

ENG 230 (Speculative Fiction) FALL 2018

Professor: Fara Nizamani

Email: fnizamani@digipen.edu

Phone: 425-629-5058

Meeting time and place:

Section A T/Th 3:00-4:20 *Von Newmann*

Section B W/F 2:00-3:20 *Jimbo*

Office Hours: T/Th, 12:00 pm-2:30 pm, and W/F 12:00pm-1:30pm and by appointment. My office is on the 3rd floor behind Door B.

Prerequisite: English 110 or equivalent.

Description (from Course Catalog):

This course is a survey of Speculative Fiction (SF)—literature (and other media, including television, film, and graphic novels) that moves beyond pure realism to include fantastic or imaginative elements, and to present worlds that differ significantly from our own. Each semester, the course will focus on one or more different sub-genres of Speculative Fiction (these sub-genres include Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror, Magic Realism, Alternate History, Steampunk, Cyberpunk, Feminist SF/Fantasy, Children's SF/Fantasy, Post-Apocalyptic SF, and more).

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

This course will provide an academic framework for the study of speculative fiction. In class, we will:

- Approach Speculative Fiction as a viable (and exciting!) field of academic inquiry, as well as “just for fun.”
- Examine the themes of Speculative Fiction across a variety of contexts and media.
- Discuss how understanding the genre may be relevant to other aspects of your academic and professional lives.
- Develop your critical thinking/analytical skills through critical assessment, interpretation, discussion, and writing.
- Improve your ability to design, write, and edit strong, well-developed academic essays.

Fall Semester, 2018—Science Fiction (with a couple of detours in the direction of fantasy!):

This semester, we will work together to answer the following questions (and many more!):

- What is science fiction? What *isn't* it? What is the difference between science fiction and fantasy? What are some of the major themes addressed in science fiction and fantasy literature, film, and television?
- How have these genres (and their readership) evolved over time?
- How is the process of reading and understanding genre fiction—the reader's relationship with the text—different from the process of reading and understanding “mainstream” literary fiction?
- What is the “sense of wonder,” and how/why does it define this literary genre?
- Where do science fiction and fantasy intersect with the current literary canon? How has this changed over time?
- What does it mean to be “human”? Is this definition fixed or fluid?

- How can stories about imagined worlds and futures (or pasts) illuminate our understanding of our own world?
- How have authors and filmmakers used science fiction and fantasy to encourage social and political change?
- How can an understanding of speculative fiction as an academic discipline inform the study of video games?

Textbooks and Other Course Materials (subject to change):

Reading:

- *The Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction* (eds. Arthur B Evans et al – paperback).
- Links to supplementary reading material will be provided.

Please note—if you can find the assigned materials in other anthologies or online, you are welcome to use whatever versions you find—I’m not going to insist on these editions, though it’s probably easier overall if you have them!

Film and Television (this list will almost certainly change as the semester develops!), but at least:

- Selected episodes of *Twilight Zone*, *Star Trek* (TOS/TNG), *Black Mirror*, *Doctor Who...* and so on.
- *Aliens*. Please note: this film contains scenes of extreme movie violence/horror.
- *Blade Runner*. Contains violence and brief nudity.
- Other material, TBA.

Grading Policy and Assignments:

Your grade will be determined as follows:

- **40%** - “Did you actually do the reading” quizzes and in-class assignments.
- **30%**—Longer critical/analytical essay (may include some research)
- **30%**—Take-home final (due on the last day of the class)

Guidelines for Written Assignments:

I will grade your written work according to several criteria, including ideas and content, structure, development, and execution (grammar, spelling, paragraphs, etc.). All sources for all written assignments must be included and cited correctly (using MLA documentation). Please follow instructions (including document naming instructions) carefully.

Late Policy:

All written assignments must be submitted online by 11:55 pm on the assigned date. Extensions will be granted only under exceptional circumstances, and you must request an extension in advance. Late work (without an extension) will lose one grade step per day (B to B-, B- to C+, and so on...), and will be accepted up to three days past the deadline.

Attendance and Classroom Behavior:

- You will fail this course if your unexcused absences add up to more than four class sessions (the equivalent of 2 weeks of class). It is your responsibility to make sure you sign the attendance sheet within 15 minutes of the beginning of class.

- If there is an emergency—including illness, transportation problems, or anything else that causes you to miss a class—I need you to contact me as soon as you are able to do so. **This is how you get an excused absence!** If you are unable to attend a class in which you’re scheduled to give a presentation, it is critical that you let me know before class so we can work around you.
- Show up on time! Habitual lateness is disruptive and disrespectful.
- Approach controversial topics and disagreements graciously and with an open mind.
- Silence your phones, don’t text during class, and don’t use your laptop in the classroom. If you absolutely need to use a laptop for note-taking purposes, please check with me first, and **be present in this class**—not on Facebook, doing homework for other classes, or playing games! (Also, if you see one person using a laptop, this does not suddenly mean that everyone is allowed to. Special circumstances do exist.)
- Current school policy does not allow food in the classrooms.

Sensitive Subject Matter/Content Notes:

Over the course of the semester, we will be discussing and viewing materials that may make some people uncomfortable. I believe that it is important to discuss controversial and sensitive topics in an academic context. With this in mind, I am okay with a measure of discomfort as a pathway to promote critical inquiry; I am also committed to making my classroom a safe place for all students. There is a difference between “discomfort” and “trauma.” If there is any subject matter that you find particularly upsetting (whether it is a PTSD trigger, a phobia, or some other issue), please feel free to contact me privately, and I will do my best to give you advance notice when we will be addressing such materials, and an alternate reading or viewing assignment if you choose not to attend those sessions (these will count as excused absences). Please bear in mind that it’s not possible to predict the exact direction that any given class discussion may take; if you find that you need to leave during class, I would appreciate it if you would follow up with me later on.

Academic Integrity Policy:

Cheating, copying, plagiarizing, or any other form of academic dishonesty (including doing someone else’s individual assignments) will result in, at the extreme minimum, a zero on the assignment in question, and could result in a failing grade in the course or even expulsion from DigiPen. All plagiarism/cheating will be reported to the DigiPen administration.

Disability Support Services:

If students have disabilities and will need formal accommodations in order to fully participate or effectively demonstrate learning in this class, they should contact the Disability Support Services Office at 425-629-5015 or dss@digipen.edu. The DSS Office welcomes the opportunity to meet with students to discuss how the accommodations will be implemented. Also, if you may need assistance in the event of an evacuation, please let the instructor know.

Week 1—NO ASSIGNMENTS DUE
“The Protocols of Science Fiction” (Gunn), and “On Science Fiction” (Vonnegut)
Week 2—Aliens and “Otherness”
C.L. Moore, “Shambleau” (1933)
Robert Silverberg, “Passengers” (1968)
Stanley Weinbaum, “A Martian Odyssey” (1934)
Nancy Kress, “Out of All Them Bright Stars” (1985)
Gene Wolfe, “Useful Phrases” (1992)

WEEK 3—Watch/discuss <i>Aliens</i> in class
WEEK 4: Artificial Intelligence/Robots/Androids
Avram Davidson, “The Golem” (1955)
Brian Aldiss, “Super-Toys Last All Summer Long” (1969)
Isaac Asimov, “Reason” (1940)
WEEK 5—Watch/discuss <i>Blade Runner</i> in class
WEEK 6: Transhumanism/Posthumanism
Ted Chiang, “The Truth of Fact, the Truth of Feeling” (2013, novella length)
Ted Chiang, “Understand” (1991, novelette length)
Paolo Bacigalupi, “The People of Sand and Slag” http://windupstories.com/books/pump-six-and-other-stories/people-of-sand-and-slag/
WEEK 7: War and conflict
Judith Merrill, “That Only a Mother” (1948)
William Tenn, “The Liberation of Earth” (1953)
Cordwainer Smith, “The Game of Rat and Dragon” (1955)
WEEK 8: Apocalypse and Post-Apocalypse
Ray Bradbury, “There Will Come Soft Rains” (1950)
Fritz Leiber, “Coming Attraction” (1950)
Octavia E. Butler, “Speech Sounds” (1983)
WEEK 9: Gender and Sexuality
Joanna Russ, “When It Changed” (1972)
Samuel R. Delany, “Aye, and Gomorrah...” (1967)
James Tiptree, Jr., “And I Awoke and Found Me Here on the Cold Hill’s Side” (1972)
Carol Emshwiller, “Abominable” (1980)
WEEK 10 : Time Travel and Alternate History
Robert A. Heinlein, ““All You Zombies—”” (1959)
John Varley, “Air Raid” (1977)
John Kessel, “Invaders” (1990)
WEEK 11 : Cyberpunk/Virtual Reality
Philip K. Dick, “We Can Remember It For You Wholesale” (1966)
William Gibson, “Burning Chrome” (1982)
Pat Cadigan, “Pretty Boy Crossover” (1986)
WEEK 12: Love and Loss
Kij Johnson, “26 Monkeys Also the Abyss” (2008) http://www.kijjohnson.com/26_monkeys.htm
WEEK 13: Utopia/Dystopia
Ursula K LeGuin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” (1973) http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/faculty/dunnweb/rprnts.omelas.pdf
Harlan Ellison, ““Repent, Harlequin!” Said the Ticktockman” (1965)
WEEK 14: Loose ends/final thoughts!
WEEK 15: Finals Week! Take-home final due on Tuesday at midnight. No scheduled class.