



ENG 6090 – Seminar in Literature: Literary Fantasy

3 Units

Spring 2026

Meeting days/times: Thursdays 4:00-6:45 pm (adjusted to 4:15-7:00 pm)

Meeting location: Bond Academic Center (BAC) 155 (adjusted to BAC 151)

Final Exam: TBD

Instructor title and name:	Dr. Schuyler Eastin
Phone:	619-849-2695 (LJWL Office)
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Office location and hours:	Bond Academic Center 122 (and Zoom upon request: https://pointloma.zoom.us/my/seastin2) M 10:00 am - 12:00 pm, TTh 9:00 - 11:00 am, and by appointment

PLNU Mission

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

Course Description*

An advanced literature course: period and topic of study selected by the faculty member.

Extended Course Description: Fantasy fiction has long been dismissed by literary elites as escapist, juvenile, and generally unserious as a literary genre. While its popularity has surged in recent years, largely influenced by the marketability of intellectual properties like J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and George R.R. Martin's *Song of Ice and Fire* (aka *Game of Thrones*), this mass appeal has also further entrenched elitist criticism; "serious fiction," these gatekeepers sneer, "should *not* appeal to the masses and should *not* advocate escapism." J.R.R. Tolkien, arguably the godfather of the genre, thought differently, challenging these generalizations and blanket judgments in his seminal defense of fantasy "On Fairy Stories" in which he argued that the distance created between a fantasy world and ours actually helps to *heal* many of the difficulties of reality.

Accordingly, our study this semester will seek to address the following course question: *How can the craft of producing fantasy fiction, in essence: literature about imagined worlds, disrupt assumptions about its literary value?*

Program and Course Learning Outcomes

At the Conclusion of the Course Students will be able to:

1. Closely read and critically analyze texts in their original languages and/or in translation.
2. Recall, identify, and use fundamental concepts of literary study to read and discuss texts
 - a. Standard literary terminology
 - b. Modes/genres of literature
 - c. Elements of literary genres
 - d. Literary periods (dates, writers, characteristics, and important developments)
 - e. Contemporary critical approaches
 - f. Extra-literary research
3. Analyze the social, cultural, ethnic, gendered, and/or historical contexts of the works and their authors, and connect the texts with their own lives.
4. Create detailed and informed textual analysis of literary works that examine several of the fundamental concepts of literary study.

Required Texts and Recommended Study Resources

Jemisin, N.K. *The Fifth Season*. ISBN: 9780316229296

Le Guin, Ursula. *Wizard of Earthsea*. ISBN: 9780547722023

Sanderson, Brandon. *Elantris*. ISBN: 9780765381026

Sapkowski, Andrzej. *The Last Wish*. ISBN: 9780316452465

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Children of Hurin*. ISBN: 9780547086057

Any other assigned readings will be made available via link or PDF in Canvas.

NOTE: Students are responsible to have the required course textbooks prior to the first day of class. Students are also encouraged to begin reading the books in preparation for the class as soon as possible.

Assessment and Grading*

This course will employ a standard point-based grading system. Each assignment carries a weighted value toward the final grade based on the assignments detailed below.

Detailed instructions for each assignment will be provided in Canvas, including the rubric that will be used to assess it.

Some assignments will involve development exercises that will require you to be present for workshoping and/or to incorporate feedback into the final revision.

Rather than grading assignments on a rolling basis toward an accumulating total your final grade will be determined by the work collected in a final portfolio. This does NOT mean you can simply turn everything in at the end of the semester as participating in the development process is absolutely essential for ultimate success of your work. Additionally, participation in development will be a point on the grading rubric for these assignments.

Grading Scale

Grades in this course will be determined out of a total 1000 points:

A	1000-930
A-	929-900
B+	899-870
B	869-830
B-	829-800
C+	799-770
C	769-730
C-	729-700
D	699-600
F	Less than 600

Assignments At-a-Glance

All assignments listed below are required. Further details for each assignment will be provided in Canvas:

- Craft Assessment papers two at 100 points each: these short analytical essays will allow you to closely examine an aspect of one of our author's craft in order to better understand how they employ literary techniques and fantasy tropes. These essays will help us reveal how the fantasy genre is *written*.
- Worldbuilding Vignette Workshop 200 points: using our understanding of fantasy worldbuilding techniques, these short creative pieces will allow you to imagine (or as Tolkien might say, sub-create) a unique fantasy world by narrating a plot-agnostic scene that shows (rather than tells)

the reader how some unique elements of this world work. Your vignettes will then be workshopped in small groups and possibly presented to the whole class.

- Research Study Collaboration 200 points: during the latter weeks of the semester, you will participate in developing a research study that will require you to both contribute a creative element to a collaboratively-constructed story and to collect survey data measuring various users' experiences with the constructed narrative.
- Seminar Leadership 100 points: once during the semester, you and a partner will be responsible for guiding the seminar conversation. While this will not require additional research (unless you want it to), it WILL require you to prepare questions, identify key passages in the reading, and to explore creative ways for the class as a whole to dive deeper into the reading.
- Research paper 300 points: this essay will be a traditional research paper that examines in detail one of the works we've covered over the course of the semester. While this essay will require scholarly sources and critical analysis, you will be free to approach it from a more creative or writerly perspective. Each student will present an abridged version of this paper during our final exam time.

Incompletes and Late Assignments

All assignments are to be submitted/turned in by the beginning of the class session when they are due—including assignments posted in Canvas. Incompletes will only be assigned in extremely unusual circumstances.

Content Warning*

Each of us comes to PLNU with our own unique life experiences that frame the way we perceive information. In this course we will cover a variety of topics, all of which has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. Each time a potentially triggering topic appears in a reading, the course schedule will contain this Content Warning superscript: ^{CW}.

The experience of being triggered versus intellectually challenged are different. The main difference is that an individual must have experienced trauma to experience being triggered, whereas an intellectual challenge has nothing to do with trauma. If you are a trauma survivor and encounter a topic in this class that is triggering for you, you may feel overwhelmed or panicked and find it difficult to concentrate. In response, I encourage you to take the necessary steps for your emotional safety. This may include leaving class while the topic is discussed or talking to a therapist at the Counseling Center. Should you choose to excuse yourself from the discussion of a certain topic, keep in mind that class topics and material are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in literary study. You are still responsible for the material, but we can discuss alternative methods for accessing that material and for assessing your learning. In either case, I will remain committed to supporting you throughout your learning in this course.

PLNU Spiritual Care

Please be aware PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith.

If you have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact your professor or the [Office of Spiritual Life and Formation](#).

PLNU Copyright Policy

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. For all student appeals, faculty and students should follow the procedures outlined in the University Catalog. See [Graduate Academic and General Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy*

I recognize that Generative Artificial Intelligence is having a significant impact on how we communicate, write, and conduct research, especially in the modern university. AI presents a number of compelling opportunities that promise to streamline our workflows and save us time but also represents an equal number of intellectual pitfalls. If the final product of our labor were all that mattered, the choice of whether or not to use AI would be quite literally a no-brainer. However, [in higher education the final product is rarely as important as your ability to work the process it took to produce it](#). In this class, the written assignments you submit are merely artifacts of the intellectual labor you've performed while reading and thinking about some very difficult texts.

This is not to say ours will be an AI-prohibitive class. In fact, there are certain situations in which the use and discussion of AI tools could be relevant to our course content. In fact, we may employ a number of these tools in specific ways throughout the semester. However, *substituting* your own intellectual labor with the nonintellectual work of an AI undermines the objectives of this course and the purpose of higher education and for this reason is highly discouraged.

All written assignments are required to contain a single-sentence AI statement describing how you used AI to produce the assignment. This includes but is not limited to: brainstorming, content generation, editing/proofreading etc. You should also provide a [proper MLA citation](#) for the AI tool you used. If you did *not* use AI, simply state: "I did not use AI on this assignment."

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2533). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation

Plan (AP) that outlines allowed accommodations. Professors are able to view a student's approved accommodations through Accommodate.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive so clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC process. This is to protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any accommodations.

Language and Belonging

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/nondiscrimination.

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination

In support of a safe learning environment, if you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the Title IX Office at pointloma.edu/Title-IX. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty and staff are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at counselingservices@pointloma.edu or find a list of campus pastors at <http://pointloma.edu/Title-IX> or as shown in the PLNU Spiritual Care section of this syllabus.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination or bias, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias

PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. Therefore, regular attendance and participation in each course are minimal requirements.

If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an “F” grade.

Students who anticipate being absent for an entire week of a course should contact the instructor in advance for approval and make arrangements to complete the required coursework and/or alternative assignments assigned at the discretion of the instructor. Acceptance of late work is at the discretion of the instructor and does not waive attendance requirements.

Refer to [Academic Policies](#) for additional detail.

GPS Academic Resources

PLNU offers the following free academic resources virtually for Graduate Professional Studies (GPS) Students. Visit myPLNU through the links below for more information.

- [The GPS Writing Center](#) offers:
 - **Zoom Writers Workshops** offered each quad on a variety of helpful topics
 - **One-to-one appointments** with the Writing Coach
 - **Microlearning YouTube Video Library** for helpful tips anytime
 - [Research Help Guide](#) to help you start your research
 - The physical office is located on the third floor of the [Mission Valley Regional Center](#) off the student lounge
- [Academic Writing Resources Course](#): Found on your Canvas Dashboard, this course is non-credit with 24/7 access, no time limits, and self-paced content. [Watch a quick video run-through](#) and take time now to explore!
- [Grammarly](#): Students have unlimited FREE access to Grammarly for Education, a trusted tool designed to help enhance writing skills by providing real-time feedback, identifying areas for improvement, and providing suggestions. Grammarly’s Generative AI is NOT available with our student accounts.
- [Tutoring](#): Students have access to 24/7 live or scheduled subject tutoring through Tutor.com, including a Paper Drop-Off Service with feedback within 12 hours.

We are here to support you! Contact us anytime: GPSWritingCenter@pointloma.edu

Additional Policies

Seminar format: As a seminar course at the graduate level, what you get out of this class is entirely dependent on your thorough preparation and active participation. Expect to complete all assigned

readings with active and forward-thinking annotation strategies by the time class begins each week. Expect also to make frequent and active contributions to class discussions by asking and answering questions, collaborating with peers, and demonstrating a critical engagement with the reading. This does not mean you must come to class having mastered or completely understood the reading but that you're prepared to work with our critical community to get your own questions answered and to help others do the same.

Our class should be a space for productive discussion, supportive collaboration, and performative expression. It is each student's responsibility to:

- Be open to trying out new ideas and pushing the boundaries of your experience
- Recognize and be supportive of the fact that your peers are doing the same

This doesn't mean we will shy away from disagreement or debate. Quite the contrary: we should be open to questioning and challenging each other, provided we always do so in a way that fosters growth.

Role/approach in your degree program: This course will largely operate as a standard graduate-level literature course. This means that our primary modes of collaboration will focus on critical analysis and research. However, I'm aware you're all Writing students and not Literature students. For this reason, the critical/theoretical support for our literary readings as well as our analytical objectives will focus largely on the *craft* of writing genre fiction. I am also open to incorporating creative approaches the otherwise analytical assignments we will be completing.

READING/ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to changes and additions throughout the semester so please be prepared to note any changes or regularly download the most current version from Canvas. Links to online material can be found here and in Canvas. All PDFs are posted to Canvas.

Week	Day	Reading	Activity/Due
1	January 15	Tolkien “On Fairy Stories” and “Mythopoeia” Le Guin “Some Assumptions about Fantasy” Krystal “Easy Writers” Grossman “Literary Revolution in the Supermarket Aisle: Genre Fiction is Disruptive Technology” James “Our Myths, Our Selves” (video) Sapkowski “The Lesser Evil” from <i>The Last Wish</i> pp. 86-129 CW: coarse language, implied sexuality	
2	January 22	Howard “Red Nails” CW: racism, sexual objectification, violent combat Peruse the Weird Tales archive to get a feel for the original target audience and presentation of Howard’s stories. Young “Founding Fantasy: J.R.R. Tolkien and Robert E. Howard” (PDF in Canvas)	
3	January 29	Tolkien, <i>The Children of Hurin</i> chapters 1-7 Izzo “Worldbuilding and Mythopoeia in Tolkien and Post-Tolkienian Fantasy Literature” (PDF in Canvas)	
4	February 5	Tolkien, <i>The Children of Hurin</i> chapters 8-18 and peruse the Genealogies and Appendices CW: implied incest Wood “Confronting the World’s Weirdness: J.R.R. Tolkien’s The Children of Húrin” (PDF in Canvas)	
5	February 12	Sapkowski, <i>The Last Wish</i> chapters 1-4, pp. 1-179 CW: coarse language, implied sexuality, violent combat Larsen “A Mythology for Poland: Andrzej Sapkowski’s Witcher Fantasy Series as Tolkienian Subcreation” (PDF in Canvas)	
6	February 19	Sapkowski, <i>The Last Wish</i> chapters 5-7, pp. 180-320 and excerpt from <i>Blood of Elves</i> (PDF in Canvas) CW: coarse language, implied sexuality, violent combat	Craft Assessment Paper #1
7	February 26	Sanderson “Lecture #6: Worldbuilding Part Two” (video) Read your peers’ vignettes by class time	Worldbuilding Workshop, Vignettes due 2/24
8	March 5	Le Guin, <i>A Wizard of Earthsea</i> Robinson and Robbins “Onomastic Metaphor: The Rhetoric of Right Names in <i>A Wizard of Earthsea</i> ” (PDF in Canvas)	

	March 12	<i>Spring Break (no class)</i>	
9	March 19	Sanderson, <i>Elantris</i> chs. Prologue-ch. 20, pp. 23-279 (prefatory material optional)	
10	March 26	Sanderson, <i>Elantris</i> ch. 21-Epilogue, pp. 279-555 (Ars Arcanum optional)	
11	April 2	<i>Easter Recess (no class)</i>	
12	April 9	Jemisin, <i>The Fifth Season</i> Prologue-ch. 13, pp. 1-231 and “The Unbearable Baggage of Orcing” <i>CW: child abuse, murder, sexual assault, torture, racism</i> <i>While these content warnings may appear extreme, keep in mind Jemisin’s dedication: “For all those who have to fight for the respect that everyone else is given without question.”</i>	
13	April 16	Janet Murray from <i>Hamlet on the Holodeck</i> chs. 4 and 5 (PDF in Canvas) <i>Fantasy Gaming Interlude (game TBD)</i>	Craft Assessment Paper #2
14	April 23	Choose Your Own Adventure: The Dragon’s Den (requires a free Internet Archive account to Borrow, read only once and track each of your choices) <i>Fantasy Gaming Study</i>	Research Study Collaboration (begin in class)
15	April 30	Jemisin, <i>The Fifth Season</i> chs. 13-22, pp. 232-449 (Appendices optional) <small>CW: see above</small>	
Finals	TBD	Final Seminar Presentations	