

**COMP 237: Writing Fantasy and SF (CRN 1422)**  
**Fully Online, Asynchronous**  
**Fall 2020**

**Instructor:** Dr. Amie A. Doughty

**Office:** 313 Netzer Administration Building

**Office Hours:** W 8:00-11:00 and by appointment (see Course Policies below for further information)

**Phone:** 436-2493

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**Required Texts:**

Roberts, Adam. *Get Started Writing Science Fiction and Fantasy*. Teach Yourself, 2014. ISBN 978-1444795653

**Technology Requirements:**

- Internet Access: You will need to be able to access a lot of web-based materials as this course is online. If you have connectivity issues, you need to let me know.
- Blackboard: The majority of the work for this class will be done using Blackboard. You will submit all of your work via Blackboard, whether in drop boxes or on discussion boards.
- Word Processing Program: You will need to use Microsoft Word or another word processing program to write your paper. If you use a program besides Word, you will need to save your files as Word (.doc or .docx) or PDF documents. Please note that as a student at SUNY Oneonta, you can download a copy of Microsoft Office to your device through Office365. You can also use the web-based version of Word and other Office programs through Office 365.
- Slide Show Program (optional): You will need to use Microsoft PowerPoint or another slide show creation program for the book presentation. If you choose a program besides PowerPoint, you will may to save the file as PDF so that I can read it if you choose the second option of the assignment (see separate description of assignment).
- Video Recording Program (optional): Ideally you will record 2 things for this class: an introductory video and your book presentation. If you have a smart phone, you can use it for the introductory video, but you will need another program, such as Screencastomatic (available on the web) to do the book presentation. If you do not have this capability, do not worry. I will give alternative means of fulfilling those assignments.
- Microsoft Stream, YouTube, or another location to save your videos (optional): Because I want you to link any video you make to Blackboard, you will need to have a location on the web to upload it. You have access to Stream through Office 365, but you can also use YouTube if you prefer or a different service. I will give instructions for uploading to Stream and for embedding videos to Blackboard.

**Method of Instruction:**

Because this class is an asynchronous online course, instruction will occur through the videos and other materials I post to Blackboard and through feedback I give to your work. See the calendar for due dates for the assigned readings and assignments.

**Course Description:**

Catalog Description: This course will cover different types of fantasy and SF (Speculative and Science Fiction) writing, including high fantasy, magical realism, urban fantasy, steampunk, time travel, alternative history, and hard and soft science fiction. The course will emphasize the creation of believable worlds and characters. Students will compose original works of fantasy and/or SF and workshop those writings with classmates and the instructor. A-E only. Offered every 2-3 years. Prerequisite(s): B or higher in COMP 150 or LITR 222 or LITR 237.

Course Objectives:

Students will

- Learn how to develop a fantastic or SF world and the importance of rules or limitations to the world and create a world appropriate to their writing.
- Learn to develop characters appropriate to their created worlds.
- Learn how the tropes of (folk) literature are commonly adapted in fantasy and SF and explore how these tropes apply to their own works.
- Craft, workshop, and revise works of fantasy or SF.
- Develop workshopping skills appropriate to fiction writing generally and fantasy and SF specifically.

### **Course Policies:**

**Office Hours:** As long as it is feasible, I will hold my office hours in my physical campus office, Netzer 313, and I will have in-person and virtual office hours during that time. However, you must make an appointment if you plan to attend those office hours so that I can ensure social distancing. You must also wear a mask if you come to speak with me in my office. (I will also wear one.) If you prefer to speak with me in another manner, we can speak by phone or using Teams or Collaborate. You will also need to set up a time for those meetings. To set up a meeting with me, go to my Calendly calendar (<https://calendly.com/doughtaa>) and sign up for a 15-minute meeting (if you think you'll need longer, you can sign up for a longer meeting). When you're setting up the meeting, make note of whether you want to meet in person or via Teams. If you want to meet at a time besides my office hours, e-mail me with possible days and times, and I'll get back to you as soon as I can to set it up.

**Course Questions:** I have created a Course Questions discussion board for the class. If you have any general questions about the materials, assignments, or any other aspect of the class, post them on this discussion board, and I will answer them as soon as I can. This discussion board will act as a resource for the class. If you have questions specific to your work, you can e-mail me, and I will answer them as soon as I can. An example of a general question is "How many pages should the Little Red Riding Hood assignment be?" An example of a specific question is "What did you mean when you wrote 'you're having comma splice issues' on my story?" If you e-mail me a general question, I will tell you to post it and only answer it once it is posted.

**Contacting Me:** My preferred method of communication outside of class is e-mail, and I am usually quick to respond to e-mail. If you send me an e-mail message, you should hear back from me within 24 hours during weekdays. If you do not receive a response within 24 hours, try again because it means that I have not received your message. I check my e-mail periodically Monday through Friday (usually between 8 and 5). I am offline on Saturdays and Sundays.

**Assignments:** You will be assessed in 5 ways for this class:

- **Exercises (25%)**—For the first 8 weeks of the semester, we will be working our way through the Roberts book, and I will assign exercises for you to complete for each chapter. You will be submitting the exercises to designated Discussion Boards on Blackboard, either as Word or PDF attachments.
- **Participation (20%)**—Throughout the semester, you will be required to comment on your classmates' work. You must respond to a minimum of 2 classmates' posts in each exercise to receive at least a C for participation. Earning a higher grade will mean you have written clear and useful responses to the exercises (far more than "that's really good" or "I think you need to watch your punctuation") and/or have written more than 2 responses. Ideally, we'll be generating a discussion about the work you're writing. Once you reach the revisions and workshopping portion of the course, your participation grade will be based on how well you critique your assigned stories. I will grade participation every few weeks during class.
- **Book Presentation (10%)**—You will choose a fantasy or SF book of your choosing for this assignment and create a presentation about it, which is due on **Monday, 19 Oct.** I want everyone to choose a different book for this assignment, so you must send me a list of 3 possible selections by **Tuesday, 8 Sept.** (you can send it earlier if you like). If two of you request the same book, I will assign it by who contacts me first, so make sure you have several possible choices to work with. For the assignment you will do several things: 1) give a very brief, non-spoiler plot summary (2-3 sentences); 2) explain some of the mythology/world-building in the book; 3) choose a brief passage from the book (no more than a

page); and 4) explain what makes this passage an example of good writing and shows the author's style. You have 2 options for this assignment:

- **Option 1:** Create a PowerPoint presentation (or other slide show presentation) and do a voice over for it. As part of the presentation, you should read the passage you've chosen aloud. You will create an embedded link to this video (which you should upload to a different site) in the Book Presentation discussion board.
- **Option 2:** Create a PowerPoint presentation (or other slide show presentation) and write in notes about how you would have talked about the slides and text if you'd recorded a video. If you don't use PowerPoint, you should save your presentation as a PDF. (If you don't have access to a slide show program, you may write the presentation up like a paper.) You must upload your slide show to the Book Presentation discussion board.
- **Revisions and Workshopping (25%)**
- **Final Portfolio and Self-Evaluation (20%)**

**Assignment Formatting:** All assignments must be submitted according to MLA formatting guidelines. For this class, do not use a title page for any of your papers unless instructed to do so in class. Use a 12-point font (yes, I can tell the difference) in **Times New Roman** (no fancy fonts in this class and no use of Courier). Failure to follow formatting instructions will result in your paper's grade being lowered. I will explain what MLA formatting looks like to the class before the first paper is due. You may also find instructions for it in any handbook. You must submit your files in Word (.doc/.docx) or PDF. If you do not submit your document in the correct format, your work will be considered late and penalized as such, and I will not grade it until you submit the correct type of file.

**Grammar and Mechanics:** While I don't expect perfection in your grammar and mechanics for this class, I do expect you to proofread and edit your work as much as possible once we read the section of the course about revision (you should do your best before we reach that section of the course, but it is less important for the initial exercises). If your grammar and mechanics impeded understanding of your text, you will lose significant credit. If it's sloppy (esp. in terms of proofreading) but does not impede understanding, you will lose some credit, though not as much as if I cannot understand your text.

**Critiquing Work:** This class works under the assumption that no writing is perfect, no matter how many times it has been revised, and the best way to figure out how to revise your work is to have it critiqued. Therefore, much of this class will require you both to critique others' work and to submit your work for critiquing. You should expect both positive and negative comments about your work. **If you have written something that you are unwilling to revise, do not submit it for critiquing.**

**Late Work:** I will accept work no more than one week late. All late work will lose 10%. If you know that you won't be able to get work in on time, see me before the due date, and we may be able to make arrangements for an extension.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the passing off of another's work (whether quoted, paraphrased or summarized) as your own without proper documentation, including on exams. If you are caught plagiarizing, you are subject to a variety of punishments, including expulsion from the university. Do your own work. See the University's policy below for details on the Academic Dishonesty policy.

**Blackboard's Gradebook:** I will be creating a gradebook on Blackboard and updating it periodically for your information. Please note that this gradebook is a guide only; however, if you do see what appears to be an error on it, please contact me. Final grades are calculated by me on my Excel gradebook, so if there is a discrepancy between Blackboard's book and mine, I will use my gradebook as the correct one. Also note that the grade marked "Total" is not a weighted total, so it should not be used to estimate your course average. Instead, the "Weighted Total" grade is the one that will indicate best how you are doing in the class.

**Grading Scale:** The number percentages will be calculated as follows for letter grades:

94-100 A	87-89 B+	77-79 C+	67-69 D+	0-59 E
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90-93 A-	84-86 B	74-76 C	64-66 D
	80-83 B-	70-73 C-	60-63 D-

**University Policies:** The following policies can be found in your Student Handbook or the Code of Student Conduct and are particularly applicable to this class. You can find a copy of all policies here:

<https://suny.oneonta.edu/office-provost/course-policies-and-procedures>

### Final Exams

Instructors must follow the final exam schedule as posted in *Keydates and Deadlines* (<https://suny.oneonta.edu/office-registrar>). The final exam week is part of the 15 class weeks required by the State Education Department. *If an instructor does not hold a final examination, the final examination period must be used as the final class day.* Exceptions to this may be made only in an emergency and only with prior approval of the department chair and the division dean. Under no condition shall a study day be used to administer a final exam. Students are held responsible for selecting a course schedule with the final exam schedule in mind. There is no policy preventing a student from having exams in one day.

### Accessibility Resources

**Students Diagnosed with a Disability—**All individuals who are diagnosed with a disability are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. As such, you may be entitled to certain accommodations within this class. If you are diagnosed with a disability, please make an appointment to meet with Accessibility Resources, 133 Milne Library, ext. 2137. All students with the necessary supporting documentation will be provided appropriate accommodations as determined by the Accessibility Resources Office. It is entirely your responsibility to contact Accessibility Resources and concurrently supply me with your accommodation plan, which will inform me exactly what accommodations you are entitled to. You will only receive accommodations once you provide me with an Accessibility Resources accommodation plan. Any previously recorded grades will not be changed.

### Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is defined as any act by a student that misrepresents or attempts to misrepresent to an instructor or any College official, the proficiency or achievement of that student or another student in any academic exercise for the purpose of influencing a grade on a piece of assigned work, on an examination or quiz or in a Course as a whole, or that is intended to alter any record of a student's academic performance by unauthorized means.

A Student deemed guilty of an act of academic dishonesty may, depending on the nature of the offense, be subject to one or more of the following measures: failure of the assignment or examination, failure of the course, or dismissal from the College. Furthermore, for a second offense, referral of the case to the Standing Disciplinary Board is mandatory. The penalties that may be assessed by the Board are listed under the Procedures of the Standing Disciplinary Board as published in this publication; however, the normal penalty is suspension or dismissal.

It is the Student's responsibility to read and understand the policy on all aspects of academic dishonesty as published in this publication and the Undergraduate Catalog. However, individual faculty members may wish to explain the policy as it relates to their courses. It is emphasized that a student who has any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty has the responsibility of clarifying them by conferring with his/her instructors.

### Examples of Academic Dishonesty:

The following examples, although not all-inclusive, are intended to help students understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. Other acts should not necessarily, be considered as falling outside the scope of this policy because of their absence from this list.

- Plagiarism that is, using materials from another's work without acknowledgment, using quotations without identification as such or paraphrasing without specific identification of the source.
- Copying and/or modifying another person's computer file, program, printout, or portion thereof for use in an assignment without permission of the instructor.
- Knowingly permitting one's computer file, program, printout, or portion thereof to be copied or modified by another student for use in an assignment without permission of the instructor.

- Unauthorized giving or receiving of information on an examination, laboratory procedure, or other exercise.
- Taking an examination for another student or allowing another student to take an examination for you.
- Altering or attempting to alter a grade on any piece of graded work, a grade written in an instructor's personal records, or a grade written on any College form or transcribed in any official College record.
- Submitting a College form with a forged signature.

### **Actions for Safety**

Please see the College's page for ways of protecting yourself and others during the pandemic:

<https://suny.oneonta.edu/fall-2020-re-start-plan/actions-safety>

### **Campus Resources:**

- [Academic Advisement](#)
- [Accessibility Resource Center](#)
- [Student Learning Center](#)
- [Milne Library](#)
- [Counseling Center](#)
- English Department:
  - Secretary Ruth Carr: 436-3446 or [Ruth.Carr@oneonta.edu](mailto:Ruth.Carr@oneonta.edu)
  - Chair Dr. Suzanne Black: 436-3446 or [Suzanne.Black@oneonta.edu](mailto:Suzanne.Black@oneonta.edu)

This calendar is tentative and is subject to change. I will notify you if I need to make any changes.

Week 1: 24-28 Aug: <b>Introduction Video due by 11:59 pm, Sunday, 30 Aug</b> ; Read Chapter 1 of Roberts and watch the videos; Do Snapshot Exercise on p. 7 and Workshop 2 on p. 18 (they're linked); Do Write a Short Story Exercise p. 18 (see video for adjustments to it); <b>Both exercises are due Monday, 31 Aug by 11:59 pm</b>
Week 2: 31 Aug-4 Sept: Read Chapter 2 of Roberts and watch the video; Do the Write Flash Fiction prompt on p. 36; Do the Worldbuilding Exercise assigned in the video; <b>Both exercises are due Monday, 7 Sept by 11:59 pm</b>
Week 3: 7-11 Sept: Read Chapter 3 of Roberts and watch the video; Do the 3 exercises mentioned in the video; <b>Send 3 options for Book Presentation to me by Tuesday, 8 Sept.; All exercises are due Monday, 14 Sept by 11:59 pm</b>
Week 4: 14-18 Sept: Read Chapter 4 of Roberts and watch the video; Do the adapted version of the Snapshot Exercise on p. 77 (see video for adjustments to it); Do the Workshop exercise on p. 78; <b>Both exercises are due Monday, 21 Sept by 11:59 pm</b>
Week 5: 21-25 Sept: Read Chapter 5 of Roberts and watch the video; Do workshop exercise on p. 94; <b>Exercise is due Monday, 28 Sept by 11:59 pm</b>
Week 6: 28 Sept-2 Oct: Read Chapter 6 of Roberts and watch the video; Do exercise on p. 109 (see video for alterations to it); Do Workshop on p. 121; <b>Exercises are due Monday, 5 Oct by 11:59 pm</b>
Week 7: 5-9 Oct: Read Chapter 7 of Roberts and watch the video; Write 2 character sketches (see video for explanation); <b>Exercise is due Monday, 12 Oct by 11:59 pm</b>
Week 8: 12-16 Oct: Reach Chapter 8 of Roberts and watch the video; Write about a trope you're using in your story/novel (see video for explanation); <b>Exercise is due Monday, 19 Oct by 11:59 pm</b>
Week 9: 19-23 Oct: Read Chapter 9 of Roberts and watch the video; <b>Book Presentation due by 11:59 pm, Friday, 23 Oct.</b>
Week 10: 26-30 Oct: <b>First revision of a story/chapter due by 11:59 pm, Monday, 26 Oct</b> ; Groups assigned for critiquing Wednesday, 28 Oct
Week 11: 2-6 Nov: <b>Critiques of group members' work due by 11:59 pm, Monday, 2 Nov</b> ; Take the time to ask for clarification from your group members if you need it
Week 12: 9-13 Nov: <b>Second revision of a story/chapter due by 11:59 pm, Monday, 9 November</b> ; Groups assigned for critiquing Wednesday, 11 Nov.
Week 13: 16-20 Nov: <b>Critiques of group members' work due by 11:59 pm, Monday, 2 Nov</b> ; Take the time to ask for clarification from your group members if you need it
23-27 Nov—Thanksgiving Break
Week 14: 30 Nov-7 Dec: <b>Third revision of a story/chapter due by 11:59 pm, Monday, 30 November</b> ; Groups assigned for critiquing Wednesday, 2 Dec.; <b>Critiques of group members' work due by 11:59 pm, Monday, 7 Dec</b> ; Take the time to ask for clarification from your group members if you need it
Final Portfolio and Self-Evaluation due by 11:59 pm on Monday, 14 Dec.
Note: You should be writing comments about your classmates' exercises throughout the first 8 weeks of the class as part of your participation grade. I will mark participation grades every few weeks. Once we read week 9, your participation grade will be based on your critiques of your assigned partners for the revisions.