

HNRS 101-10 Quest for Meaning
Block 1, 2008 Library 108

“Our actions, utterances, and emotions are guided not by the way things really are but by the way that we represent [imagine] them to be,” (Harris 38).

“We have only the choice between a badly trained imagination and a well trained one,”
(Frye 134-35).

“Though I will defend the value of bedtime stories to my last gasp, I have learned to value imagination in a much broader sense. Imagination is not only the uniquely human capacity to envision that which is not, and therefore the fount of all invention and innovation. In its arguably most transformative and revelatory capacity, it is the power that enables us to empathize with humans whose experiences we have never shared.” J.K. Rowling, at Harvard University (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 18, 2008, A29).

Instructor: Dr. Nancy Thomas, Virginia 310

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Office hours: 7:30-8:30 a.m., Monday through Friday; 12:00-2:00 on Thursdays, and by appointment

Course Description: An interdisciplinary exploration of how the imagination works, how it impacts our lives, and how we can further develop the imagination through close analysis of literary, philosophical, scientific, and artistic materials. Particular attention will be given to the development of effective reading, writing, and critical thinking skills.

Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes:

- To explore fictional accounts of how the imagination works. By the end of the course, students will be able to read a piece of fiction and explain verbally and in assigned papers how authors use fictional characters to illustrate real-life issues involved with the imagination.
- To study non-fictional works that address the issues involved in the imagination. By the end of the course, students will be able to articulate how prominent figures, past and present, work or have worked to understand and develop the imagination.
- To connect what we read to its historical context. By the end of the course, students will be able to explain how the time and place in which we live help determine what how our imagination defines our world view and what society does and does not do to help us have more control over and understanding of this process.

- To integrate various authors' views and visions of the imagination with our own experiences. By the end of the course, students will be able to objectively analyze pertinent issues from various points of view, including their own.
- To further develop students' Critical Thinking, Writing, Public Speaking, and Analytical Reading Skills as defined by the Tusculum College Competency Document. By the end of the course, students will have demonstrated these skills in written in-and-out-of-class papers, small group and class discussions, structured debate, reading and film responses, essay exams and quizzes, and oral reports.

Required Texts:

- *Menace under Marswood*, Sterling E. Lanier
- *The Sparrow*, Mary Doria Russell
- *The Educated Imagination*, Northrop Frye
- *The Rational Imagination: How People Create Alternatives to Reality*, Ruth Byrne
- Plato's essay "The Allegory of the Cave"—please download a copy of this from an Internet site
- Vonnegut's essay "Harrison Bergeron"—on reserve in the library
- **Please note: you must bring the texts to class in order to participate in the course. Anyone who does not have the texts after the first day of class will be counted absent. Please see someone in our bookstore if financial considerations are a problem in getting your texts.**

Expectations: While I will lecture, much of our class time will involve directed discussions as well as individual and group activities. It is important to come to class prepared. This means

- You have actively read and **annotated** reading assignments and demonstrate critical engagement with and discussion of materials.
- You have completed homework assignments and participate in self-directed study and critical engagement with the professor and your peers.
- You have your own textbooks, pens, paper (not spiral notebook, please), highlighter, pocket folder, and stapler (all out-of-class assignments must be **typed** and stapled or fastened with a large paper clip).
- You come to class on time, ready to participate actively for the entire period.
- You leave caps, hoods, negative or disruptive attitudes, and use of cell phones/text messaging at the door.

Civility Statement:

A former President of Tusculum College said, "Our faculty has the right to set clear and fair standards of classroom conduct at the first class meeting and then dismiss a student if vulgar and disrespectful behavior persists." Disrespectful behavior includes the following:

- Wearing of hats or hoods

- Speaking when someone else is talking
- Use of any tobacco product
- Sleeping in class
- Use of any electronic device
- Use of any hostile or negative language or behavior
- Being tardy or leaving early

Please see the section on Attendance for penalties regarding being tardy or leaving early. All other offences will be addressed as follows:

- First offense: private talk with instructor
- Second offense: student is asked to leave class and counted absent for the day
- Third offense: failure of course

On the first day of the block, you will be asked to sign a course contract addressing these civility issues, as well as the attendance and plagiarism policies. As Svi Shapiro notes, schools should be a place “where young people learn of the value of caring and cooperative relationships based in mutual respect and equality” (2).

Attendance Policy: I follow the Tusculum College attendance policy that mandates student attendance at every class session and allows three valid absences for school-sponsored events (including participation in sports events but not practice), illness (doctor’s note required), or death in the immediate family. For excused, documented absences, students may make up work if possible—arrangements may be made in advance. In the case of unexcused absences, in-class work may not be made up. Absences will incrementally affect your grade—the fourth absence will result in a failing grade for the course. Late appearances and leaving early (3=1 absence) will also accumulate to affect your grade. If you are absent, you are responsible for contacting a fellow classmate for assignments and being prepared when you next come to class—please do not call me. Late homework will not be accepted. Homework is due at the beginning of the class on the due date. Late, end-of-the-term research papers will lose a letter grade each day they are late and will not be accepted after two days. Computer/printer problems are not acceptable excuses for late homework or papers.

Please note: I enjoy working with and helping students. If you are having any type of problem with any aspect of course work or would just like to chat, please see me and/or take advantage of the help available on campus. Conversely, if you have problems and do not seek help, your grade will be affected accordingly. Please contact the **Learning Support Service Office of the Academic Resource Center** for any disability-related accommodations, services, or inquiries. The office can also provide or arrange additional academic support services. Phone: on campus dial extension 5379; off campus at 1.423.636.7379 or 1.800.729.0256, ext. 5153. E-mail: jjones@tusculum.edu or nkilday@tusculum.edu. Location: 1st floor of the Annie Hogan Byrd Fine Arts Building, Room 100.

Academic Misconduct/Plagiarism: Consult the Tusculum College catalog. Any paper that is plagiarized in any way will receive an F and may result in failure of the course. All incidents will be reported. I have zero tolerance in this area!

Evaluation:

- Attendance/participation: **5%** This includes thoughtful, polite, and prepared participation in class discussion; industrious involvement in daily group work; and homework completed when due.
- Quizzes and critical reading/film responses: **25%**
- Two exams: **50%**
- One 7-8 page paper and oral presentation: **20%**

Grading Scale:

93-100: A	90-92: A-	
87-89: B+	83-86: B	80-82: B-
77-79: C+	73-76: C	70-72: C-
67-69: D+	60-66: D	0-59: F

All papers must be typed in MLA format, using Times New Roman 12 font, and have 1” margins on all sides of each page. Do not use cover pages or folders/plastic covers. To receive at least a C on a paper, it must show evidence of original, critical thinking; contain few mechanical errors; follow the assignment; be structurally correct (clear thesis and focused paragraphs); and make use of personal experience and/or relate topic to current events. Papers that are simply/mostly summaries of material you have read or films you have seen will receive no credit. A and B papers show strong evidence of original, critical thinking—digging deeply and creatively into a well-focused topic. More detailed paper prompts will be provided.

Tentative Course Schedule:**Week One:**

- Introduce ourselves
- Review syllabus
- Begin the process of exploring the subject of how we define “imagination” and how use of it impacts our lives
- Write an in-class essay
- On Tuesday we will watch *The Illusionist*. A two-page response paper on the film is due on Wednesday
- For Tuesday, read pages 1-63 in *Menace under Marswood*, annotating as you read.
- Read pages 64-145 in *Menace* for Wednesday
- Choose a focus for your out-of-class paper—we will work on all aspects of your paper in class
- Reading review, using *Where the Wild Things Are*, and focusing on concepts such as plot and character archetypes
- For Thursday, read pages 146-214 in *Menace*
- For Friday, read pages 13-81 in *The Educated Imagination*

- The Honors cohort will elect officers, set up a phone/email tree, and make plans for the year, including dinner and a movie at Dr. Thomas' home.
- On Thursday, I will review the process of writing a research paper. You will have time in class to work on your paper proposals that are due on Friday.
- On Friday, Library staff will review research methods.
- For next Monday, download and read Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" and turn in a two-page reading response to this assignment. Also, read pages 85-156 in *The Educated Imagination*
- Thursday: Opening Convocation of Tusculum College—attendance is required

Week Two:

- This week, we will begin to focus on how to develop/teach the imagination
- For Tuesday, read pages xi and 1-67 in *The Rational Imagination*
- For Wednesday, read pages 69-156 in *The Rational Imagination*
- On Wednesday, we will review for the midterm on Friday that will cover assignments as well as class notes.
- For Thursday, read pages 157-215 in *The Rational Imagination*
- All sources are due in class on Monday.
- For next Monday, read pages 5-100 in *The Sparrow*
- **Friday: midterm**

Week Three:

- On Monday, we will review your sources that are due today and discuss how to synthesize them in your papers.
- For Tuesday, read pages 101-171 in *The Sparrow*
- A rough draft of your paper is due this week—we will not have class on Wednesday so that I can see each of you in a 15-minute conference to review the rough draft of your paper in my office.
- For Thursday, read pages 172-240 in *The Sparrow* and turn in a two-page reading response on these pages
- For Friday, read pages 241-314 in *The Sparrow*
- Movie and dessert/snacks at school on Thursday (reserve room/date)
- For next Monday, finish *The Sparrow*

Week Four:

- On Monday, review for final exam and catch-up with reading assignments
- **Research paper due on Monday**
- **Oral presentations on these papers to be made on Tuesday**
- **Final exam on Wednesday.**