The Imaginary and the Actual: Possible Worlds and Fictional Worlds
7.5 hp Spring 2015

On the next page you will find the course description and a preliminary reading list and seminar plan (listing all the primary works, but some critical essays will be added) for the MA course “The Imaginary and the Actual: Possible Worlds and Fictional Worlds,”

You will receive the detailed seminar plan later. Please don't let this stop you from getting the books on the list and start reading. We will cover a lot of ground in this course, and I want you to have prepared for the first seminar by reading excerpts from Beowulf and John Gardner’s short novel Grendel. You may have read Robinson Crusoe in some form or another, but we will want to re-read it and make sure it is the unadulterated original version, which is quite long, so you may want to start reading it before the semester starts..

The course begins on Wednesday 21 January at 10 am in room E890. You can find your schedule on www.english.su.se.

On-line registration for the course 12-14 January.

See you soon,

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will consider the relations between the fictional and the actual, what exists and what may exist, with the help of theories of possible worlds and of fictionality. We will read a number of literary works whose distinctive fictional worlds claim a reality at least in our ability to imagine what is not the case.

Central concepts: Possible worlds; fictionality; referentiality; spatiality; utopia/dystopia

COURSE LITERATURE

Primary works

Beowulf (in Seamus Heaney’s translation, available in many anthologies or as a paperback). We will focus on the first part, lines 1-1250.
Jorge Luis Borges, “The Garden of Forking Paths” (Hand-out)

Secondary material (a preliminary list):

Ryan, Marie-Laure. “Possible Worlds and Accessibility Relations: A Semantic Typology of Fiction,” Poetics Today 12:3 (Fall 1991). (online through the library web site)

Additional material according to the teacher’s instructions.
Preliminary seminar plan

Seminar 1. *Beowulf* and Gardner’s *Grendel*. Possible worlds.


Seminar 7. David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*. The novel, the historical novel, and our world