

Instructor: Ramzi Fawaz
 Session Hours: 9:55-10:45 AM
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English 173: Ethnic and Multicultural Literature

There's No Place Like Oz: Fantasy and Enchantment in Modern America

Course Description: The twentieth century is often understood as the era when scientific reason triumphed over age-old superstitions, religious faith, and enchanted ways of thinking. Yet modern American culture is filled with wizards, faeries, time travel, superheroes, enchanted forests, and any number of fantasy worlds. This course offers an introduction to the study of literature and popular culture by asking what role fantasy has played in shaping American media, politics, and society since 1900. Though commonly dismissed as juvenile entertainment, fantasy is arguably the most important element of American popular culture, offering the promise of boundless transformation, pleasure in the impossible, and utopian visions of a better world. Rather than a discreet genre, we will treat fantasy as a mode of communication that runs through a variety of popular forms, including high and commercial art, children's literature, comics, novels, and Hollywood movies. We will ask what kinds of desires and pleasures fantasy activates, why certain kinds of fantasy (including magic, metamorphoses, time travel, ghosts and hauntings, and superhuman ability) have come to make sense to people at specific historical moments, and how fantasy has been mobilized as a tool of social and political transformation. Throughout, we will explore how a variety of underrepresented or marginalized groups including women, ethnic and racial minorities, and gender and sexual outlaws have mobilized fantasy to carve a place for themselves in the American imagination.

Teaching Assistants:

Matthew Gately: mgately@wisc.edu
 Simon Harris: sharris24@wisc.edu
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Required Texts:

L. Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (100th Anniversary Edition, w/pictures)* (1900)
 Edgar Rice Burroughs, *A Princess of Mars* (1912)
 Octavia Butler, *Kindred* (1979)
 Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoir of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (1976)
 Ira Levin, *The Stepford Wives* (1972)

All texts marked with * will be available to you online through the D2L portal at <https://learnuw.wisc.edu>.

Course expectations: This course will demand rigorous reading, writing, and viewing on a weekly basis in addition to consistent attendance in lecture and discussion section. Students should be prepared to devote a significant amount of time to preparing for class, especially on weeks when we are reading literary texts, which require more time to complete than scholarship

or films. You should always bring a physical copy of the text we are reading to class on the day we are discussing it (and to discussion sections). This includes printing out any literary or scholarly text that is posted on D2L and bringing it with you to class, taking notes in the margins, and using it as a resource for study and essay writing. You should also maintain a regular course notebook and use it to keep a written record of the ideas and concepts you encounter in our readings and viewings, lecture, and discussion sections. In the first four weeks of class, we will practice developing strong note taking skills through a series of exercises that will ask you to write down organized observations and ideas about the texts we are reading. You will use these notes to develop your first essay.

Screening movies: All course films will be streamed on D2L for your convenience. Movies must be viewed **PRIOR TO** the class session under which it is listed. You may also view any of the films using iTunes, Netflix, and YouTube if they are available through these sources.

Course Assignments and Grade Distribution: Your grade in this course will be determined by three rubrics: note taking exercises, papers, and participation in lecture and discussion. There are three papers of varying lengths, which ask you to exercise different skills including applying scholarship, close analysis of a cultural text, and independent group research. Your final paper will be a collaborative essay that you will develop with a pre-selected peer group assigned in your discussion section. **Lecture and discussion participation represents a significant portion of your grade and should be taken just as seriously as any assignment in the course.** Grade distribution will be as follows:

Assignment #1: Note Taking Exercises, 10%
 Assignment #2: Explaining an Argument, 15%
 Assignment #3: Analyzing a Cultural Text, 20%
 Assignment #4: Collaborative Research Essay, 25%
 Participation (Discussion and Lecture), 30%

Important Note: To ensure fairness to everyone, no late papers will be accepted, and no extensions will be granted on written work without advance approval based on medical or emergency circumstances. Speak with your assigned teaching assistant to learn about their specific expectations for submission of assignments.

Attendance: Attendance and participation at every lecture and discussion section is non-negotiable. That means not only showing up, but being actively engaged in class and discussion. It is crucial that you always come to class having completed that day's reading and viewing assignments. Inform your discussion leaders of any unforeseeable absences, such as those caused by severe illness or a personal emergency, as soon as possible. Since we will be discussing complex cultural and political ideas, our class and your discussion sections will always be a productive and open space for dialogue and debate. Regardless of our own positions on these matters, we will always respect the ideas of others while recognizing that anything we bring up in class Q&A is up for discussion, rebuttal, and collective consideration.

Academic Integrity: To learn strategies for researching, compiling, and presenting your arguments, you must complete all stages of the work yourself: taking the words of others, or presenting the ideas of others as your own not only prohibits you from learning the skills of

academic research, it is also a violation of the University's Code of Academic Integrity. All members of our community share responsibility for creating an environment supportive of intellectual honesty and integrity. In other words, don't cheat or plagiarize. It's just bad form.

Course accessibility: At all times, this seminar will be open and accessible to students with disabilities. If you are a student enrolled with the McBurney Disability Resource Center or have a disability but have not used the MDRC, I encourage you to speak with me or your TA regarding your rights to accommodation. For more information, contact MDRC, 702 W. Johnson Street, at 608-263-2741. Or refer to <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/services/>.

Part I: Dream Worlds

Week 1: Enchanted America

Wednesday, January 18: Introduction: In the Land of Oz, and other American Dream Worlds

Read "How to Read and View Worksheet" before your first discussion section meeting.

Week 2: Modern Magic

Monday, January 23:

L. Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), p. 1-72

Wednesday, January 25:

Finish *Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

Week 3: Color, Glass, and Light: Consumer Society and Fantasies of Abundance

Monday, January 30:

Selections from Winsor McKay, *Little Nemo in Slumberland* (1905-1911)*

Read the following strips:

1905-10-15	1906-02-11	1907-10-06	1908-03-29	1910-06-12
1905-10-29	1906-04-08	1907-09-15	1908-04-05	
1905-11-19	1907-09-22	1907-12-01	1908-09-02	
1905-12-103	1907-09-29	1908-01-26	1910-04-24	

All *Little Nemo* strips can be accessed here:

<http://www.comicstriplibrary.org/browse/results?title=2>

William Leach, "Facades of Color, Glass, and Light," from *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (1994)*

Wednesday, February 1:

Michael Saler, "Introduction: From Imaginary to Virtual Worlds," from *As Is: Modern Enchantment and the Literary Prehistory of Virtual Reality* (2011)*

Week 4: Animating the Imagination: Walt Disney and the American Child

Monday, February 6:

Screening: **Pinocchio** (Disney, 1939) & selections from **Walt Disney's Silly Symphonies** (Disney, 1929-1939)

Selections from Sergei Eisenstein, *Eisenstein on Disney* (1941)*

Wednesday, February 8:

Discussion of *Pinocchio* cont.

Nicholas Sammond, "Manufacturing the American Child: Child-rearing and the Rise of Walt Disney" (1999)*

Week 5: Men and Supermen: Pulp Fiction and the "Crisis of American Masculinity"

Monday, February 13:

Edgar Rice Burroughs, *A Princess of Mars* (1917), chapters I – XVIII

Wednesday, February 15:

Finish *Princess of Mars*.

Selections from Jerry Siegal & Joe Shuster, *Superman* comics (1938)*

Week 6: Entertainment and Utopia: The American Musical as Popular Fantasy

Monday, February 20:

Screening: **The Wizard of Oz** (Fleming, 1939)

Richard Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia" (1977)*

Watch selected clips from Hollywood musicals on D2L

Essay #1 Due Sunday February 26 by Noon

Wednesday, February 22:

Re-read “Entertainment and Utopia”

***Part II:
Political Nightmares***

Week 7: From Utopia to Apocalypse

Monday, February 27 :

Selections from Maxwell Gaines et. al. *Weird Science-Fantasy* (1950)*

Warren Susman (with Edward Griffin), “Did Success Spoil the United States?: Dual Representations in Postwar America” (1988)*

Wednesday, March 1:

Screening: **Forbidden Planet** (Wilcox, 1956)

Week 8 The Gender of Fantasy (Part I)

Monday, March 6:

Ira Levin, *The Stepford Wives* (1972)

Wednesday, March 8:

In-class workshop on developing a thesis (we will use Levin’s *The Stepford Wives* as our example)

Week 9: The Gender of Fantasy (Part II):

Monday, March 13:

Screening: **The Stepford Wives** (Forbes, 1974)

Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema” (1975)

Wednesday, March 15:

Re-read, “Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema”

In-class workshop on close reading (we will use *The Stepford Wives* as our example)

Essay #2 Due Saturday, March 18 by 11 PM

Week 10: Spring Break**Week 11: Life After Apocalypse: Radical Science Fiction in the 1970s**

Monday, March 27:

Screening: **Zardoz** (Boorman, 1974)

Sam Binkley, “Being One: From Knowledge to Consciousness in the Spaceship Society,” and “Loving Each Other: From the Phony Real to the New Togetherness,” from *Getting Loose: Lifestyle Consumption in the 1970s* (2007)*

Wednesday, March 29:

Discussion of *Zardoz* cont.

Week 12: The Nightmare of History: Speculative Fictions of Slavery

Monday, April 3:

Octavia Butler, *Kindred* (1979), p. 1-143

Wednesday, April 5:

Finish *Kindred*

Group Research Paper Proposal Due Saturday, April 1 by noon

Week 13: The Monstrous Feminine: Gender and Horror

Monday, April 10:

Screening: **Alien** (Scott, 1979)

Carol Clover, “Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film”*

Wednesday, April 12:

Discussion of *Alien* cont.

***Part III:
Fantastic Transformations***

Week 14: Magical Thinking

Monday, April 17:

The Uncanny X-Men # 101-108, “The Phoenix Saga” (1976-1977)*

Jane Gerhard, “Sex and the Feminist, 1970,” in *Desiring Revolution: Second-Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of American Sexual Thought 1920 to 1982* (2003)*

Wednesday, April 19:

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (1975), Parts I-III

Week 15: The Enchanted Present

Monday, April 24:

Finish *The Woman Warrior*

Wednesday, April 26:

Screening: **Angels in America** (Kushner, 2003), Parts I-III

Jane Bennett, “The Wonder of Minor Experiences”*

Deborah Gould, “The Pleasures and Intensities of Activism; or, Making a Place for Yourself in the Universe”*

Week 16: Pulling the Curtain Back

Monday, May 1:

Screening: **Angels in America** (Kushner, 2003), Parts IV-VI

Wednesday, May 3:

Screening: **The Game** (Fincher, 1997)

****Group Final Paper Due Saturday, May 13 by 11 PM****