**English 2411-01: Popular Literature**

**What’s Popular about Popular Fiction?**



**Instructor: Rebecca Rowe**

**Pronouns: She/her/hers**

**Classroom/Hours: RHBA 101 MWF 10:10-11:00**

**Office: Austin 153**

**Office Hours: WF 8:30-9:30, and by appointment**

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**Course Description**

Victor E. Neuburg argued in 1977 that “popular literature can be defined as what the unsophisticated reader has chosen for pleasure.” This statement reflects the sentiment often held in academia that literature that is popular has little or no value *because* people enjoy it. This course will challenge that view by exploring what makes popular literature, well, popular, and what value it has for academia and culture alike. The course is divided into five units, with each unit exploring a popular genre through one piece of longer fiction, one piece of shorter fiction, and a film or television show. The first four genres are mystery, fantasy, comics, and romance; the final genre will be chosen by popular vote by y’all!

**Course Outcomes**

* Understand and assess genre conventions, why certain genres are popular, and how individual texts manifest these conventions
* Analyze what makes a text popular--both textually and contextually
* Make a case for popular fiction in culture and academia
* Engage in scholarly conversations, both in person and through writing

[**Texts**](https://tinyurl.com/8207-F19-ENGL-2411-001)

* Christie, Agatha. *And Then There Were None*
* Doyle, Arthur Conan. *A Study in Scarlet*
* Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*
* Wilson, G. Willow and Adrian Alphona. *Ms. Marvel, Vol. 1: No Normal*
* Stevenson, Noelle. *Nimona*
* Meyer, Stephenie. *Twilight*

**Helpful websites:**

* [UConn library homepage](http://lib.uconn.edu/)
* [Purdue OWL for MLA citation](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/)

### **Integrity and Respect**

In this class, you may come into contact, and perhaps conflict, with communities whose ideals and perspectives may differ radically from your own. This will be a topic of discussion and interest, but it may also be uncomfortable, and we will seek to find meaning in those uncomfortable moments. As a class, we will maintain a sympathetic and compassionate outlook and keep an open mind throughout the course.

Additionally, in accordance with UConn policies and Title IX, this course will be a designated safe space for all students, regardless of background, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, socioeconomic status, race, or ethnicity. If you feel you have experienced discrimination or harassment at UConn, you can find support and resources at the Office of Institutional Equity. You may also contact Health Services, Counseling & Mental Health Services, and/or the Women’s Center. Please note that I am a mandatory reporter to the Office of Institutional Equity if I become aware of issues that may pose a danger to a student’s health or safety.

**Academic Integrity**

While studying and making use of the ideas and texts of others is central to the writing we will be doing in this course, this must be done in an ethical and appropriate way. Please review and abide by the University’s code on academic misconduct (plagiarism and misuse of sources), which will be distributed in class and can also be found on [the UConn Community Standards website](http://community.uconn.edu/the-student-code-preamble/); you will be held responsible for understanding these materials. Plagiarizing the work of others—passing off someone else’s work as your own—is a very serious offense, and anyone found plagiarizing will fail the essay or the course. Please let me know if you have questions about what constitutes appropriate use and citation of other people’s work.

**Disability and Accessibility**

The First-Year Writing program is committed to making educational opportunities available to all students. If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact the Center for Students with Disabilities (Wilbur Cross 204, 860-486-2020). They will work with you to accommodate your needs and provide me with a letter describing those accommodations. All information and documentation is confidential. Please contact me as soon as possible in the semester so that I can also make the necessary arrangements for your comfort in our classroom.

**You can find more UConn-level policies** [**here**](https://provost.uconn.edu/faculty-and-staff-resources/syllabi-references/)**. The specific policies for this course can be found here.**

### **Course Components**

### *Writing*

You will write a 6-8 page essay in which you explore why a chosen piece of fiction is popular and what role it has in culture and/or academia. You will begin by submitting a 1-2 page proposal about which text you wish to work with.

### *Group Project*

At the beginning of the course, you will sign up in groups to present on a genre. Your goal for this project is, as a group, to give us a wider understanding of some of the most popular texts of that genre and what draws people to them. We cannot cover a wide range of texts per genre, so this assignment will allow you to dig further into a genre and share what you find with the class.

### *Exams*

You will have two exams in this course: a midterm exam given in class halfway through the course, and a take-home exam that will be due during your exam period.

### *Reading Responses*

### You will complete two kinds of reading responses throughout this course, one weekly and one per unit:

1. Every week, you will engage with the Classroom discussion board, which will appear as a new assignment each week. You are required to make two posts and one reply to classmates a week, all of which is due the Sunday after the week is over. These posts/replies can be about the reading, about something that came up in class, whatever. Your posts/replies must be substantive (i.e., more than “Agree”), adding something to the conversation. That being said, this is online communication, so part of this assignment is to distill what you’re thinking into a snapshot. Memes, emojis, gifs and other forms of internet speech that you can figure out how to use in GC are welcome (just keep it clean). This is a place for you to engage with each other and me as scholars and as people; use it as you will. You will receive a point for each substantive post/reply you make, so you should get three points a week. Each week will be graded on its own, so if you miss 1 post in a week, it can be costly. Make sure to make your posts every week.
2. For each unit (**except** for the unit in which you present), you will turn in one response paper, 400-600 words long, responding to one of the texts of that unit. In this response, you will explore how this text fits the genre expectations we discuss in class or that you find on your own. How does *A Study in Scarlet*, for example, fit into the mystery genre? These response papers are a place for you to explore your ideas and will be graded as such; they will receive a check, check plus, or check minus, depending on what ideas you explore and how well you complete the prompt, but I am not necessarily grading how well you express your ideas but rather how willing you are to explore new ideas. You are responsible for making sure that you complete one response for each unit, due to Google Classroom (I will create a separate assignment for each unit but not for each text) the day that we finish reading the text you are writing about.

### *Participation*

Thoughtful discourse is an essential part of this class, and you will frequently work in groups of various sizes, which means you will need to be considerate of and attentive to others. It is your responsibility to keep up with the reading, to contribute to class conversation in the form of analytical comments or questions, and to attend class regularly and on time.

**Grades**

In order to pass this class, you must submit all assignments, no exceptions. Your grade will be determined by your performance on the major writing assignment, reading responses, and participation.

Your assignments will count for the following percentages of your final grade:

Writing Project 20%

Group Project 15%

Midterm Exam 15%

Final Exam 15%

Discussion Board Responses 10%

Unit Reading Responses 15%

Participation 10%