**Course Number:** Online 2331

**Instructor:** Dr. Bryan Conn

[Dr. Conn’s Email Address](mailto:bryan.conn@unt.edu)

**Physical Office:** 409K Language Building

**Office Hours:** Tu/Th 2:00-3:00, in person or via Zoom **World Literature**

## **Unlikely Lit.:**

### Strange, Speculative, Magic, Marvelous, Meta, and Fantastic Fiction, Poetry, and Drama

## Course Description:

This course will survey a miscellany of literary works from across the globe published between roughly the eighteenth and the twenty-first centuries that play with or entirely eschew the conventions of realism. In other words, all of the fiction, poetry, and drama that we will read this semester in some way challenges the idea that literature should strive for mimesis, the commonplace notion that literature should accurately reflect or represent quotidian existence. Thus our readings narrate unlikely events—at least purported ones—that depart from our probabilistic expectations for how the world is supposed to work. Our study will be in part guided by the following questions: What kind of thinking is made possible through the depiction of the improbable? What are the types or genres within this this broader category of literature (our subtitle hints at many that we will examine)? What purpose do these departures from the everyday have within each specific work? What contribution do these elements make to the symbolic meaning of these texts?

## Course Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, learners will be able to:

* Identify the main characters and major plot points in each of the literary works that we will read
* Match the authors that we will read to the country with which they are most associated
* Match selected literary works that we will read to the century in which they were written
* Recognize important aspects of a number of keywords drawn from literary studies, history, and theory that apply to our readings and are relevant to other humanities and social science courses and to contemporary cultural and political phenomena
* Discuss the topics and themes presented in our readings in relation to their supernatural and anti-mimetic elements
* Analyze some of our readings for the thinking they mobilize about ethics
* Contrast two of our readings that share a similar topic to more effectively develop an interpretation of each work
* Relate a contemporary "unlikely" narrative to one of the genres, concepts, or works that we've studied
* Integrate or synthesize your interpretive claims and your fellow group members' interpretive claims about the project text into an overarching idea about the work
* Develop counterintuitive explanations or surprising interpretations using the Argumentative Twist technique
* Compose effective literary and textual analyses

## Course Texts:

### Standalone Texts to Purchase or Rent

#### (Available at UNT’s Barnes & Noble)

* Barrett, A. Igoni. *Blackass*. Graywolf Press, 2015.
* Carter, Angela. *The Bloody Chamber: And Other Stories*. 1979. Penguin Classics, 2015.
* Saadawi, Ahmed. *Frankenstein in Baghdad*. 2013. Translated by Jonathan Wright. Penguin Books, 2018.
* Zapata, Celia Correas. Editor. *Short Stories by Latin American Women: The Magic and the Real*. 1990. Modern Library Classics, 2003.

### eBook:

#### (Available through the UNT library’s website)

* Ueda, Akinari. ““The Chrysanthemum Vow,” “The Carp of My Dreams,” and “Serpent’s Lust.” *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*. 1776. Translated by Anthony Chambers. Columbia University Press, 2007. [Link to the book on the library’s website](https://libproxy.library.unt.edu:9443/login?url=http://iii.library.unt.edu/record=b5832748~S12).

### Freely Available Online Copyright-Protected Text

* Dao, Fei. “The Robot Who Liked to Tell Tall Tales.” 2014. Translated by Ken Liu. *Clarkesworld*, issue 127, April 2017. [Link to the story on *Clarkesworld*.](http://clarkesworldmagazine.com/fei_04_17/)

### Freely Available Open-Access Texts

#### An \* will denote these texts in the reading and assessment schedule.

* Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Faust, Part I*. 1829. Translated by A. S. Kline. *Poetry in Translation*, 2003. [Link to the text on *Poetry in Translation*.](https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/German/Fausthome.php)
* Bierce, Ambrose. “Moxon’s Master.” 1899. *Presented by Library of America: Story of the Week*, 2018. [Link to the text on](http://storyoftheweek.loa.org/2018/10/moxons-master.html) *[Presented by Library of America: Story of the Week.](http://storyoftheweek.loa.org/2018/10/moxons-master.html)*

### *Project Gutenberg* (Public Domain)

#### (Available for download in the module in which they are assigned)

These eBook materials are provided by Project Gutenberg and are for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy such materials, give them away or re-use them under the terms of the [Project Gutenberg License](https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gutenberg.org%2Fpolicy%2Flicense.html&data=05%7C02%7CCharlesa.Olmstead%40unt.edu%7Ca289728b88174530690d08dd5c082696%7C70de199207c6480fa318a1afcba03983%7C0%7C0%7C638767912253172637%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=CcsjfNZhgeY4%2BoNS9ee6yvBk2ar4rMxAZhLSATEpDcM%3D&reserved=0) included with this eBook or online at [www.gutenberg.org/license](https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.gutenberg.org%2Flicense&data=05%7C02%7CCharlesa.Olmstead%40unt.edu%7Ca289728b88174530690d08dd5c082696%7C70de199207c6480fa318a1afcba03983%7C0%7C0%7C638767912253193198%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=UhOfJsVpKUQ2GLaL3lANu6aayowEbn1fhq4bLfAqxrc%3D&reserved=0).

An \* will denote these texts in the reading and assessment schedule.

* Chesnutt, Charles. “Mars Jeems’s Nightmare.” 1899.
* Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. 1798.
* Dunbar, Paul Laurence. “The Haunted Oak.” 1900.
* Gaskell, Elizabeth. “The Old Nurse’s Story.” 1852.
* Gogol, Nikolai. “The Nose.” 1842. Translated by Claud Field.
* James, Henry. *The Turn of the Screw.* 1898.
* Perrault, Charles. “Blue Beard.” 1697 (In French). Translated by Robert Samber and J. E. Mansion.
* Leprince de Beaumont, Jeanne-Marie. “Beauty and the Beast.” 1756. Translated by the author.
* Rossetti, Christina. “Goblin Market.” 1862.
* Songling, Pu. “A Disembodied Friend,” “The Painted Skin,” “The Wonderful Stone.” 1766. Translated by Herbert Giles.
* Swift, Jonathan. “A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms.” *Gulliver’s Travels.* 1726.

## Grading

This course makes use of a points-based grading system.

### Total Possible Points for the Semester = 1000

* A=1000-900
* B=899-800
* C=799-700
* D=699-600
* F=599-500

### Course Activities & Assessments

#### Activities

* Reading Check Quizzes (125 points)
* Discussion Forums (135 points @ 5 or 10 points per forum)

#### Assessments

* Three-Paragraph Writing Exercise (120 points)
* Five-Paragraph Writing Exercise (200 points)
* Signature Assignment Essay (150 points)
* Group Speculations Project (120 points @ 20 Proposal Post, Voting, & Option Selection; 60 Analysis Post; 40 Reflection Post)
* Context Test Midterm (100 points)
* Context Test Final (50 points)

### Reading Check Quizzes

Each module will include a brief quiz on the module’s assigned literary works and that will be worth five or ten points. These questions are not intended to be difficult, but they are intended to encourage you to do the reading and to read attentively. It’s also a way to exercise control over your grade in the course. If you do well on these, it can help keep your grade up even if you aren’t the best writer in the class. Also, at the end of the semester when your instructor considers borderline grades, this is a place one can look to see how much effort you put into the course.

### Online Discussion Posts

The online discussions will be an important venue for you to develop your thinking about our readings and to gain practice writing about literature. They will be relatively low stakes, but substantive. Each post will be worth 5-10 pts. and have a 150-word minimum. Discussing the readings in a literature course is essential not just because it makes the class feel like a collective enterprise but, even more importantly, because it enables us (the instructor included) to learn from one another.

Three-Paragraph Writing Exercise

The Three-Paragraph Writing Exercise will ask you to respond to an interpretive question on the idea of ethics in Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw*. The assignment has a unique structure—it’s an exercise, not a traditional essay. Each of your first two paragraphs will require you to respond to more specific questions logically entailed by the broader one; you will synthesize and build on your findings in your final paragraph.

### Five-Paragraph Writing Exercise

The Five-Paragraph Writing Exercise asks you to put into conversation with one another two works, among several options, that present the same topic, theme, or motif. By juxtaposing texts that possess a shared element, we can sharpen our perception of how each work differently handles that topic, theme, or motif. Differences in form necessarily give rise to differences in meaning. Differences in meaning make for differences in ideational content, the commentary a work offers (on society, ethics, concepts, etc.). Please note that, like the Three-Paragraph Writing Exercise, the format of this assignment is quite different than that of the traditional thesis-driven essay, so read the directions below for how to structure it very carefully.

### Signature Assignment Essay

The Signature Assignment is required in all UNT English CORE classes. In this essay, you will develop a thesis-driven argument about an ethical dilemma presented in a work or across two works. You will perform a close reading of one (or possibly two) of our literary readings for how it presents and comments on an ethical problem. The ethical issue that you address could be primarily interpersonal (e.g. how does the writer explore the ethics of certain behaviors or actions as they relate to individuals or families?) or primarily social (e.g. how does the writer explore the ethical implications of societal forms of oppression, such as racism, classism, sexism, or homophobia?) or, perhaps more likely, could involve the intersection between the two. In your conclusion, you will reflect on your own view of the ethical issue raised in part one.

### Group Speculations Project

This project will help you to see the contemporary relevance of the ideas and materials we’ve worked with this semester. Working in groups of 3-4 students, your group will choose an “unlikely” fictional work from outside of our course that you think can be related to at least two of our previously assigned texts and two or more of our keywords. You are welcome to use a movie, a television show, or a video game for this assignment; it just has to be “unlikely” (i.e. anti-mimetic or not-entirely-realist). Film versions of our readings would work particularly well (and I have some suggestions). After each member proposes a potential project text, your group will choose from these options via vote. Each group member will develop a proposal, a two-paragraph analysis, and two-paragraph reflection for the project. We will use a series of discussion forums for sharing these pieces of writing and for communicating with your fellow group members. Each stage of this assignment will put to use the analytic tools you’ve honed in our online discussions and higher-stakes writing assignments.

### Context Tests

Although I believe that literature courses aren’t primarily informational, it is important that you come away from the course knowing more about history, theory, and especially literature than you did going in. Along with the supplementary information material in the form of keyword pages, this test will ask you to identify the countries with which the authors of our readings are most associated. You will also be asked to apply some of our contextual terms to some of our readings based on information provided in the micro lectures and in the keyword explanations. The context tests will have multiple-choice, true/false, and matching questions.

### Practice Quizzes

To assess how well you are learning the contextual information mentioned above, each module will include an extra-credit practice quiz that will have multiple-choice, true/false, and matching questions. While the practice quiz questions will be worth mere fractions of a point, over the course of the semester they can really add up. But there is another reason why you should take these quizzes. Their questions will constitute the question pool for both the midterm and final context tests. (A word about the practice quiz grades: Canvas, unfortunately, does not have an extra credit quiz option. So it will appear as though your final grade is out of more than 1000 points. Just keep this in mind if you look at your percentage grade throughout the semester, it might—depending on how you do on these quizzes—appear slightly lower than it truly is.)

## Policies

### Late Work

Please do your best to submit your assignments and assessments on or before the day they are due. But if you do miss the deadline, a two-day grace period, beyond the official due date, has been built into the course. That is, you have 48 hours after the official deadline to complete any outstanding assignments or assessments at no penalty. As a general rule, no reading check quiz, practice quiz, journal entry, online discussion post, or exam can be made up once the grace period for that assignment or assessment has passed. Late exercises and essays will receive a full letter grade deduction the day after the grace period end date and for each subsequent week they are not submitted. *Having said that, we are still very much living through a pandemic (and also life happens), so if you are unable to submit your work before the grace period ends, please send a Canvas message (preferably in advance) to your instructor and they will decide—on a case-by-case basis—whether to allow you further time to complete the assignment or assessment.*

### Turnaround Time

I'll aim to respond to your posts in the discussion forums within one week after the grace period ends. I'll aim to respond to your higher stakes writing assignments (Three-Paragraph Writing Exercise, and Five-Paragraph Writing Exercise) within two weeks. When this is not possible, I will send an announcement to the class or to individuals who are affected.

### Plagiarism

The UNT Policy Manual defines plagiarism as: “(a) the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement and (b) the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.” (18.1.11). All writing in this course must be your own; it must be original (i.e. not written for other courses and resubmitted here), and all uses of other writers’ material (i.e., for the purposes of research based argumentation) must be acknowledged and clearly cited in any writing submitted for a grade. **Writing produced by ChatGPT and other AI writing programs is therefore prohibited.**

The consequences for plagiarism at UNT are severe, and may include failure for the course, loss of scholarships, and in some cases dismissal from the university. Please talk with me if you are unsure about whether or not something you are doing in your writing might be identified as plagiarism. If I believe that something you have written has been plagiarized, you will be notified of the allegations in writing and asked to meet with me and respond to my argument. After hearing your response, I will decide on a course of action and notify you in writing of any penalties or other consequences. I will also send a copy of the allegations and sanctions to the Academic Affairs office.

Please note that instructors in the English Department are authorized to fail students for an assignment or for the course if they judge that an assignment is knowingly or negligently plagiarized. Students have the option of appealing in writing to the Assistant Chair of the Department of English within 5 days of the instructor’s decision.

### A.I. Writing Policy

To reiterate: The use of generative AI writing tools (such as ChatGPT, GrammarlyGO, GPT-3, GPT-4, BERT, or others) to compose your essays is strictly prohibited in this class. Assignments have been designed to help you develop as a thinker and writer without the use of these technologies. You will generate ideas, read, revise, and write on your own and/or in consultation with peers, me, or Writing Center tutors. I urge you not to use AI at any stage of your writing process. You are the author of your work and authorship means you take responsibility for your words and claims. However, if you do choose to consult with AI as you brainstorm your essay, be sure to cite it according to [MLA’s latest suggestions](https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/). Again, any use of language directly composed by a generative AI writing tool will be treated as plagiarism.

### Blanket Trigger Warning

Serious literature, by definition, takes up difficult, even distressing subject matter. Topics such as, but not limited to, sex, rape, death, murder, mental illness, war, genocide, racism, and enslavement will show up in this semester’s readings. By remaining in this class, we have all agreed to discuss these topics with the maturity they deserve. Please remain respectful.

If you experience a psychological or emotional crisis during the semester, whether it is “triggered” by the reading or by ongoing events in your life, I urge you to make [use of UNT’s free counseling services](http://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-testing-services%20).

### Confidentiality in the Classroom

Your instructor will not share student writing on social media, and the English department expects you, as good classroom citizens, to show the same discretion. Please don't share your classmates' or instructor’s posts or any of the class materials on social media. The recorded lectures in this course are the intellectual property of the university and course designer and are reserved for use only by students in this class and only for educational purposes. Students may not post or otherwise share the recordings outside the class, or outside the Canvas Learning Management System, in any form. Failing to follow this restriction is a violation of the UNT Code of Student Conduct and could lead to disciplinary action.

## Technology Requirements

Minimum technology skills for successful completion of this course include:

* Sending and receiving email
* Creating, sending, and receiving Microsoft Word documents
* Posting to discussion boards
* Printing Word documents OR opening and printing pdf files, using free [Adobe Acrobat Reader](https://get.adobe.com/reader/)
* Navigating Canvas

### Statement on Americans with Disabilities

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations 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 reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access web site](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

## Reading and Assessment Schedule

Each module includes a reading check quiz, a practice quiz, and, with a couple exceptions, a discussion forum dedicated to that module’s reading. See precise due dates on Canvas.

Starting with Module 2, each subsequent module will open on a Friday (sometime before midnight).

### Varieties of Unlikely Lit. I

#### MODULE 1: 1/14-1/19

*Short Stories by Latin American Women*:Maria Teressa Solari, “Death and Transfiguration of a Teacher” (1977) and Alicia Yáñez Cossio, “The IWM 1000” (1975)

### Varieties of Unlikely Lit. II

#### MODULE 2: 1/17-1/26

*Short Stories by Latin American Women*: Marta Traba, “The Tale of the Velvet Pillows” (before 1990?); Luisa Valenzuela, “Up Among Eagles” (1983); Dora Alonso, “Sophie and the Angel” (before 1990); Vlady Kociancich, “Knight, Death and the Devil” (before 1985); Rosario Ferré, “The Poisoned Tale” (1976); María Elena Llano, “In the Family” (1966)

### Unlikely Satire Revisited

#### MODULE 3: 1/24-2/2

\*Jonathan Swift, from *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), “A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms”

### The Fantastic and Narrative Form

#### MODULE 4: 1/31-2/9

\*Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898)

### Friendly Ghosts and Sentimental Hauntings

### MODULE 5: 2/7-2/16

\*Pu Songling, from the *Liaozhai* (1766), “A Disembodied Friend”; Ueda Akinari, from *Tales of Moonlight and Rain* (1776), “The Chrysanthemum Vow”; \*Elizabeth Gaskell, “The Old Nurse’s Story” (1852); \*Paul Laurence Dunbar, “The Haunted Oak” (1900)

### (Super)Nature

#### MODULE 6: 2/14-2/23

**Three-Paragraph Exercise Due by 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, 2/19**

\*Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798); Ueda Akinari, from *Tales of Moonlight and Rain* (1776), “The Carp of My Dreams”; \*Pu Songling, from the *Liaozhai* (1766), “The Wonderful Stone”; Angela Carter, from *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979), “The Werewolf”

### Literary Fairy Tales, Their Rewritings, and a Faux Nursery Rhyme

#### MODULE 7: 2/21-3/2

\*Charles Perrault, “Blue Beard” (1697); Angela Carter, from *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979), “The Bloody Chamber”; \*Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, “Beauty and the Beast” (1756); Angela Carter, from *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979), “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride”; \*Christina Rossetti, “Goblin Market” (1862)

### Artificial Life

#### MODULE 8: 2/28-3/9

**Context Test Midterm available from 2/28 to 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, 3/5**

\*Ambrose Bierce, “Moxon’s Master” (1899); Karel Capek, *R. U. R. (Rossum’s Universal Robots)* (1920); Fei Dao, “The Robot Who Liked to Tell Tall Tales” (2014)

**SPRING BREAK WEEK 3/9-3/16**

### Racial Metamorphosis I

#### MODULE 9: 3/7-3/23

**\***Charles Chesnutt, “Mars Jeems’s Nightmare” (1899); A. Igoni Barrett, *Blackass* (2015), from the beginning to p. 74; you can skip pp. 75-94 ("@\_Igoni” summarized on a Canvas page), then from p. 95 to the section break on p. 120.

### Racial Metamorphosis II

#### MODULE 10: 3/7-3/30

**Proposal for Group Speculations Project due by 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, 3/26**

A. Igoni Barrett, *Blackass* (2015), from the section break on page 120 to the end of the novel.

#### “Strange” Desire

#### Module 11: 3/28-4/6

\*Pu Songling, from the *Liaozhai* (1766), “The Painted Skin”; Ueda Akinari, from *Tales of Moonlight and Rain* (1776), “A Serpent’s Lust”; \*John Keats, “La Belle Dame Sans Merci” (1819); Angela Carter, from *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, “The Lady of the House of Love” (1979)

### Cycles of Violence, Problems of Ethics

*The due dates for the quizzes, activities, and assignments in Modules 12 & 13 will be stretched over Weeks 12-15 of the semester*

#### Module 12: 4/4-4/20

**Five-Paragraph Writing Exercise due by Wednesday, 4/16**

Ahmed Saadawi, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2013), from the beginning to the end of Chapter 9.

#### Module 13: 4/11-5/4

**Two-Paragraph Analysis for Final Speculations Project due by 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday 4/23**

Ahmed Saadawi, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2013), from Chapter 10 to the end of the book.

### Final Micro Lecture

### Module 14: Opens 4/25

**Two-Paragraph Reflection on Final Speculations Project due by 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday 4/30**

\*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, excerpt *Faust, Part One* (1808) (Optional reading assignment that goes with the final micro lecture of the semester)

#### Finals Period

**Final Context Test available from 11:59 p.m. on Friday, 5/2 until 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, 5/11** and **Signature Assignment Essay due by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, 5/4**