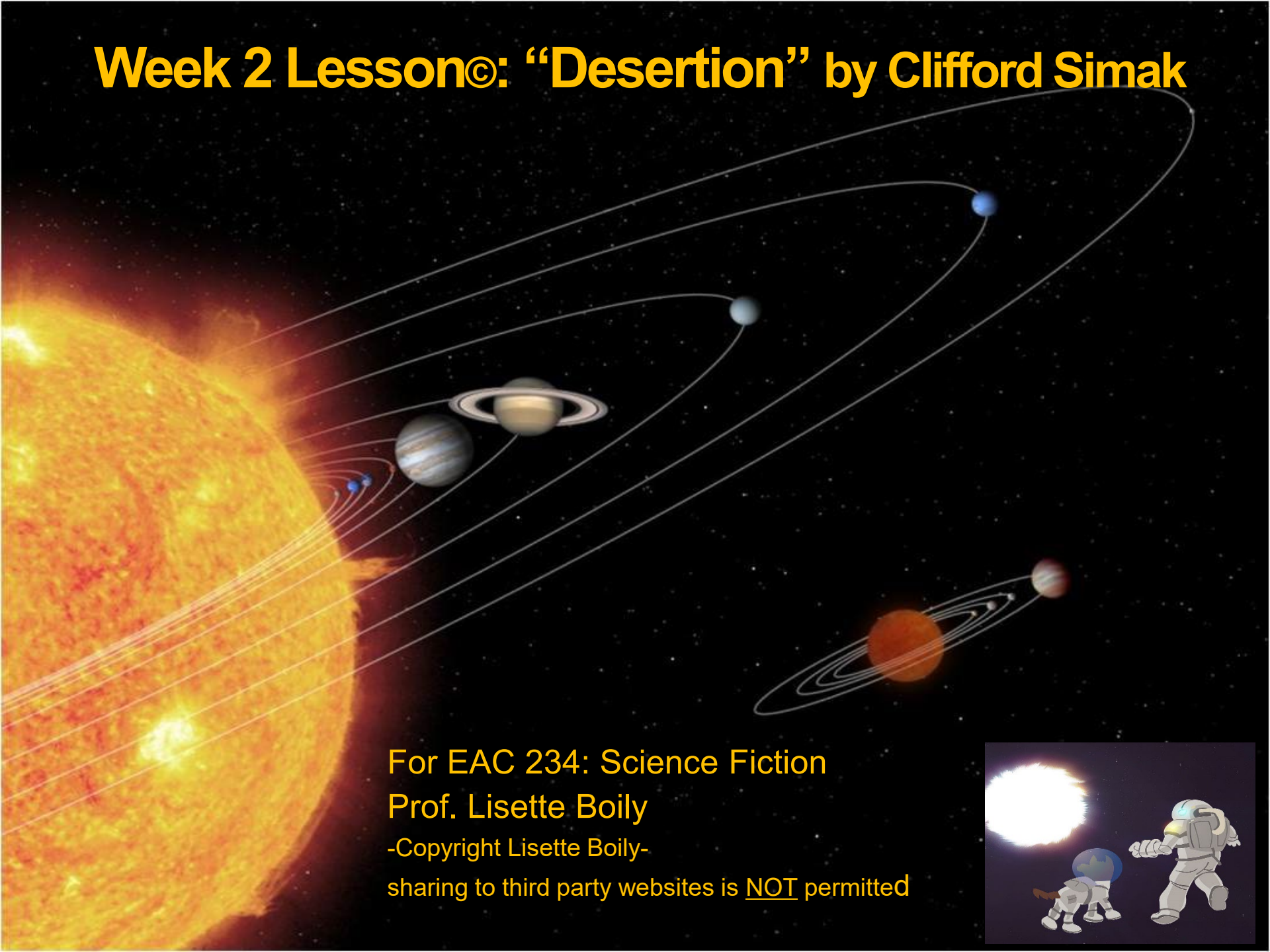


Week 2 Lesson©: “Desertion” by Clifford Simak

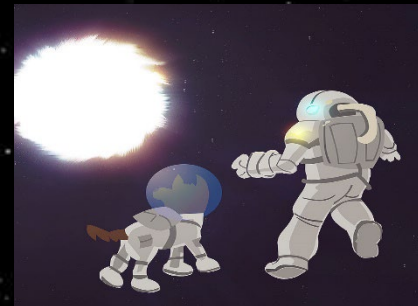


For EAC 234: Science Fiction

Prof. Lisette Boily

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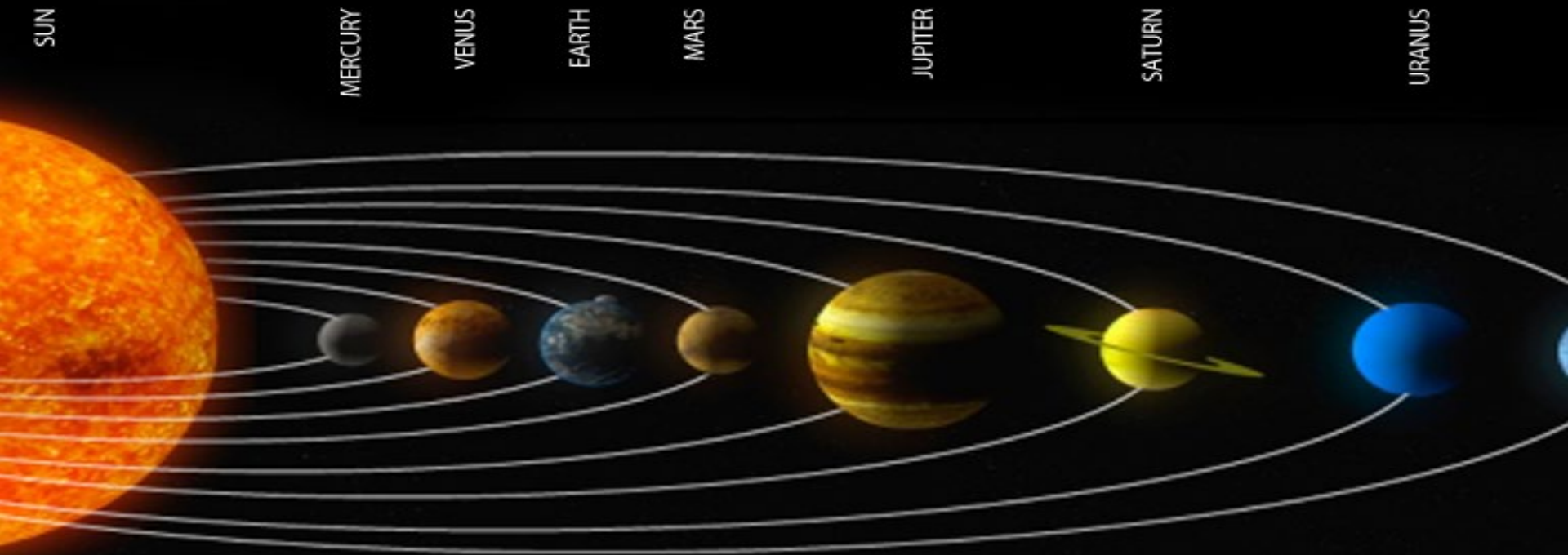
Lesson Topics

- Story Setting
 - Our Solar System
 - Real Characteristics of the planet Jupiter
 - Additional Info about Jupiter
 - The Imagined, Science Fictional portrayal of Jupiter in the story
- The Writing Context of the Story (World War II)
 - The meaning of the word 'desertion' & story's **title significance**
- **Science Fiction (SF) & Literary Devices in the Story**
 - **Spotlight on SF Core Concepts (especially transformation), Speculative Scenario, Epiphany, Open or Closed Ending (?)**



Important Setting: the largest planet in our solar system: JUPITER

- See an image of the planet Jupiter, below – it is an ‘outer’ planet in relation to its location to our sun (Earth is an ‘inner’ planet)
- *Note: planets depicted below are not exactly ‘to scale’*





Real Characteristics of the Planet Jupiter

- Jupiter's size –it's big! It's the biggest planet in our solar system (see slide 2 for planetary image comparison)
- Jupiter's famous 'red spot' – it's a HUGE storm that never ends (it's bigger than our planet Earth)

Image from: <http://www.foundalis.com/ast/redspot.htm>



- Jupiter's environment – from a human perspective, it's nasty (crushing gravity, hydrogen-ammonia atmosphere, constant storms...)



"Storm on Jupiter," image from <http://science-puzz.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/hydrogenoceant.jpg>

How do we 'Know what we Know' about Jupiter?

- **Human observation**

- Jupiter is one of the five planets in our solar system visible in the night sky
- The name 'Jupiter' comes from the ancient Romans' name for the planet

- **Telescopes** – small and large; earth-bound and in space (i.e. the Hubble and Webb Telescopes)

- Italian astronomer **Galileo** first discovered the moons of Jupiter in the 16th century by looking through his telescope:
http://galileo.rice.edu/sci/observations/jupiter_satellites.html
- More recently, the Hubble Telescope detected changes to Jupiter's famous 'red spot' storm: <http://www.nasa.gov/press-release/goddard/hubble-s-planetary-portrait-captures-new-changes-in-jupiter-s-great-red-spot>

- **Inter-disciplinary scientific extrapolation, planetary comparisons, and theorizing**

- **Space probes and data collection**

- From Pioneer 10 and 11 in the 1970s to 'JUNO' (2016) & 'Jupiter Icy Moon Explorer' (2022) and more
- http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/juno/main/index.html





The Scientific and Philosophical Importance of Jupiter to Human Thought

- *“In 1610, Galileo Galilei turned his rudimentary telescope on Jupiter, and realized that it had 4 large moons orbiting it: Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto. **This was an important discovery, because it demonstrated that Earth was not the center of the Universe as proponents of the geocentric view believed**”.*

- Universe Today: Space and Astronomy News
<http://www.universetoday.com/15142/discovery-of-jupiter/>

- This relates to our story “**Desertion**,” where Earth-centric and human-centric assumptions about intellect, consciousness, perception of reality, etc., are overturned, when the characters experience Jupiter for themselves.



The Imagined Science Fiction (SF) Setting of Jupiter in the story “Desertion”

- **“Desertion”** uses real science facts about Jupiter (either as known, or speculated about, at the time of story publication in 1944) to imagine a speculative ‘what if’ scenario set in the future, where human travel to Jupiter is possible
 - To date, human travel to Jupiter still has not yet taken place
- **“Desertion”** imagines Jupiter as a catalyst of physical and mental transformation, where the human explorers become acclimatized ‘Jovian’ aliens (called ‘Lopers’), both after their biological transformation by human technology, and also after they are exposed to the planet’s seemingly hostile environment
- **“Desertion”** uses Jupiter, human interstellar travel and planetary exploration as a means of exploring a speculative ‘what if’ scenario about the possibility of expanded states of consciousness made possible by an alien environment





The Writing Context in 1944

World War II (1939 – 1945)

- War, battle, military threats, soldiers...
- The relationship between the military and science & technology
- Military characters on a military planetary exploration installation
- A sense of 'duty' versus the need for 'freedom' or a need for freedom versus a sense of 'duty'?
- **Title Significance: 'DESERTION' word meaning**
 - *To run away from something*
 - *To intentionally leave or abandon a place, without permission*
 - In the military, soldiers who 'desert' their posts are severely punished





Science Fiction (SF) & Literary Devices

- A 'traditional' (& at first assumed antagonistic) **SF Setting**: a 'hostile' alien planet (**Jupiter**)
- **TITLE SIGNIFICANCE**
- Vivid description / Worldbuilding
- Foreshadowing
- Anthropomorphism
- **SPECULATIVE SCENARIO**
- All of the Four Core SF Concepts: Exploration, Invention, Discovery / Revelation & **TRANSFORMATION**
- **EPIPHANY**
- A Technological premise
- The Unknown
- Irony
- Open or Closed Ending?

**See our course site 'SF Lit. Glossary' menu area for definitions*



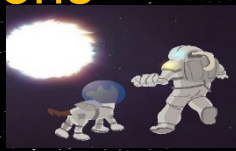


The Four Core Science Fiction (SF) Concepts

See our course site 'SF Lit. Glossary' menu area for definitions

“Desertion” contains ALL of the above SF core concepts but some are more prominent than others:

- **Exploration** (of Jupiter's surface)
- **Invention** (the 'Converter')
- **Discovery / Revelation** (of how Jupiter changes those who step onto its surface / of what it means to be fully sentient, and of the choice to be human or to be Jovian...)
- ***TRANSFORMATION** (physical but even more important mental transformation; ironically, to become 'alien' (Jovian) is to become even more 'ones true self' by seeing through 'different eyes' = with different, enhanced perceptions)





The Story's Speculative Scenario

- **Speculative Scenario** = profound ‘what if’ questions that an SF story raises about BIG issues that could face humanity
- In this story, the speculative scenario is the **result of the transformation and epiphany** the character's experience
- The **Title significance** foreshadows the epiphany and the characters' final choice at end of the story
- The character's final choice directly relates to the story's speculative scenario
- ****The Specific Speculative Scenario of “Desertion” = What if expanded states of consciousness awaited us outside of Earth – what choices might we be forced to make upon discovering and experiencing increased abilities?***



The Epiphany Moment



<http://xatu.deviantart.com/art/Space-Dog-166583619>

- An **EPIPHANY** is a sudden, life changing insight of ‘flash’ of knowledge that was not previously known or understood
- The complete transformation into lopers equals an ‘**epiphany moment**’ for the story’s main characters
- What do the characters experience and realize after they have transformed into lopers and spent some time on Jupiter’s surface?
 - **WHAT** do they choose at the end of the story and why?
 - **How** does their choice relate to the story’s Title Significance?



The Story's Ending...Open or Closed?

- All fictional endings relate to a story's speculative scenario (profound 'what if' questions about BIG issues that could face humanity)
- Story endings are either 'closed' or 'open'
- A **closed ending** clearly wraps up all story issues
- An **open ending** leaves some or all story issues unresolved, and/or leaves the characters' fates undetermined at the end of the story
- It may be possible for a story to have a combination of closed and open endings...
- **Some stories have endings that are less obvious...what type of ending do you think "Desertion" has?**



The End

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(image from: https://img0.etsystatic.com/051/1/5919340/il_214x170.698491404_k68u.jpg)

