High Fantasy
Spring 2014, Dept. of English, SBU
EGL 301, Mo / We 2:20 – 3:50, Frey Hall 226
Instructor: Bente Videbaek, Ph. D., Office hours: Mo 2–2:30 by our class room, Tu / Th 11:45–12:45 in HUM 2088, We 5:20–5:40 by our class room
e-mail: videbaekbente@gmail.com or bente.videbaek@stonybrook.edu (no written work this route, please!)

In this class we will be looking at what has been labeled “High Fantasy,” fiction, epic in nature, most often in a medieval setting which has its roots in our world. We most often find a hero, a quest, and an all-encompassing evil that threatens the very fabric of society. And, like it or not, we are usually presented with a high moral message that flies under the radar. Most of our texts are the first volumes of a series of three or more, and I hope you will continue the series in all that spare time you almost have. It’s worth it.

Fantasy is often of the ‘cautionary tale’ variety. We are going to examine how the genre develops, and we’ll see if we can determine why a particular author has opted to tell his tale in the way we find it at the historical moment the tale was written/published.

You will write three papers on a topic of your choosing, approved by me. If you're stumped, drop by the office or e-mail me. We'll figure something out. Revisions due one week after the paper is handed back. And you will be talking about the readings a lot! Participation counts!

Books (print available at Stony Brook’s Book Store):

NN: Beowulf
NN: "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" in Tolkien's translation (This is the optimal one out there. If you already have another, it will be OK to use it, but you'll cheat yourself of a true work of translation art)
Tolkien: The Fellowship of the Ring
Le Guin: A Wizard of Earth Sea
Pullman: The Golden Compass
Nix: Sabriel
Gaiman: American Gods
Collins: The Hunger Games

There will be two short stories and three critical texts on Blackboard.

You can buy the book, rent it, or get an electronic version depending on what format you prefer. These books are readily available used, cheap on line.

Absence and lateness

Please try (HARD!) to be on time. You can be absent twice without having your grade suffer, but after that there will be points off. There is such a thing as excusable absences, but they should be documented. Also, please don’t be late with papers, especially 2 and 3 in solid draft form.

Try to curb the siren-song of the warbling cell phone. If the tune is right, I will dance. And it’s embarrassing—I know! I’ve been there; mine does Big Band...
Grade:

Papers: Three papers [15%, 20% and 30% of grade]. The first must be 4–6 pages (no external sources necessary), the second 6–10 pages (3 outside/critical sources necessary), the third 8–12 pages (5+ outside/critical sources necessary) double spaced, **MLA style**. The papers need to be ready in a draft form, two copies, you won’t blush to show others on the days specified. Make sure you have that draft! No paper = absence. Revision must happen, unless you get an A the first round, and the revision is due one week after the papers are returned. Please have the paper ready on the due-date.

Quizzes: 15%

Participation: 20%. If you want, we will set up a discussion board on BB. The TAs and I will read and monitor the discussions, but the actual "work" is up to you. Post things you somehow didn't get to say in class.

Plagiarism:

...is a bad thing! Always give credit to all your sources. If plagiarism is discovered, the best thing that can happen is F for the course… And there’s that BORING Q course one has to take. SBU subscribes to a plagiarism-detection website, and it is really easy for instructors to use. Moreover, the time spent searching for lovely things to plagiarize is arguably longer than what it will take to craft a personal paper. And remember, Latin *plagiarius* means kidnapper! Again, please don’t!

Americans with Disabilities Act:

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. Do this as soon as possible. I cannot help when I am not informed.

Academic Integrity:

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/
Critical Incident Management:

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Read texts closely with attention to nuances of language, content and form; such texts include published works and drafts of student writing for the purposes of peer review.

2. Write focused, organized and convincing analytical essays in clear, standardized English prose, making use of feedback from instructor and peers.

3. Locate, evaluate, synthesize and incorporate relevant primary and secondary source materials into thesis-driven, interpretive essays of increasing length and complexity.

4. Understand conventions of literary study, including: familiarity with literary terms, genres, devices; knowledge of narrative and rhetorical forms; awareness of literary criticism.

5. Participate in discussions by listening to others’ perspectives, asking productive questions, and articulating ideas with nuance and clarity.

6. Develop and hone critical thinking skills.

Syllabus (subject to change...)

Most of our novels are spread over three or so meetings. Count the meetings and divide the book's pages by that number, then proceed to the end of the chapter, to know what is due on a given day. If there is a critical text, make sure that is read as well. Most of these novels are quick reads.

January 27: Introduction to the class and the material. "The Ones Who Walk away from Omelas." Begin Beowulf

January 29, February 3: Beowulf. "On Fairy Stories"

February 5, 10: "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"

February 12: "The Child and the Shadow"; "The Shadow" (link on BB)
February 17, 19, 24: Discussion of paper expectations. *The Fellowship of the Ring*

**Draft of Paper 1, 2 copies, due 2/19. Peer editing day half of 2/24.** Please have a well-prepared worksheet and comments with you to share with your partner.

February 26, March 3, 5: "Why Are Americans Afraid of Dragons?"; *A Wizard of Earth Sea*

March 10, 12, 24: *The Golden Compass*

**Draft of Paper 2 due 3/24. I'll need two copies.**

March 26: Peer editing day. Please have a well-prepared worksheet and comments with you to share with your partner. We'll probably need part of the meeting for finishing the novel.

March 31, April 2, 7: *Sabriel*

April 9, 14, 16, 21: *American Gods*

**Paper 3 due 4/16; revision due on the date of our final in my office. I'll need two copies.** We'll probably need part of the meeting for finishing the novel.

April 26: Peer editing day. Please have a well-prepared worksheet and comments with you to share with your partner.

April 28, 30, May 5, 7: *The Hunger Games*

Final: Tuesday May 13th, 5:30–6:30 in my office, or earlier in my mailbox.