



# Towards a Pedagogy of Speculative Fiction Writing

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# Teaching SFF writing is different from teaching other forms of prose writing.


- pre-existence of fandoms (strong communities of practice, consumption, and critique)
- tension between increasing ambiguity about what speculative fiction “should” be and a distinct tradition of practice
- the need to consider from a work’s very conception the demands that its possible transmediation might impose





# Principles of pedagogy

- Constructivism
- Learner-centered teaching
- Scaffolding
- Constructive alignment
- Reflective practice



# Learning outcomes should be:

- Clear
- Authentic (relevant to the larger world of practice into which the learner will emerge)
- Assessable and transparent
- At the appropriate level of cognition using Bloom's taxonomy






# Bloom's taxonomy

- knowledge (remembering)
- comprehension (understanding)
- application (transferring)
- analysis (relating)
- synthesis (creating)
- evaluation (judging)


Note: In a revision of the now-traditional hierarchy, Krathwohl (2002) considers creating to be a more advanced skill than judging.



# What activities will help students achieve the learning outcomes?

- Authentic
- Directly related to helping learners gain skills to achieve the learning outcomes
- Appropriate in scope and level of challenge
- Appropriately scaffolded





A background image showing a book cover with a red and blue pattern, a library card, and a piece of brown paper. The library card is partially visible, showing the author 'Lowell.' and the title 'The Biglow papers.' The card also has a table with columns for 'Date Due', 'Borrower's Name', and 'Date Returned'. The 'Date Due' column has entries for 'Aug 6'40', 'Apr 30'41', and 'May 1941'. The 'Borrower's Name' column has a handwritten name 'Wanda A. ...'. The 'Date Returned' column has an entry for 'Aug ...'.

# How should we assess learning?

- Authentic assessments
- Directly related to assessing the degree to which learners have achieved the learning outcomes
- Appropriate in scope and level of challenge
- Can be assessed fairly and transparently



# Sample course outline (1): Learning outcomes

By the end of this course, participants will be able to:

- **Identify and discuss** the historical characteristics and context of genre fiction and how those have changed over time.
- **Apply** the concepts of character, plot, world-building, and theme in writing a piece of short genre fiction.
- **Place** their piece of short genre fiction within a context of works that have preceded it and the current state of genre-fiction practice, and **justify** their creative choices with reference to the scholarly literature of genre fiction in a brief exegesis.
- **Participate** in peer critique sessions of their own and peers' work in progress.





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AUTHOR Lowell.

TITLE The Biglow papers.

Date Due	Borrower's Name	Date Returned
Aug 6 '40	Wanda	Aug
Apr 30 '41	J. D.	Aug
May 1914		

## Sample course outline (2): Learning activities


- Discussion of weekly readings
- Discussion of concepts
- Small-group critique of works in progress



## Sample course outline (3): Assessments

- Participation in critique groups – 15%
- Participation in weekly discussions – 15%
- Short story of between 1,500 and 3,000 words or equivalent in other media – 35%
- Exegesis of between 1,000 and 1,500 words – 35%





As arts education is under fire and creative-writing degrees continue to be cut, what next?

- Online or blended delivery
- Informal workshops and online non-degree courses can provide real benefit to learners
- All the more reason to focus on rigorous pedagogy to ensure quality learning and teaching



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May 10 '41		

...questions?





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