

Department of English & Writing Studies

Winter 2018

: Alyssa MacLean
alyssa.maclean@uwo.ca
Tel: (519) 661-2111 ext. 87416
AHB 1G33

Tues 1:45-2:45 (please log in using the
Blackboard Collaborate tool on OWL)

Wed 11:00-
12:30, Thurs 10:30-12:00, and by
appointment

: None

Science fiction is a speculative art form that deals with new technologies, faraway worlds, and disruptions in the possibilities of the world as we know it. However, it is also very much a product of its time—a literature of social criticism that is anchored in a specific social and historical context. This course will introduce students to the genre of science fiction, starting with three highly influential works from the nineteenth and early twentieth century—Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* and Wells's *The War of the Worlds*—that are preoccupied with humanity's place in an inhospitable universe. Next, we examine Walter Miller's novel *A Canticle For Leibowitz*, a Cold War novel that reflects both the apocalyptic sensibility of the era of nuclear confrontation in the sixties and the feelings of historical inevitability that marked the era. Building on these important precedents, our next texts use discussions of alien species and alternative futures to explore the nature of human identity. Ursula Le Guin's novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* uses the trope of alien contact to explore the possibilities of an androgynous society unmarked by the divisions of gender. A futuristic dystopia by Octavia Butler ("Speech Sounds") critiques current systems of racial inequality and gender oppression. We will finish the course with novels examining the relationship between humans and technology. Joe Haldeman's *Forever Peace* examines the utopian possibility for achieving peace and eliminating war in the mid twenty-first century, while William Gibson's *Neuromancer* foregrounds what many critics see as a crisis in defining human identity. Marge Piercy's *He, She, and It* comes full circle to re-examine many of the ideas about artificial life and intelligence brought up in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* a century and a half earlier. Short stories by authors such as Marion Zimmer Bradley, Phillip K. Dick, and Molly Gloss will round out our exploration of prominent narrative conventions and tropes of science fiction.

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

Identify different generic qualities of science fiction, recognize the evolution of the genre, and situate individual works within wider debates about the genre

Appreciate and analyze the aims and accomplishments of individual works using appropriate literary terminology (for example, plot, character, point of view, theme, setting, imagery, symbols, tone, and diction)

Analyze individual works of science fiction in relation to their historical, political, and cultural context; compare how different works critique their respective societies

Communicate ideas clearly and succinctly in multiple written contexts such as discussion boards and literary analysis essays. This course will focus especially on the development of effective written communication skills. Students will learn to frame a research question, respond constructively to comments, and produce formal essays that have a clear, persuasive, well-argued thesis supported by appropriate textual evidence.

This course demands as much time and effort from you as a conventional lecture-based university course in literature. You are expected to read the assigned work and to engage with the material, the instructor, and the other students in the course. You are required to participate in the course regularly, as you would in a regular classroom. To be successful, you will need to read the course materials carefully and very actively, ask questions in the course review session when you need extra information, and contribute to online discussions.

You may buy other editions of these texts EXCEPT for *Frankenstein*. This edition of *Frankenstein*

Mon, Mar 19:
Week 10

Molly Gloss, "Interlocking Pieces" (NBSF)
Eileen Gunn, "Stable Strategies for Middle Management" (NBSF)
Candas Jane Dorsey, "(Learning About) Machine Sex" (NBSF)

Each student is required to contribute to the class discussion forum

Together, those posts must address
in the unit. You may post more than that if you want to, as long as it
doesn't erode the quality of your posts. One week before the scheduled start of each unit,
questions will be posted on the discussion board that cover the next unit's readings. In
addition,

as long as it responds to
the forum for that unit.

These discussion board posts are meant to do a few things: a) ensure that you're all
keeping pace and finishing the readings in a timely way, b) encourage you to think
dynamically about the texts and lecture materials (and each other's ideas), and c) direct
your attention to specific passages in the texts that are particularly important or
controversial.

S

some of the most complex and even upsetting issues in society. As a result we will often be discussing difficult, sensitive, and even ethically challenging topics. Respectful and considerate behavior and language is required on the discussion forum and in all assignments. Reread your forum posts with your classmates in mind before you post anything; be mindful of ho

participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

For further types of academic accommodation including accommodation for students with disabilities, students in reserve forces, students observing religious holidays, please see <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2015/pg111.html>. If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see the SSD to arrange for a formal request for accommodation and inform me as soon as possible. We can then discuss the best solution.

Students anticipating an absence for a major religious holiday are responsible for notifying the instructor in writing of anticipated absences due to their observance of such holidays as soon as possible, and no later than one week before a test or two weeks before a major

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Other services:

Wellness Centre: www.wec.uwo.ca

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Office of the Ombudsperson: www.westernu.ca/ombuds