Draft Syllabus!!!

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Spring 2021: ENGL0511C
Fantastic Places, Unhuman Humans

Pedagogical Philosophy: We learn more when we have fun. This assertion constitutes one of the fundamental pedagogical principles underlying ENGL0511C, "Fantastic Places, Unhuman Humans." Sure, we'll be reading lots of challenging, engaging, sometimes disturbing works of "literature" (Hey, why the quotation marks, Egan? How pretentious). And grappling with the issues raised by that reading isn't always fun (what is? Don't answer that question, please. I shouldn't have asked it on a syllabus), but we can make it "mostly" fun.

Context: Who knows what the Spring 2021 semester will bring? As I write this, it's early November, and even our most optimistic or most pessimistic predictions for Spring might be completely wrong. I simply want to say here that whatever context we encounter in Spring 2021—and it very well could change during the course of the semester--I want to create a learning environment that manages to succeed and support students throughout what will no doubt be an extremely difficult period. This effort will no doubt require adaptations as we go along, and it will also require considerable flexibility. That's fine. Let's, in fact, embrace adaptation and flexibility! My ultimate goal: I want us to engage in our reading and communications and work this semester with one another in a spirit of generosity, support, respect, and community building.

How This Course Works: This is an asynchronous online course. We won't ever meet together at the same time as a class.

    1. We'll use announcements, assignments, forum posts, and elements drawn from online and tabletop games (including but not limited to a story that ties all course elements together, avatars, quests, points, etc.) to form a class community and get to know one another. And, yes, have fun!

    2. The course is organized around week-long modules. Every week operates on the same schedule.

    3. You'll have Mondays-Wednesdays to do the assigned reading for that week. I try to keep the reading to a manageable length.

    4. You'll have a discussion post related to that week's reading due on Wednesday night at 11:59, then a response to a post or more of your peers by Friday at 11:59 pm.

    5. On Sunday at 11:59 pm, you'll have one or sometimes two short (1-3 pp) assignment (s) due.

•**The Assignments**: We try to give you some choice in your assignments. You might choose one week between a 1-2 page analysis of a passage from that week's reading; a diagram using whatever diagraming tool (including one's we offer as possibilities; we don't want to leave you hanging!) you want to compare the conflicts you see in that week's readings; a creative piece where you have two characters from the reading speak to one another about something that happened; a word cloud, graph, or other visualization of the words in that week's reading using an easy, online computational tool; a tweet that encapsulates the novel; or many other possibilities!

The Reading: I've listed a tentative reading schedule below, and, while it's unlikely to change much before the start of the semester, it isn't fixed in stone right now and might change just a little. Our focus will be on the ways various works of literature over the years distinguish between the so-called "human" and the "unhuman." Is there something unique about our brains, our external features, our consciousness, or our imaginations? How have we constructed the conceptual boundary between what we qualify as human and what we categorize as robotic, animal, android, or alien? What, in the end, makes the human "human"?

Learning Outcomes

- Discuss important problems that grow out of the effort to apply definitive and universal moral judgments to actions, thoughts, social structures, and/or living beings.
- Discuss important conceptual problems that grow out of the effort to define what constitutes the categories of "nature" and "natural."
- Apply the techniques of close reading to a variety of different "texts" across media and genres.
- Come to multiple interpretations of literary works by leveraging alternative tools like computer-generated visualizations.
- Present your insights in an engaging, coherent, organized, and focused form through the use of literary analysis.
- Produce creative responses to literature which engage and challenge the themes and express new viewpoints into the conversation.
- Display critical thinking, literary analysis skills when analyzing texts, events, phenomena in the world outside this course

Texts:
•H.G. Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (Modern Library Classics)
•Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (Del Rey/Ballentine Books)
•Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (W.W. Norton)
•William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (Folger Shakespeare Library)
•J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Scholastic Paperback)

Additional Texts (Provided in the Course)
•Edgar Allan Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"
•Angela Carter, "Wolf-Alice" in *The Bloody Chamber*
•Octavia Butler, "Speech Sounds"
•Samuel R. Delany, "Aye, and Gomorrah"
•H. P. Lovecraft, "The Colour Out of Space"
•Margaret Atwood, "Homelanding" in *Good Bones and Simple Murders*
•Margaret Atwood, "Lusus Naturae" in *Stone Mattress*
•Michael Jackson, *Thriller*

> •If you have financial concerns regarding non-tuition costs of a course at Brown, including this course, you may apply to the [Dean of the College Academic Emergency Fund](#) to see if you are eligible for financing these costs; your privacy in this process will be ensured.

Grading:
•Instead of using A/B/C, each assignment will allow you the opportunity to earn a specified number of points: 6, 10, or, on several occasions, 20, 80, or even 100 points. Your final grade will be determined according to the total number of points you accumulate over the course of the semester:
·   90% of available points-- A.
·   80% of available points-- B.
·   70% of available points –C
Those taking the course S/NC will need to earn 90% of available points to earn an "S with distinction," while those taking the course S/NC will need to earn 70% of all available points to earn an "S."

Your grade may be adjusted upward even if you do not meet the relevant threshold in order better to reflect your unique contributions to the class or other factors that are not captured in the raw score.

Tentative Reading Schedule

Village de Embarke   •Orientation
Jan 20-24
                              Bio World
Mysteria Realm   •Edgar Allan Poe, "Murders in the Rue Morgue"
Jan 25-31   •Angela Carter, "Wolf-Alice"

Moreau Isle Realm Feb 1-7	•H.G.Wells, *Island of Dr. Moreau*

Future World

Dystopia Realm Feb 8-14	•Octavia Butler, "Speech Sounds" •Samuel R. Delany, "Aye, and Gomorrah"
Robotica Realm Feb 15-21	•Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
Robotica (cont) Feb 22-28	•Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Other World

Unearthly Realm March 1-7	•H. P. Lovecraft, "The Colour Out of Space" •Margaret Atwood, "Homelanding"

Gothic World

Reanmia Realm March 8-14	•Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
Reanmia Realm March 15-21	•Shelley, *Frankenstein*
Undead Wastes March 22-28	•Margaret Atwood, "Lusus Naturae" •Michael Jackson, *Thriller*

Magic World

Isle of Transformation March 29-April 4	•William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*
Hogwarts April 5-April 11	•J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

Final Scriptorium

April 12-April 18	Reading Period
April 19-April 23	Remote Finals

Additional Course Information
(Should This Info Be at the Top of the Syllabus Instead?)

Accommodations

Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me early in the term if you have a disability or other conditions that might require accommodations or modification of any of the course procedures. For more information, please contact Student and Employee Accessibility Services at 401-863-9588 or SEAS@brown.edu. Students in need of short-term academic advice or support can contact one of the deans in the Dean of the College office.

Time Commitment
The total of hours of work for all full credit courses at Brown is approximately 180 hours over the length of a 14-week semester. In this class, students seeking to maximize their learning can expect to spend, 70 hours reading/watching/playing games (approx. 5 hours/week), 91 total hours doing various weekly assignments (6.5 hours/week), , and approximately 19 hours preparing, researching, and writing over the course of the semester for the final project. Actual times will vary for each student; final grades are not determined by the amount of time a student spends on the course.

Community Standards:
Online discussions can be extraordinarily productive, engaging, supportive, and, quite simply, restorative. Any course that covers literature will generate a range of opinions, perspectives, views, attitudes, whatever. My goal is to create an classroom environment characterized by a spirit of generosity, kindness, and support. If you have any issues with how you have been treated by anyone in or related to the course, please contact me immediately.