

**Course Projects**  
**ENG 200: Literature and the Human Experience**  
**Otherworlds and the Otherworldly**  
**Spring 2022 - Prof. Fowler**

**ASSIGNMENT**

Research and complete a Course Project related to one of the texts read in class.

**EXPLANATION OF AND RATIONALE FOR THE ASSIGNMENT**

Each student will research and complete a project related to one course text. This project can take one of several forms: 1) an analysis or argumentative paper; 2) a creative project; 3) a personal narrative; 4) a blog post; 5) a podcast; or 6) a lesson plan. You may choose which of these formats you wish to work in. You may also choose what you wish to write about; I have included a list of possible topics related to each text (or set of texts), as well as individual instructions for each project type, below.

Giving you a choice in the type of major project you'd like to complete elevates the chance that you will enjoy the work, which also increases the likelihood of learning from it. You will find more extensive rationales for each assignment in its section below.

**CHOOSING A TEXT**

Each student will select a text from the list in Appendix A below for research and writing, based on text overviews. The Course Projects related to each text will be due in draft form a week after completion of that text rather than being submitted as a final project. For example, if you choose to write on one of the Marie de France or Tolkien book stories, your project will be due Tuesday, March 1, whereas, if you are doing your project on Atwood's novel, your project is due Tuesday, May 10. This helps to spread out the grading load and keeps most of you (except those who choose Atwood) from working on the "big" assignment for the class during the last week of class, when you have other big projects due. Please see the deadlines below for which text's Projects are due when.

## **ANALYSIS OR ARGUMENTATIVE PAPER**

### **Guidelines**

To complete the paper option:

- 1) Decide on a topic for your analysis or argument related to your chosen text, either from the list below or on your own.
- 2) Research your topic, using no fewer than three reliable sources, not including the text from this class.
- 3) In writing, either analyze how your topic focus is addressed in the text of your choice or argue a claim about how the novel addresses that topic focus.
- 4) Work on creating a logical organization that uses strong transitions between ideas, puts sources into conversation with one another rather than presenting information source by source, and builds the analysis or claim rather than presenting a 5-paragraph essay (intro, topic 1, topic 2, topic 3, conclusion). This is often the least effective way to build an analysis or argument.
- 5) Use formal, academic prose style, tone, and structure.
- 6) Use quotes from both the choice text and your sources as evidence (choice text) and/or support (outside sources) for your analysis and/or argument, being sure to cite your sources using MLA, APA, or Chicago format.
- 7) Include a Works Cited (MLA), References (APA), or Bibliography (Chicago) page as a separate page at the end.
- 8) Paper should be 1250-1500 words in length (5-6 pages), double spaced, not counting the reference page. Please use either Times New Roman, Calibri, Cambria, or Ariel font.
- 9) Submit to the Canvas Course Project dropbox by the deadline for your chosen text.

### **Rationale for Analysis or Argument Papers**

The main reasons for assigning the formal analysis/argument papers are the following: 1) they require students to connect to and become immersed in literary learning through writing, which encourages greater conceptual retention; 2) they involve students in the research process and in effectively applying research through writing; 3) they develop student awareness of formal, academic audiences and how to write for them, particularly in the discipline of literary studies; 4) they promote awareness of the relevance of literary studies to the human experience; 5) you become “experts” on some aspect of a course text.

## **CREATIVE PROJECT**

### **Guidelines**

To complete the creative option:

- 1) Decide on a focus topic related to your chosen text on which to create your project. This can be from the list below or something else that interested you in the text.
- 2) Decide on a creative format for your project that reimagines some aspect of your chosen text, related to your focus, in a different medium. This could be a short story or poem, a play, a painting, a game, a multimedia project, a song, a video-taped performance, a decorated cake . . . your project is limited only by your creativity!
- 3) Research your focus topic, using no fewer than three reliable sources, not including the text from this class.
- 4) Create your project!
- 5) In writing, provide a rationale for your project in which you explain why you chose to represent the text in this medium, your process for creating the project, how your research informed your project, and how creating this piece engaged you more deeply with the choice text.
- 6) In the rationale, use quotes from both the choice text and your sources as evidence (choice text) and/or support (outside sources) for your choices and explanations, being sure to cite your sources using MLA, APA, or Chicago format.
- 7) Use informal, personal style, as if you're explaining this to me in a conversation.
- 8) Include a Works Cited (MLA), References (APA), or Bibliography (Chicago) page as a separate page at the end of your rationale.
- 9) Rationale should be 500-600 words in length (1-1.5 pages), single spaced, not counting the reference page. Please use either Times New Roman, Calibri, Cambria, or Ariel font.
- 10) Submit both the project and the rationale to the Canvas Course Project dropbox. You can take photos of any visual projects. If you prefer to hand in the physical project, you are welcome to do so.

### **Rationale for Creative Projects**

The main reasons for assigning the creative projects are the following: 1) they require students to connect to and become immersed in literary learning through creative media, which engages the highest level thought processes in Bloom's Taxonomy (creativity); 2) they involve students in the research process and in effectively applying research to creative works, thus pairing the creative and rational minds; 3) they connect student research to real/authentic audiences not often considered when writing typical "English papers"; 4) they promote awareness of the relevance of literary studies to the human experience; 5) you become "experts" on some aspect of a course text; 6) you get to have some fun!

## **PERSONAL NARRATIVE**

### **Guidelines**

To complete the personal narrative option:

- 1) Decide on a topic for your narrative related to your chosen text, either from the list below or on your own, but that you connect to personally.
- 2) Research your topic, using no fewer than three reliable sources, not including the text from this class.
- 3) In writing, tell a story that deftly combines your experience, your research, and the chosen text.
- 4) Work on creating a logical organization moves the story along chronologically or with a smart use of flashback/flash forward or other reasonably understood structure.
- 5) Use informal, personal style, as if you're telling a story.
- 6) Use quotes from both the choice text and your sources to enhance your story and provide evidence of engaged reading and research, being sure to cite your sources using MLA, APA, or Chicago format.
- 7) Include a Works Cited (MLA), References (APA), or Bibliography (Chicago) page as a separate page at the end.
- 8) Paper should be 1250-1500 words in length (5-6 pages), double spaced, not counting the reference page. Please use either Times New Roman, Calibri, Cambria, or Ariel font.
- 9) Submit to the Canvas Course Project dropbox.

### **Rationale for Personal Narratives**

The main reasons for assigning personal narratives are the following: 1) they promote personal connection to course texts through lived experience; 2) they require students to connect to and become immersed in literary learning through writing, which encourages greater conceptual retention; 3) they involve students in the research process and in effectively applying research through writing about it; 4) they connect student research and writing to real/authentic audiences not often considered when writing typical "English papers"; 5) they promote awareness of the relevance of literary studies to the human experience; 6) you become "experts" on some aspect of a course text with which you have a similar or shared experience or awareness; 7) they allow you hone your storytelling skills!

## **BLOG POST**

### **Guidelines**

To complete the paper option:

- 1) Decide on a topic for your analysis or argument related to your chosen text, either from the list below or on your own.
- 2) Research your topic, using no fewer than three reliable sources, not including the text from this class.
- 3) In writing, either analyze how your topic focus is addressed in the text of your choice or argue a claim about how the novel addresses that topic focus.
- 4) Work on creating a logical organization that uses strong transitions between ideas, puts sources into conversation with one another rather than presenting information source by source, and builds the analysis or claim rather than presenting a 5-paragraph essay (intro, topic 1, topic 2, topic 3, conclusion). This is often the least effective way to build an analysis or argument.
- 5) Use informal, personal style, as if you're talking to peers.
- 6) Use quotes from both the choice text and your sources as evidence (choice text) and/or support (outside sources) for your analysis and/or argument, being sure to cite your sources using MLA, APA, or Chicago format.
- 7) Include a Works Cited (MLA), References (APA), or Bibliography (Chicago) page as a separate page at the end.
- 8) Blog Post should be 1250-1500 words in length (5-6 pages double spaced, not counting the reference page); however, I encourage you to use a blog post template rather than double-spacing, and perhaps to add images if you want! You have flexibility on font for this option.
- 9) Submit to the Canvas Course Project dropbox.

### **Rationale for Blog Posts**

The main reasons for assigning the blog posts are the following: 1) they require students to connect to and become immersed in literary learning through writing, which encourages greater conceptual retention; 2) they involve students in the research process and in effectively applying research through writing and/or talking about it; 3) they connect student research and writing to real/authentic audiences not often considered when writing typical "English papers"; 4) they promote awareness of the relevance of literary studies to the human experience; 5) you become "experts" on some aspect of a course text.

## **PODCAST**

### **Guidelines**

To complete the Podcast option:

- 1) Decide on a topic for your analysis or argument related to your chosen text, either from the list below or on your own.
- 2) Research your topic, using no fewer than three reliable sources, not including the text from this class.
- 3) Create a script or outline for what you will discuss in your podcast, assuming your podcast will be roughly 10-15 minutes long.
- 4) Work on creating a logical organization that uses strong transitions between ideas, puts sources into conversation with one another rather than presenting information source by source, and builds the analysis or claim.
- 5) Use a personable and friendly tone, imagining your peers as your audience.
- 6) Use quotes from both the choice text and your sources as evidence (choice text) and/or support (outside sources) for your analysis and/or argument, being sure to cite your sources using MLA, APA, or Chicago format. These should appear in your script/outline.
- 7) Include a Works Cited (MLA), References (APA), or Bibliography (Chicago) page as a separate page at the end.
- 8) Script or outline should be long enough for a 10-15 minute podcast. Please use either Times New Roman, Calibri, Cambria, or Ariel font.
- 9) Record your podcast as an mp3 or mp4 file.
- 10) Submit both the podcast and the script/outline to the Canvas Course Project dropbox.

### **Rationale for Podcasts**

The main reasons for assigning the blog posts are the following: 1) they require students to connect to and become immersed in literary learning through writing and speaking, which encourages greater conceptual retention; 2) they involve students in the research process and in effectively applying research through writing and talking about it; 3) they connect student research and writing to real/authentic audiences not often considered when writing typical “English papers”; 4) they promote awareness of the relevance of literary studies to the human experience; 5) you become “experts” on some aspect of a course text; 6) you practice sharing your expertise through oral communication.

## **LESSON/UNIT PLAN**

### **Guidelines**

To complete the lesson plan option:

- 1) Decide on a focus for your lesson related to your chosen text, either from the list below or on your own, keeping the grade level for your lesson in mind as you choose your focus. For this option, depending on grade level, choices other than those below may be more suitable.
- 2) Research your focus, using no fewer than three reliable sources, not including the text from this class. You are welcome to use teaching resources for this one!
- 3) Create either a single-day lesson plan or a whole unit plan for teaching your focus on your chosen text. You may research lesson/unit plan styles or, if you are an education major, use one that you've used in your classes.
- 4) Include grade level, focus, activities, readings, length of class period or unit, learning outcomes, and any other significant information in your plan.
- 5) Write a rationale explaining why you would teach this lesson for this group of students and how creating the plan helped you to engage more deeply with the source text.
- 6) Use quotes from both the choice text and your sources as evidence (choice text) and/or support (outside sources) for your rationale, being sure to cite your sources using MLA, APA, or Chicago format.
- 7) Include a Works Cited (MLA), References (APA), or Bibliography (Chicago) page as a separate page at the end.
- 8) Rationale should be 500-600 words in length (1-1.5 pages), single spaced, not counting the reference page. Please use either Times New Roman, Calibri, Cambria, or Ariel font.
- 9) Submit both the lesson/unit plan and the rationale to the Canvas Course Project dropbox.

### **Rationale for Lesson/Unit Plans**

The main reasons for assigning the lesson/unit plans are the following: 1) they provide potential or current education students the opportunity to practice writing lesson/unit plans; 2) they require students to connect to and become immersed in literary learning through writing, which encourages greater conceptual retention; 3) they involve students in the research process and in effectively applying research to teaching and learning; 4) they connect student research and writing to real/authentic audiences not often considered when writing typical "English papers"; 5) they promote awareness of the relevance of literary studies to the human experience; 6) you become "experts" on some aspect of a course text; 7) the plan you create could potentially be paired with the Lesson presentation "extra" option!

## DUE DATES

Visiting the Past Texts (Marie de France, Tolkien book):

- Draft by Tuesday, March 1;
- Revised final draft due within a week of receiving feedback.

Taking a Walk Down Memory Lane (Ishiguro):

- Draft by Tuesday, March 22;
- Revised final draft due within a week of receiving feedback.

Journeying to the Underworld (Gaiman):

- Draft by Tuesday, April 10;
- Revised final draft due within a week of receiving feedback.

Touring Parenthood and Cyberspace (LaValle):

- Draft by Tuesday, April 26;
- Revised final draft due within a week of receiving feedback.

Voyaging into a Future (Atwood)

- Draft by Tuesday, May 10;
- Revised final draft due Friday, May 14 (we can talk about this!).



## Appendix A

### **Unit 2: Visiting the Past: *The Lais of Marie de France, Sir Orfeo, Pearl, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight***

Text 1: Marie de France (fl. late twelfth century) is the earliest known French woman poet and her *lais*— stories in verse based on Breton tales of chivalry and romance—are among the finest of the genre. Recounting the trials and tribulations of lovers, the *lais* inhabit a powerfully realized world where very real human protagonists act out their lives against fairy-tale elements of magical beings, potions and beasts. De France takes a subtle and complex view of courtly love, whether telling the story of the knight who betrays his fairy mistress or describing the noblewoman who embroiders her sad tale on the shroud for a nightingale killed by a jealous and suspicious husband.

Text 2: Written by a medieval poet whose name is unknown, and comparable with the works of Chaucer, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Pearl*, and *Sir Orfeo* are masterpieces of a remote and exotic age—the age of chivalry and wizards, knights and holy quests. Yet it is only in the unique artistry and imagination of J.R.R. Tolkien that the language, romance, and power of these great stories comes to life for modern readers in these masterful and compelling translations.

The centerpiece of this brilliant collection, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, is a tale as lush and dark as England's medieval forests. It is romance interlaced with scenes of the hunt and temptations of the flesh; it is a fairy tale of giant warriors in armor and King Arthur's most noble knight; and it is a rousing adventure of epic enchantment and the destiny of human desires.

#### Possible Focuses:

1. Medieval marriage (especially relevant to the *Lais*)
2. Magical and rudderless ships (*Guigemar* from the *Lais*)
3. Werewolves and other monsters (*Bisclavret* from the *Lais*)
4. Fairy otherworlds, especially in Celtic folklore and literature ( "Lanval," *Sir Gawain*, and *Sir Orfeo*)
5. Chastity and/or loyalty tests (*Lais*, *Sir Gawain*, *Sir Orfeo*)
6. Chivalry (note: it may not be the same as modern ideas about chivalry, so be careful in your research here)
7. Virtue ethics
8. Largesse/generosity (*Lais*, *Sir Gawain*, *Sir Orfeo*)
9. European feudalism
10. Arthurian contexts and background ("Lanval," *Sir Gawain*)
11. Courtly love
12. Celtic fairy lore
13. Early medieval European (British/English, especially) pagan cultures and the shift to later medieval European Christianity (esp. *Sir Gawain*)
14. European medieval noble leisure activities
15. Biblical references in medieval literature

### **Unit 3: Taking a Walk Down Memory Lane: *The Buried Giant***

In post-Arthurian Britain, the wars that once raged between the Saxons and the Britons have finally ceased. Axl and Beatrice, an elderly British couple, set off to visit their son, whom they haven't seen in years. And, because a strange mist has caused mass amnesia throughout the land, they can scarcely remember anything about him. As they are joined on their journey by a Saxon warrior, his orphan charge, and an illustrious knight, Axl and Beatrice slowly begin to remember the dark and

troubled past they all share. By turns savage, suspenseful, and intensely moving, *The Buried Giant* is a luminous meditation on the act of forgetting and the power of memory.

#### Possible Focuses:

1. Treatment of the elderly in the European medieval society and today
2. Romans, Britons, and Anglo-Saxons (and King Arthur) in Britain (present-day England) during the 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> c.
3. 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> c. British combat (e.g., arms and armor, battle techniques)
4. Dragons in European medieval texts, especially those from the British/English tradition and Arthurian legend
5. Nationalism, factionalism, and/or cultural identity
6. Briton, Anglo-Saxon, and Roman construction (homes and other buildings) in Britain during late antiquity and the early Middle Ages
7. Borrowings and analogs (literary traditions and texts from which Ishiguro borrows for this novel)
8. Classical (ancient Greek and Roman), early medieval, and modern conceptions of memory
9. Ferryman in literature
10. Sir Gawain
11. Repetition as a storytelling device
12. Mystical islands in literature (esp. medieval works)
13. The hero's journey
14. Influences of epics and medieval romances on the modern fantasy novel

#### Unit 4: Journeying to the Underworld: *Neverwhere*

Published in 1997, Neil Gaiman's darkly hypnotic first novel, *Neverwhere*, heralded the arrival of a major talent and became a touchstone of urban fantasy.

It is the story of Richard Mayhew, a young London businessman with a good heart and an ordinary life, which is changed forever when he discovers a girl bleeding on the sidewalk. He stops to help her—an act of kindness that plunges him into a world he never dreamed existed. Slipping through the cracks of reality, Richard lands in Neverwhere—a London of shadows and darkness, monsters and saints, murderers and angels that exists entirely in a subterranean labyrinth. Neverwhere is home to Door, the mysterious girl Richard helped in the London Above. Here in Neverwhere, Door is a powerful noblewoman who has vowed to find the evil agent of her family's slaughter and thwart the destruction of this strange underworld kingdom. If Richard is ever to return to his former life and home, he must join Lady Door's quest to save her world—and may well die trying.

#### Possible Focuses

1. Folkloric and literary references Gaiman uses in *Neverwhere* (You might start with the Marquis de Carabas)
2. Animalistic qualities of characters in Gaiman's novel (see, for instance, Mr. Croup and Mr. Vandemar, the Marquis de Carabas) and their precedents
3. Urban fantasy
4. Baronies, fiefdoms, fealty, and the feudal system
5. London in 1997 and London today (and, perhaps, location as "character")
6. Homelessness/houselessness/the untraditionally housed
7. The London Underground
8. Dark humor
9. Bystander effect

10. Phobias, stress, and/or other mental health issues
11. Escapism
12. Medieval themes, settings, or concepts in fantasy novels (even in urban fantasies)
13. Class structures and conflicts in 1997 England (esp. London) and the U.S. 2020/2021?
14. The role of dreams in literature (and this novel)

### **Unit 5: Touring Parenthood and Cyberspace: *The Changeling***

When Apollo Kagwa's father disappeared, all he left his son were strange recurring dreams and a box of books stamped with the word IMPROBABILIA. Now Apollo is a father himself—and as he and his wife, Emma, are settling into their new lives as parents, exhaustion and anxiety start to take their toll. Apollo's old dreams return and Emma begins acting odd. Irritable and disconnected from their new baby boy, at first Emma seems to be exhibiting signs of postpartum depression, but it quickly becomes clear that her troubles go even deeper. Before Apollo can do anything to help, Emma commits a horrific act—beyond any parent's comprehension—and vanishes, seemingly into thin air.

Thus begins Apollo's odyssey through a world he only thought he understood, to find a wife and child who are nothing like he'd imagined. His quest, which begins when he meets a mysterious stranger who claims to have information about Emma's whereabouts, takes him to a forgotten island, a graveyard full of secrets, a forest where immigrant legends still live, and finally back to a place he thought he had lost forever.

This captivating retelling of a classic fairy tale imaginatively explores parental obsession, spousal love, and the secrets that make strangers out of the people we love the most. It's a thrilling and emotionally devastating journey through the gruesome legacies that threaten to devour us and the homely, messy magic that saves us, if we're lucky.

#### **Possible Focuses:**

1. Changelings
2. Witches, historically and literarily
3. Online surveillance, data collection, and privacy
4. Ethnic neighborhoods/grouping and self-segregation
5. The rare books trade
6. Support groups (especially for victims of violence)
7. 21st c. NYC (and, perhaps, location as "character")
8. Trolls
9. Social media
10. Postpartum depression
11. "New Dads" in the 21<sup>st</sup> c.
12. Wish-making in folklore and literature
13. Boundaries between fantasy and reality; fantasy as a way of addressing difficult real-world situations
14. Race and "\_\_\_\_\_ while black"

### **Unit 6: Voyaging into a Future: *Oryx and Crake***

*Oryx and Crake* is at once an unforgettable love story and a compelling vision of the future. Snowman, known as Jimmy before mankind was overwhelmed by a plague, is struggling to survive in a world where he may be the last human, and mourning the loss of his best friend, Crake, and the beautiful and elusive Oryx whom they both loved. In search of answers, Snowman embarks on a

journey—with the help of the green-eyed Children of Crake—through the lush wilderness that was so recently a great city, until powerful corporations took mankind on an uncontrolled genetic engineering ride. Margaret Atwood projects us into a near future that is both all too familiar and beyond our imagining.

Possible Focuses:

1. Genetic engineering
2. Scientific ethics (just because we can, should we?)
3. Dystopian and apocalyptic literatures
4. Posthumanism/the posthuman
5. Biospheres and similar ecological experiments
6. Video gaming and its impacts
7. Talent recruiting in Big Tech, Big Science, etc.
8. Mega-corporations and/or industry-related planned communities (see, for example, experiments from the late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> c. by Pullman, Carnegie, etc.)
9. Pandemics
10. Religions
11. “Pre-lapsarian” and “post-lapsarian” concepts in the novel
12. Women’s roles in the novel and/or Atwood as a female, and feminist author
13. Being human
14. Sci-fi and/or fantasy; what type of novel is this?