



500 Wilcox Street
Joliet, IL 60435
www.stfrancis.edu

Course: ENGL-200E: Introduction to Literature: Weird Fiction

Semester: Fall, 2019
Time: MWF 9:00-9:50
Location: DONV-C207

Materials: *The Weird: A Compendium of Strange and Dark Stories*, ed. Ann and Jeff VanderMeer. New York: TOR Books, 2011. (WC hereafter)
Other materials available on Canvas.

Professor: **Dr. Kevin Andrew Spicer**
Associate Professor
Chair, Dept. of English and Foreign Languages
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USF Mission Statement:

As a Catholic university rooted in the liberal arts, we are a welcoming community of learners challenged by Franciscan values and charism, engaged in a continuous pursuit of knowledge, faith, wisdom, and justice, and ever mindful of a tradition that emphasizes reverence for creation, compassion, and peacemaking. We strive for academic excellence in all programs, preparing women and men to contribute to the world through service and leadership.

College Mission Statement:

Embracing excellence in its diverse disciplines of study, the College of Arts and Sciences serves as the home, shepherd, and guardian of Franciscan liberal arts values for the University. It serves to inspire in its students a love of learning through continual investigation, nurturing of curiosity, exploration, discovery, and sharing that leads to the passionate life as a servant leader. The College provides a rich environment of inspiration, learning, and service to prepare its students to build their future through programs and opportunities that represent the values of our Catholic/Franciscan University mission.

Course Description:

Provides students with an extensive exploration of fiction, poetry, drama and/or film, and sometimes the literary essay. The components of these genres are examined in order that students will be knowledgeable and critical readers. (IAI Course #: H3 900)

Philosophical Perspective & Inquiry:

In this section of Introduction to Literature, we are going to be attempting a rather exhaustive engagement with a genre of literature that is quite difficult (if not impossible) to categorize: “Weird” Fiction. We will begin pretty close to the beginning of this genre of literature that manages to straddle or bleed into (depending on one’s preferred metaphor) a number of different kinds of literature: horror, “supernatural horror,” “sci-fi,” a “strange kind of fantasy literature,” “mystery,” “scary stories,” or just plain “strange” works. This course will cover all the giants of the genre and students will experience a number of the “big names” of the genre: H. P. Lovecraft, Franz Kafka, Jorge Luis Borges, Neil Gaiman, Thomas Ligotti, China Miéville, (even) Stephen King, and many more. Towards the end of the semester we will read a couple examples of stories from what has recently come to be called the “New Weird” movement. We will also hopefully have some time at the end to try our hand with a couple of films that could easily fit into the “Weird” genre. By the end of the course, students will have encountered a rather large sample of different kinds of “weird” works such that they can begin to come to some understanding of how one might talk about something that is so incredibly difficult to categorize.

Course Objectives/Outcomes:

By the end of this course the student will be able to:

- 1.) demonstrate an awareness of the scope of this genre of literature called “Weird” fiction
- 2.) learn to closely read and analyze texts from a number of different time periods, countries, authors, etc. in ways that clearly go beyond merely summarizing or paraphrasing the works under discussion;
- 3.) engage in cogent and reasoned argumentation about the texts both in writing and in oral discussion.

General Education Outcome:

This course has one major General Education Outcome (HCW-3) that we will work toward achieving. The “Literary Inquiry” outcomes reads: students will learn to “relate to, enjoy, analyze, discuss, and write about imaginative literature—including poetry, fiction, and drama or film—within such contexts as formalist, historicist, and reader-response theory.”¹

Course Requirements:

Students will be expected to:

- 1.) Read the assigned texts when they are assigned.
- 2.) Keep the daily “Reading Log” up to date.
- 3.) Create a “Proposal” for the Final Project.
- 4.) Complete the proposed Final Project.

Course Schedule/Outline:

Provide detail on course schedule or outline, including modules, dates, or weeks for readings, due dates for assignments, etc.

Methods of Evaluation:

- 1.) Participation in class discussions;
- 2.) Reading Log (more information up on Canvas): all students will be asked to keep a “reading log” that you will use to keep track of your own responses to, thoughts about, and general reactions to the stories we read for each day of class. This log should be useful and helpful for a number of different reasons. For starters, getting a sense of what you notice when you read is a hugely significant thing to know about yourself as a reader. Ideally, we will read together, but the vast majority of your life will be you reading on your own—thus, being an independent reader is an incredibly significant skill. The log should also help you be

¹ See the [2018-2020 USF Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog](#), p. 73

prepared to have some kind of sense of what you might like to contribute to our classroom discussions. Lastly, these logs will help prepare you for the Final Project assignment due at the end of the semester. Reading logs will be for your own use—although Dr. Spicer will ask that you upload them to Canvas each week so that he can read through, respond, etc. Every once in a while, I will use students to share their entry for a particular story in order to spark discussions in class, so be sure to have some way to access your log during class time. (The best way to keep this log is no doubt with a Microsoft Word or Google Doc file that you can add entries to for each day's worth of reading.)

- 3.) Proposal for Final Project (see Canvas).
- 4.) Final Project (see Canvas).

Grading Scale: Standard USF Grading Scale for CAS.

Course Evaluations/Surveys

Information gleaned from course evaluations is an important part of maintaining quality and continuous improvement in courses. The University's expects students to thoughtfully participate in this anonymous evaluation process.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance Policy:

This course, like many others at USF, is modeled on the ancient Socratic dialogues of Plato, which were completely discussion-oriented in nature. This means that one of the major ways we learn is in collaboration with others through dialogue, conversation, simple talking about things, etc. In order to learn this way, everyone needs to be ready to be a part of the discussion. "Being ready" means having closely read, in many cases thoroughly annotated, and thought about the reading for the day. Since this course focuses not just on course content but also on a particular way of doing things (a particular way of reading texts, etc.), everyone should have their copy of the text under discussion every single day. ***As many teachers in the humanities have no doubt told you before, not bringing your text to class is like trying to do science experiments without the proper and requisite equipment—no one can do chemistry experiments without chemicals, test tubes, Bunsen burners, and so forth. If you don't have the test tubes, you can't do the lab.*** More often than not, our discussions will arise out of our attending carefully and closely to the language the texts use, so we all need to have those texts in front of us when we talk about them. (Note, you need to have the text in front of you even if you've read the assignment.)

In terms of the kinds of conversations we will more than likely have, feel free to always and often be asking questions, both of the texts and of what we are discussing in class. Don't be afraid to be inquisitive. If you've taken courses in the past—in high school, at community college, or even at USF—where teachers have been hard on you for having a different position on something than they do, that will not be the case in this course. Divergent and different opinions are always welcome, assuming that one can present them in a respectful and courteous manner, etc. Of course, this is not to say that every opinion is equally valid, but only that differences of position are often good for growing conversation. Given that this course will be much more like a "seminar"/Socratic dialogue—in the sense that the instructor will not be lecturing at you but will instead be trying to utilize all of your own responses to what we're reading—the necessity of being prepared by having thoughts of your own on the material is thus absolutely necessary. A good seminar cannot do without participants contributing heavily to how a class discussion goes, ultimately. ***Your participation in class discussion will therefore be graded and included in the final grade for this course.***

The instructor reserves the right to adjust the syllabus and class schedule as circumstances may warrant during the semester.

Students are expected to follow all policies in the USF Catalog and Student Handbook, both of which can be found in the student portal.

Policies not covered in this document will be handled in accordance with the USF Catalog and/or Student Handbook.

INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

The student should use the USF portal as the first resource for guidance and support on items such as student complaints, safety, security and transportation questions, contact information for various USF departments, student support services such as counseling and academic resources. Information on these resources can be found in the “For Students” section of the USF portal.

A complete listing of university policies and procedures can be found in the University of St. Francis Course Catalog and Student Handbook. For the most current version of the catalog, please visit <http://stfrancis.edu/academics/university-catalog>

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity requires that all academic work be wholly the product of an identified individual or individuals. Collaboration is only acceptable when it is explicitly acknowledged. Ethical conduct is the obligation of every member of the University community, and breaches of academic integrity constitute serious offenses. Since a lack of integrity hinders the student’s academic development, it cannot be tolerated under any circumstances. Violations include but are not limited to: cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, plagiarism, and denying others access to information or material. See the USF Catalog for further clarification and information on grievance procedures.

Services and Accommodations for Students with Disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act):

The University strives to be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA). A student who requires special accommodations or arrangements due to a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services. This contact preferably should occur no later than the first week of classes. Early contact before the semester starts is encouraged to allow sufficient time to provide accommodations. Extra time is needed for some types of accommodations such as sign language interpreters or special text formatting. Should a need arrive after the start of a semester; the student is encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible. Note that accommodations are not retroactive. Each case will be reviewed on an individual basis to determine reasonable and appropriate accommodations.

The University of St. Francis is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs, regardless of the course format. If you have a documented disability and need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this course, complete course requirements, or benefit from the University’s programs or services, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) as soon as possible at 815-740-3204 or Sarah Alag at salag@stfrancis.edu. The Office of Disability Services is located on the second floor of the LaVerne and Dorothy Brown Library building room L214. Consultations are also available, please contact ODS for an appointment.

Academic Support Services:

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) located in Room L214 in the Library (815-740-5060) offers various types of academic services. Online and distance learning students can contact ARC for appropriate resources. ARC serves students who need tutoring in many areas of study including writing and math. Library services include a number of online services and full text databases. Call the Library at 815-740-5041 for additional information. If you need academic-related resources or assistance, please contact the Academic Resource Center.

Notice of Copyright

This course may contain copyrighted materials that are intended to support the learning experiences of students currently enrolled in the course. No student may retain or further disseminate any copyrighted materials, in their entirety or any portion thereof, under penalty of law.

Technology Support

1. The Department of Academic Technology (DAT) administers the learning management system Canvas. If you are experiencing any difficulty using Canvas or need technical assistance, you have several options to receive support, including:
 - a. 24x7 Live Canvas Support. If you experience technical difficulties or have a question about Canvas, you can receive support 24 hours a day 7 days a week through the Canvas help menu. From the help menu, select **Chat with Canvas Support** for a “live” text-based click-to-chat session,
 - b. select **Report a Problem** to send an email support request, or speak to someone directly by using the toll-free number listed under the Canvas Support Hotline.

NOTE: Responses to Canvas’ email-based Report a Problem request system will go to your USF stfrancis.edu email account, NOT your personal email.

2. Online Self-Service Help Resources. A student user guide and other resources for solving issues related to Canvas can be found at <http://learnitnow.stfrancis.edu>
3. Telephone Support from DAT. You can also phone the Department of Academic Technology for personal help at (815) 740-5080 or (866) 337-1497 (toll-free) between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Central Standard Time, Monday through Friday.

For any technical support issues that are not related to Canvas, please contact the USF Technology Support Center (TSC). You can reach them via:

- Phone: 1-815-768-TECH (8324)
- Email: techsupport@stfrancis.edu
- Web: <http://techsupport.stfrancis.edu>
- Or visit them on the first floor of Marian Hall

WEIRD FICTION SCHEDULING:

WEEK 1: Laying Some Theoretical Foundations

Monday, 19 August: First Day of Class Matters

Wednesday 21 August: Have Read “Section I: Introduction” to H. P. Lovecraft’s essay, “Supernatural Horror in Literature” available [here](#), Michael Moorcock’s “Foreweird” (in *WC*) and the “Introduction” by the VanderMeers (*WC*), and Freud’s essay, “The Uncanny” available on Canvas.

Friday, 23 August: Have read Chapter 2 on “Psychoanalytic Criticism” in Lois Tyson’s *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* available on Canvas and Alfred Kubin’s “The Other Side” (pp. 1-10 in *WC*),

WEEK 2:

Monday, 26 August: Blackwood, Saki, James, & Dunsany (pp. 27-70)

Wednesday 28 August: Meyrink, Heym, & Ewers (pp. 71-89)

Friday, 30 August: Tagore, Ugolini, & Merritt (pp. 90-109)

WEEK 3:

Monday, 2 September: LABOR DAY, NO CLASS, but read Akutagawa, Stevens, & Kafka

(pp. 110-147)

Wednesday, 4 September: Grabinski, Arnold, & Lovecraft (pp. 148-182)

Friday, 6 September: Irwin, Ray, & Ray (pp. 183-222)

WEEK 4:

Monday, 9 September: Smith, Sakutaro, & Walpole (pp. 223-247)

Wednesday, 11 September: Schulz, Johnson & Leiber (pp. 248-276)

Friday, 13 September: Carrington, Wollheim, & Bradbury (pp. 277-289)

WEEK 5:

Monday, 16 September: Sansom, Borges, & Bhely-Quenum (pp. 290-310)

Wednesday, 18 September: Jackson, St. Clair, & Bloch (pp. 311-332)

Friday, 20 September: Tutuola, Bixby, & Monterroso (pp. 333-351)

WEEK 6:

Monday, 23 September: Cortazar, Sansom, & Beaumont (pp. 352-367)

Wednesday, 25 September: Peake, Buzzati, & Bernanos (pp. 368-405)

Friday, 27 September: Rodoreda, Seignolle, & Wilson (pp. 406-422)

WEEK 7:

Monday, 30 September: du Maurier, Aickman, & Etchison (pp. 423-473)

Wednesday, 2 October: Tiptree, Jr., Basso, & Kincaid (pp. 474-520)

Friday, 4 October: Martin, Leman, Campbell (pp. 521-559)

WEEK 8:

Monday, 7 October: Shea, William Gibson/John Shirley, & Harrison (pp. 560-599)

Wednesday, 9 October: Russ, Harrison, & Mitra (pp. 600-622)

Friday, 11 October: Wilson, Butler, & Barker (pp. 623-656)

WEEK 9:

FALL BREAK—NO CLASS: FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE.

WEEK 10: Krohn, Kilworth, & Shepard (pp. 657-717)

Monday, 21 October: Ellison, Okri, & Hand (pp. 718-755)

Wednesday, 23 October: Oates, Brite, & Ajvaz (pp. 756-776)

Friday, 25 October: Fowler, Kojima, & Murakami (pp. 777-797)

WEEK 11:

Monday, 28 October: Tuttle, Laidlaw, & Utley (pp. 798-823)

Wednesday, 30 October: Simpson, Spencer, Ford (pp. 824-843)

Friday, 1 November: King, Carter, Padawer (pp. 844-875)

WEEK 12:

Monday, 4 November: Chapman, Lee, Link (pp. 876-895)

Wednesday, 6 November: Kiernan, Chabon, & Miéville (pp. 896-921)

Friday, 8 November: Cisco, Gaiman, VanderMeer (pp. 922-962)

WEEK 13:

Monday, 11 November: Ford, Ligotti, Evenson (pp. 963-1005)

Wednesday, 13 November: Samuels, Abraham, Lanagan (pp. 1006-1035)

Friday, 15 November: Wright, Barron, Williams (pp. 1036-1068)

WEEK 14:

Monday, 18 November: Negarestani, Morrisette, & Duffy (pp. 1069-1099)

Wednesday, 20 November: Jones & Bishop (pp. 1100-1112)

Friday, 22 November:

WEEK 15:

Monday, 25 November: TBD

Wednesday, 27 November: TBD

Friday, 29 November: THANKSGIVING—NO CLASS

WEEK 16:

Monday, 2 December: TBD

Wednesday, 4 December: TBD

Friday, 6 December: TBD

WEEK 17:

Monday, 9 December through 12 December: FINALS WEEK: FINAL PROJECT DUE DURING SCHEDULED FINAL EXAM PERIOD