

Speculative Fiction as Cultural Inquiry

English 1325.005: Writing About Literature II

Spring 2026 | University of North Texas

	<p>Instructor: Amber Walters-Molina (she/her)</p> <p>Class times: Language Building (LANG) 222 TR 12:30-1:50 pm</p> <p>Email: amberwalters-molina@my.unt.edu</p> <p>Office Hours: <u>By Appointment</u>; or walk-ins Tues. 10-11 am</p> <p>Office Location: AUDB 105</p>
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Course Description

What is speculative literature? How does literature inform and capture culture? And how can novice readers establish their ethos and join academic conversations about literature and the culture it inspires?

In ENGL 1325: Writing about Literature II, we will explore famous works of speculative fiction and practice academic genre conventions. With an emphasis on brainstorming, critical reading, analysis, and revision, you will gain rhetorical knowledge and develop a framework for producing persuasive writing about issues that are important to you. Our class theme, “How speculative is that?”, narrows our focus to works that explore themes and raise questions about the fundamental elements of the human condition. We will closely read these works of speculative fiction, identify the questions and themes they raise, and then craft a thoroughly researched and informed response in the form of an essay.

Course Outcomes

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

- Collaborate with peers and provide useful feedback
- Develop a relevant research question
- Locate and analyze academic sources to use as evidence
- Analyze and evaluate specific concepts or texts that have significance within larger cultural conversations.
- Identify literary genres, conventions, and devices.
- Evaluate ideas in a text, the implications, and the relationship to ideas beyond it.
- Write a research-based argumentative essay that articulates a clear, thoughtful position, deploys supportive evidence, and considers multiple points of view.

Core Requirements

Catalog Description: 3 hours. Study of the relationship between writing and research, with research topics drawn from readings of prose fiction. Emphasis on the process of perfecting the essay through the writing of several drafts

Prerequisite(s): ENGL 1315 or equivalent. May be substituted for ENGL 1320

CORE Category: Communication (English Composition and Rhetoric)

Course Books & Materials

Materials:

- Writing utensils and paper.
- A system to organize and keep all class work, quizzes, CRRs, and notes.

Required Purchase:

- *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley ISBN: 9781554811038
- *Kindred* by Octavia Butler ISBN: 9781472258229
- *Three-Body Problem* by Cixin Liu ISBN: 9780765382030
- Any other material will be linked on Canvas.

Recommended Purchase:

- *Line By Line* by Claire Kehrwald ISBN: 9780395393918
- *The Writer's Harbrace Handbook* by Cheryl Glenn and Loretta Gray ISBN: 978130565965

Technical Requirements & Skills

You'll need [a computer](#) with [internet access](#) and know the basic skills necessary to:

- Use [Outlook for UNT email](#)
- Use [Canvas](#)
- Use [Microsoft Word and PowerPoint](#)

Grade Distribution

Assignments	Weight	Due Date
Participation and Daily Work <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This class is designed with collaboration and group discussion in mind, and thus, you are expected to contribute to class discussions every day and complete all in-class assigned activities/work.	15%	Everyday
Critical Reading Responses (CRR) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A one-page exploration of the work the class has read for the day, as viewed through the lens of an outside source of the students' interests. Each day's responses must be submitted at the beginning of that class.	15%	Submitted in person at the beginning of class.
Reading Comprehension Quiz (RCQ) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There will be a short quiz for each work we complete to gauge your reading comprehension.	15%	Pop quizzes—it could happen at any time!
Major Assignment 1 (MA1) Research Proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 300-word proposal including a research question, an explanation of the topic, your interest, and the contribution you hope to make to the conversation.	5%	MA 1 Due by 5:00 pm on Friday, January 30 th
Major Assignment 2 (MA 2) Annotated Bibliography <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You will write a 300-word abstract and ten 300-word annotations for relevant sources with MLA citations.	20%	MA 2 Due by 5:00 pm on Friday, March 6 th

Major Assignment 3 (MA 3) Rough Draft of Research Essay <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A complete draft of the 6-8 page thesis-driven argumentative research paper	10%	MA 3 Due by 5:00 pm on Friday, April 3 rd
Major Assignment 4 (MA 4) Final Draft of Research Essay <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A 6-8 page thesis-driven argumentative research paper	10%	MA 4 Due by 5:00 pm on Friday, April 24 th
Major Assignment 5 (MA 5) Presentation of Research <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A 5 Minute presentation of your research essay with accompanying PowerPoint.	10%	MA 5 Due by the start of class on Tuesday, April 28 th

Grading

Grade	Description
A 90-100	Exceeds the assignment's requirements. Has few to no errors. Shows a mastery of the concepts being taught. Is impressively sophisticated, inventive, balanced, justified, effective, mature, and expertly situated in time and context.
B 80-89	Meets most of the assignment's requirements. The number of errors does not impede the work's meaning. Shows high level of understanding of the concepts being taught. Skilled, revealing, developed, perceptive, but not unusually or surprisingly original.
C 70-79	Meets most the assignment's requirements. The number of errors may impede the work's meaning. Shows some understanding of the concepts being taught. Coherent, significant, and perhaps even insightful in places but ultimately challenged in organization, articulation, and/or effectiveness.
D 60-69	Does not meet most of the assignment's requirements. The number of errors does impede the work's meaning. Shows low level of understanding of the concepts being taught. Offers an overall response that is incomplete and may be severely lacking: incoherent, limited, uncritical, immature, underdeveloped, and overall, not reflective of the performance expected of UNT undergraduates.
F 59 or below	Does not meet the assignment's requirements. The number of errors impede the work's meaning. Shows no understanding of the concepts being taught.

All major assignments must be turned in on Canvas and processed through Turnitin to be eligible to pass this course.

I encourage you to monitor your score and review feedback posted on Canvas; However, Canvas's gradebook is not always accurate. Some grades, such as Participation or extra credit, are not incorporated until *after* the class's final meeting. If you are concerned about your grades, please schedule a meeting to discuss them.

Work and Communication Expectations

Feedback

I strive to return all graded work promptly. For shorter assignments and discussions, I will generally post grades/feedback within seven days of the due date. For larger projects, I aim for 14 days, but

with the rise in cheating and plagiarism, it occasionally takes longer to grade a set of papers. If it has been longer than the times mentioned, please feel free to ask me when to expect the grades and feedback, but not before then.

Student Hours

You can walk into my office during my above-listed office hours, but I encourage you to make an appointment to ensure you get time to meet with me. Feel free to use my office hours as often as you'd like to chat with me, review an assignment, or discuss any questions/concerns you have. It's been my experience that a quick conversation is the most effective way to resolve any confusion.

Email

I will respond to all official correspondence addressed to my UNT email (amberwalters-molina@my.unt.edu) in person or via email within three business days. All other communication methods—Canvas Messenger, assignment comments, personal emails, physical letters, etc.—are unreliable ways to contact me. I cannot guarantee that I will see your message on other platforms within any specific time frame, if ever.

Please check the syllabus and related assignment sheets before emailing me, and in your email, indicate where you looked for the information you are seeking before you emailed me. So that if something is unclear, I can fix it. Additionally, when you write to me, please include the subject of your email in the subject line and write your email with appropriate salutations and grammar. For a sample email, read this article, “[How to Email Your Professor](#).” Or, for a checklist on effective email communication between yourself and instructors, see <https://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>.

It is your responsibility to check your UNT email during your ‘business’ hours each day to ensure you do not miss any time-sensitive information.

Workload Expectations

Note that at university you should expect to do 2-3 hours of work outside of class for every credit hour of a course; thus, for our course (for which you will earn three credit hours), you should expect to spend at least 6-9 hours per week working outside class.

Writing Expectations

Since this is your second semester of college-level writing, I expect that you will write multiple drafts for each paper with the final draft free from formatting, grammatical, stylistic, and mechanical errors; all students must submit complete rough drafts to Canvas by the assigned deadline to have the final paper accepted. (Note: your final draft should show noticeable improvement from the rough draft if needed; a final draft turned in without needed improvements will not earn full credit.)

Public Writing

All submissions for this course, including but not limited to pre-writing, drafts, in-class assignments, and final projects, are public, i.e., any writing submitted for this course may be viewed by or classmates. Do not submit any information that you are unwilling to share.

Syllabus Change Policy

I have made every attempt to provide an accurate syllabus for this course. However, if unanticipated circumstances arise that necessitate an amendment to the syllabus, I will provide advance written notice via email of all changes and will provide an updated hard copy with the changes.

Participation and Attendance

Participation

It is crucial that you not only physically show up to class but also participate. Your contributions and active engagement are key to our collective success. To that end, your participation for the day is determined not only by your presence but also by your active engagement (or lack thereof) in the discussion or class activity for the day. Successful course participants will make quality contributions, demonstrating they have completed all assigned readings (including supplementary materials). They are attentive to the nuances of the texts and discussion prompts. They also reflect genuine engagement with others (don't talk "at" people—talk with them). Remember not to conflate participation with domination: excellent discussion participants make the space necessary for others to think and speak.

As active participation is of the utmost importance to your success this semester, ours will be a technology-free class. **Please shut down all electronic devices during our class, unless otherwise directed by the instructor.** You should print out the readings provided on Canvas for ease of reference each day. Students who use electronic devices, including laptops, will see their participation grade affected.

I'll note everyone's participation during class; you will lose a point for each week (every two classes) you do not participate.

Attendance

This course is, by nature, participatory, collaborative, and discussion-based, and face-to-face. So, I take attendance at the start of each class. As detailed in the chart below, you can miss up to two classes with no penalty, but every absence after that will result in a 5-point grade deduction to your overall final score. **You will automatically fail the course for seven or more absences.**

Number of Absences	Consequences
1 st absence	Nothing
2 nd absence	Nothing
3 rd absence	5 point deduction
4 th absence	10 point deduction
5 th absence	15-point deduction
6 th absence	20-point deduction
7 th Absence	Fail the course

You will be marked tardy if you arrive more than ten minutes late or leave more than ten minutes early. Two tardies add up to one absence.

Absences for the following reasons are considered excusable by the university based on [UNT policy 6.039](#), but you must obtain a note from the [Dean of Students](#) (or other appropriate university offices) to verify your absence(s): (1) religious holy day, including travel for that purpose; (2) participation in an official university function; (3) active military service, including travel for that purpose; (4) pregnancy and parenting under Title IX; and (6) when the University is officially closed. Please inform me of any planned absences with at least 10 days' notice to minimize any potential negative impact on your grades.

If the absence is an illness or extenuating circumstance that exceeds five consecutive days, you must request documentation from the Dean of Students' office. Examples include, but are not limited to: (1) temporary disability or injury; (2) extended medical absence or hospitalization; (3) illness of a dependent family member; or (4) major illness or death of a loved one.

If you miss a class:

You are responsible for finding out what you missed. *Before* the next time our class meets, review the Canvas page and ask a classmate for notes on what you missed, or make an appointment to meet with me during office hours, or if needed, email me to ensure you are on track and prepared for the next class.

If you miss an assignment:

Only assignments missed due to an excusable absence can be made up. For excused absences that resulted in missing in-class assignments, it is your responsibility to 1) turn in all necessary documentation regarding the absence and 2) *schedule* a time to make up the missing work *within two weeks of missing the assignment*. Since I must prepare the missing assignment, you cannot make up work as a walk-in during office hours.

Late Work

This course requires extensive reading and regular writing. To keep up with the course, you must complete all assignments by the date and time stated on Canvas. I will not accept late submissions without a university-approved *and* documented excused absence or an approved extension.

Extensions

I will occasionally grant assignment extensions if you request one at **least 24 hours before the deadline**. All requests must be sent via email and include 1) the specific assignment information in the subject and body, and 2) let me know the day and time you will turn in the assignment instead. No extensions will be granted for inherently collaborative assignments (peer review, in-class activities, etc.) in which your peers depend on your timely submission to progress in their work.

UNT Policies

Academic Integrity Standards

According to [UNT Policy 06.003](#), Academic Integrity standards are violated when students engage in academic dishonesty behaviors, including, but not limited to, cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty and the instructor's decision on academic sanctions will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Plagiarism can include copying a passage from a source verbatim without citing it, but it can also include improper or misleading citations. Please note that all source material must be acknowledged, even if the material is paraphrased. Be careful always to acknowledge the work of other writers and take the time to work out your thoughts and arguments without copying the work of others.

The use of generative AI writing tools is prohibited in this class. Assignments for the course have been designed to help you develop as a thinker, reader, and writer without using these technologies. You will generate ideas, read, revise, and write independently or in consultation with peers, UNT Writing Center tutors, and me. *Any* use of generative AI in your work violates our syllabus and UNT's academic integrity policy.

Acceptable Student Behavior

According to [UNT policy 07.012](#), student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be notified verbally or in writing and may be directed to leave the classroom. Additionally, the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct.

For additional information, refer to the [Dean of Students](#) website.

ADA Accommodations

According to [UNT policy 16.001](#), UNT will make reasonable academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA). Then, the ODA will provide them with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty members detailing the students' accommodation needs. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours. Students may request reasonable accommodation at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation and meet with all faculty members prior to accommodation implementation every semester.

For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](#) website.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly provide students with critical information in the event of an emergency. In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

For additional information, refer to the [Eagle Alert](#) website.

Getting Help

Technical Assistance:

[Information Technology Help Desk | University of North Texas](#)
Email: helpdesk@unt.edu
Phone: 940-565-2324
In Person: Sage Hall, Room 130

Writing Assistance:

[Writing Center | University of North Texas](#)
Email: WritingCenter@unt.edu
Phone: 940-565-2563
In Person: Sage Hall, Room 150

English 1325 Weekly Schedule

Week	Dates	Readings	Assignments
1	T Jan 13 R Jan 15	T: Syllabus R: <i>Frankenstein</i> Preface to Vol I Ch I	
2	T Jan 20 R Jan 22	T: <i>Frankenstein</i> Ch II- Ch V R: <i>Frankenstein</i> Ch VI- Vol II Ch II	
3	T Jan 27 R Jan 29	T: Library Research Day R: <i>Frankenstein</i> Ch III – Ch VII	MA 1 Due by 5:00 pm on Friday, January 30 th
4	T Feb 3 R Feb 5	T: <i>Frankenstein</i> Ch VIII – Vol III Ch II R: <i>Frankenstein</i> Ch III – Ch V	
5	T Feb 10 R Feb 12	T: <i>Frankenstein</i> Ch VI – End. R: <i>Kindred</i> Prologue to “The Fire”	
6	T Feb 17 R Feb 19	T: <i>Kindred</i> “The Fall” R: <i>Kindred</i> “The Fight” 1-7	T: CRR 1 R: CRR 2
7	T Feb 24 R Feb 26	T: <i>Kindred</i> “The Fight” 8-16 R: <i>Kindred</i> “The Storm” 1-6	T: CRR 3 R: CRR 4
8	T Mar 3 R Mar 5	T: <i>Kindred</i> “The Storm” 7-13 R: <i>Kindred</i> “The Rope” – end	T: CRR 5 R: CRR 6 MA 2 Due by 5:00 pm on Friday, March 6 th
9	T Mar 10 R Mar 12	Spring Break	
10	T Mar 17 R Mar 19	T: <i>The Three-Body Problem</i> Ch 1-7 R: <i>The Three-Body Problem</i> Ch 8-11	T: CRR 7 R: CRR 8
11	T Mar 24 R Mar 26	T: <i>The Three-Body Problem</i> Ch 12-15 R: <i>The Three-Body Problem</i> Ch 16-17	T: CRR 9 R: CRR 10
12	T Mar 31 R Apr 2	T: Peer Peer Review R: Workshop	MA 3 Due by 5:00 pm on Friday, April 3 rd
13	T Apr 7 R Apr 9	T: <i>The Three-Body Problem</i> Ch 18-21 R: <i>The Three-Body Problem</i> Ch 22-25	T: CRR 11 R: CRR 12
14	T Apr 14 R Apr 16	T: <i>The Three-Body Problem</i> Ch 26- 29 R: <i>The Three-Body Problem</i> Ch 30-32	T: CRR 13 R: CRR 14
15	T Apr 21 R Apr 23	T: <i>The Three-Body Problem</i> Ch 33-End R: Workshop	R: CRR 15 MA 4 Due by 5:00 pm on Friday, April 24 th
16	T Apr 28 R Apr 30	T: Presentations R: Presentations	MA 5 Due by the start of class on Tuesday, April 28 th
Final Exam Period	<u>Thursday, May 7th, 10 am-12 pm</u>	Presentations	