

Dr. Lois Parkinson Zamora  
Spring 2009  
**On-line VISTA course, with accompanying DVD's**  
Office: (713) 743-2959; 227C Roy Cullen  
Office Hours: TTH 2:30-3:30  
lzamora@uh.edu  
Turnitin.com: Course ID: 2550274  
Password (lower case): magical

## **English 3322: The Contemporary Novel: Magical Realism Section 32225**

### **On-line VISTA course**

This course will focus on recent novels that have been described by the term "magical realism." Magical realism engages the usual devices of narrative realism, but with a difference: the supernatural is an ordinary matter, an everyday occurrence, accepted and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism. We will read a number of novels from different cultural contexts in order to compare the workings of magical realism in North and South America and explore the diversity of its contemporary styles and subjects. We will also pay attention to the visual arts and their connection to the novels we are reading.

The streaming lectures that accompany this course were recorded last year, so there may be some topical information that does not relate to you, but the material covered in the lectures will be relevant to your reading. **There are two streaming lectures per week, except for Week 2, when there are three lectures, and the last two weeks of the semester, which have none.** Your reading quizzes and assignments will be posted on our VISTA site as noted on the syllabus. Requirements for the course are described at the end of the syllabus. There are no face-to-face meetings for this course.

Posted on our VISTA site under Web Paper Projects are web sites relating to our course material; they were created by my students in previous semesters. Please browse through them and learn from them.

Galleries of art and three illustrated lectures are at: <http://www.class.uh.edu/classes/zamora>  
Not all of the galleries are relevant to this course, but several are. During the semester, you will be directed to specific galleries in conjunction with your reading by links in the weekly organizers. (The top three galleries in both the right and left columns are for this course, if you want to go to the website listed above and take a look.)

#### **Required Texts:**

*Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, eds. Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris (Duke University Press, 1995)

Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (Colombia)  
Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths* (Argentina)  
Alejo Carpentier, *The Kingdom of this World* (Cuba)  
Louise Erdrich, *Tracks* (USA)  
Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (USA)  
Isabel Allende, *The House of the Spirits* (Chile)

**First week:                   What is Magical Realism?**

January 20-23

Introduction to the course; Zamora and Faris, Introduction to *Magical Realism*, pp. 1-11.

Two short stories by Gabriel García Márquez, "The Very Old Man with Enormous Wings," and "Light is Like Water" (on VISTA)

**Second week:               The Art Historical Beginnings of Magical Realism**

January 26-30

Franz Roh, "Magical Realism: Post-Expressionism," in *Magical Realism*, pp. 15-31

Irene Guenther, "Magic Realism, New Objectivity, and the Arts during the Weimar Republic," in *Magical Realism*, pp. 33-74

**SKIP AHEAD to the final lecture for this class**, where you'll find an interview with Irene Guenther, the author of the above essay, and further discussion of the origins of Magical Realism as an art historical category. This lecture is **in addition to** the two lectures for this week. The material on this lecture will be covered on the Reading Quiz for this week.

**Images our VISTA site: Week 2:**

Magical Realist Painting and Franz Roh

**Reading Quiz 1: Covering the reading and lectures assigned to this point; CLOSED BOOK, 30 minutes, timed: available Thursday 10:00 am to Sunday 11:00 pm**

**Third week:               Magical Realism and the Baroque**

February 2-6

Read Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

**Images on our VISTA site: Week 3:**

The exuberant hyperbole of Baroque painting: angels, levitating virgins, and other miraculous episodes

**Maps on our VISTA site:** Please study them, and know where our authors come from.

**Fourth Week:**  
February 9-13

**Gabriel García Márquez**

Finish *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

**Images on our VISTA site: Week 4:**

The Paintings of Colombian artist Fernando Botero

**Reading Quiz 2: Covering *One Hundred Years of Solitude*;  
CLOSED BOOK, 30 minutes, timed: available Thursday  
10:00 am to Sunday 11:00 pm**

**Fifth week:**  
February 16-20

**Jorge Luis Borges's Trompe l'oeil Tricks**

Jon Thiem, "The Textualization of the Reader," in *Magical Realism*, pp. 235-247

Borges, *Labyrinths*, "Partial Magic in the Quixote"

Borges, "When Fiction Lives in Fiction" (on VISTA)

Julio Cortázar, "Continuity of Parks" (on VISTA)

Woody Allen, "The Kugelmas Episode" (on VISTA)

Borges, *Labyrinths*: "The Library of Babel," "The Zahir," "The Circular Ruins," "The Secret Miracle," "The God's Script," "The Aleph" (on VISTA)

**Images on our VISTA site: Week 5:**

Trompe l'oeil Painting and Borges

**Sixth week:**  
February 23-27

**Jorge Luis Borges' Labyrinths**

Borges, *Labyrinths*: "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," "The Garden of Forking Paths," "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote," "The Fearful Sphere of Pascal," "Funes the Memorious," "The Wall and the Books," "Borges and I"

**Images on our VISTA site: Week 6:**

Argentine artist Xul Solar and Borges

**Reading Quiz 3: Covering the work of Borges and Jon Thiem's essay; CLOSED BOOK, 30 minutes, timed: available Thursday 10 am to Sunday 11:00 pm.**

**Seventh week:**

**New World Baroque: Two essays by Alejo Carpentier**

March 2-6

Alejo Carpentier, "The Marvelous Real in America," in *Magical Realism*, pp. 75-88; "The Baroque and the Marvelous Real," in *Magical Realism*, pp. 89-108

**Images on our VISTA site for Week 7:**

New World Baroque Art and Architecture

**Eighth week:**

March 9-13

**Lo real maravilloso americano**

Alejo Carpentier, *The Kingdom of this World*

**SPRING BREAK**

March 16-21

**Ninth week:**

March 23-27

**North American Indigenous Culture I**

Read Louise Erdrich, *Tracks*

**Reading Quiz 4: Covering Alejo Carpentier's essays and his *The Kingdom of this World*, and Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*; CLOSED BOOK, ONE HOUR TIMED: available Thursday 10 am to Sunday 11:00 pm**

**Tenth week:**

March 30-April 3

**North American Indigenous Culture II**

Read Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*

**Reading Quiz 5: Covering *Ceremony* ; Closed book, 30 minutes, timed: available Thursday 10:00 am to Sunday 11:00 pm**

**Eleventh week:**

April 6-10

**Magical Feminism: Isabel Allende**

Isabel Allende, *The House of the Spirits*

**Twelfth week:**

April 13-17

**Magical Feminism II**

Finish *The House of the Spirits*

**Images our VISTA site for Week 12:**

The Spanish/Mexican Painter Remedios Varo

In the Web Paper Organizer on our Home Page, go to **nmunoz2** to read/see more about Remedios Varo

**Reading Quiz 6: Covering *The House of the Spirits*; CLOSED BOOK, 30 minutes, timed: available Thursday 10:00 am to Sunday 11:00 pm**

**Thirteenth week: Magical Feminism III**  
April 20-24

P. Gabrielle Foreman, "Past-On Stories: History and the Magically Real, Morrison and Allende on Call," in *Magical Realism*, pp. 285-303

Lois Zamora, "Magical Romance/Magical Realism: Ghosts in U.S. and Latin American Fiction," in *Magical Realism*, pp. 497-549

**Reading Quiz 7: Covering the essays by Foreman and Zamora (these essays are NOT discussed on the streaming lecture); CLOSED BOOK, 30 minutes, timed: available MONDAY 10:00 am to Sunday 11:00 pm**

**Please take Quiz 7 as early as possible so that you will have time to concentrate on your final paper. Your final paper is due early the following week, Tuesday, April 28. Taking Quiz 7 early will assure that you have adequate time to write your final paper carefully and, calmly.**

**Fourteenth week: Final paper due to Turnitin.com by midnight, Tuesday, April 28.**  
April 27-May 1

**Final Exam: Available from April 29, 10:00 am to midnight, Monday, April 4.**

**Reading** is required, and will be covered in the **reading quizzes and the final examination, along with the material covered in lectures on the streaming lectures posted on this class website.** Sometimes the lecture on a particular work will not be totally done at the end of the session, and you'll need to go on to the next one, but you should be able to tell if there is some "spill over" from one lecture to the next.

**Reading quizzes are CLOSED BOOK.** Do not consult anything while taking the quizzes. They will be posted on the website as noted on the syllabus. Except for Quiz 7, they will be posted on Thursday at 10 am, to be completed by Sunday at 11:00 pm. Quiz 7 is available on Monday, April 20, to encourage you to take it early, and get to work on your final paper, which is due on April 28. The quizzes are simple, short answer questions on plot, character, theme, etc., designed to assure that you have completed the reading. Quizzes are usually comprised of four questions, each one counting for one point if correctly answered. In one case, the quiz will have six questions.

**Please note that the quizzes are the largest percentage of your grade because they attest to your careful reading of the assigned texts. It is imperative that you prepare for them by**

**reading carefully, taking notes on your reading and on the lectures, and attending to the visual images and other materials on the VISTA site. You cannot do well in this course if you don't do well on the reading quizzes. They are CLOSED BOOK; if there is any evidence of consulting your books or notes or other students, there will be dire consequences.**

**Missed quizzes cannot be made up at a later date for any reason. I'm sorry, but there can be no exceptions to this rule.**

**The final examination is CLOSED BOOK:** do not consult anything while taking the exam. The exam consists of essay questions and passages from the texts we have read, which I will ask you to identify and discuss. Passages will be drawn largely (but not entirely) from those passages discussed in the streaming lectures that accompany this course. The visual arts discussed in the course will also be covered on the final exam. The exam will be timed to last four hours.

**Final Paper:** 5 to 7 pages of literary critical analysis on a topic that engages Magical Realism in selected work(s) of fiction **that we have read in this class**, with the possibility of extending your discussion to the visual arts and/or film. Please turn it in to Turnitin.com; class ID and password are on the heading of the syllabus.

**Turnitin.com:** I will ask you to turn in your final papers to the web site turnitin.com, to assure that your text is properly documented. Class ID and password are at the top of this syllabus.

Grades are determined as follows:

Final exam	30%
Final paper	30%
Quizzes	40%

Quizzes are calculated as follows, out of 30 total points: 27-30 A; 26-24 B; 23-20 C; 19-17 D

Your final exam and final paper will be given a letter grade, with the three letter grades weighted according to the percentage of the final grade (30% or 40%) and averaged, to determine your final grade in the course.

**Learning Outcomes:** This course is designed to teach students to read, write, speak and think more clearly about the type of literary fictions labels “magical realist” by literary critics. This implies the development of interpretive skills that allow for critical analysis of fictions that depart from literary realism, and yet are also realistic in many of their narrative structures and strategies. An important outcome of this course is the cultural awareness that comes from placing literary texts in their cultural contexts. Magical realism is often written in post-colonial contexts where Western forms of thought have collided, and then converged, with non-Western forms—in the Americas, principally with indigenous and African cultural belief systems and expressive structures. Exams and papers, as well as in-class discussion and writing assignments, are designed to support these outcomes.