# COURSE OUTLINE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>ENG 256</th>
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<tr>
<td>Course Title</td>
<td>Fantasy Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Credits</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hours: lecture/laboratory/other (specify)</td>
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**Catalog description:**
ENG 256 Fantasy Literature
Explores fantasy literature through a study of genre elements and the challenge this genre presents to readers of mainstream literature. By examining works written in and translated to English participants better appreciate and interpret such works and how they represent an increasingly important sub-section of literary expression.

**Prerequisites:**
Prerequisite: Minimum C grade in ENG 102 or divisional permission

**Corequisites:**

**Required texts/other materials:**
In addition to critical works as appropriate by authors such as Tom Shippey (Tolkien) and chapters from *A Handbook on Critical Approaches to Literature*, ed. Guerin et al., a selection of works like those appearing below serve as the material for the course. Typically students would read one or two longer novels (such as *The Lord of the Rings*) and a selection of shorter items, including short stories from an anthology such as *The American Fantasy Tradition* and shorter novels such as J.K. Rowling’s *The Sorcerer’s Stone*. At most, one cinematic text shall be selected.

**Sample Bibliography of Potential Texts:**

| Thieve’s World, ed. Aspirin & Abbey |
| Excalibur, dir. John Boorman |
| Jhereg, Steven Brust |
| The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay, Michael Chabon |
| Fortress in the Eye of Time, CJ Cherryh |
| Little, Big, John Crowley |
| The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, dir. David Fincher |
| The Conan texts by Robert E. Howard |
| Assassin’s Apprentice, Robin Hobb |
| The Earthsea Trilogy, Ursula K. Le Guin |
| A Game of Thrones, George RR Martin |
| Dragonslayer, dir. Matthew Robbins |
| Harry Potter novels, JK Rowling |
| Dies the Fire, SM Stirling |
| Heroes Die, Matthew Woodring Stover |
| The American Fantasy Tradition, ed. Brian M. Thomsen |
| The Lord of the Rings, JRR Tolkien |
| The Hobbit, JRR Tolkien |
| Wings of Desire, dir. Wim Wenders |
Thematic Combinations—Samples:

The Epic

Lord of the Rings, Tolkien
A Game of Thrones, Martin
or
Assassin’s Apprentice, Hobb
Excalibur, Boorman
+other texts

“Hidden Reality”

Little, Big, Crowley
Wings of Desire, Wenders
American Gods, Gaiman
or
The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay, Chabon
+other texts

Resistance and Acceptance of Stereotype

The Earthsea Trilogy, Le Guin
One or two Harry Potter novels, Rowling
Dragonslayer, Robbins
+other texts

Swords & Sorcery

Heroes Die, Stover
Jhereg, Brust
Conan the Barbarian, Howard
Thieve’s World, Aspirin & Abbey
+other texts
Course coordinator: Edward Carmien, carmiene@mccc.edu, X3306

Information resources: Texts, Fantasy TV/Cinema, special library research resources

Other learning resources: Tutors available in the Learning Center

Course goals:

The student will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the fantasy genre
- Identify various elements of structure in fiction and other expressive modes of storytelling
- Analyze fantasy works using one or more critical frameworks
- Understand the scope and flow of both American and world fantasy in a broad historical context
- Assess the relative merits of a variety of fantasy works
- Distinguish between the many varieties of fantasy works

Course-specific General Education goals and objectives.

(From proposed General Education guidelines as of January, 2006)

A. Written and Oral Communication in English: 1, 2, 3, 4
B. Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving: 1, 2, 3, 4
C. Ethical Decision-Making: 1, 2
D. Information Literacy: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
E. Computer Literacy: 1, 4, 5
F. Collaboration and Cooperation: 1, 3
G. Intra-Cultural and Inter-Cultural Responsibility: 4, 5

Units of study in detail.

These units should not be considered discrete organizational elements, but rather the salient points of the course that are addressed through specific reading discussions, mini-lectures, and other activities during the semester. History, for example, will reoccur as a topic throughout the semester, as each new text will need to be placed in the overall concept being developed by the class as the semester progresses. Items in Unit II will occur as they arise—for example, an early work might represent an example of “swords & sorcery” fantasy, while a work assigned later in the semester represents an example of the epic quest. By the conclusion of the semester, students should have completed the content described in each of the units listed below.
Unit I  Fantasy in Historical and Cultural Context

*Learning Objectives*

*The student will be able to…*

- Demonstrate familiarity with the history of fantasy in world culture
- Identify the characteristics of fantasy
- Understand basic terminology applicable to the discussion of fantasy works, for example how the concept of “setting” means something very different in a fantasy text
- Explore the link between fantasy and existing cultural myth forms, as in Campbell’s *Hero With a Thousand Faces* and Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*

Unit II  American Fantasy

*Learning Objectives*

*The student will be able to…*

- Demonstrate familiarity with swords & sorcery, “magic portal,” epic quest, and other conventions of fantasy literature
- Discuss novels and other works of fantasy in a critical context, that is, not merely as escapist or “trash” works but as genuine expressions of cultural messages
- Analyze fantasy works using appropriate critical terminology
- Understand the development of American fantasy during the past 100+ years, especially in the context of Tolkien’s landmark contribution to the field

Unit III  Fantasy in a Literary Context

*Learning Objectives*

*The student will be able to…*

- Demonstrate an understanding of fantasy’s place in the larger literary landscape, for example its role as Romantic literature in a generally Modernist context (and in more contemporary work perceive that there are modernist tendencies in some current fantasy)
- Express himself or herself at an appropriate level of mastery in research-based writing on the subject matter of the course
- Produce critical material of a useful quality for the benefit of the larger literary community, for example via postings to Wikipedia or the electronic mailing lists of appropriate scholarly organizations
- Research, plan, and carry out a rigorous oral presentation at the same intellectual level as the research-based writing students are performing in the course

**Evaluation of student learning:**

- Four or five MLA papers, one oral presentation based on outside research in the field, amounting to a minimum of 18 pages of formal work 50%
- Mid-term and final exams 20%
- Contribution to the field (Wikipedia/electronic resources of scholarly organization) 10%
- Attendance and participation & Reading comprehension quizzes 20%

**Academic Integrity Statement:** Mercer County College’s policy regarding academic integrity, described in the current student handbook, will be specifically addressed as part of the course requirements and expectations.