

ENGL 3743 x20 Special Topic – Literature of Diverse Voices:
Weird Literature
Spring Semester 2024
Syllabus, Reading Schedule, Due Dates, and Grading Rubric

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VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS: MTWR 11:00 AM – 1:30 PM. We can talk on the phone, meet in person, or make a ZOOM appointment. If I miss your call, my email (Outlook) will record your message and send it to me.

Required BOOKS (the actual books with page numbers), link, PDFs, and movie:

H. P. Lovecraft, *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories*. Penguin Orange Collection, edited by S. T. Joshi, Penguin, New York, 1999.

Arthur Machen. *The White People and Other Weird Stories*, edited by S. T. Joshi, foreword by Guillermo Del Toro, Penguin, New York, 2011.

Matt Ruff. *Lovecraft Country*, Harper Perennial, New York, 2017. Includes P.S. Insights, Interviews & More.

In D2L you will find the link for “Mongoose” by Sarah Monette and Elizabeth Bear; you will also find PDF versions of Elizabeth Bear’s “Shoggoths in Bloom” and C. L. Moore’s “Black God’s Kiss” and “Black God’s Shadow.”

The movie *Annihilation* (2018; directed by Alex Garland; starring Natalie Portman, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Gina Rodriguez, Tessa Thompson, Tuva Novotny, and Oscar Isaac) is significant in our course. It is available for free in the Moffett database SWANK.

Course goals

- Read Weird stories by Lovecraft, Machen, Ruff, and other authors.
- Write three essays with MLA citation that explain what makes this literature “weird” and why the weird is important. The first two essays are each seven paragraphs; the third essay is 10 paragraphs.
- After reading each story (or before if you don’t mind spoilers), watch our videos. They are conversations between Dr. Fields and Moffett Librarian Ryan Samuelson on why these stories are weird and why the weird is important.
- If students elect to do so, they can develop each essay paragraph-by-paragraph with my input. See the module “Getting My Input: Weird Essays.” No one else can see your work but me.
- Essay 3 (about Ruff’s *Lovecraft Country* and the movie *Annihilation*) should establish continuity with some of the stories addressed in Essays 1-2.
- Demonstrate proficient use of Standard Written English.

DUE DATES AT A GLANCE & PERCENTAGE VALUE OF SEMESTER GRADE

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|---------------------------------------|-------|--------------------|
| 1. D2L Drop box: Weird Essay 1 | –30% | Friday February 16 |
| 2. D2L Drop box: Weird Essay 2 | – 30% | Friday April 5 |
| 3. D2L Drop box: Weird Essay 3 | – 40% | Friday May 3 |

Weird Essay 1, 2, and 3. We use MLA in-body citing and Works Cited.

Weird Essay 1 discusses at least three of our four Lovecraft stories. The prompt question is two-fold: What makes these stories WEIRD? Why is the WEIRD important? The essay should be seven significant paragraphs, each paragraph 300 to 400 words (**seven paragraphs**—approx. seven pages)

Weird Essay 2 discusses “The White People,” “Black God’s Kiss/Black God’s Shadow” (treated as one story), and either “Shoggoths in Bloom,” or “Mongoose.” This essay needs to address two of our four stories from Matt Ruff’s *Lovecraft Country*: “Lovecraft Country,” “Dreams of the Which House,” “Abdullah’s Book,” and “The Mark of Cain.” The prompt questions and format are the same as Essay 1 (**seven paragraphs**—approx. seven pages). NOTE: You can reference some of the stories you addressed in Weird Essay 1.

Weird Essay 3 discusses the movie *Annihilation*. This discussion should make at least brief mention of the movie’s connection to Lovecraft’s “The Color Out of Space.” The essay should have 10 paragraphs, each 300 to 400 words (**10 paragraphs**; approx. 10 pages). Like Weird Essays 1 and 2, it answers the questions: What makes this movie WEIRD? Why is the WEIRD important? **Weird Essay 3 should look back at previous stories addressed in Weird Essays 1 and 2 that are relevant to *Annihilation*.** Therefore, Weird Essay 3 answers a THIRD question: **How does *Annihilation* compare to previous Weird stories you have already addressed in Essays 1-2?**

Weird Essay/Paragraph One:

Paragraph one is a mini-essay. It answers (overall) the two questions: What makes these stories weird? Why is the Weird important? This paragraph previews some of the specific details, scenarios, and dynamics we will see in the body paragraphs.

Body Paragraphs 2-6

Each body paragraph should start with a TOPIC idea about some aspect of the Weird. The body paragraph describes some specific scenario, moment, or dynamic from a relevant story. The paragraph connects to other Weird stories in our reading. In Weird Essays 2 and 3, these can be stories that were prominent in Weird Essay 1.

Conclusion (epilogue/coda)

Paragraph seven begins with a scenario, moment, or dynamic as yet not addressed in the essay or previous essays. This paragraph closes with a personal reflection on the Weird—your own thought. You get the last word. This paragraph only needs to be five sentences.

Note: Weird Essay 3 is 10 paragraphs—so that would be 8 body paragraphs.

LATE PENALTY (10 points out of 100)

Late penalty for DROP BOX due dates is 10 points out of 100 even if D2L says lateness is by a minute or less. **All late work is due before 11:59 PM Monday May 6.**

Academic Dishonesty & Getting input from Dr. Fields

Do not succumb to the temptation of using AI or unauthorized material from the internet. Doing so means a “0” (no points) for that assignment. Think of me as your “AI.” In CONTENT, in the modules for DISCUSSION FORUM & TOPIC for a THREAD, click on the arrow next to the title of the discussion forum. Then click on VIEW TOPIC. Copy-and-paste or type directly into the text box. Don’t use the attachment function (I am not able to reply to it). I can correct punctuation, syntax, and word choice errors. I can make my own edit of your paragraph. If you omitted or misunderstood something, I will alert you. This opportunity is called a THREAD, but this thread is very different from threads in other D2L courses. Our thread is NOT public. **In your thread to me, no one can see your writing but me; likewise, you are the only one who can see my reply.** NOTE: **My help is purely optional.** Plenty of people do well without my help beforehand. If you are truly interested in my help, post your thread to me in timely fashion. If you wait until the day before, or day of, the due date, I will reply, but it will be a brief remark.

Drop Box Due Dates: My replies to your threads are only for input. You still need to submit your assignment to the drop box in order for it to count and be graded.

Videos: Moffett Librarian Ryan Samuelson and I discuss our stories in 12 videos. We are answering our course's perennial two questions: what makes these stories weird? Why is the Weird important?

GRADES ARE NOT ROUNDED UP - D2L Final Calculated Grade is the semester grade.

Here are the numeric-letter values: 100-90 (A), 89-80 (B), 79-70 (C), 69-60 (D), 59-0 (F). NOTE: An 89.9 is a B; 79.9 is a C; 69.9 is a D; and 59.9 is an F.

Students with disabilities:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guarantees reasonable accommodation. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Support Services in Room 168 of the Clark Student Center, 397-4140.

Reading & Watching Schedule with Due Dates

The videos feature Dr. Fields and Moffett Librarian Ryan Samuelson talking about important scenarios in our stories and answering our perennial two questions: what makes these stories weird? Why is the Weird important?

WEEK 1 January 16-19:

Lovecraft's "The Outsider." See video.

WEEK 2 January 22-26:

Lovecraft's "The Call of Cthulhu." See video.

WEEK 3 January 29-February 2:

Lovecraft's "The Color Out of Space." See video.

Option: Get my input on your paragraphs. Click on the module "Getting My Input"; click on the arrow beside the title of the discussion forum. Click on View Topic. Type or copy-and-paste from your document into textbox. Don't use the attachment function. I can only reply to what is in the text box

WEEK 4 February 5-9:

Lovecraft's "The Shadow Over Innsmouth." See video.

WEEK 5 February 12-16:

Arthur Machen's "The White People." See video.

Weird Essay 1 is due in the drop box before 11:59 PM Friday February 16.

WEEK 6 February 19-23:

C. L. Moore's "Black God's Kiss" and "Black God's Shadow." See PDFs and Links. See video.

WEEK 7 February 26-March 1:

Elizabeth Bear's "Shoggoths in Bloom"; Sarah Monette and Elizabeth Bear's "Mongoose." See PDFs and Links. See video.

WEEK 8 March 4-8

From the novel *Lovecraft Country* by Matt Ruff: "Lovecraft Country" (pp. 1-106). See video.

SPRING BREAK March 11-15

WEEK 9 March 18-22:

From the novel *Lovecraft Country*: "The Dreams in the Which House" (pp. 107-144). See video.

OPTION: Get my input into your paragraphs.

WEEK 10 **March 25-29: CAMPUS CLOSED FOR HOLIDAY: Thursday – Friday March 28-29.**

From the novel *Lovecraft Country*: "Abdullah's Book" (pp. 145-174). See video.

WEEK 11 April 1-5:

From the novel *Lovecraft Country*: “The Mark of Cain” (pp. 341-366). See video.

Weird Essay 2 is due in the drop box before 11:59 PM Friday April 5.

WEEK 12 April 8-12:

We need to watch and ponder the movie *Annihilation* (2018). It was directed by Alex Garland. It stars Natalie Portman, Jennifer Jason Leigh, and Gina Rodriguez. It may be found on the Moffett Library database SWANK. See video.

WEEK 13 April 15-19.

Option: get my input on Weird Essay 3.

WEEK 14 April 22-26:

Weird Essay 3 (about the movie “Annihilation”) should look back at previous stories you addressed in Weird Essay 1-2.

WEEK 15 April 29-May 3:

Weird Essay 3 is due in the drop box before 11:59 PM Friday May 3. If the Essay is late (even by less than a minute), it is penalized 10 points out of 100. NOTE: the drop box for the Essay will close and lock two hours after the due date. The Essay cannot be submitted at all after 2:00 AM May 4.

ALL LATE DROP BOX ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE SUBMITTED BEFORE 11:59 PM Monday May 3. Late penalty is 10 points out of 100.

GRADING RUBRIC

The rubric consists of five categories that are evaluated on a scale of five possible scores: 56 (failing), 66 (passing), 76 (satisfactory), 86 (good), and 96-100 (excellent). The average of the five scores for the five categories is the assignment’s grade:

- Paragraph one (introduction): this paragraph is a mini-essay that answers the overall question for these stories: What makes these stories weird? Why is the Weird important? This paragraph previews salient details, scenarios, and dynamics we will see in the body paragraphs.
- Body paragraphs: Each body paragraph begins with a topic idea about some aspect of the Weird (in the opinion of the student). Each body paragraph develops a scenario, moment, or dynamic from a relevant story (in our reading schedule) that illustrates how some aspect of the Weird works and why it’s important. Each body paragraph connects with other relevant stories in our reading schedule. Weird Essay 3 should make a special point of connecting to some of the stories you addressed in Weird Essays 1 and 2.
- Specific Details: Essay avoids summary, synopses, and long recounting of plot points. We need to focus on the specific situation, dynamic, or scenario the illustrates a given topic idea, which by implication illustrates what makes the story in question Weird.
- Originality, creativity, and readability: Essay represents the unique point of view, insight, and vision of the STUDENT writer. Every paragraph represents the perspective of the STUDENT. The student should not rely on AI or the internet. The essay is the unique and meaningful work of the student writer.
- Conclusion (epilogue/coda): last paragraph is not a review of the essay. It begins by describing a specific dynamic, scenario, or moment heretofore not represented in the student’s writing in this class. The paragraph closes with a personal take on the Weird. The student has the last word. This paragraph only needs to be five sentences.