on essays will be given when I return your essays to you, and feedback on presentations will be. Feedback from me and your peers generated during in-class discussions will also be helpful to check your understanding of prescribed works.

Course Policies and Student Responsibilities

(1) General
You are expected to complete all assigned pre-class readings and response papers. You will attend all seminar classes punctually. If you must miss a seminar session, you are responsible for following up with course notes, assignments and course related announcements. Since engagement is one of the assessment components, you are expected to participate actively in all seminar discussions and activities.

(2) Absenteeism
Attendance will be taken each week. Absence from class without a valid reason can affect your course grade significantly. Valid reasons include falling sick supported by a medical certificate and participation in NTU's approved activities supported by an excuse letter from the relevant bodies. If you must miss a seminar, you must inform me (the course instructor) via email prior to the start of the class.

Academic Integrity

Good academic work depends on honesty and ethical behaviour. The quality of your work as a student relies on adhering to the principles of academic integrity and to the NTU Honour Code, a set of values shared by the whole university community. Truth, Trust and Justice are at the core of NTU's shared values.

As a student, it is important that you recognize your responsibilities in understanding and applying the principles of academic integrity in all the work you do at NTU. Not knowing what is involved in maintaining academic integrity does not excuse academic dishonesty. You need to actively equip yourself with strategies to avoid all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, academic fraud, collusion and cheating. If you are uncertain of the definitions of any of these terms, you should go to the [academic integrity website](#) for more information. Consult your instructor(s) if you need any clarification about the requirements of academic integrity in the course.

Late Work and Extensions: if your essay is late, it will be marked down by one third of a letter grade for each day that it is overdue (i.e. a paper that would have received an A will receive a A-). You need to request for an extension at least 24 hours in advance before the deadline(s). No work will be accepted more than three days late without prior permission. Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances, including documented illness or genuine emergency. You can earn a two-day extension if you work on your paper with a writing coach at the LCC Communication Cube.

Seeking Help Outside Class: you are encouraged to use any form of legitimate aid to help you write papers and research topics that interest you. Obvious sources of legitimate assistance include your tutors, the coaches at the LCC Communication Cube, and the subject librarians at the library. If you work on a paper with a writing coach, you are eligible for a two-day extension. Please speak to me if you would like to take advantage of this!

Generative AI: generative AI (such as ChatGPT) is not designed for research and is inclined to make things up. For this reason, the use of AI in generating your assignments and term papers is NOT allowed. If you intend to use generative AI for your work in any capacity (primarily for artwork), you must get written permission from me first. You must follow the university's prevailing policies about how to acknowledge the use of generative AI in your work. Although it can be a useful tool, you must not use it to replace your own thinking or learning. If it is discovered by the Turnitin system, or via plagiarism software that your assignments were generated by AI, you risk a failing grade.

Course Instructors

Instructor	Office Location	Phone	Email
Kevin Teo			kevin.teokc@staff.main.ntu.edu.sg kevin.t.cho@gmail.com

Planned Weekly Schedule

Week	Topic	ILO	Readings/ Activities

Week 1	Introduction	1	No reading
Week 2	The Medieval Roots of Fantasy	1, 2	Boccaccio, *The Decameron* (selected tales) and *A Thousand and One Arabian Nights* (selected)
Week 3	Myth and Fantasy	1	Brothers Grimm, *Fairy Tales* (selected) As Byatt, *Ragnarok*
Week 4	Children's Fantasy	1	Alan Garner, *The Owl Service*
Week 5	Worldmaking/Mythmaking in Fantasy	1, 3, 4	J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Silmarilion* (selections) and *The Hobbit*
Week 6	High Fantasy	1, 3, 4	J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: *The Fellowship of the Ring* (selections)
Week 7	High Fantasy	1, 2, 3, 4	J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: *The Fellowship of the Ring* (selections)
Week 8	Magic and Fantasy	1, 2	Guy Gavriel Kay, *The Fionavar Tapestry: The Summer Tree*
Week 9	Magic and Fantasy	1, 2	Guy Gavriel Kay, *The Fionavar Tapestry: The Summer Tree*
Week 10	Fantasy, Disability and the Environment	1, 2	Stephen Donaldson, *Lord Foul's Bane*
Week 11	Fantasy, Disability and the Environment	1, 2	Stephen Donaldson, *Lord Foul's Bane*
Week 12	Historical Fantasy (Fusion Genre/ Horror/ Myth)	1, 2	M.D Lachlan, *Lord of Slaughter*
Week 13	Historical Fantasy (Fusion Genre/ Horror/Myth)	1, 2	M.D Lachlan, *Lord of Slaughter*

The reading schedule is subject to change according to demand and holidays.