

Ursula K. Le Guin

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00–3:20 p.m., in HC-E128

Professor Andrew Goldstone (andrew.goldstone@rutgers.edu)

Office hours: Tuesdays, 12:30–1:30 p.m.

<https://andrewgoldstone.com/ukl25>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Ursula K. Le Guin was one of the most important science-fiction and fantasy writers of the last century, a feminist pioneer and a crucial figure in the transformation of both SF and fantasy in the 1960s and after. This seminar course surveys her career, with an emphasis on her own attempts to make “genre fiction” artistically significant despite ongoing condescension from arbiters of “serious” literature. We will read extensively from her novels, short stories, and non-fiction writings, asking what unites the varying strands of her work and what changes as she moves among genres—and as she engages with the changing contexts of literature and politics since World War II.

BOOKS TO BUY

Please buy the following books. You should buy either *The Books of Earthsea* or both *A Wizard of Earthsea* and *Tehanu*. E-books are not acceptable substitutes for any of these titles. For shopping online at bookshop.org, Amazon, or elsewhere, search using the ISBNs below.

Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Hainish Novels & Stories*. Vol. 1 and 2. New York: Library of America, 2017. ISBN: 9781598535372.

Please buy this two-volume boxed set. It is more expensive at Barnes & Noble than direct from the publisher or on Amazon.

———. *A Wizard of Earthsea*. New York: Clarion, 2012. ISBN: 9780547722023.

———. *Tehanu*. New York: Atheneum, 2012. ISBN: 9781442459960.

———. *The Books of Earthsea: The Complete Illustrated Edition*. New York: Saga, 2018. ISBN: 9781481465588.

Not available at the campus Barnes & Noble. Order online if you want this big omnibus; otherwise buy the separate Earthsea volumes, *A Wizard of Earthsea* and *Tehanu* (which are available at the bookstore).

———. *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching*. Boston: Shambhala, 1997. ISBN: 9781611807240.

LEARNING GOALS

1. Master analyzing individual prose fiction texts in terms of their themes, formal characteristics, media, and social contexts.
2. Learn to make arguments about a literary career in terms of its inner development and its historical circumstances.

3. Learn to use the work of Ursula Le Guin to make arguments about the relationships among textual genres, including science fiction, fantasy, and “literature.”
4. Learn to write a researched interpretive argument about a single writer demonstrating significant engagement with scholarship.

This course also satisfies the WCr Core Curriculum goal: Respond effectively to editorial feedback from peers, instructors, and/or supervisors through successive drafts and revision.

SCHEDULE

TUESDAY, JANUARY 21.

- “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas.”

THURSDAY, JANUARY 23.

- Early stories (print out from Canvas):
 - “April in Paris.”
 - “The Masters.”

TUESDAY, JANUARY 28.

- *Rocannon’s World* (1966), in *Hainish Novels & Stories*, 1:1–30.
- “How Freya Gained Her Necklace and How Her Loved One Was Lost to Her,” in Colum, *The Children of Odin*, 45–52.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 30.

- *Rocannon’s World*, 1:1–80.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4.

- *Rocannon’s World*, complete.
- Introduction to *Rocannon’s World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977; *Hainish Novels*, 1:1011–14).
- Exercise due: how it’s written.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6.

- *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), chaps. 1–5 (*The Books of Earthsea*, 7–66).

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11.

- *A Wizard*, complete; also read Le Guin’s afterword.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13.

- *A Wizard*, continued.
- Attebery, *Fantasy*, chap. 9.
- Exercise due: thou hast nor youth nor age.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18.

- Suvin, "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre."
- *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), chaps. 1–7 (*Hainish Novels & Stories*, 1:389–58).

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20.

- *Left Hand*, chaps. 1–11.
- "Is Gender Necessary?"
- "Is Gender Necessary? Redux," in *Hainish Novels & Stories*, 1:1033–43.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25.

- *Left Hand*, chaps. 1–15.
- Jameson, "World Reduction in Le Guin."

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27.

- *Left Hand*, complete, including the Appendix.
- "Unchosen Love" (1994), in *Hainish Novels & Stories*, 2:207–26.

TUESDAY, MARCH 4.

- Le Guin, *Lao Tzu*.
- Roberts, introduction to *Dao De Jing*.
- *Left Hand*, continued.
- Exercise due: draft paper 1 introduction.

THURSDAY, MARCH 6.

- Le Guin, *Lao Tzu*.
- Prettyman, "Daoism, Ecology, and World Reduction in Le Guin's Utopian Fictions."

TUESDAY, MARCH 11.

- *The Dispossessed* (1974), chaps. 1–3 (*Hainish Novels & Stories*, 1:613–88).

(WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12.)

- Paper 1 due.

THURSDAY, MARCH 13.

- *The Dispossessed*, through chap. 6 (through 1:767).

(SATURDAY, MARCH 15. SPRING RECESS.)

TUESDAY, MARCH 25.

- *The Dispossessed*, through chap. 9 (through 1:857).

THURSDAY, MARCH 27.

- *The Dispossessed*, complete.

TUESDAY, APRIL 1.

- *The Dispossessed*, continued.
- Delany, "To Read *The Dispossessed*."
- Le Guin, "A Response, by Ansible, from Tau Ceti," in *Hainish Novels & Stories*, 1:1028-32.

THURSDAY, APRIL 3.

- *Tehanu* (1990), chaps. 1-4 (*Earthsea*, 393-426).
- Exercise due: connect some dots.

TUESDAY, APRIL 8.

- *Tehanu*, through chap. 8 (through 472).

THURSDAY, APRIL 10.

- *Tehanu*, through chap. 11 (through 514).

(FRIDAY, APRIL 11.)

- Paper 2 proposal and bibliography due.

TUESDAY, APRIL 15.

- *Tehanu*, complete.
- "Earthsea Revisioned," in *Earthsea*, 982-93.
- Plotz, *Ursula Le Guin's Earthsea*, chap. 3.

THURSDAY, APRIL 17.

- *The Telling* (2000), chaps. 1-3 (*Hainish Novels & Stories*, 2:589-637).

TUESDAY, APRIL 22.

- *The Telling*, through chap. 6 (through 2:706).

THURSDAY, APRIL 24.

- *The Telling*, complete.

TUESDAY, APRIL 29.

- Presentations of research in progress.

THURSDAY, MAY 1.

- "The Day Before the Revolution," in *Hainish Novels & Stories*, 1:975–990.
- Course conclusion.

(FRIDAY, MAY 9.)

- Paper 2 due.

GRADING

The final grade will be calculated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{grade} = & 0.15(\text{participation}) + 0.1(\text{short assignments}) \\ & + 0.25(\text{paper 1}) + 0.1(\text{presentation}) + 0.40(\text{paper 2}) \end{aligned}$$

Each grade is given on the four-point scale as specified in the Undergraduate Catalog. In converting the final numerical score to a letter, the equivalents in the Catalog are used as follows:

$3.5 < \text{grade} \leq 4.0$	A
$3.0 < \text{grade} \leq 3.5$	B+
$2.5 < \text{grade} \leq 3.0$	B
$2.0 < \text{grade} \leq 2.5$	C+
$1.0 < \text{grade} \leq 2.0$	C
$0.5 < \text{grade} \leq 1.0$	D
$\text{grade} \leq 0.5$	F

The final grade will be based on a numerical score but is subject to my discretion. Unsatisfactory work in all areas of the course will result in an F even if the numerical score corresponds to a passing grade.

Assignments include one short paper, one presentation, and one long paper. Satisfies AHp and WCr Core Requirements.

PARTICIPATION

Attendance and active, thoughtful participation in discussion are required. Lateness, lack of preparation (including coming to class without the assigned text in printed form), and disruptive behavior affect the participation mark.

If you miss three or more classes without excuse, the *maximum* participation mark you can receive is 3.0 out of 4.0. Missing more than five meetings without an excuse will normally result in a failing grade for the course.

If you fall ill or miss class for a family emergency, please contact me as soon as possible; you can make up for an excused absence.

SHORT ASSIGNMENTS

Short exercises will help build up towards the papers.

PAPER 1

A short paper on one of Le Guin's early novels will be due before spring break.

PRESENTATION AND PAPER 2

The main assignment is a research paper on Le Guin, considering both texts assigned in the course and further sources, literary and scholarly. An in-class presentation on work in progress will be separately graded.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students and instructors have a duty to each other and to our community to abide by norms of academic honesty and responsibility. To present something as your own original writing when it is not is plagiarism. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating are serious violations of trust. For the purposes of this course, I will also consider any use of so-called "AI" tools for generating text for assignments as a violation of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will have severe consequences, in accordance with the University Policy on Academic Integrity and the Code of Student Conduct. For details about the University's academic integrity policies, please see academicintegrity.rutgers.edu.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

All reasonable accommodation will be given to students with disabilities. Students who may require accommodation should contact the Office of Disability Services (ods.rutgers.edu; 848-445-6800) and speak with me at the start of the semester.

EXTRA CREDIT

Extra credit equivalent to one written exercise will be given for an oral report briefly describing and analyzing any of Le Guin's flying-cat stories for children to the class. These reports may be given on any class day except the final two.

OTHER READINGS AVAILABLE VIA CANVAS

- Attebery, Brian. *Fantasy: How It Works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192856234.001.0001>.
- Colum, Padraic. *The Children of Odin*. Harrap, 1922. London: HathiTrust, 2023. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433086932526>.
- Delany, Samuel R. "To Read *The Dispossessed*." Chap. 9 in *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction*, rev. ed. 1976. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2009. <http://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/lib/rutgers-ebooks/detail.action?docID=776841>.
- Jameson, Fredric. "World Reduction in Le Guin." In *Archaeologies of the Future*, 267–80. London: Verso, 2005.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. "April in Paris." *Fantastic* 11, no. 9 (September 1962): 54–65. https://archive.org/details/Fantastic_v11n09_1962-09_Lenny_Silv3r.
- . "Is Gender Necessary?" In *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*, edited by Susan Wood, 161–69. New York: Putnam, 1979.
- . "The Masters." *Fantastic* 12, no. 2 (February 1963): 85–99. https://archive.org/details/Fantastic_v12n02_1963-02.
- . "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." In *The Wind's Twelve Quarters*. New York: Harper & Row, 1975.
- Plotz, John. *Ursula Le Guin's Earthsea*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192847881.001.0001>.
- Prettyman, Gib. "Daoism, Ecology, and World Reduction in Le Guin's Utopian Fictions." In *Green Planets: Ecology and Science Fiction*, edited by Kim Stanley Robinson and Gerry Canavan, 56–76. Wesleyan University Press, 2014. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/lib/rutgers-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1635427>.
- Roberts, Moss. Introduction to *Dao De Jing: The Book of the Way*, by Laozi. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvq4c02h.3>.
- Suvin, Darko. "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre." *College English* 34, no. 3 (December 1972): 372–82. <https://www-jstor-org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/stable/375141>.