

Department of English & Writing Studies

Speculative Fiction: Science Fiction
English 2071G (650)
Winter 2019

Instructor: Dr. Mark Stephenson
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Office Hours: Mondays 2-4, Wednesdays
3-4 – or by appointment (see below)

Please read the following information completely and carefully. You are responsible for it.

Prerequisites: Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Please note that English 134E is an antirequisite to this course; hence, if you have taken English 134E, you cannot receive credit for English 2071F/G.

Course Description

Welcome to Science Fiction Online! This course explores a selection of science fiction short stories and novels by focusing on the authors' imaginative recreation of the human world. The course focuses upon critical science fiction themes such as the creation of artificial intelligence, the reconstruction of a conventional social and political order, the breakdown of traditional gender definitions, alien encounters, and explorations of otherness.

Important information about this online course

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(se)10 g0 Geive no a(,)4()-4(a)13(s)-4(y)11 0 0 17

Course Materials

Texts:

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*.

Wells, H. G. *The Time Machine*.

historical inevitability that marked the era. Following Miller, we turn to Ursula Le Guin's novel *The Left Hand of Darkness*, which explores the possibilities of an androgynous society unmarked by the divisions of gender. And after Le Guin we turn to Joe Haldeman's novel *Forever Peace*, which examines the utopian possibility for achieving peace and eliminating war in the mid twenty-first century. Again, the course ends with William Gibson's *Neuromancer* and Marge Piercy's *He, She and It*, novels that foreground what many critics see as a coming crisis in defining human identity.

Though it follows a rough historical narrative, the course also develops thematically by examining related motifs and concerns. The short stories are situated between the novels as segues to either introduce a new thematic concern or to develop a particular theme or issue. In addition, many of the short stories are accompanied by contextual information used to establish the historical or cultural context of a particular image or concern. These stories are meant to be in active dialogue with the novels that surround them. As well, though many of the stories and novels are given fairly precise interpretations, these interpretations are meant to offer examples of how to approach the texts and not to foreclose discussion. Hence, in preparing your responses to the texts and planning your essays, you should draw upon your readings of the texts, the course lectures, and your own analysis of the materials. An analogy that may aid you throughout the course is to remember to read like a detective—searching for clues, contradictions, subtleties, and problems—and write like a lawyer by constructing a clear and cogent argument and supporting it with evidence from the texts.

You will discover that for the most part the lectures include few detailed references to illustrate the arguments. The point of the lectures is to provide some literary analysis, some context, and some theory in order to provide students with a perspective on the texts under discussion. In contrast, when writing your essays, you need to prove your points by direct reference to the text under discussion. Students sometimes make one of two common errors: either they assume that if they read the lectures they will not need to read the assigned texts; or, they assume that in their essays all they need to do is demonstrate that they have read the texts by summarizing them. These choices lead to two major problems that undermine the strength of an essay. In the first case, the essay will be too abstract and unfocused, engaging entirely in the analysis of ideas but not clearly demonstrating how the ideas relate to the texts. The second, equally grave problem is many students believe that if they demonstrate repeatedly that they have read the text, then they will achieve a passing grade. This problem is identified as *description* or *plot summary*. Instead of making these two common errors, you need to be both judicious and selective, developing a sharp and focused argument (interpretation) of the text(s).

How to Proceed in the Course Generally

For each unit in this course, you should begin by reading the assigned text(s) (listed above). When you have finished the text(s), you should click on the learning module for that unit (these can be found on the left-hand menubar on the OWL course site). Within the learning module, you'll find a document containing notes on the assigned readings. These notes are designed to play the role that a lecture would play in an on-campus course.

Contacting your instructor

EMAIL

I am happy to communicate with students by e-mail, but there are two provisos. However, I can't always answer emails instantly; please allow 24 hours for a response on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends. If you haven't received a response to your email within 24 hours (or 48 on

Discussion questions are posted in the forums. You may use these questions to get a discussion of a text started, although you may certainly raise other questions or issues not included in the questions. Once a discussion is posted, you may respond to it or raise another issue. Post as many discussions and responses as you like.

Remember, these discussions replace in-class discussions and should, therefore, be seriously considered and analytical. Avoid using the Forums just to state whether you liked or disliked a text or to simply agree or disagree with a previous post. I will be checking the Forums at least three times a wee

Further Information for Students

For English Department regulations governing Term Work, Exams, Faculty Office Hours, Academic Relief (appeals, petitions, complaints), and other matters, please consult "Information for Students" on our Department website at <https://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

Timetable

