



Popular Culture: Science Fiction in Literature and Film

This section of Popular Culture (ENGL 4482) will explore the genre of science fiction in the last half of the twentieth century in short stories, novels, and films, and its impact on popular culture. Much of humanity's hopes and fears about its relationship with the universe is explored by the various writers and directors known for their work in science fiction. Science fiction also considers humanity's responses to changes in the level of science and technology. This class will consider science fiction as located historically and attempt to relate culturally texts that explore, discover, learn, by means of projection, extrapolation, analogue, hypothesis-and-paper-experimentation, something about the nature of the universe, of humanity, of "reality." Cyberpunk, world building, gender, cyborgs, robots, space travel, aliens, war, time travel, mad computers, and other similar subjects will fall under the purview of the course.

Dr. Gerald Lucas

Division of Humanities, M-117

Tuesday and Thursday 12:30 to 2:50 in M-120

Office Hours TR 11:00 to 12:15

Course Requirements

Research and Response

Much of the subject matter of this course will be challenging, and this requirement is an attempt to get you to engage the material. Students must write a minimum of 6000 words during the semester, 3000 of which are due before midterm. This writing should be a mixture of textual analysis (primary research), response, and critical research (secondary research): basically your own ideas about the texts and those of critics. This writing can be in any form you wish, within reason: blog posts, wiki entries, hypertext, or good old dead tree. All writing must contain a list of works cited to be considered for this requirement.

Final Exam

A final, cumulative exam will test the students' knowledge of the texts, their synthesis of lecture and discussion material, and their ability to incorporate their own research and imagination into several essays. This exam will be essay and will address all of the texts we have read and viewed this semester.

Class Participation

Much of our in-class work will revolve around class discussion of assigned reading. Therefore, active participation—both by adding to the conversation in the classroom and by doing your work outside the classroom—is integral for the success of the course. Also, the occasional reading quiz and group activity will count toward class participation.

Required Texts

Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968).

Lem, Stanislaw. *Solaris* (1961).

Sterling, Bruce. *A Good, Old-Fashioned Future* (1999).

Warrick, Patricia S., et al. *Science Fiction: The Science Fiction Research Association Anthology* (1988).

Course Policies

Assignments

Your work represents you. Therefore, I expect everything you turn into me to exemplify the very best of your professional self. Every out-of-class assignment must be word-processed on white, wrinkle-free paper; if not posted online. I will not accept any hand-written assignment, period. Please plan ahead so that you have plenty of time to make your assignments as polished as possible. All essays must be formatted according to MLA Style (see your handbook). Be sure to review the Editor's Checklist before turning in your essays. Finally, always keep copies of your assignments, especially when they have been graded and returned.

Attendance

Attendance will be taken at every class meeting, either orally or on an attendance sheet. A student's grade will be negatively affected if absences exceed *one class period*, or three hours. There are no "excused absences" in my class, but you are allowed to miss one class—no questions asked, nor explanations needed—before your grade suffers. If something happens, communication is the key between a passing grade and a failure. Talk with me if something happens. Each additional class missed beyond the allotted one will result in your final semester's grade being *dropped one letter*. In case of absence, it is your responsibility to discover what was missed in class and any assignments. Quizzes and in-class activities cannot be made up for any reason.

Children

Since class lecture and discussion will often touch on the controversial, this classroom is not an appropriate place for children. Please make arrangements to have your children looked after while you attend class.

Deadlines

Late work is not acceptable and will receive a zero. Allowing for a single contingency, one late assignment will be accepted; this assignment cannot be more than a week late.

Electronic Communication Devices

Please leave all distracting electronic devices, cell phones and beepers, in your car, or silence them during class. In addition, I do not allow class discussions to be taped, so do not bring any voice recording devices to class.

Plagiarism

The Oxford English Dictionary defines plagiarism as "the wrongful appropriation or purloining, and publication as one's own, of the ideas, or the expression of the ideas (literary, artistic, musical, mechanical, etc.) of another," or "a purloined idea, design, passage, or work." Any time you use ideas that are not your own in anything that you write, you must supply a citation in an identifiable citation method, e.g., MLA, Chicago, etc. Plagiarism will result in automatic failure of this class and will be pursued to incite the utmost penalty for such dishonesty. Academic falsehood, in any form, will constitute class failure. Remember two things:

- I. If you use the language of your source, you must quote it exactly, enclose it in quotation marks, and cite the source. A paraphrase employs source material by restating an idea in an entirely new form that is original in both sentence structure and word choice. Taking the basic structure from a source and substituting a few words is an unacceptable paraphrase and may be con-

strued as plagiarism. Creating a new sentence by merging the wording of two or more sources is also plagiarism.

II. If you use ideas or information that are not common knowledge, you must cite a source.

Special Needs

Any student who has special needs because of a disability should contact Ann E. Loyd at the Counseling and Career Center (478-471-2714 / S-230) and fill out the appropriate paperwork. The student should then see me with the documentation so that the necessary accommodations can be made.

Calendar

Week 1	May 31	“José Chung’s ‘From Outer Space’” (TV)
	June 2	LeGuin "Introduction" (handout); Hawthorne “The Birthmark”; Wells “The Star”
Week 2	June 7	Forster “The Machine Stops”; Asimov “Nightfall”; Moore “No Woman Born”; Sturgeon “Thunder and Roses”
	June 9	Campbell “Who Goes There?”; Carpenter <i>The Thing</i> (film)
Week 3	June 14	Bradbury “There Will Come Soft Rains”; Clarke “The Sentinel”; Blish “Common Time”
	June 16	TBA
Week 4	June 21	TBA
	June 23	TBA
Week 5	June 27	Lem <i>Solaris</i>
	June 29	Tarkovsky and Soderbergh <i>Solaris</i> (films)
Week 6	July 5	Dick “Faith of Our Fathers”; Ellison “I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream”; Delany “Driftglass”
	July 7	Russ “When It Changed”; McIntyre “Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand”; Butler “Bloodchild”
Week 7	July 12	Dick <i>Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?</i>
	July 14	Scott <i>Blade Runner</i> (film)
Week 8	July 19	Tiptree “Houston, Houston, Do You Read?”; Varley “Options”; Gibson “The Gernsback Continuum” (handout)
	July 21	Sterling “Maneki Neko” and “Big Jelly” (in <i>A Good, Old-Fashioned Future</i>)
Week 9	July 26	Sterling “Deep Eddy,” “The Bicycle Repairman,” and “Taklamakan” (in <i>A Good, Old-Fashioned Future</i>)
	July 28	Final Exam

Some Definitions of Science Fiction

“By ‘scientifiction’ I mean the Jules Verne, H.G. Wells and Edgar Allan Poe type of story—a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision.” Hugo Gernsback, in “Amazing Stories” (April 1926)

“Science Fiction is a branch of fantasy identifiable by the fact that it eases the ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ on the part of its readers by utilizing an atmosphere of scientific credibility for its imaginative speculations in physical science, space, time, social science, and philosophy.” Sam Moskowitz, in “Explorers of the Infinite” (1963)

“We might try to define science fiction in this broader sense as fiction based upon scientific or pseudo-scientific assumptions (space-travel, robots, telepathy, earthly immortality, and so forth) or laid in any patently unreal though non-supernatural setting (the future, or another world, and so forth).” L. Sprague de Camp, in “Science Fiction Handbook” (1953)

“A science fiction story is a story built around human beings, with a human problem, and a human solution, which would not have happened at all without its speculative scientific content.” Theodore Sturgeon, as amended by Damon Knight, in “A Century of Science Fiction” (1962)

“Science fiction is that branch of literature which is concerned with the impact of scientific advance upon human beings.” Isaac Asimov, in “Modern Science Fiction”, edited by Reginald Bretnor (1953)

“Science fiction is that branch of literature what deals with human responses to changes in the level of science and technology.” Isaac Asimov, in “Isaac Asimov’s Science Fiction Magazine” (Mar-Apr 1978)

“Science fiction is that class of prose narrative wtreating of a situation that could not arise in the world we know, but which is hypothesized on the basis of some innovation in science or technology, or pseudo-science or pseudo-technology, whether human or extraterrestrial in origin.” Kingsley Amis, in “New Maps of Hell” (1961)

“Science fiction is the search for a definition of man and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science), and is cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mould.” Brian W. Aldiss, in “Billion Year Spree” (1973)

“A literary genre developed principally in the 20th Century, dealing with scientific discovery or development that, whether set in the future, or the fictitious present, or in the putative past, is superior to or simply other than that known to exist.” Fred Saberhagen, in “Encyclopedia Britannica” 15th edition (1979)

“The branch of fiction that deals with the possible effects of an altered technology or social system on mankind in an imagined future, an altered present, or an alternative past.” Barry M. Malzberg, in “Collier’s Encyclopedia” (1981)

“Science fiction deals with improbable possibilities, fantasy with plausible impossibilities.” Miriam Allen deFord, in “Elsewhere, Elsewhen, Elsehow” (1971)

“A piece of science fiction is a narrative of an imaginary invention or discovery in the natural sciences and consequent adventures and experience.” J. O. Bailey, in “The SF Book of Lists,” p.256, ed. Malcolm Edwards & Maxim Jakubowski, New York: Berkeley (1982)

“[Fiction] in which the author shows awareness of the nature and importance of the human activity known as the scientific method, and shows equal awareness of the great body of knowledge already collected through that activity, and takes into account in his stories the effect and possible future ef-

fects on human beings of scientific methods and scientific fact.” Reginald Bretnor, in “The SF Book of Lists,” p.257, ed. Malcolm Edwards & Maxim Jakubowski, New York: Berkeley (1982)

“Science fiction is a label applied to a publishing category and its application is subject to the whims of editors and publishers.” John Clute & Peter Nichols, in “The SF Book of Lists,” p.257, ed. Malcolm Edwards & Maxim Jakubowski, New York: Berkeley (1982)

“A handy short definition of almost all science fiction might read: realistic speculation about possible future events, based solidly on adequate knowledge of the real world, past and present, and on a thorough understanding of the scientific method. To make the definition cover all science fiction (instead of ‘almost all’) it is necessary only to strike out the word ‘future’.” Robert Heinlein, in “The SF Book of Lists,” p.257, ed. Malcolm Edwards & Maxim Jakubowski, New York: Berkeley (1982)

“Speculative fiction: stories whose objective is to explore, to discover, to learn, by means of projection, extrapolation, analogue, hypothesis-and-paper-experimentation, something about the nature of the universe, of man, of ‘reality’.” Judith Merrill, in “The SF Book of Lists,” p.257, ed. Malcolm Edwards & Maxim Jakubowski, New York: Berkeley (1982)

“It is that thing that people who understand science fiction point to, when they point to something and say ‘That’s science fiction!’” Frederik Pohl, in “The SF Book of Lists”, p.257, ed. Malcolm Edwards & Maxim Jakubowski, New York: Berkeley (1982)

“Science fiction is hard to define because it is the literature of change and it changes while you are trying to define it.” Tom Shippey, in “The SF Book of Lists,” p.258, ed. Malcolm Edwards & Maxim Jakubowski, New York: Berkeley (1982)

“There is only one definition of science fiction that seems to make pragmatic sense: ‘Science fiction is anything published as science fiction’.” Norman Spinrad, in “The SF Book of Lists,” p.257, ed. Malcolm Edwards & Maxim Jakubowski, New York: Berkeley (1982)

“A literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author’s empirical environment.” Darko Suvin, in “The SF Book of Lists,” p.258, ed. Malcolm Edwards & Maxim Jakubowski, New York: Berkeley (1982); this is a particularly often-cited definition in the academic study of science fiction

“Science fiction is that branch of fantasy which, while not true of present-day knowledge, is rendered plausible by the reader’s recognition of the scientific possibilities of it being possible at some future date or at some uncertain period in the past.” Donald A. Wollheim, in “The SF Book of Lists,” p.258, ed. Malcolm Edwards & Maxim Jakubowski, New York: Berkeley (1982)

“Science fiction is a label applied to a publishing category and its application is subject to the whims of editors and publishers.” John Clute & Peter Nichols, in “The SF Book of Lists,” p.257, ed. Malcolm Edwards & Maxim Jakubowski, New York: Berkeley (1982)