

ENG 1131: Writing Through Media – American Fantasy TV and Cultural Prestige (Class # 13156), Fall 2020

Instructor Name: Thomas Johnson

Course meeting times & locations: Synchronous Canvas Zoom T, Period 4 (10:40 a.m.-11:30 a.m.), R, Period 4-5 (10:40 a.m.-12:35 p.m.), Screening Period 5-8 (W, 4:05 p.m.-7:05 p.m.), **All sessions will be synchronous and take place on Zoom, including screening periods..**

Office Hours: W, 11 a.m. to noon, R 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. on Canvas Zoom

Course website: Canvas

Instructor Email: tdjohnson@ufl.edu

Course Description

This class will examine the rise of American fantasy television from a niche, cult genre to unprecedented cultural prominence and influence over the last decade. The early 21st-century saw a new brand of premium cable TV that branded itself as “quality” and realist by default. This categorization went largely unchallenged until the premiere of *Game of Thrones* in 2011. Based on a book series that appealed to readers of mass-market fantasy, the show represents an attempt by premium cable to appeal to a previously untapped market of genre fiction fans without alienating a core audience that engaged with its programming on the premise that it was more aesthetically refined and psychologically complex than “ordinary” television. As *Game of Thrones* rose to unprecedented cultural prominence over the next decade, the show brought issues to the fore of the cultural conversation that the fantasy genre has long negotiated – the nuances of fan engagement, the ethics of postcolonialism, questions of feminist representation, and debates over politics and religion.

By examining *Game of Thrones* and the variety of scholarly and journalistic discourses surrounding it, students will come to a better understanding of how fantasy television has increasingly influenced American culture as it has risen in cultural prominence. Students will explore how the reception of fantasy television influences its narrative trajectory and ideological messages in a manner unique to the medium. Students will learn how to rigorously engage with popular texts through four critical viewing responses, an annotated bibliography, and a critical research paper on show of their choice within the genres of fantasy, science fiction, and/or horror. Finally, students will become cognizant of the realities of television development and network branding by writing a pitch for a prospective fantasy adaptation to a premium cable network or streaming platform.

COVID-19 Statement: In light of the continuing impacts of COVID-19, this course will be offered entirely through online course sessions. Our classes will rely heavily on discussion which, I hope, will help to bridge some of the gap between our computer screens. Please be sure to download Zoom on your personal computer before the start of the class and familiarize yourself with how it works. I will send instructions to the class via email about how to join our Zoom meetings.

If you as an individual have any COVID-related hardships which may obstruct your performance

in this class, please communicate with me as well as making use of all UF resources available to you. We can then assemble a plan to help you complete the class and fulfill all requirements in the way most beneficial for you.

General Education Objectives:

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) *or* Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

General Education Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to

Required Texts and Subscriptions:

An HBO subscription (available as an “add-on” to Hulu and Amazon Prime)

All other required readings are available on Canvas and/or linked to in the schedule.

Assignments (see below for Grading Rubric):

Four Critical Reading/Viewing Entries (500 words each, 200 points)

These short response papers will be on the *Game of Thrones* episodes we are watching for a particular day and should demonstrate knowledge and engagement with the show. These viewings are **critical** and as a result, you are expected to make an argument about what you have watched. The responses should incorporate terminology from the criticism/scholarship we read

on the week of submission.

Write a Pitch for a Fantasy TV Adaptation (1500 words, 200 points)

Write a pitch for a television adaptation of a novel, film, or video game that broadly falls under the umbrella of speculative fiction (fantasy, science fiction, horror). The pitch should include discussions of how your adaptation will make structural changes to the source material to accommodate the shift in medium, how it will fit the brand of a particular network/platform, and how it will address specific viewer demographics (i.e., fantasy television fans, fans of HBO ‘prestige’ programming, etc.).

Essay Prospectus/Annotated Bibliography (500 words, 100 points)

This assignment contains both a formal abstract for your Researched Critical Essay and an annotated bibliography of at least 3 sources.

Presentation: Pitch your Final Paper Topic to the Class (100 points)

Distill the argument for your final paper into a five-minute oral presentation to give to the class during the screening period on Wednesday, 12/9. Students should be prepared to answer questions from the instructor about the idea. The oral presentation should be accompanied by a visual aid (a poster or PowerPoint, for example).

Paper: Researched Critical Essay (2000 words, 300 points)

This essay will be a sustained, formally researched critical analysis in which you will make an original argument about a fantasy, science fiction, or horror television show of your choice (*Game of Thrones* is an option). You should engage with one of the theoretical frameworks we have discussed in class (‘quality’ television, postcolonialism, feminism, adaptation theory, etc.) and bring in at least 3 outside secondary sources that relate to the television series and your chosen theoretical framework.

Attendance/Daily Participation (100 points)

Daily and engaged participation is a priority in this course. All students should participate every day in some fashion by offering points of view, raising questions, asking for clarification, and/or writing when it is required. Attendance is mandatory.

Assignments and Grade Distribution	Points
Viewing Entries (500 words each) - 20%	200
Written Fantasy TV Pitch (1500 words) – 20%	200
Essay Prospectus/Annotated Bib. (500 words) – 10%	100
Fantasy TV Pitch Presentation – 10%	100
Researched Critical Essay (2000 words) – 30%	300
Class Participation – 10%	100
	Total: 1000

Course Policies:

You must complete *all assignments* to receive credit for this course. You are expected to be prepared for every class, including completing all reading and writing assignments on time.

Attendance:

a) ENG 1131 is a participation-oriented course, which means that you will build your skills and gain knowledge incrementally and systematically in each class throughout the semester.

Attendance is crucial in engaging with other students about the reading and writing assignments. Much of the learning that takes place is spontaneous and difficult to reproduce outside of class.

b) Only those absences involving military service; court-mandated obligations, such as jury duty and court testimony; university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays, are exempt. Absences for illness or family emergencies will count toward your three allowed absences. Please provide a doctor's note. Each absence beyond three may lower your overall grade. If you are absent, it is still your responsibility to make yourself aware of all due dates. You are still responsible for turning assignments in on time.

c) Please do not come late to class; arriving late disrupts the entire class. If you are more than 15 minutes late, you will be marked absent. Being tardy three times will equal one absence. Save your absences for when you really need them. UF's official attendance policy is available to read [here](#).

1. **Paper Format and Submission:** All papers must be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, and follow other MLA formatting and citation guidelines. All assignments will be submitted on Canvas.
2. **Late Papers/Assignments:** Papers and drafts are due at the beginning of class. Extensions can be negotiated in advance of deadline; late papers will not be accepted. Failure of technology is not an excuse.
3. **Paper Maintenance Responsibilities:** Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned and/or graded work in this course until the semester is over.
4. **Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism:** Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>
5. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565 <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.
6. For information on UF Grading Policy, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ungrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
7. **Grade Appeals:** In 1000-and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (cblount@ufl.edu). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
8. **Course Evaluations:** Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>.
9. Students who face difficulty completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center, (352) 392-1575, or contact them online: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwcDefault.aspx>
10. **Cell Phones and Laptops:** Cell phones must be silenced or on vibrate at the beginning of class. Laptops are not necessary for this class and must be kept shut and put away unless

the instructor gives you permission to use them.

11. UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>. Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage with controversial topics and opinions. Diverse student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own.

Fall 2020 Schedule

Schedule Note: Readings are subject to change. While all classes are planned as synchronous, synchronous sessions are subject to change to asynchronous sessions in case of a technology malfunction or an emergency.

Week	Day	Viewing/Reading Material	Due
1 Introduction	T, 9/1 Synchronous	Syllabus and Course Overview	
	W, 9/2	No class	
	R, 9/3 Synchronous	Episodes 1.01 and 1.02 New York Times and Washington Post Reviews	
2 Prestige Television as Cultural Category	T, 9/8 Synchronous	Episodes 1.03 and 1.04 Janet McCabe and Kim Akass, "It's Not TV, It's HBO Original Programming: Producing Quality TV."	
	W, 9/9 Synchronous	Episodes 1.05 and 1.06	
	R, 9/10 Synchronous	Episodes 1.07 and 1.08	
3	T, 9/15 Synchronous	Episodes 1.09 and 1.10 Tobias Steiner, "Steering the Author Discourse: The Construction of Authorship in Quality TV and the Case of <i>Game of Thrones</i> "	
	W, 9/16 Synchronous	Episodes 2.01 and 2.02	
	R, 9/17 Synchronous	Episodes 2.03 and 2.04	Last Possible Due Date for Critical Viewing Entry #1

4 The Fantasy Genre on Television	T, 9/22 Synchronous	Episodes 2.05 and 2.06 Catherine Johnson, <i>Telefantasy</i> , Introduction	
	W, 9/23 Synchronous	Episodes 2.07 and 2.08	
	R, 9/25 Synchronous	Episodes 2.09 and 2.10	
5	T, 9/29 Synchronous	Episodes 3.01 and 3.02 Ryan Vu, “Fantasy After Representation: D&D, <i>Game of Thrones</i> , and Postmodern World-Building”	
	W, 9/30 Synchronous	Episodes 3.03 and 3.04	
	R, 10/1 Synchronous	Episodes 3.05 and 3.06	
6 Adaptation	T, 10/6 Synchronous	Episodes 3.07 and 3.08 Shannon Wells-Lassagne, <i>Television and Serial Adaptation</i> , Introduction.	
	W, 10/7 Synchronous	Episodes 3.09 and 3.10	
	R, 10/8 Synchronous	Episodes 4.01 and 4.02	Last possible due date for Critical Viewing Entry #2
7	T, 10/13 Synchronous	Episodes 4.03 and 4.04 Reading TBA – Instructor will send link	
	W, 10/14 Synchronous	Episodes 4.05 and 4.06	
	R, 10/15 Synchronous	Episodes 4.07 and 4.08	Fantasy TV Adaptation Pitch
8 (Post)Colonial Feminism and Fantasy	T, 10/20 Synchronous	Episodes 4.09 and 4.10 Anne Gjelsvik, “Unspeakable Acts of Terror as/in Quality Television”	
	W, 10/21 Synchronous	Episodes 5.01 and 5.02	

	R, 10/22 Synchronous	Episodes 5.03 and 5.04	
9	T, 10/27 Synchronous	Episodes 5.05 and 5.06 Shiloh Carroll, "Postcolonialism, Slavery, and the Great White Hope"	
	W, 10/28 Synchronous	Episodes 5.07 and 5.08	
	R, 10/29 Synchronous	Episodes 5.09 and 5.10	
10 Religion and Politics in (Fantasy) Television	T, 11/3 Synchronous	Episodes 6.01 and 6.02 Charlotte E. Howell, "Fantastic TV's Displacement of Christianity"	
	W, 11/4 Synchronous	Episodes 6.03 and 6.04	
	R, 11/5 Synchronous	Episodes 6.05 and 6.06	Last Possible Due Date for Critical Viewing Entry #3
11	T, 11/10 Synchronous	Episodes 6.07 and 6.08 Katherine Tucker, "Violence, Politics, and Religion: Cosmic War in <i>Game of Thrones</i> "	
	W, 11/11 Synchronous	Episode 6.09 and 6.10	
	R, 11/12 Synchronous	Episode 7.01 and 7.02	
12 Fandom and Fantasy Television	T, 11/17 Synchronous	Episode 7.03 and 7.04 Judith Fathallah, "Fanfic paratexts for <i>ASIOAF/Game of Thrones</i> "	
	W, 11/18 Synchronous	Episode 7.05 and 7.06	
	R, 11/19 Synchronous	Episode 7.07 Matt Zoller Seitz, " Is Game of Thrones the Last Show We'll Watch Together? "	Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography
13	T, 11/24 Synchronous	Episodes 8.01 and 8.02	

	W, 11/25	Thanksgiving: No Class	
	R, 11/26	Thanksgiving: No Class	
14 TV Finales	T, 12/1 Synchronous	Episode 8.03 Casey McCormick, <i>TV Finales and the Meaning of Endings</i> , Excerpt	
	W, 12/2 Synchronous	Episode 8.04	
	R, 12/3 Synchronous	Episode 8.05 Kristen Warner, “Fans with Feels: Game of Thrones as Soap Opera”	Last possible due date for Critical Viewing Entry #4
15	T, 12/8 Synchronous	Episode 8.06	
	W, 12/9 Synchronous	Final Discussion and Final Presentations	Final Presentation Powerpoint
	W, 12/16		Final Paper Due at 11:59 p.m.

4.0	93-100%	930-1000	C	2.0	73-76	730-769	
A-	3.67	90-92%		C-	1.67	70-72	700-729
B+	3.33	87-89%		D+	1.33	67-69	670-699
B	3.0	83-86		D	1.0	63-66	630-669
B-	2.67	80-82		D-	0.67	60-62	600-629
C+	2.33	77-79		E	0.00	0-59	0-599

Grading Rubric:

An A level assignment is complete in content, is organized well, and has few to no mechanical errors. An assignment of this level also demonstrates originality and creativity, showing that the student took extra steps beyond what was required.

A B level assignment is solid overall in terms of content, organization, and mechanics, but may need some minor revision to one of these three areas. An assignment that receives this grade fulfills assignment expectations but is also complete in content and relatively free of grammatical or mechanical errors.

A C level assignment has promise in some areas, but lacks the command, organization, persuasiveness or clarity of the A or B assignments. An assignment that receives this grade may be overlooking an important component of the assignment or need significant revision.

A D level assignment does not yet demonstrate basic writing expectations. The paper has major

issues in content, organization and / or mechanics. Assignments that receive this grade will often be incomplete or have major issues with organization.

An “E” is usually reserved for students who do not do the assignment or fail to attend class. However, an “E” may also be given if an essay blatantly ignores instructions or has major problems.