

**ANG 1002 – Reading Fiction**  
**Autumn 2023**  
**Tuesdays 3:30-6:30pm**  
**Prof. Heather Meek**

**Description:**

In this course, students will refine their abilities to read, analyze, and write about fiction. We will work from the premise that the experience of reading fiction becomes more enriching and effective when we possess the proper skills to understand and speak about it critically. As David Lodge remarks in *The Art of Fiction*, “you cannot analyse a literary text without an appropriate descriptive vocabulary, any more than you can strip down an engine without an appropriate set of tools.” We will acquire some of this descriptive vocabulary as we learn both to read fictional works closely and to place these works within their relevant social, historical, and critical contexts. In order to meet these goals, we will study various fictional representations of the figure of the outcast: the enslaved eponymous hero of Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko*, the depressed mother of Elena Ferrante’s *The Days of Abandonment*, the alienated non-human beings of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Octavia Butler’s “Bloodchild,” the father-son vagabond pair of Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*, and the refugees of Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West*. Among other questions, we will ask: How do these fictional outcasts bring to light societal concerns, anxieties, and injustices? To what extent are they forcibly cast out? To what extent is their isolation self-imposed? In what ways do depictions of the outcast evolve through history? How does the outcast lend itself particularly well to literary representation? What particular narrative forms, styles, and techniques do various authors use to capture this compelling figure?

**Reading Material:**

For purchase in UdeM Bookstore

Behn, Aphra. *Oroonoko, or The Royal Slave* [1688]. Penguin, 2004.  
Ferrante, Elena. *The Days of Abandonment*. Europa, 2015.  
McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*. Vintage, 2007.  
Mohsin, Hamid. *Exit West*. Riverhead, 2017.  
Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* [1818]. Oxford, 2019.

Available on StudiUM

Butler, Octavia. “Bloodchild.” 1995.  
Lodge, David. *The Art of Fiction*. Vintage, 2011.

**Evaluation:**

Midterm in-class assignment:	25%
Term paper (6-8 pages):	40%
Final in-class assignment:	25%
Participation:	10%