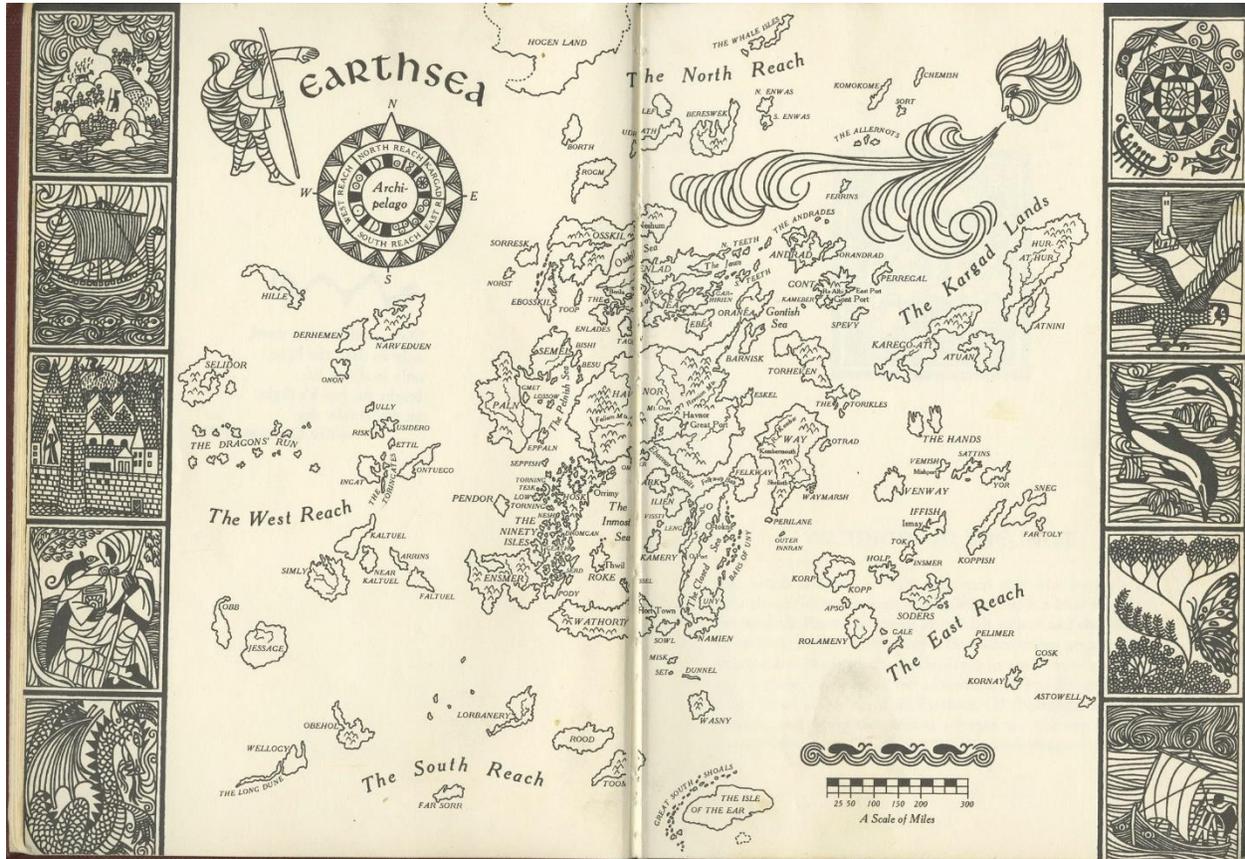


Approaches to Literature: Speculative Societies and Possible Worlds



The 1st edition of *A Wizard of Earthsea* in 1968 contained maps and illustrations by Ruth Robbins; she and Herman Schein founded and operated Parnassus Press, Berkeley CA, which published the novel. Image credit: Houghton Library, Harvard Map Collection.

Course description: This course explores speculative fiction to explore the many ways in which writers imagine how societies and cultures might be... otherwise. Fantastic and speculative worlds are some of the richest forms of experimental thought, problem solving and storytelling in which we engage. How do writers make these worlds persuasive? What kinds of connections do they expect us to make between their storyworlds and the actual world? What influences differences among the ways they take up similar themes? We will discover multiple answers to these questions. Along the way, we will also learn general principles about narrative and literary fiction as it is theorized in English, and how writing works at an analytical level, by discussing matters such as plot, character, point of view, and of course (given our theme), setting.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, occupied, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) people. I acknowledge the land rights of the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

COURSE INFORMATION

Official Course Title	Course Code Number	Credit Value
Approaches to Literature	ENGL 110 032	3 credits

PREREQUISITES

Eligibility for first-year English courses.

CONTACT INFO

Course Instructor(s)	Contact Details	Office Location	Office Hours
Prof. Judith Paltin	judith.paltin@ubc.ca	BUTO 502	M 1-3 pm and by appointment. Please feel welcome to visit.

COURSE INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

My preferred pronouns are she/her or they/them. I am an assistant professor of English at UBC in Vancouver, Canada, and earned my Ph.D. in 2013 from the University of California, Santa Barbara. At UBC, I supervise research and teach courses in modern Anglophone literature, modernist studies and critical and cultural theory. I am passionate about teaching English courses that are meaningful and truly interesting to you, that give you questions to ponder, methods of thinking, and ideas to carry forward into your next endeavors. The quickest way to reach me is by email, and even when away, I will try to respond within 48 hours. If you haven't heard from me by then, please kindly let me know I somehow missed your communication.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND VITAL INFORMATION

This course meets MWF from 10-10:50 am in SWNG 307, and for a final exam at a time and place to be scheduled by UBC. This will be announced to you through your Student Service Centre account and in class.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

The reading schedule shows you which readings we will be discussing each day. For the longer books, I will not expect you to have finished the book the first day we spend with it, but try to finish it as soon as you can. You should aim to read 30-50 or more pages per day for this course (30-60 minutes or a bit more). For example, our first novel is 183 pages long, in my edition; you *could* read it over the

weekend before we start working with it, and you *should* finish it by the 11th in order to have two full days in class during which you know the entire book and know how things turn out. The faster you complete the reading, the better you can participate in discussions and the more you will understand lecture materials. Some days you might read more, and some days less... 30-50 pp. is my estimate of an average which will provide you with several days off per week. It is infinitely better to finish the current book and THEN take your days off, rather than the other way around. Theoretical readings have fewer pages, but take longer to think about and digest, so please don't try to skim them. *How* you read is important. Choose a quiet place, and try to read a certain amount without interruption. Texts demand thought and "just sitting with them for awhile."

INTRODUCTORY: SPECULATIVE SOCIETIES AND POSSIBLE WORLDS

Sep 4 Course introduction. Neil Gaiman, "The Day the Saucers Came" [Canvas LOCR and on slides in class]. Concepts: narrative, genre, style.

Sep 6 Jesse Goldberg, "And She Was Loved"; Ray Bradbury, "A Sound of Thunder," "All Summer in a Day." These two short stories and article are available on Canvas under the Library Online Course Reserves tab (LOCR). You might also find them online.

Sep 9 Ursula Le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea*

Sep 11 *A Wizard of Earthsea*

Sep 13 *A Wizard of Earthsea*

ROOTS AND ORIGINS, ENCOUNTERS, OTHERINGS

Sep 16 Isaac Asimov, "Robbie"; Robert Scholes, "The Roots of Science Fiction." [Canvas LOCR]

Sep 18 Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles*

Sep 20 *The Martian Chronicles*

Sep 23 *The Martian Chronicles*

Sep 25 *The Martian Chronicles*

Sep 27 No reading assigned. Discussion of climate change. Attendance optional.

Sep 30 Jorge Luis Borges: "The Library of Babel"

Oct 2 Susan Sontag, "The Imagination of Disaster." [Canvas LOCR]

Oct 4 H.G. Wells, "The Empire of the Ants," "The Man Who Could Work Miracles." [Canvas LOCR]

DYSTOPIA, CONFLICT, WAR, APOCALYPSE

Oct 7 George Orwell, *Animal Farm*

Oct 9 *Animal Farm*

Oct 11 Le Guin, "Vaster Than Empires and More Slow" ; Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny." [Canvas LOCR]. Essay #1 due.

Oct 14 Thanksgiving--NO CLASS MEETING

Oct 16 Angela Carter, "The Company of Wolves" [Canvas LOCR]

Oct 18 INSTRUCTOR AWAY AT CONFERENCE. Expect a substitute teacher or activity. Begin reading Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*

Oct 21 *Slaughterhouse-Five*

Oct 23 *Slaughterhouse-Five*

Oct 25 *Slaughterhouse-Five*; Carl Jung, "The Shadow" [lecture topic with slides, no reading.]

Oct 28 Midterm exam (in class)

TECHNOSCIENCE AND SOCIETY, CYBERBODIES, HUMAN EVOLUTION/DEVOLUTION

Oct 30 Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Nov 1 *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Nov 4 *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Nov 6 Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange*

Nov 8 *Tropic of Orange*

Nov 11 Remembrance Day--NO CLASS MEETING

Nov 13 *Tropic of Orange*

Nov 15 INSTRUCTOR AWAY AT CONFERENCE. Expect a substitute teacher or activity.

Nov 18 Arthur C. Clark, "The Nine Billion Names of God." [Canvas LOCR]

TIME TRAVEL, ALTERNATE REALITIES/HISTORIES, PERSPECTIVES

Nov 20 Octavia Butler, *Kindred*

Nov 22 *Kindred*

Nov 25 *Kindred*. Essay #2 due.

Nov 27 *Kindred*

Nov 29 Course summary and final exam review

Final Exam period: Dec 3- Dec 18. UBC typically issues an exam schedule around late October.

Important note: From time to time, for additional learning opportunities and enrichment, **I introduce other materials during class meetings** which you don't need to read ahead of class, and which therefore are not listed in the reading schedule, but which you will be expected to remember and be able to analyze. I will post powerpoint slides on Canvas when available, but I assure you the slides cannot replace class attendance.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this class students will be able to:

- Identify and explain the cultural and political significance of major works of speculative fiction and other media by 20th- and 21st-century writers that reflect decolonial, asylum-seeking, feminist, and critical race concerns, among other social, political, and economic issues.
- Engage with varieties of genre and textual studies that take account of differential identities and ideations of citizenship and human and animal rights, referencing contemporary and historical instances of speech and writing in contexts that are often culturally complex.

- Identify and integrate into their own research appropriate research sources and methods, and critically evaluate the scholarly quality of research sources.
- Evaluate and participate in lines of argument and critique relating to cultural change and theories about literature as a field by cultural theorists and stakeholders of diverse origins.
- Recognize and appropriately utilize methods of English studies' disciplinary modes of reading and criticism.
- Think beyond traditional nation- and period-defined fields of literary and cultural classification.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

In this course, you will read and analyze a range of writing in English from writers working in speculative and science fiction genres which will give you the opportunity to identify, define, compare, explain and discuss various aspects and issues of social, political, economic, and literary criticism, anticolonial praxis, gender/sexuality and cultural theory, and historical materials. Our activities include close readings and analysis, lectures providing contextual and background information, library and media research, theoretical discussions, discussions of controversies and issues, and writing activities.

During lectures, you should listen carefully, and think about the material as you take notes, adding your own ideas and connections where you can. I welcome a conversational style during class, with lots of interaction among all of us. If I am talking, feel free to intervene with questions and contributions. Your own curious and imaginative contributions are always welcome in class, as long as you are not talking over other people, failing to share class time fairly, or taking the class too far away from the day's assigned topics for an extended period. Barring that, please explore your venturesome side!

LEARNING MATERIALS

Ursula Le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea*, ~\$12

Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles*, ~\$8

Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange*, ~\$10

Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, ~\$12

George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, ~\$7 (available for free download from the University of Adelaide, <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/o/orwell/george/o79a/complete.html>)

Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five*, ~\$10

Octavia Butler, *Kindred*, ~\$15

Other course materials will be supplied at no charge on Canvas or via URL links online.

Cost estimates are gathered from publishers' websites when available, or from online booksellers; you may be able to pay less online or by buying a used copy. If necessary, you can use a different edition. Not all books have a scholarly critical edition in print, but when you can, please try to select one.

ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING

Requirements consist of class attendance and participation, two at-home papers, a midterm exam, and a final exam.

10% Classroom discussion, attendance and participation, evaluated holistically. An attendance sheet will be circulated at the beginning of each class for students to sign-in. No late sign-ins will be allowed for arrivals after 10:30 am (> halfway through the class period).

20% Analytical essay. This at-home essay of at least 1000 words will be based on textual analysis (close reading and topical or thematic discussion of one or more literary texts).

20% Midterm exam. A brief in-class analytical essay, passage identification and analysis, and short answer questions.

25% Research essay. This at-home essay of at least 1500 words will include a library research component (two professional-level secondary sources) and an analysis component (close reading and interpretation as above). You will prepare and submit a brief prospectus and preliminary bibliography for partial grade credit before drafting the paper.

25% Final examination. An in-class exam during the final exam period including an essay (a list of potential topics will be circulated ahead of the exam), passage identification and analysis, and short answer questions. The UBC exam schedule for the term is usually published in late October. Please do not schedule your holiday departure from Vancouver until you know when your exams are scheduled.

All of the major assignments are required, i.e., in order to pass the course, you must submit work in each of these categories. A general writing rubric and assignment prompts will be supplied on Canvas. Your written work for this course should take up a critical question or issue of concern to the course (in some cases, specific topics may be assigned), and offer a focused, well-reasoned discussion with reference to primary course-assigned texts, in MLA or Chicago citation style. You may also choose to include real-world examples from high-quality journalistic or historical sources around an issue of concern to the course, or some other form of case study.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

The following statement is composed by and mandated to appear in the syllabus by the UBC Academic Senate in support of **Senate Policy V-130**.

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions.

Details of the policies and how to access support are available on [the UBC Senate website](#).

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

Our classroom space is intended to be warmly welcoming, enriching, and respectful in all its interactions. I request that you kindly self-monitor your own contributions for civility, including off-topic phone or computer use. Tuning out during class affects other people's experience and takes away from your own impact and learning.

The following policy is adapted from resources and ideas originated by Prof. Koritha Mitchell, @ProfKori: This classroom will be free of hate speech regarding sexual orientation, gender expression, race, ethnicity, national origin, and socio-economic status or background. Students may suggest additions to this list which the class will discuss whether to adopt. This policy means that words that are slurs such as the N-word or F-word won't be used in this class by any person, even when it appears in our texts and we are quoting the passage. Instead we will substitute the name of the first letter of the word. Dr. Mitchell points out that we can be responsibly and deeply engaged with texts and materials which contain these slurs without "giving them life with our breath" in our learning space.

Readings, discussions, and class materials may reference mature themes, violence, sexual matters, or conflictual ideas (this is a "content warning"). If you feel you do not wish to read one of the assigned texts because it may significantly distress you, please see me well in advance of the assigned reading's due date to request a substitute reading assignment; if we cannot agree on an appropriate substitution, you may be obliged to follow the original schedule of readings to complete the course.

Please be advised that study at university-level is more than knowing a collection of facts, and class attendance and participation are crucial to developing your academic skills at this level. We will follow the Department of English **attendance policy**, which you may read at: <http://english.ubc.ca/resources/resources-for-students/#attendance>. Please know that "religious observance may preclude attending classes or examinations at certain times. In accordance with the UBC Policy on Religious Holidays, students who wish to be accommodated for religious reasons must notify their instructors in writing at least two weeks in advance" (UBC Policy on Academic Concession).

The same webpage ("Resources for Students") also details the English department's agreed-upon marking standards for your reference.

The course adheres to the university's strict rule against plagiarism. If you represent the words, productions or ideas of anyone else as your own, you become subject to the disciplinary processes of the university concerning plagiarism, and may face a disciplinary process. If you have any questions about what counts as plagiarism, please ask me before you submit the assignment.

Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day of lateness, and no papers will be accepted more than a week late unless they are accompanied by a memo from Arts Advising or a medical excuse. I do not accept computer breakdowns or accidental file deletions as excusing emergencies—you should frequently back up your work to a cloud account or flash drive, so that you can upload it to the assignment page on time from any connected device.

Students may record in class for personal study purposes only, and may not share any portion of their recordings with any other person not currently enrolled in the course nor upload them to any online platform.

LEARNING ANALYTICS

This course will be using the following learning technologies: Canvas. This tool captures data about your activity and provides information that can be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning. In this course, I plan to use analytics data to:

- View overall class progress
- Track your progress in order to provide you with personalized feedback
- Review statistics on course content being accessed to support improvements in the course
- Track participation in discussion forums
- Assess your participation in the course

LEARNING AND OTHER SUPPORT RESOURCES

There is a student Writing Centre with coaching available in the Chapman Learning Commons in Barber: please see <http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/tutoring-studying/writing/> for more information. Anyone with a documented disability is gently encouraged to contact the Access and Diversity Office in Brock Hall, 1203- 1874 East Mall (tel. 604.822.5844) for accommodations and support services. Other helpful programs are the academic services described at <http://students.ubc.ca/success>, and UBC Counselling Services tel. 604.822.3811 or, after hours, for anyone in distress, the Vancouver Crisis Line, tel. 800.784.2433. I am a resource person with UBC's Positive Space Campaign. As its website announces, "the Positive Space Campaign is an initiative intended to help make UBC more receptive to and welcoming of its lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans* (transgender, transsexual, trans-identified), two-spirit, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (LGBT*TQIA+) communities, individuals and issues of sexual and gender diversity on campus." If you would like more information about this campaign, or to be put in touch with campus resources, please feel free to talk to me, or to contact the Office of Equity and Inclusion in Brock Hall, tel. 604-822-6353.

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All original materials of this course (course handouts, lecture slides, assessments, curation of course readings, etc.) are the intellectual property of the course Instructor. Redistribution of these materials by any means without permission of the copyright holder(s) constitutes a breach of copyright and may lead to academic discipline.

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