

# First Essay: Assessing a Definition

*due Thursday, May 29 in lecture*

## *Assignment*

Choose *one* of the following topics and write an essay assessing its proposed definition. Your essay should: motivate the proposed definition; raise at least two objections to the proposed definition; and respond to the objections you raise, either by countering them or by modifying the proposed definition. **Word limit: 800 words.**

### Topics (choose one!)

- (i) Q: What distinguishes fiction from nonfiction?  
A: Fiction describes an imagined world; nonfiction describes the actual world
- (ii) Q: What distinguishes literary fiction from popular fiction?  
A: Literary fiction is literature which is serious and critically acclaimed
- (iii) Q: What distinguishes science fiction from other genres?  
A: Science fiction is literature which presents realistic speculations about possible future events
- (iv) Q: What distinguishes fantasy from other genres?  
A: Fantasy is literature which features magic and other supernatural phenomena as a primary element

**N.B.:** To write an effective essay, you will need to mention *specific works* as paradigm examples of the category being defined, both to motivate and to criticize the proposed definition. As such, you should pick a topic category that you are already familiar with (e.g., don't pick topic III if you don't read any sci-fi). Also, be sure to fully explain the relevance of the examples you use; write as if your reader has never heard of the works.

### *Formatting*

**Prepare your essay for blind grading:** the only piece of identifying information should be **your student number**; please do *not* include your name. As for all other formatting guidelines: do whatever you want.

### *Turning it in*

**Your paper is to be printed out, stapled, and handed in to me, in person, at lecture on the due date.** Late papers will be docked 10% if handed in within the first 24 hours after the lecture at which they are due, and 5% for each subsequent 24 hour period after that (unless accompanied by valid documentation). Late papers should be submitted, in PDF format, to [willie.costello@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:willie.costello@mail.utoronto.ca). To repeat, **on-time assignments cannot be submitted by email**, and any assignment submitted on or before the due date by email will automatically be docked 10%.

### *On citations, secondary sources, and plagiarism*

This assignment is asking *you* to write an *original* assessment of a definition. As such, you are not expected to do any research or use any ‘secondary sources’ (for example, books, journal articles, websites, or any other written work on the topic). Any works you reference as examples need not be cited.

However, if you *do* consult secondary sources – and remember, this includes websurfing on the topic and reading other students’ work – you *must*: (i) include a bibliography at the end of your paper listing all your sources; (ii) give a footnote reference *every time* you quote, paraphrase, or say something influenced by what you have read; and (iii) make sure that the bulk of your paper consists in your own original, independent thinking. **Any failure to follow rules (i), (ii), and (iii) counts as plagiarism** and will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. The much better option is just not to look at any secondary sources at all.

In addition, no collaboration on this assignment is permitted. Any submission of work not entirely your own or of work already submitted in another course is a form of cheating, and will be dealt with accordingly.