

Department of English & Writing Studies

Speculative Fiction: Science Fiction

English 2071F (001)

Fall 2019

Instructor: Professor Alyssa MacLean

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UC 4429

Course Location: University Community
Centre 37

Course Date/Time: Monday 11:30-12:30 pm,
Wednesday 11:30-1:30 pm

Course Description

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 narrative conventions and tropes 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 *H.G. Wells' The War of the Worlds* that

... in an inhospitable universe. *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 K. Le Guin's 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. *Arrival*, a film portraying the appearance of mysterious spacecraft on Earth and the subsequent threat of war, revisits many of the concerns raised by Wells in a postmodern context, and poses new questions about identity, language, and time. *The Martian* by Andy Weir portrays the horrors of colonialism in an apocalyptic future, and offers an indigenous response to systems of oppression. We will finish the course with two novels examining the relationship between humans and technology. *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.

Learning Objectives:

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

Identify

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

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.

Support Services

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/>

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.

Timetable

TBA