

## **ENGL 373: Science Fiction and Fantasy:** **Death and the Undying**

Fall 2021  
CRN 20440  
MWF 9:30-10:20 am  
BRNG 1255

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Office hours M 10:30-11:30 and by appointment  
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### **Description:**

Vampires! Zombies! Liches! Evil AIs! Again and again, science fiction and fantasy return to issues of death and dying. Even when not inventing new and terrifying ways to die (and come back from it), these genres speculate on more than death alone. In this class, we will examine the ways in which speculative fiction uses tropes of the dead, the undead, and the undying to discuss issues very central to those of us who are still alive. We will examine female sexuality demonized into vampirism, queer desire processed through necromancy, the echoes of colonialism both on a spaceship and in a (haunted?) gothic mansion, and how one might come of age in a time of (un)death. While our focus is on death and the undead, these texts will ultimately ask us to examine life and the living.

### **University course description:**

Credit Hours: 3.00. Representative works of science fiction and fantasy examined in relation to both mainstream and popular literature. Emphasis is on technique, theme, and form.

### **Outcomes:**

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Identify key terms in speculative fiction through regular quizzes and class lectures
2. Analyze the use of death and undeath in course texts through classroom discussion and short explication essays
3. Compose a creative research project that reimagines and repurposes one aspect of a course text into a new genre

### **Required texts (available at Von's):**

- *Binti*, Nnedi Okorafor. **Do not buy your own copy! You will get one for free!**
- *All Systems Red*, Martha Wells. TorDotCom, 2017. 9780765397539
- *Reaper Man*, Terry Pratchett. Harper, 2013. 0062237357
- *Dracula*, Bram Stoker. Dover, 2000. 9780486454016
- *Mexican Gothic*, Silvia Moreno-Garcia. Del Rey, 2021. 052562080X
- *Gideon the Ninth*, Tamsyn Muir. TorDotCom, 2020. 125031318X
- *Sabriel*, Garth Nix. HarperTeen, 2008. 9780061474354

The ISBN numbers for these texts reflect the paperback editions. Other editions are okay to buy if you can find them for a cheaper price, but **please try to order the same edition of *Reaper Man***, as there are no chapter headings to standardize page numbers.

All supplemental texts will be available on Brightspace (noted as BS in the course calendar).

**Assignments:**

- 15%: Quizzes: You will be quizzed regularly on course readings, classroom discussion, and lectures. All quizzes will be available on Brightspace.
- 20%: Discussion prompts: You will sign up to be a discussion leader for two class periods. You will come to class with 3-5 prepared questions to spark discussion and will help guide the conversation around your questions. Questions will be due by 9 am on your assigned days via Brightspace. We will conduct sign-ups during the first week of class.
- 30%: Explication essays (2, each 3-5 pages): You will examine and explicate one significant moment from one of our course texts. You will explain how and why the moment is important as to the understanding of the overall text by using the close reading skills we will develop in class. One will be due before fall break, the other will be due before Thanksgiving break.
- 20%: Creative project: You will select one aspect of a syllabus text and remediate it into a different form, accompanied by a short paper explaining the context for your text and explaining your creative choices. This project will be due during finals week.
- 15%: Professional ethos: This category includes attendance, homework, and participation in class.

**Course policies:**

- Grading scale:

A+ 97-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69
A 93-96	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66
A- 90-92	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62
F 0-59			

- Assignment and format guidelines: Assignments should be written in either MLA or Chicago format, using 12-point Times New Roman font. Papers should be double spaced with 1" margins. All papers should be submitted electronically as a Word doc (.doc or .docx) or PDF.
- Email etiquette: I will occasionally send emails to the courselist, so please be sure to check your Purdue email regularly. Any email communication with me must be done via your Purdue email. Please allow up to 24 hours for a response.
- Technology policy: Technology is welcome in the classroom as long as it contributes directly to the focus of the course (notetaking, viewing course

documents/articles, free writing, etc.). Please refrain from using the social media functions on your digital technology unless it's part of a lesson.

- **Camera and Zoom policy:** In the event that we must return to remote learning, class will be held synchronously on Zoom. You are encouraged to have your camera on, but it is not required. Should you choose to keep your camera off, I ask that you upload a profile picture to your account so we can be more than a sea of blank squares.
- **Missed or late work:** I expect work to be submitted on time. Late work will be docked a third of a letter grade for every day late (so after one day an A will become an A-, etc.). **I am happy to grant extensions, but you must reach out to me at least 24 hours before the deadline.**
- **Attendance:** As much of our time together will be spent discussing the day's reading, you are expected to attend every class. If you must miss class for a religious or military obligation or if you are sick, please let me know ahead of time so the absence may be excused. **If you are sick, do not come to class.** Email me ahead of time and let me know, and then stay home and rest. More than 3 unexcused absences will negatively impact your participation grade.
  - If you are isolated or quarantined, we will use discussion boards (graded under Professional Ethos) to supplement in-person discussion.
- **Inclusivity:** Despite the fact that we're reading speculative fiction, all of our texts deal with real-world identities, including different races, sexual orientations, and religions. Bigotry of any kind—including but not limited to sexism, racism, and homophobia—will not be tolerated. We can disagree on content, but not on a person's humanity or identity.
- **Mask policy:** The texts we're reading this semester are science fiction and fantasy. Covid is neither. We will follow Purdue's policies with regards to masking. Masks must go over both mouth and nose. Failure to wear your mask properly will affect your professional ethos grade. If you are able, I strongly encourage you to get vaccinated.
- **Syllabus and course schedule:** I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus and course schedule based on the needs of our class.

## Schedule:

### Unit 1: Death and the Dead

Week 1:	Introduction to Speculative Fiction
M 8/23:	Syllabus, introductions
W 8/25:	"A Machine, Unhaunted," Kerstin Hall (available on Brightspace (BS))
F 8/27:	"The Specialist's Hat," Kelly Link (BS)
Week 2:	Afrofuturism
M 8/30:	<i>Binti</i> pp. 1-29
W 9/1:	<i>Binti</i> pp. 29-end
F 9/3:	<i>Binti: Sacred Fire</i>

Week 3: Cyborgs!  
M 9/6: **LABOR DAY—NO CLASS**  
W 9/8: *All Systems Red* Chapter 1-4  
F 9/10: *All Systems Red* Chapter 5-end

Week 4: The Grim Reaper  
M 9/13: *Reaper Man* pp. 1-51  
W 9/15: *Reaper Man* pp. 51-102  
F 9/17: *Reaper Man* pp. 102-162

Week 5: New Death  
M 9/20: *Reaper Man* pp. 162-224  
W 9/22: *Reaper Man* pp. 225-283  
F 9/24: *Reaper Man* pp. 283-343

#### Unit 2: The Undead

Week 6: The Gothic  
M 9/27: *Dracula* Chapter 1-4  
Guest lecture: Vanessa Iacocca  
W 9/29: *Dracula* Chapter 5-9  
F 10/1: *Dracula* Chapter 10-15

Week 7: Gender and the Undead  
M 10/4: *Dracula* Chapter 16-19  
W 10/6: *Dracula* Chapter 20-23  
F 10/8: *Dracula* Chapter 24-end  
**Explication paper 1 due by 11:59 pm on Brightspace**

Week 8: (Post)colonialism and Fantasy  
M 10/11: **FALL BREAK—NO CLASS**  
W 10/13: *Mexican Gothic* Chapter 1-5  
F 10/15: *Mexican Gothic* Chapter 6-11

Week 9: Race and Undeath  
M 10/18: *Mexican Gothic* Chapter 12-16  
W 10/20: *Mexican Gothic* Chapter 17-22  
F 10/22: *Mexican Gothic* Chapter 23-end  
Guest lecture: Alejandra Ortega

Week 10: The Undead in Other Media  
M 10/25: *What We Do in the Shadows*  
W 10/27: *What We Do in the Shadows*

F 10/29: Dungeons and Dragons (BS)

Unit 3: The Undying

Week 11: Necromancy and Science Fantasy

M 11/1: *Gideon the Ninth* Chapter 1-8

W 11/3: *Gideon the Ninth* Chapter 9-11

**Nnedi Okorafor reading at 7 pm** (not required, but it will be cool!)

F 11/5: *Gideon the Ninth* Chapter 12-16

Week 12: Queerness

M 11/8: *Gideon the Ninth* Chapter 17-21

W 11/10: *Gideon the Ninth* Chapter 22-25

F 11/12: *Gideon the Ninth* Chapter 26-30

Week 13: Death and Rebirth

M 11/15: *Gideon the Ninth* Chapter 31-34

W 11/17: *Gideon the Ninth* Chapter 35-end

F 11/19: Media TBD

**Explication paper 2 due by 11:59 pm on Brightspace**

Week 14: Turkey Time

M 11/22: Catch up day (*wink wink*)

W 11/24: **NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING BREAK**

F 11/26: **NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Week 15: Coming of Age

M 11/29: *Sabriel* Chapter 1-7

W 12/1: *Sabriel* Chapter 8-14

F 12/3: *Sabriel* Chapter 15-20

Week 16: Endings

M 12/6: *Sabriel* Chapter 21-26

W 12/8: *Sabriel* Chapter 27-end

F 12/10: Wrap-up

Finals week

W 12/15: **Creative project due by 11:59 pm on Brightspace**

# UNIVERSITY POLICIES

## COVID-19 Policies

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the [Protect Purdue Plan](#) along with the [Protect Purdue Pledge](#) are to be considered campus policy. The entire Purdue community must comply with these health and safety guidelines. Because this is an online course, policies related to face-to-face attendance do not apply. However, if you find yourself too sick to progress in the course, please notify me immediately via email. We will make arrangements based on the particulars of your situation.

## Grief Absence Policy, Military Active Duty, Absences for Religious Observances

All official university regulations concerning absences can be found at this website:

[http://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/regulations\\_procedures/classes.html](http://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/regulations_procedures/classes.html)

- If you have a death in the family, you (or your representative) should contact the Office of the Dean of Students. That office will then notify your instructors. Check the Greif Absence Policy on Purdue's website.
- If you are called up for active duty or mandatory military training, your commanding officer can provide the Dean of Students a copy of your orders. The Dean of Students may then contact your instructors; however, please let me know at the beginning of the semester if you expect to be absent for military duty.
- If you need to miss class for a religious observance, you must let me know a week in advance, minimize the length of your absence, and be flexible in arranging alternative times to complete the assignments you may miss.

## Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Academic integrity is one of the highest values that Purdue University holds. Individuals are encouraged to alert university officials to potential breeches of this value by either emailing [integrity@purdue.edu](mailto:integrity@purdue.edu) or by calling 765-494-8778. While information may be submitted anonymously, the more information that is submitted provides the greatest opportunity for the university to investigate the concern.

Incidents of academic misconduct in this course will be addressed by the course instructor and referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (OSRR) for review at the university level. Any violation of course policies as it relates to academic integrity will result minimally in a failing or zero grade for that particular assignment, and at the instructor's discretion may result in a failing grade for the course. In addition, all incidents of academic misconduct will be forwarded to OSRR, where university penalties, including removal from the university may be considered.

Plagiarism is the act of using another person's work and calling it your own. You can plagiarize by purchasing a paper from someone and handing it in as your work, by stealing another student's electronic file, by downloading someone's work from the Internet, by copying material from a book or magazine article without citing the source, by cutting and pasting material from websites, and by using another's ideas without proper attribution. When doing research, you need to take careful notes and attribute your sources meticulously; you can inadvertently plagiarize someone's material if you don't.

You should become familiar with the following websites related to Purdue's rules and regulations.

Purdue University's Student Conduct Code at

[http://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/student\\_conduct/index.html](http://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/student_conduct/index.html)

Purdue University's student regulations at

[http://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/student\\_conduct/regulations.html](http://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/student_conduct/regulations.html)

The section on plagiarism is under Student Conduct, B, 2, a.

If you still have questions about what is and is not plagiarism, do not hesitate to ask me in class, in my office, or via e-mail.

### **The Purdue Honor Pledge**

In 2016, a group of Purdue students, with the support of several campus governance groups, developed the Purdue Honor Pledge: "As a Boilermaker pursuing academic excellence, I pledge to be honest and true in all that I do. Accountable together—we are Purdue."

### **Accessibility and Accommodations**

Purdue University strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, you are welcome to let me know so that we can discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at: [drc@purdue.edu](mailto:drc@purdue.edu) or by phone: 765-494-1247.

### **Diversity & Inclusion**

Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. Purdue's nondiscrimination policy can be found at: [purdue.edu/purdue/ea\\_eou\\_statement.html](http://purdue.edu/purdue/ea_eou_statement.html).

### **Student of Concern**

The Office of the Dean of Students is committed to helping students succeed both in and out of the classroom. To this end, your instructor may contact ODOS by filing a "Student of Concern" Report, should they notice concerning behavior from you or your peers: missing classes, substance abuse, or other indicators of distress. This is not a disciplinary measure: reports are vetted by Purdue staff, and trained professionals contact students to offer help as needed. Anyone worried about friends, classmates, or co-workers is welcome to file reports. Learn more at [purdue.edu/studentconcern/](http://purdue.edu/studentconcern/) or talk to your instructor for help.

### **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**

Purdue University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services

are available. For help, such individuals should contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (765) 494-6995 and [purdue.edu/caps/](http://purdue.edu/caps/) during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or through its counselors physically located in the Purdue University Student Health Center (PUSH) during business hours.



### Campus Emergencies

We will spend some time during the first week of class discussing what to do in case of an immediate campus emergency. The website on Emergency Preparedness is at

[purdue.edu/epps/emergency\\_preparedness/](http://purdue.edu/epps/emergency_preparedness/). In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading

percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond my control. Here are ways to get information about changes in this course.

- 1) Check the course website.
- 2) Check your e-mail.
- 3) E-mail me at [myers379@purdue.edu](mailto:myers379@purdue.edu)

You are expected to read your @purdue.edu e-mail on a frequent basis. Not only will you receive important information from the university via e-mail, you will also receive a great number of reminders and updates from me.

**Emergency Notification Procedures** are based on a simple concept – if you hear a fire alarm inside, proceed outside. If you hear a siren outside, proceed inside.

- Indoor Fire Alarms mean to stop class or research and immediately evacuate the building.
- Proceed to your Emergency Assembly Area away from building doors. Remain outside until police, fire, or other emergency response personnel provide additional guidance or tell you it is safe to leave.
- All Hazards Outdoor Emergency Warning Sirens mean to immediately seek shelter (Shelter in Place) in a safe location within the closest building.
- “Shelter in place” means seeking immediate shelter inside a building or University residence. This course of action may need to be taken during a tornado, a civil disturbance including a shooting or release of hazardous materials in the outside air. Once safely inside, find out more details about the emergency. **Remain in place** until police, fire, or other emergency response personnel provide additional guidance or tell you it is safe to leave.

### The Writing Lab

Besides seeing me during class time or in my office, you have other resources at Purdue to help you with your writing and writing assignments. The **Writing Lab** in Heavilon Hall, Room 226, offers FREE tutorials to students by appointment or on a drop-in basis. For more information or to make an appointment, call 494-3723. You may also access the Online Writing Lab (OWL) at [owl.purdue.edu/](http://owl.purdue.edu/).