

World-building: Designing the Multiverse of Speculative Fiction

UHON 301 CRN 59271

Betsy James, author-illustrator of 17 books and finalist for the 2017 World Fantasy Award, teaches her popular workshop in science fiction, fantasy, horror, magic realism and other “What if?” genres. Its oddball “thought experiments” push the envelope of human thinking, and model creative thinking in STEM fields as well as the liberal arts and the entertainment industry.

This course is guaranteed to make you a better writer of both fiction and nonfiction. You’ll read, write, and critique short stories and nonfiction; you’ll experiment with maps and diagrams and other media. (No, you don’t have to be able to draw.) Offbeat assignments will give you a personal portfolio of concepts and story starts for fiction, games, movies, the graphic novel. Bring your quirky knowledge of this world to the building of new ones!

Texts:

Required: *You Are Here: Personal Geographies and Other Maps of the Imagination*, by Katharine Harmon

Steering the Craft: A 21st-Century Guide to Sailing the Sea of Story, by Ursula K. Le Guin

Optional: *Wonderbook: The Illustrated Guide to Creating Imaginative Fiction*, by Jeff VanderMeer

Instructor will provide readings in the form of pdfs and online links.

Assignments:

Weekly: readings of short stories and articles, and written “thought experiment” of 1000 words or less, sometimes with goofy graphics.

Midterm (10 sentences).

Self-determined final project.

Fill a 100-page notebook (ca. \$14) any way you like.

Fee:

\$10 fee for speakers’ honoraria.

About the instructor:

Betsy James is the author-illustrator of 17 books. Her novel, *Roadsouls*, was one of five finalists for the 2017 World Fantasy Award, which judges all SF published in English or translated into English. She is also a recognized watercolorist and a backcountry desert hiker. She lives in Albuquerque’s North Valley.