

Department of English & Writing Studies

Speculative Fiction: Science Fiction
English 2071F (650)
Fall 2022

Instructor: Alyssa MacLean
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Hybrid office hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays 1:30-3, in-person or online. See office hour signup sheet on OWL under “Learner Resources.” Zoom Meeting ID for office hours and appointments: 917 4880 5366 (this meeting ID will be the same for regularly-scheduled office hours as well as appointments).

Course Time: Asynchronous online class (no scheduled class period)
Antirequisites/Prerequisites: None

Teaching Assistants:

Sarah Tiller (Learning Pod 1)

Email: stiller6@uwo.ca
Office: online office hours
Office hour join code: Meeting ID 993 6858 8478
Office hours: Mondays 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm and Wednesdays 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm, or by appointment

Mina Rosefield (Learning Pod 2)

Email: mrosefie@uwo.ca
Office: online office hours only
Office hour join code and passcode: Meeting ID: 914 3462 3986, passcode: 864720
Office hours: Mondays 11 am – 1 pm, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Science fiction is a staple of popular culture (that is, it is one of the most widely read and viewed genres in the world). This course will explore the history and evolution of the genre, with a focus on the work of H.G. Wells, Isaac Asimov, and Ursula Le Guin. The course will also explore the genre's role in the development of the science fiction film and television industry. DC 21:4-2 (am:TTvP)

historical context. This course will introduce students to the narrative conventions and tropes of

Wells's *The War of the Worlds*—that are preoccupied with humanity's place in an inhospitable universe. A series of short stories by authors such as Ray Bradbury will reflect the apocalyptic sensibility of the era of nuclear confrontation in the sixties. 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. *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 free will. Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves* portrays the horrors of colonialism in an apocalyptic future and offers an indigenous response to systems of oppression.

We will finish the course with novels examining the relationship between humans and technology. William Gibson's *Neuromancer* foregrounds what many critics see as a crisis in defining human identity in a technological age. Victor LaValle's graphic novel *Destroyer* comes full circle to re-examine many of the ideas about artificial intelligence brought up in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, repositioning the creature's desires for love and vengeance in the embittered atmosphere of the contemporary United States. Short stories by authors such as Phillip K. Dick and Octavia Butler will round out our exploration of prominent narrative conventions and tropes of science fiction.

Course delivery: this course is an asynchronous online Distance Studies course. Units of the course material will be given out as Word downloads on OWL, under the "Lessons" tab. Please see the "Getting Started" tab on OWL to learn how to proceed through the units of the class. Our class discussions will take place asynchronously on OWL Forums.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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
- 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 discussion boards and literary analysis essays. This course will focus especially on the development of effective written communication skills. Students will learn to answer an essay question, analyze literary texts in T.6 (v)-2 (7nl)2.6 (l)2.6itnhe dand , and sheir2.6 (on boar)rpecuppopt x

	<p>Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • don't forget to get your systems in place this week—see “Getting Started” page • if you joined the class after Sept 4, email Prof. MacLean so we can assign you to a Learning Pod
Week 2, Mon Sept. 12:	<p>Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> (warning: it's long) and Appendix I: Introduction to Shelley's 1831 Edition (pp. 347-352).</p> <p>Forum 2 for Frankenstein due Sun. Sept. 18 at 11:55 pm</p>
UNIT 2: UTOPIAS AND DYSTOPIAS	
Week 3, Mon. Sept. 19:	<p>H. G. Wells, <i>The Time Machine</i> and <i>War of the Worlds</i></p> <p>Forum 3 for The Time Machine and War of the Worlds due Sun. Sept. 25 at 11:55 pm</p>
Week 4, Mon. Sept. 26:	<p>Cordwainer Smith, “Alpha Ralpa Boulevard” Joanna Russ, “A Few Things I Know about Whileaway” Aliette de Bodard, “Immersion”</p> <p>Forum 4 for dystopian stories due Sun. Oct. 2 at 11:55 pm</p>
UNIT 3: COLD WAR ANXIETIES	
Week 5, Mon. Oct 3:	<p>Ray Bradbury, “There Will Come Soft Rains” Donald Barthelme, “Game” Avram Davidson, “The House the Blakeney's Built” Isaac Asimov, “The Gentle Vultures”</p> <p>Please complete the Academic Integrity tutorial on OWL and upload your certificate to “Assignments” by Monday Oct 3.</p> <p>Forum 5 for Cold War short stories due Tues. Oct. 11 at 11:55 pm (note extension because of Thanksgiving holiday)</p>
UNIT 4: THE ALIEN AND THE OTHER	
Week 6, Tues. Oct 11:	<p>Monday Oct 10: Thanksgiving holiday</p> <p>Ursula Le Guin, <i>The Left Hand of Darkness</i> (warning: it's long) ESSAY #1 DUE FRI OCT 14 at 11:55 pm Forum 6 for The Left Hand of Darkness due Sun. Oct. 16 at 11:55 pm</p>
Week 7, Mon Oct 17:	<p>Denis Villeneuve, <i>Arrival</i></p> <p>Forum 7 for Arrival due Sun. Oct. 23 at 11:55 pm</p>
UNIT 5: LESSONS FROM THE APOCALYPSE	
Week 8, Mon. Oct 24:	<p>Cherie Dimaline, <i>The Marrow Thieves</i></p> <p>Forum 8 for The Marrow Thieves due Mon. Nov. 7 at 11:55 pm (note extension due to Reading Week)</p>

Mon Oct 31-Fri Nov 4 READING WEEK

UNIT 6: CYBORGS, AI, AND THE POST-HUMAN	
Week 10, Mon. Nov. 14:	Philip K. Dick, "Frozen Journey" Eileen Gunn, "Stable Strategies for Middle Management" Forum 10 for post-human short stories due Sun. Nov. 20 at 11:55 pm Tip: read ahead to <i>Neuromancer</i> this week to pace out the reading
Week 11, Mon. Nov. 21:	William Gibson, <i>Neuromancer</i> Forum 11 for Neuromancer due Sun. Nov. 27 at 11:55 pm

students: this involves reading the course texts and our course content on time, reading actively, participating on our OWL forum, and responding thoughtfully to other students.

We will be diving the class up into “Learning Pods” for group discussion on OWL. Each Learning

discuss the learning of other students in other non-scholarly contexts such as social media.

- Be professional and scholarly in all online postings. Cite the ideas of others appropriately.

There are 2 essays due for this class: one short essay (5 pages) and a research paper (8 pages). Papers in English should be written in MLA format; this method of documentation is described in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 9th ed, which is available as a digital download on the university's library website. It's also available for purchase at the bookstore. The OWL at Purdue website also has an abbreviated guide to MLA guidelines at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>.

Further details of these papers will be announced later in the course. I encourage you to discuss your papers with us in office hours as you work on them. On the day the essay is due, please upload a copy of your assignment to the "Assignments" page in OWL. Details about how to submit a paper in MLA format (i.e. how to format in-text citations and your bibliography) are listed in the "Learner Resources" section of our OWL page.

The penalty for late papers will be 2% per day. Extensions may be granted in the case of a documented personal or medical emergency. Late penalties will be applied for each day of the week, including weekends and holidays.

This course will have a 3-hour open-book take-home exam delivered online. It will be released 24 hours prior to our exam slot with the Registrar, and it will be due at the end of our exam slot. The exam will be comprehensive (i.e. will cover all of the texts and course material of the term). Further details will be announced later in the semester.

MORE COURSE POLICIES:

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cog

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quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

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.

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/>

Academic Support & Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

If you need help:

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: