

Spring 2024 course proposal

Title: Great Books in Genres

Course Content

Two or three times now since I began teaching this course, which was several years ago, I've been asked to record the course, and have consistently declined because I felt that members who registered for the first time would feel like they'd come into the middle of something. So, I decided for next term to provide a kind of introduction to what I've been doing in my novels course all along, with sufficient background information to provide a context for the reading and discussion we do in class. For those who have taken previous courses, this one will be a kind of summary or reflection.

So, the thesis for this course, planned for Spring 2024, is a survey of the genres and subgenres that define novels. For each, I will provide background information, review a brief history, and define the important characteristics of each genre. I will also suggest that we read and discuss only the best, most outstanding, and exemplary books for each genre. More specifically, I'm going to select the books I love, the ones that have "haunted" me since I first read them, the ones I can't forget. Many are also prize winners, Pulitzer, Booker, and other awards. So, choosing just six novels isn't going to be easy. Already I have a long list. I will choose from the genres and books listed below, and maybe a couple of others not yet listed, including some "classic" novels. I would love to teach *Bleak House*, Dickens, or *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen, or Edith Wharton, etc.

Part of the idea here is that this course, as structured, could provide an adequate introduction for members who might like to take the course as an "on demand" option.

As usual, I will organize the course around 6 two-week segments, with a lecture on the genre for the first week, and discussion of the novel itself for the second. I will also offer this course in two formats—online, on Zoom, recorded, and in-person in Arsh Hall so that members may choose which they prefer.

And, as usual, I have created a website for the course, where I will list the books and upload the PowerPoint slides after each class. That website is available at:

<https://sites.google.com/udel.edu/booksgenres>

The categories for genres and books are:

- Historical novels—fiction but based on fact (myriads of these)
 - *The Nightingale*, Kristin Hannah (new one coming out, maybe in time)
 - *A Town Like Alice*, Nevil Shute
 - *The Alice Network*, Kate Quinn (*and many others*)
 - *The Secret River*, Kate Grenville
 - *Marriage Portrait*, Maggie O'Farrell
 - *Hamnet*, Maggie O'Farrell
 - *Horse*, Geraldine Brooks
 - *All the Light We Cannot See*, Doerr
 - *Storyteller's Secret*—(also cross cultural)
 - *Mary Coin*, Marissa Silver (based on the Migrant Mother photo)
 - *A Piece of the World*, Christina Baker Kline (based on Wyeth's painting)
- Mystery—classic
 - Dorothy Sayers, *Gaudy Night*, or any of the Peter Wimsey novels
 - Dashiell Hammett (maybe)

- Tana French, *In the Woods*, *The Searcher*, *The Witch Elm*, (she has a new one coming out, a follow-up to *The Searcher*, but not published in time)
- Mystery—puzzles
 - Anthony Horowitz—several possibilities
- Epistolary
 - *Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*
 - *Meet me at the Museum*
- Epic
 - *The Covenant of Water*, Abraham Verghese (or *Cutting for Stone*)
 - *Cold Mountain*, Charles Frazier
 - *Demon Copperhead*, Barbara Kingsolver
 - *Claire Keegan* (any of her novels, short, but epic)
 - *Salt Creek*, Lucy Treloar
 - *The Secret River*, Kate Grenville
 - *A Narrow Road to the Deep North*, Richard Flanagan
- Memoir
 - *Where the Crawdads Sing*, Delia Owens
 - *Personal Librarian*, Marie Benedict
 - *A Single Thread*, Tracy Chevalier
 - *Started Early, Took My Dog*, Kate Atkinson
 - *The Weight of Ink*, Rachel Kadish
- Novels featuring animals
 - *Watership Down*, Richard Adams
 - *Once There Were Wolves*
 - *Remarkably Bright Creatures*, Shelby VanPelt