

## **Spring 2026 UnCommon Reads IDH2930 Red Queen**

Professor: Ms. Patti Takacs (Ta-Ka-Ch) [patriciatakacs@ufl.edu](mailto:patriciatakacs@ufl.edu)

Office #502 Library West 352-273-2889

Office Hours Tuesday 2-4pm or by appointment

Book: [Red Queen by Victoria Aveyard](#) (Required Text)

### **Course Description:**

This course explores *Red Queen* by Victoria Aveyard through the lens of social hierarchy, political power, and individual agency. Using the novel as a primary text, students will engage in dynamic class discussions that connect fiction to real-world systems of oppression, rebellion, and change. Weekly readings and discussions will challenge students to think critically about narrative structure, genre, character development, and the portrayal of societal conflict in young adult (YA) dystopian literature. This class is designed as a seminar driven primarily by in class discussions therefore your participation is essential and encouraged.

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

#### **1. Analyze Themes of Power, Inequality, and Resistance**

Students will critically examine how *Red Queen* portrays social stratification, power dynamics, and resistance movements, and articulate how these themes resonate with or differ from structures of inequality in contemporary societies. To compare fictional systems of power with real historical and contemporary structures and to analyze how YA literature explores complex sociopolitical issues

#### **2. Evaluate Character Motivations and Moral Complexity**

Students will assess the development and motivations of key characters in *Red Queen*, using textual evidence to explore themes such as loyalty, betrayal, and identity, while drawing parallels to ethical dilemmas in modern political and social contexts. To develop skills in close reading, oral communication, and textual analysis

#### **3. Develop and Communicate Informed Perspectives Through Discussion**

Students will engage in structured, discussion-based analysis to express and defend their interpretations of the novel's key issues, demonstrating the ability to listen, respond constructively, and synthesize diverse viewpoints in both written and oral formats. To foster critical thinking through collaborative discussion

## **Class Expectations**

This is a safe space, this is a space where we can all give freely of our ideas and opinions and expect that they will be welcomed with open minds. It is ok to discuss differing opinions, but everyone needs to be respectful and kind. Different opinions is what makes class and the world interesting, and kindness is what allows for democracy and freedoms to live on. I want this class to be fun, for you to meet new people, for this to be a time of enjoyment and exploration and that can not happen if anyone ever feels they are being judged.

## **Weekly Schedule:**

Week 1: 1/13/26

Syllabus Review & Class Expectations

For next week: Read through chapter 3

Pages 1-32

Week 2: 1/20/26

Assign Discussion Leader Groups

For next week: Read through chapter 6

Pages 33-62

Week 3: 1/27/26

Discussion Leaders Group 1

For next week: Read through chapter 9

Pages 63-95

Week 4: 2/3/26

Discussion Leaders Group 2

For next week: Read chapter through chapter 12

Pages 96-125

Week 5: 2/10/26

Discussion Leaders Group 3

For next week: Read through chapter 15

Pages 126-167

Week 6: 2/17/26

Discussion Leaders Group 4

For next week: Read through chapter 16

Pages 168-200

Week 7: 2/24/26

Discussion Leaders Group 5

For next week: Read through chapter 19

Pages 201-240

Week 8: 3/3/26 ***Discussion paper due***

Discussion Leaders Group 6

For next week: Read through chapter 21

Pages 241-269

Week 9: 3/10/26 Discussion Leaders Group 7

For next week: Read through chapter 23

Pages 270-301

Week 10: 3/17/26 NO CLASS

SPRING BREAK

Week 11: 3/24/26 Assign Roles for Final Mock Trial

Discussion Leaders Group 8

For next week: Read through chapter 25

Pages 302-331

Week 12: 3/31/26 Discussion Leaders Group 9

For next week: Read through chapter 27

Pages 332-363

Week 13: 4/7/26 Final Paper due for Mock Trial

For next week: Read through end and epilogue

Pages 364-383

Week 14: 4/14/26

Mock Trial

Week 15: 4/21/26

Additional Mock Trial Day if needed

## Course Assignments

**Attendance 10%** – Since we only meet once a week it is important that you attend, I understand things happen and I follow the UF attendance policy but please know that you can not participate if you do not attend.

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

**Weekly Class Participation 20%** – Support for your peers and promoting public speaking. In addition, this class only meets weekly and attendance is critical. Please just email me if you are going to be out for a class.

**Discussion Leader/s – 20%** – Coming with questions prepared to promote peer interaction and class. We will assign these partners in the second week of class. Discussion questions can be around themes such as propaganda, media, ethics, contemporary connections, government, identity, revolution, authority, control, power etc. An example might be something like: How do Cal and Maven each understand duty and sacrifice?

Group 1 leads discussion on 1/27/26

Group 2 leads discussion on 2/3/26

Group 3 leads discussion on 2/10/26

Group 4 leads discussion on 2/17/26

Group 5 leads discussion on 2/24/26

Group 6 leads discussion on 3/3/26

Group 7 leads discussion on 3/10/26

Group 8 leads discussion on 3/24/26

Group 9 leads discussion on 3/31/26

**Discussion paper – 20%** – Choose one of the following questions and write a paper that should be 2-3 pages in length following APA guidelines.

1. How does *Red Queen* construct and legitimize social hierarchy through the concept of blood, and what does this reveal about political power framed as “natural”?
  - How is blood difference framed as destiny rather than design?
  - What institutions (monarchy, military, marriage) reinforce the hierarchy?
  - What real-world parallels exist in the political use of “natural” difference?
  - How does the division between Reds and Silvers function as a caste system? What mechanisms are used to maintain this hierarchy?

- How does the Silver elite justify their rule? What parallels can you draw to real-world systems of inherited power?
  - How does Mare's experience illuminate the lived realities of structural inequality?
2. How does the use of spectacle and narrative control in *Red Queen* sustain political legitimacy, and why is controlling the story as important as controlling force?
- How does spectacle obscure violence and inequality?
  - Who benefits from the official narrative, and who is erased by it?
  - How is Mare's identity reshaped for public consumption?
  - What parallels can be drawn to modern media and political image-making?
  - What role does violence play in sustaining political order in the novel?
  - How are law and punishment used selectively across social classes?
  - To what extent is fear more effective than consent as a governing strategy in the novel?
  - How does surveillance—formal and informal—function as a tool of control?

You do not need to answer all of these questions, I simply put them there as potential talking points to help you with your discussion.

## **Final Presentation 30%**

### **"The Silvers' Courtroom" – Mock Trial**

Students participate in a mock trial where characters are put on trial for their actions. Roles include attorneys, witnesses, judge, and jury. The trial explores moral gray areas and allows for rich interpretation.

Each student will submit **one short written component** prior to the trial:

- **Attorneys:**  
A 1–2 page case brief with claims, evidence, and anticipated counterarguments
- **Witnesses:**  
A 1–2 page character analysis explaining motivations, loyalties, and constraints
- **Jurors & Judges:**  
A 1–2 page trial position statement identifying key questions they will consider

Two potential topics for class to vote on before final

## **The Crown vs. Maven Calore**

*Charges:* Crimes against the state; manipulation and abuse of power; conspiracy; treason.

## **The People vs. the Silver Monarchy**

*Charges:* Systemic oppression; crimes against humanity; unlawful use of violence.

<b>Red Queen Trial Roles</b>
<b>Judge(s)</b> (1–2): Moderates proceedings, rules on objections, ensures evidence comes from the text.
<b>Prosecution Team</b> (3–4): Constructs the case for guilt using textual evidence.
<b>Defense Team</b> (3–4): Argues innocence, justification, or lack of legitimate authority.
<b>Jury</b> (5–7): Evaluates arguments and delivers a verdict with written justification.
Witnesses (6–10) Mare Barrow Cal Calore Maven Calore Queen Elara Farley A Red factory worker / soldier (composite role allowed) A Silver noble or military officer

All testimony must be supported by **events, dialogue, or descriptions from the novel**

No evidence from later books unless explicitly allowed

Witnesses may interpret events but cannot invent new facts

Objections are allowed for:

- speculation beyond the text
- misrepresentation of events
- leading questions (optional, depending on rigor)

## **Trial Structure**

### **1. Opening Statements (2 minutes each)**

- Prosecution outlines the charges and theory of guilt
- Defense outlines their counter-theory

## **2. Prosecution Witnesses (15 minutes)**

- Direct examination
- Cross-examination by defense

## **3. Defense Witnesses (15 minutes)**

- Direct examination
- Cross-examination by prosecution

## **4. Closing Arguments (2 minutes each)**

- Focus on interpretation, power, and moral responsibility

## **5. Jury Deliberation (5 minutes)**

- Jury must reach a verdict **and** provide a written rationale citing the text

## **6. Verdict Announcement and Debrief**

### **Honors Academic Policies**

A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards Honors Completion Requirements. Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors

Canvas Cohort:

Honors Requirements module to earn Honors Milestone / Completion credit.

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Honors Program, Honors Village Complex #4, 352-392-1519

- Quick questions for an Honors advisor? Email [advisor@honors.ufl.edu](mailto:advisor@honors.ufl.edu)
- Need an Honors advising appointment? Schedule via Microsoft Bookings:

<https://bit.ly/UFHonorsAdvising>

- Honors Program Event Calendar:

<https://www.honors.ufl.edu/news--events/calendar-of-events/>

## Academic Policies:

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in the course are consistent with university policies. [See UF Academic Regulations and Policies for more information regarding the University Attendance Policies.](#)

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. [See the “Get Started With the DRC” webpage on the Disability Resource Center site.](#) It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points. This may be achieved by including [a link to the University grades and grading policies.](#) Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online. Students can complete evaluations in three ways:

The email they receive from GatorEvals

Their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals

The central portal at <https://my-uf1.bluera.com>

Guidance on how to provide constructive feedback is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

The University's Honesty Policy regarding cheating, plagiarism, etc.:

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [See the UF Conduct Code website for more information.](#) If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

## In-Class Recording:

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal education use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the



university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and deliver by an instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentation such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless, of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

#### Academic Resources:

E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at [352-392-4357](tel:352-392-4357) or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).

[Career Connections Center](#): Reitz Union Suite 1300, [352-392-1601](tel:352-392-1601). Career assistance and counseling services.

[Library Support](#): Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources. Call [866-281-6309](tel:866-281-6309) or email [ask@ufl.libanswers.com](mailto:ask@ufl.libanswers.com) for more information.

[Academic Resources](#): 1317 Turlington Hall, Call [352-392-2010](tel:352-392-2010), or to make a private appointment: [352-392-6420](tel:352-392-6420). Email contact: [teaching-center@ufl.edu](mailto:teaching-center@ufl.edu). General study skills and tutoring.

[Writing Studio](#): Daytime (9:30am-3:30pm): 2215 Turlington Hall, [352-846-1138](tel:352-846-1138) | Evening (5:00pm-7:00pm): 1545 W University Avenue (Library West, Rm. 339). Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Academic Complaints: Office of the Ombuds; [Visit the Complaint Portal webpage for more information.](#)

Enrollment Management Complaints (Registrar, Financial Aid, Admissions): [View the Student Complaint Procedure webpage for more information.](#)

UF Student Success Initiative: Visit <https://studentsuccess.ufl.edu/> for resources that support your success as a UF student.

[Public Speaking Lab](#): (Dial Center, 501 Rolfs Hall). Offering online and in-person help developing, organizing, and practicing oral presentations. Contact email: [publicspeakinglab@clas.ufl.edu](mailto:publicspeakinglab@clas.ufl.edu).

Campus Health and Wellness Resources:

UF Whole Gator Resources: Visit [Whole Gator - ONE.UF](#) for resources that are designed to help you thrive physically, mentally, and emotionally at UF.