Tolkien, Carroll, Peake: great British fantasists

**Start date**  Friday 19 November 2021  **End date**  Sunday 21 November 2021

**Venue**  Madingley Hall  
Madingley  
Cambridge  
CB23 8AQ

**Tutor**  Dr John Lennard  
**Course code**  2122NRX068

**Director of ISP and LL**  Sarah Ormrod

**For further information**  inteng@ice.cam.ac.uk

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**Tutor biography**

Dr John Lennard was formerly both a Fellow of Trinity Hall and Professor of British and American Literature at the University of the West Indies in Mona, Jamaica, and is an Associate Member of and occasional Director of Studies in English at Hughes Hall. His published work includes two best-selling OUP textbooks, *The Poetry Handbook* and *The Drama Handbook*, and a study of *Mock-Death in Shakespeare’s Plays* as well as two collections of essays on ‘genre fiction’, *Of Modern Dragons* and *Of Sex and Faerie*, as well as individual studies of Tolkien, Faulkner, and Paul Scott. He has taught for Cambridge ICE since 1991, including summer schools, virtual festivals, and day and weekend courses.
**Course programme**

**Friday**
Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the Terrace Bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>19:00</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
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<tr>
<td>20:30 – 22:00</td>
<td><strong>The Uses of Fantasy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>22:00</td>
<td>Terrace Bar open for informal discussion</td>
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**Saturday**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>07:30</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:00 – 10:30</td>
<td><strong>Charles Lutwidge Dodgson and Lewis Carroll</strong></td>
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<td>10:30</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 – 12:30</td>
<td><strong>The Lessons of Wonderland</strong></td>
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<td>13:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>14:00 – 16:00</td>
<td>Free time</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:00</td>
<td>Tea</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:30 – 18:00</td>
<td><strong>Mervyn Peake’s Life and Art</strong></td>
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<td>18:00 – 18:30</td>
<td>Free time</td>
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<tr>
<td>18:30</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
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<tr>
<td>20:00 – 21:30</td>
<td><strong>The Very Strange History of The Lord of the Rings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>21:30</td>
<td>Terrace Bar open for informal discussion</td>
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**Sunday**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>07:30</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:00 – 10:30</td>
<td><strong>Tolkien’s Wars and Faiths</strong></td>
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<td>10:30</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 – 12:30</td>
<td><strong>Pottermania and Beyond : The Popularity of Fantasy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>12:45</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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The course will disperse after lunch
Course syllabus

Aims:
The course will introduce students to:
1) Issues and arguments about the value and uses of the fantastical in literature.
2) The expressions of personal concerns by Carroll, Peake, and Tolkien within their fantasy
   writing.
3) The historical development of Fantasy as a commercial genre.

Content:
NOTE: This course deals in detail with written fantasies that include violence and warfare, and will
touch on other works that include death and sexual violence. Debates around Carroll’s supposed
paedophilia will also be discussed in one session.

Over the last two centuries fantasy writing has become a very successful commercial genre, and
three creations in particular have gripped generations – Lewis Carroll’s Wonderland, J.R.R.
Tolkien’s Middle-earth, and Mervyn Peake’s Gormenghast. But why write – or read – fantasy? And
is it any more than the escapism of which it is often accused? This course begins with some sharp
reconsiderations of what we mean by ‘fantasy’, and what it might actually be, before looking in turn
at Carroll, Peake, and Tolkien, with their astonishing creations, and asking what purposes their
fantasy has served, for themselves and for their readers. Why and how does it matter that all were
notable polymaths, practicing more than one art? And why does fantasy writing grow ever stronger
and more popular in a worrying world?

Presentation of the course:
The course will involve illustrated lectures, group discussion and the study of some fine and/or
illustrated editions of the set texts.

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

1) Talk with confidence and knowledge about the confusions besetting the nature and study of
   fantastical texts.
2) Discuss with insight attitudes towards fantasy and the three set texts.
3) Relate current discussions surrounding popular fantasy to its historical and critical contexts.
Reading and resources list

Listed below are the set texts and texts of interest should you wish to supplement your learning on the course. Any essential reading is marked with an asterisk *


(A 'Deluxe 150th anniversary edition' with additions and revisions by Mark Burstein was published by Norton in 2015, but is as yet only available in hardback.)


Website addresses:

https://lewiscarrollsociety.org.uk/online-resources/

https://www.lewiscarroll.org/carroll/study/


https://www.tolkiensociety.org/links/

https://www.wheaton.edu/academics/academic-centers/wadecenter/authors/jrr-tolkien/tolkien-resources/