**Special Topics Course 2303**

**Necessary Magic: Contemporary Trends in Magical Realism**

“*The lateral thinking of magical realism expands our perceptions of what on earth reality is about.” Gary McMahon*

**Instructor:** Rachael Mariboho **Course Information:** MWF 11:00-11:50; Preston Hall 110

**Office:** 402 Carlisle Hall **Office Hours:** MWF 12:00-1:00

**E-mail:** [mariboho@uta.ed](mailto:mariboho@uta.ed)u **Faculty Profile:** <https://mentis.uta.edu/explore/profile/rachael-mariboho>

**Required Texts & Materials:**

Laura Esquivel, *Like Water for Chocolate*

Leslye Walton, *The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender*

Meg Medina, *The Girl Who Could Silence the Wind*

Tea Obreht, *The Tiger’s Wife*

Paulo Coehlo, *The Alchemist*

Selected Readings (Available on Blackboard) YOU must print these readings and bring them to class

Selected Films (Available to Stream through Blackboard)

**Course Description**

Magical realism is often associated with twentieth century Latin American or postcolonial texts that use the combination of realism and the fantastic to depict political, cultural, or social trauma. However, there is a growing body of twenty-first century works of magical realism that underline the genre’s appeal to artists portraying contemporary issues and anxieties in popular culture. Building on the rich tradition established by authors like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Toni Morrison, and others, twenty-first century works of magical realism encompass a range of literary and visual texts, from young adult novels to award winning films to Beyoncé’s *Lemonade*. This course examines the pop culture impact of magical realism in the twenty-first century by analyzing recent novels and films that use elements of magical realism in conjunction with the twentieth century works that inspired them.

**Course Goals**

* To encourage students to see that literary studies matter and to foster enjoyment of literature
* To help students recognize that literature is in dialogue with complex cultural and historical contexts
* To develop students’ ability to read critically
* To develop students’ skills of writing and expression, particularly with respect to analysis of literary texts

**Course Objectives under the Core Curriculum**

This course satisfies the University of Texas at Arlington core curriculum requirements in Language, Philosophy, and Culture.

* Students will develop their critical thinking by learning to read literary texts closely, pay attention to relevant details, and organize their observation into cogent arguments.
* Students will develop their communication skills by discussing literature orally in class and by articulating their findings in written arguments.
* Students will develop their sense and practice of personal responsibility by learning to engage with and incorporate secondary sources into their writing.
* Students will develop their understanding of social responsibility by tracing the way that literature shapes and addresses urgent social questions, both historical and contemporary; students will do this in class discussion and most pointedly in the Signature Assignment (see description after the class course schedule).

The Departmental guidelines for sophomore literature can be found by typing “sophomore literature” in the “Search UT Arlington” box on the University website: http://www.uta.edu/uta.

**NOTE:** This is a READING, WRITING & PARTICIPATION **intensive** course. I will, however, provide help to those willing to seek it out, including extended office hours, pre-writing help, comments on drafts, etc. If you are not sure if you can keep up with the workload as presented in the schedule, let me encourage you that it *is* possible; if you are unwilling to keep up with the workload as presented in the schedule, you should consider dropping the course as early as possible, since I cannot drop you.

Much of our time will be spent speaking to one another about our common experience of reading fiction and wondering about how to make the best sense of it. I want you to view yourselves as **active** readers and participants, and as people committed to improving their skills as readers and as writers. Since much of our time will be spent in active debate and conversation, I expect each student to behave professionally and respectfully in this setting, as well as in all communications that stem from your involvement in this course (i.e. emails, or study group activities).

**Requirements:**

**Analytical Essays:** You will write **four** analytical essays over issues related to the course readings (minimum **two FULL** pages). Essay prompts will be given in class for each analysis paper. Critical analysis is more than an opinion (I liked/didn’t like a reading or agreed/disagreed with a point). To be “critical” requires identifying the criteria that informs your judgment (explaining *why* you had that response). These essays give you a space to explore your reactions to the reading, discuss an element/theme you find intriguing, or ask questions about the text and/or its historical context. Use close textual analysis to illuminate your discussion. This assignment will be graded on the originality of your thought and the depth of analysis used to support your position.

**Visual Project:** For this assignment, you will create your own, original visual representation over one of the texts we read. Your visual should focus on a/the irreducible elements of magic in the text. You may create a collage, comic, children’s story, painting, or other visual medium of your choice. More details will be given in class.

**Quizzes:** There will be a total of 16 quizzes given over four of the novels we read this semester:They will be given at the start of class on the day listed. You may **NOT** take the quiz at an alternate time. The lowest grade will be dropped.

**Signature Essay Assignment:** Write a well-organized, effectively developed, 3-5-page analysis of at least one of the course texts. The paper should critically analyze the way the text engages a significant issue of social responsibility. Students should anchor the paper’s argument with a clearly articulated thesis statement and use careful analysis of textual evidence to support their claims. Details are included after the course schedule.

**Exams**: You will have both a midterm exam (dealing with terms and passages from the first half of the course and an essay section) and a final exam (consisting of terms and passages from the second half of the course and an essay section).

**Class participation:** Class participation includes: attending class, reading all assigned material, and actively engaging in discussion with your fellow students and your instructor.  Students will be assigned small groups and a set of discussion questions to work with each week. Your class participation grade will be partly based on your participation in your small group.

**Bonus Points:** Group discussions will often include answering questions I provide on a handout. If you turn in all handouts (with your written responses) before the pertinent exam, I will add **5** points to your exam grade. Turning in discussion sheets will also help your class participation grade.

**Grading:**

**Visual Project 10% Quizzes 15%**

**Analytical Essays 20% Mid-Term 15% Final Exam 20% Signature Essay 15% Class Participation 5%**

**Late Papers:** Late Research Projects that have not been cleared with me at least a week beforehand will lose one letter grade for every class period they are late. Late Analytical Essays will NOT be accepted.

**Attendance:** Class attendance is necessary for reading comprehension, group discussion, and preparation for exams and class assignments. It should also be noted that 5% of your final grade is based on your class participation. Therefore, it is important that you attend every class session regularly. Failure to do so will affect your participation grade. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to contact another student for an explanation of what was covered. I do understand that things come up during a semester. You have **6** absences to do with as you like—use them wisely for the inevitable "stuff" that will mess up your semester: illness, traffic, death of a loved one, etc. I DO NOT give excused absences. After 6 absences, you automatically receive a zero for your participation grade.

**Tardiness:** Be on time for class. Two tardies count as an absence.

**Classroom behavior.** Class sessions are short and require your full attention. All cell phones, iPods, laptops, and other electronic devices should be **turned off and put away when entering the classroom**; all earpieces should be removed. Store newspapers, crosswords, magazines, bulky bags, and other distractions so that you can concentrate on the readings and discussions each day. Bring book(s) and blackboard readings (heavily annotated and carefully read) to every class. Students are expected to participate respectfully in class, to listen to other class members, and to comment appropriately. I also expect consideration and courtesy from students. Professors are to be addressed appropriately and communicated with professionally.

**Odds and Ends**: The university sends all its correspondence to you via your UTA email address and so will I. It is your responsibility to check your UTA email account regularly.

**Drop Policy:** If you choose to withdraw from this course, you must follow university procedures. It is your responsibility to execute these procedures correctly, and within the university’s deadlines.

**Electronic Communication Policy.** All students must have access to a computer with internet capabilities. Students should check email daily for course information and updates. I will send group emails through MyMav. I am happy to communicate with students through email. However, I ask that you be wise in your use of this tool. Make sure you have consulted the syllabus for answers before you send me an email. Remember, I do not monitor my email 24 hours a day. I check it periodically during the school week and occasionally on the weekend.

The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the University “MavMail” address as the sole official means of communication with students. MavMail is used to remind students of important deadlines, advertise events and activities, and permit the University to conduct official transactions exclusively by electronic means. For example, important information concerning registration, financial aid, payment of bills, and graduation are now sent to students through the MavMail system. All students are assigned a MavMail account. ***Students are responsible for checking their MavMail regularly.*** Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/>. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, and it remains active even after they graduate from UT Arlington.

**Conferences and Questions:** I have three regularly scheduled office hours each week. These times are reserved for students to drop by or to make an appointment to discuss course assignments, grades, or other class-related concerns. I will be happy to make other appointment times for you if your class schedule conflicts with regular conference times or if I am not available on certain days. If you receive a grade on an assignment about which you have questions, please wait twenty-four hours before discussing it with me. This gives you time to process the assignment comments and to think about how your course work meets the requirements set forth for each assignment.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 93112 -- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans With Disabilities Act - (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens. As faculty members, we are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodation" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty at the beginning of the semester and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels.

**Academic Dishonesty:** It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University.  
 "Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts." (Regents’ Rules and Regulations, Part One, Chapter VI, Section 3, Subsection 3.2, Subdivision 3.22)  
 If you are suspected of academic dishonesty, you may be called before the Vice President of Student Affairs to receive disciplinary action. Forms of academic dishonesty include:

Collusion – lending your work to another person to submit as her/his own Fabrication – deliberately creating false information on a works cited page Plagiarism – the presentation of another person’s work as your own, (intentional or not). Please acknowledge the source of any words, phrases, or ideas that you use. If you are not sure how to quote or paraphrase a source, please see me, go to the Writing Center, or check your handbook. Make sure that your written work is all your own.

**Student Support Services**:UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include [tutoring](http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/current/academic-support/learning-center/tutoring/index.php), [major-based learning centers](http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/college-based-clinics-labs.php), developmental education, [advising and mentoring](http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/advising.php), personal counseling, and [federally funded programs](http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/current/academic-support/mcnair/index.php). For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at <http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/index.php>.

**The IDEAS Center (**2nd Floor of Central Library) offers **free** tutoring to all students with a focus on transfer students, sophomores, veterans and others undergoing a transition to UT Arlington. To schedule an appointment with a peer tutor or mentor email [IDEAS@uta.edu](mailto:IDEAS@uta.edu) or call (817) 272-6593.

**The English Writing Center (411LIBR)**: The Writing Center Offers free tutoring in 20-, 40-, or 60-minute face-to-face and online sessions to all UTA students on any phase of their UTA coursework. Our hours are 9 am to 8 pm Mon.-Thurs., 9 am-3 pm Fri. and Noon-6 pm Sat. and Sun. Register and make appointments online at http://uta.mywconline.com. Classroom Visits, workshops, and specialized services for graduate students are also available. Please see [www.uta.edu/owl](http://www.uta.edu/owl) for detailed information on all our programs and services.

The Library’s 2nd floor Academic Plaza offers students a central hub of support services, including IDEAS Center, University Advising Services, Transfer UTA and various college/school advising hours. Services are available during the library’s hours of operation. <http://library.uta.edu/academic-plaza>

**Emergency Phone Numbers**: In case of an on-campus emergency, call the UT Arlington Police Department at **817-272-3003** (non-campus phone), **2-3003** (campus phone). You may also dial 911.

**Course Schedule**

**NOTE:  Have the assigned texts read completely by the first day they are listed. Individual homework assignments and group work will be announced on a daily basis. This syllabus is subject to change; all changes will be announced in class.**

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| **Week** | **Date** | **Class Topic and Daily Readings** | **Assignments Due** |
| **1** | WED  1/18 | **What is Magical Realism?**  Course introduction. Policies and procedures.  Introduction to Magical Realism |  |
| **2** | FRI  1/20 | **Magical Realism History**  **Read:** “Magical Realism” by Maggie Bowers (Pg. 1-5, 32-36, 39-47)  **Read:** “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings”  (Selected Readings on Blackboard) |  |
| **2** | MON  1/23 | **Defining Magical Realism**  **Read:** “Scheherazade’s Children”  “Light is Like Water”  “My Life with the Wave”  (Selected Readings on Blackboard) |  |
| **2** | WED  1/25 | **Defining Magical Realism Cont.**  **Read:** “The Enormous Radio”  Bring “Scheherazade’s Children” article  (Selected Readings on Blackboard) |  |
| **3** | FRI  1/27 | “The Elephant Vanishes”  (Selected Reading on Blackboard) |  |
| **3** | MON  1/30 | **Magical Realism and Film**  *The Illusionist*  (View in Class) | **Due: Analysis Paper #1**  Submit on Blackboard by 11:59 pm |
| **3** | WED  2/1 | *The Illusionist*  (View in Class) |  |
| **4** | FRI  2/3 | *The Illusionist* Discussion  **Read:** “Eisenheim, the Illusionist”  (Selected Reading on Blackboard) |  |
| **4** | MON  2/6 | **Popular Magic**  *Like Water for Chocolate*  Ch. 1-3 (Pg. 1-60) | **Quiz #1**  **Due: Analysis Paper #2**  Submit on Blackboard by 11:59 pm |
| **4** | WED  2/8 | *Like Water for Chocolate*  Ch. 4-6 (Pg. 65-118) | **Quiz #2** |
| **5** | FRI  2/10 | *Like Water for Chocolate*  Ch. 7-9 (Pg. 123-181) |  |
| **5** | MON  2/13 | *Like Water for Chocolate*  Ch. 10-12 (Pg. 187-246) | **Quiz #3**  **Due: Analysis Paper #3**  Submit on Blackboard by 11:59 pm |
| **5** | WED  2/15 | *Chocolat*  (No Class! View film on Blackboard Streaming) |  |
| **6** | FRI  2/17 | *Chocolat* Discussion |  |
| **6** | MON  2/20 | *The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender*  (Prologue, Ch. 1-5, Pg. 1-71) | **Quiz #4**  **Due: Analysis Paper #4**  Submit on Blackboard by 11:59 pm |
| **6** | WED  2/22 | *The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender*  (Ch. 6-10, Pg. 72-136) | **Quiz #5** |
| **7** | FRI  2/24 | No Class! |  |
| **7** | MON  2/27 | *The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender*  (Ch. 11-21, Pg. 137-244) | **Quiz #6** |
| **7** | WED  3/1 | *Ava Lavender*  (Ch. 22-27, Pg. 245-301)  Midterm Review | **Quiz #7** |
| **8** | FRI  3/3 | No Class! Midterm Preparation | **Due: Analysis Paper #5**  Submit on Blackboard by 11:59 pm |
| **8** | MON  3/6 | Midterm Part I |  |
| **8** | WED  3/8 | Midterm Part II |  |
| **9** | FRI  3/10 | No Class! |  |
| **9** | MON  3/13 | Spring Break |  |
| **9** | WED  3/15 | Spring Break |  |
| **10** | FRI  3/17 | Spring Break |  |
| **10** | MON  3/20 | **Inherited Magic**  *The Girl Who Could Silence the Wind*  (Prologue, Ch. 1-6) | **Quiz #8** |
| **10** | WED  3/22 | *The Girl Who Could Silence the Wind*  (Ch. 7-14, Pg. 65-121) | **Quiz #9** |
| **11** | FRI  3/24 | *The Girl Who Could Silence the Wind*  (Ch. 15-22, Pg. 122-176) | **Quiz #10** |
| **11** | MON  3/27 | *The Girl Who Could Silence the Wind*  (Ch. 23-33, Pg. 177-244) | **Quiz #11**  **Due: Analysis Paper #6**  Submit on Blackboard by 11:59 pm |
| **11** | WED  3/29 | *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*  (No Class! View film on Blackboard Streaming) |  |
| **12** | FRI  3/31 | *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* Discussion |  |
| **12** | MON  4/3 | *The Tiger’s Wife*  **Read:** Introduction, Ch. 1-2 (3-80) | **Quiz #12**  **Due: Analysis Paper #7**  Submit on Blackboard by 11:59 pm |
| **12** | WED  4/5 | *The Tiger’s Wife*  **Read:** Ch. 3-4 (81-124) | **Quiz #13** |
| **13** | FRI  4/7 | *The Tiger’s Wife*  **Read:** Ch. 5-6 (125-189) | **Quiz #14** |
| **13** | MON  4/10 | *The Tiger’s Wife*  **Read:** Ch. 7 (190-228) | **Quiz #15** |
| **13** | WED  4/12 | *The Tiger’s Wife*  **Read:** Ch. 8-11 (229-302) | **Quiz #16** |
| **14** | FRI  4/14 | *The Tiger’s Wife*  **Read:**Ch. 12- Conclusion (303-338) |  |
| **14** | MON  4/17 | **Mythic Magic**  *Beasts of the Southern Wild*  (View in Class)  **Read:** Selected articles on Blackboard | **Due: Analysis Paper #8**  Submit on Blackboard by 11:59 pm |
| **14** | WED  4/19 | *Beasts of the Southern Wild*  (View in Class) |  |
| **15** | FRI  4/21 | *Beasts of the Southern Wild* Discussion |  |
| **15** | MON  4/24 | Signature Essay Peer Review |  |
| **15** | WED  4/26 | Writing Conferences |  |
| **15** | FRI  4/28 | *The Alchemist*  (Prologue and Pages 3-61) |  |
| **16** | MON  5/1 | *The Alchemist*  (61-104) |  |
| 16 | WED  5/3 | *The Alchemist*  (104-167) |  | |
| 16 | FRI  5/5 | Final Exam Review | **Due: Signature Assignment** (Hard Copy Due In-Class)  **Due: Analysis Paper #9**  Submit on Blackboard by 11:59 pm | |

**Signature Assignment:**

**Overview**

The signature assignment addresses all four of the course objectives. **Personal responsibility**: This essay includes the integration of outside sources; it, therefore, requires students to demonstrate personal responsibility as they use the words and ideas of other writers in an accurate and ethical manner. Citing sources properly isn’t just a matter of mechanics. It’s a question of personal responsibility (with real consequences for students) that overlaps with students’ responsibility to the academic community of which they are a part. The construction of a clearly articulated thesis statement supported by a careful analysis of textual evidence demonstrates **critical thinking** and **communication skills**. The development of a well-organized essay that demonstrates the correct use of grammar and other writing mechanics and demonstrates an awareness of the how to appeal convincingly to an audience further addresses the communication objective. The critical analysis of the way the selected text engages a significant issue of social responsibility addresses the **social responsibility** outcome.

**Specific Requirements**

Write a well-organized, effectively developed, 3-5-page analysis of at least one of the course texts. The paper should critically analyze the way the text engages a significant issue of social responsibility. Students should anchor the paper’s argument with a clearly articulated thesis statement and use careful analysis of textual evidence to support their claims.

**Possible Areas of Focus:**

Race; gender; class and/or economic oppression; colonialism and/or empire; postcolonialism; cultural difference and/or cultural discrimination; war; religious discrimination; human mastery of nature and/or the environment and/or animals; national identity controversies; the social implications of a change in literary movements; sexual orientation; disability; globalization; the way the work of literature itself can be seen as a rhetorical attempt to engage effectively in significant regional, national, or global issues.

**Responsible Integration of Sources:**

Students must properly integrate material from two secondary sources into their analysis in a way that gives credit to the authors whose ideas and language they are incorporating. This is not a research paper or a summary of the work of literature, but a paper in which you draw on secondary sources to communicate an interpretive argument about your chosen text through the lens of social responsibility. Instructors may wish to require their students to take the UTA Library’s plagiarism tutorial available at <library.uta.edu/plagiarism/index.php>. This would be a separate assignment, not part of the signature assignment.

**Secondary Sources:**

Here is a list of credible sources:

* National newspapers (e.g., *New York Times, Washington Post, USA Today, Dallas Morning News*)
* Print magazines (e.g., *The Atlantic, Harper’s, New Yorker, Time, Newsweek*)
* Online magazines (e.g., *Slate, Salon*)
* Scholarly articles (e.g., academic articles published in peer-reviewed journals; you can find citations for these articles by using the MLA International Bibliography database, JSTOR, or Project Muse—all of which UTA’s library gives you access to online)
* Scholarly books or book chapters (it’s a good bet a book is scholarly if it’s published by an academic press, such as Duke University Press; if you’re not sure, ask your instructor)
* Historical documents (e.g., old newspaper articles, letters, speeches, journal entries)

Students interested in using a source that isn’t listed here, should check with their instructor.

**Minimum Requirements:**

Your essay should be a Word document that is double spaced, with 1-inch margins, in 12-pt., Times New Roman (or some other easily readable) font. Follow the MLA’s recommendations for formatting, citation, and style. In order to receive a passing grade on the signature assignment, students are expected to:

1. write an essay that is at least 3 pages long, but no more than 5.
2. integrate two appropriate sources.
3. have a thesis.
4. have a title.
5. incorporate evidence (i.e., quotations) from the literary text.
6. have a Works Cited page.