

Senior Seminar (English Capstone)

COGNITION AND READING FICTION

ENG 461-02 Fall 2022

Mondays 4:00-6:45 pm

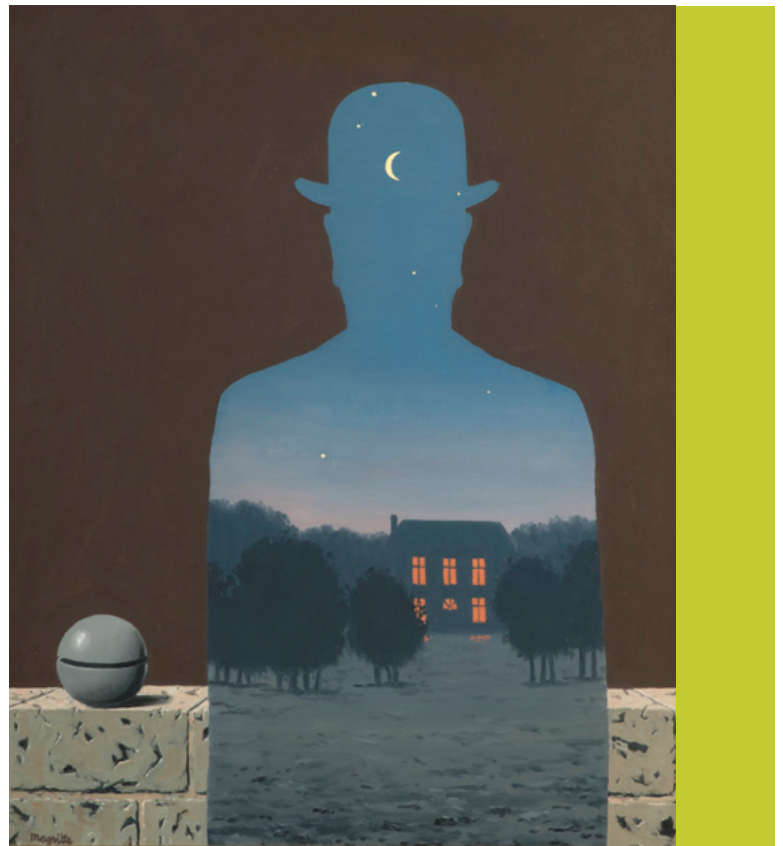
Professor: Dr. Miriam Chirico

... so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and of its surroundings, taking their proper shapes and growing solid, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, all from my cup of tea.

Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*

Any fictional world exists only in a reader's mind. Just like Proust conjured up a memory of his childhood from eating a cookie soaked in a cup of tea, fiction writers evoke in our minds some images, people, and conversations that never existed – and yet they feel real. How do writers do this? And just as importantly, what imaginative and interpretive skills do we bring to our reading experience to make this character or a place feels real to us?

In this English Senior Seminar, we will approach literature through the science of reading. As we read several short stories and one novel over the course of the semester, we will consider the mind's ability to process fictional information. Together, we will explore how writers represent events in words and how readers process information, build mental models, and respond emotionally to the imagined worlds of fiction.



René Magritte, *The Happy Donor*, 1966; oil on canvas; Musée d'Ixelles, Belgium

SAMPLE READING LIST

The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat, Oliver Sacks

The Yellow Wallpaper, Charlotte Perkins Gillman

Signs and Symbols, Vladimir Nabakov

Funes the Memorious, Jorge Luis Borges

next to normal, Brian Yorkey

How We Read Now, Naomi S. Baron

Who should take this class:

- Students who love literature
- Future teachers who will engage students in reading
- Students who are interested in psychological states of mind