



**FULL COURSE CODE (Ex. FLOR FILM 3316)
Introduction to Science Fiction**

CAPA LONDON PROGRAM

Spring 2020

Faculty name	:	Tyler Bickford
E-mail	:	bickford@pitt.edu
Class times	:	Day and time
Classroom location	:	Name and number of classroom
Office Hours	:	Day and Time or «by appointment»

Course Description

What lies beyond “The Final Frontier”? Why does it matter if androids dream of electric sheep? What will our future look like and who will be there to enjoy it? What role does technology, ethics and/or politics play in imagining our future? Why has science fiction become such a central metaphor for our daily, lived experiences? Introduction to Science Fiction discusses them all! This course is designed to expose students to broad spectrum of science fiction. We will examine representative texts from each of the modern, roughly defined as the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, “periods” of the genre. The class will discuss the ongoing debate surrounding the “work” performed by the genre, as well as its themes, and stylistic movements. Whether you are a geek, or are geek-adjacent, this course has something for you!

Course Aims

Upon completion of the course, students will be knowledgeable about the history of science fiction as a literary and commercial genre. Students will develop and practice close readings skills and scholarly methods of textual analysis and critique. And they will cultivate habits of mind that take entertainment and commercial genres seriously in everyday life and in scholarly inquiry. Students will have substantial opportunities to practice written and oral communication.

Requirements and Prerequisites

There are no specific requirements for this course.

Learning Outcomes

- a. Acquire knowledge of the breadth and depth of the science fiction genre
- b. Become familiar with important concepts and debates in the history of science fiction
- c. Develop close reading skills and learn methods of textual analysis and critique
- d. Improve written and oral communication skills
- e. Gain experience working with others

Developmental Outcomes

Students should demonstrate: responsibility & accountability, independence & interdependence, goal orientation, self-confidence, resilience, appreciation of differences.

Class methodology

This course will meet once per week for 3.5 hours. Students will be expected to complete substantial reading, writing, and preparation outside of class. Class meetings will include lecture, discussion, small group work, and student presentations.

Assessment/Grading Policy

1. A small group exploration of a type of narrative common to the science fiction genre.
2. A short (3-5 page) comparison of a text and narrative type.
3. A medium length (4-6 page) “argument” analysis of one class reading.

4. A long (6-8 page) paper that analyzes an ideological theme, or argument across multiple texts read in the course. May include outside readings.

The grade breakdown is as follows:

Small group exploration	10%
Short argument paper	10%
Medium genre paper	20%
Long analysis paper	25%
In-class presentation	5%
Class participation	30%
Overall grade	100%

Assessment of Learning Outcomes			
Learning Outcomes	Assessment task	Grade %	Due Date
a-e	Small group exploration	10%	Week 3
a-d	Short argument paper	10%	Week 6
a-d	Medium genre paper	20%	Week 9
a-d	Long analysis paper	25%	Week 12
a-d	In-class presentation	5%	Week 12
a-e	Class participation	30%	Weekly

DESCRIPTOR	ALPHA	NUMERIC	GPA	REQUIREMENT/EXPECTATION
Outstanding (High Distinction)	A	93+	4.0	Maximum grade: In addition to description for grade "A-", the student shows detailed understanding of materials about which he or she can show independent analytical ability. This means the ability to question an issue from different perspectives and evaluate responses in an objective manner.
Excellent (Distinction)	A-	90 - 92	3.7	Student shows understanding of literature beyond the textbook/class hand-outs/class notes, and the work shows a high level of independent thought, presents informed and insightful discussion and demonstrates a well-developed capacity for evaluation.
Very good (High Credit)	B+	87 - 89	3.3	Shows evidence of a capacity to generalise from the taught content, or the material in literature, or from class lectures in an informed manner. Also, the work demonstrates a capacity to integrate personal reflection into the discussion and an appreciation of a range of different perspectives.
Good (Credit)	B	83 - 86	3.0	The work is well organised and contains coherent or logical argumentation and presentation.
Good (Credit)	B-	80 - 82	2.7	Student shows understanding of literature beyond the textbook and/or notes, and, there is evidence of additional reading.
Average (Good Pass)	C+	77-79	2.3	The work demonstrates a capacity to integrate research into the discussion and a critical appreciation of a range of theoretical perspectives. Also, the work demonstrates a clear understanding of the question and its theoretical implications and demonstrates evidence of additional reading.
Adequate (Pass)	C	73 - 76	2.0	Shows clear understanding and some insight into the material in the textbook and notes, but not beyond. A deficiency in understanding the material may be compensated by evidence of independent thought and effort related to the subject matter.

Below Average (Borderline Pass)	C-	70-72	1.7	Shows some understanding of the material in the textbook and notes. A deficiency in any of the above may be compensated by evidence of independent thought related to the subject matter.
Inadequate (Borderline Fail)	D+	67 - 69	1.3	Fails to show a clear understanding or much insight into the material in the textbook and notes
Poor (Fail)	D	60 - 66	0.7 - 1.0	Besides the above for D+, student has not shown interest or engagement in the class work or study.
Poor (Fail)	F	<60	0	Shows little or no understanding of any of the material
Incomplete	I			Please see CAPA policy in the Faculty Handbook.

Dress Code

No requirements.

Course Materials

Required Readings:

Shelley, Mary *Frankenstein*
Wells, H.G. *The Time Machine*
Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *Herland*
Dick, Phillip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
Leinster, Murray. "Proxima Centauri."
Hasse, Henry. "He Who Shrank."
Asimov, Isaac. "Robbie"
Bradbury, Ray. "There will come Soft Rains."
Zelazny, Roger. "A Rose for Ecclesiastes."
Delaney, Samuel R. "Time Considered as a Helix of Semi Precious Stones."
Butler, Octavia, "Bloodchild"
Jemisin, N. K. "The Effluent Engine"
Walton, Jo, *Among Others*
Okorafor, Nnedi, "Binti"
Lord, Karen *Redemption in Indigo*
Gaiman, Neil, *Miracleman: The Golden Age*
Moore, Alan, *Watchmen*

Weekly Course Schedule

WEEK 1

Course introduction

READ BEFORE CLASS: Shelley, *Frankenstein*

IN CLASS: Writing: What is YOUR definition of the genre?

IN CLASS: Discuss the problem of definition in science fiction. Which "official" definition is closest to your own? If you had to organize the list of definitions (including your own), how would you do it?

IN CLASS: Discuss Shelley. Would you categorize this as science fiction? In what ways does it fit or not fit your definition?

HOMEWORK: Finish your in-class writing and post your definitions to LMS. Read the collection of definitions of science fiction.

WEEK 2

Early Science Fiction, Emergence through 1917

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

IN CLASS: Discuss Wells. Is his science fiction doing similar work as that of Shelley? How does it match your definition of science fiction?

IN CLASS: Review the small group assignment and create groups for assignment 1.

HOMEWORK: Small group assignment for next week. Read assignment sheet for paper 1 and come to class with any questions you might have.

WEEK 3

Science Fiction Between the Wars, 1918-1939

DUE: Small Group Assignment.

READ: Leinster, "Proxima Cenauri," Hasse, "He Who Shrank

IN-CLASS: Discuss Leinster and Hasse. How is science fiction evolving?

IN CLASS: Small groups share their assignments with the class.

IN CLASS: Introduce first writing assignment. Discuss ways to meet the terms of the assignment. Begin brainstorming your proposals.

HOMEWORK: Work on Paper 1 proposal for next week.

WEEK 4

Science Fiction Between the Wars, 1918-1939

DUE: Draft of Paper 1 proposal

READ: Gilman, *Herland*

IN CLASS: Discuss Gilman. How does a focus on gender complicate the early history of science fiction?

HOMEWORK: Finish your proposal assignment. Bring one copy with you to class.

WEEK 5

The Golden Age and the Atomic Age 1940-1963

READ: Bradbury, "There Will Come Soft Rains," and Asimov, "Robbie."

DUE: Paper 1 proposals

IN CLASS: Workshop paper 1 proposals

IN CLASS: Discuss Bradbury and Asimov. How do their visions complicate our understanding of science fiction written during this period?

HOMEWORK: Paper 1 due next week

WEEK 6

New Wave and Reaction, 1963-1983

READ: Delany, "Time Considered as a Helix of Semi Precious Stones," and Zelazny, "A Rose for Ecclesiastes"

DUE: Paper 1

IN CLASS: Introduce second writing assignment. Discuss ways to meet the terms of the assignment. Begin brainstorming your proposals.

IN CLASS: Discuss Delany and Zelazny. How are their stories different than the ones we have read in class thus far?

HOMEWORK: Work on Paper 2 proposals for next week.

WEEK 7

New Wave and Reaction, 1963-1983

READ: Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

DUE: Paper 2 proposals

IN CLASS: Discuss Dick. What similarities do you see between this novel and the short stories of Delany and Zelazny?

IN CLASS: Workshop proposals

HOMEWORK: Start drafting Paper 2. Outlines due in class next week.

WEEK 8

Graphic novels

READ: Alan Moore, *Watchmen* (excerpts); Gaiman, "Miracleman: The Golden Age"

DUE: Paper 2 outlines

IN CLASS: Discuss Moore and Gaiman: how does the graphic novel/comic format change the genre of science fiction? Are superhero stories inherently science fiction?

HOMEWORK: Read the assignment for paper 3. Come to class with any questions you might have about the assignment.

WEEK 9

Science fiction reflects on itself

READ: Walton, *Among Others*

DUE: Paper 2

IN CLASS: Introduce third writing assignment. Discuss ways to meet the terms of the assignment. Begin brainstorming your proposals.

IN CLASS: Discuss Walton: This story is very much *about* science fiction and related genres; is it a work of science fiction itself?

HOMEWORK: Paper 3 proposal due next week

WEEK 10

Contemporary trends

READ: Butler, "Bloodchild." Okorafor, "Binti." Jemisin, "The Effluent Engine"

DUE: Paper 3 proposal

IN CLASS: Workshop paper 3 proposals

IN CLASS: Discuss Butler, Okorafor, and Jemisin. How do these writers push the limits of science fiction. How do they build on the science fiction tradition?

HOMEWORK: Start drafting Paper 3. Outlines due in class next week.

WEEK 11

Contemporary trends, continued

READ: Lord, *The Best of All Possible Worlds*

DUE: Paper 3 outlines

IN CLASS: Discuss Lord

IN CLASS: Prep for presentations next week

HOMEWORK: Finish Paper 3 and prepare for in class presentations

WEEK 12

Contemporary British science fiction TV

WATCH: Doctor Who, series 2, episode 10, "Blink". Black Mirror, season 1 episode 2, "[Fifteen Million Merits](#)"

DUE: Paper 3

IN CLASS: Final paper presentations

Attendance, Participation & Student Responsibilities

Attendance: CAPA has a mandatory attendance policy. Attendance is taken at the beginning of every class. Unauthorized absence from class will result in a reduction of the final grade and potentially a failure for the course.

Missing classes for medical reasons: If you need to miss a class for medical reasons or for a family emergency, you must send an e-mail to let the Director of Academic Affairs (DAA) or Resident Director know at least one hour in advance of your class or meeting at the following e-mail: _____. Note that calling the CAPA Center (_____) is acceptable only if you do not temporarily have access to the internet. An e-mail is still required as quickly as you can get access to the internet again. You will need to provide evidence of the reason for your absence. Unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction. In the event of a missed class or field trip, it is your responsibility to contact your instructor and make up any missed assignments.

Class Participation: Students are expected to participate actively and critically in class discussions, and the participation portion of the class will be graded accordingly. Students must read assignments BEFORE the class, and come in on time. Participation is a vital part of your grade: students are expected to participate orally in seminars and in online forums and discussions in a critical and evaluative manner; to interact with the faculty and fellow students with respect and tolerance; and to actively engage in discussion. Derogatory or inflammatory comments about the cultures, perspectives or attitudes of others in the class will not be tolerated.

Academic Integrity: A high level of responsibility and academic honesty is expected. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work and class behavior. Plagiarism and cheating will result in dismissal from the program. See the Handbook of CAPA Academic Policies for more information and resources on plagiarism.

Use of electronic equipment in class: All devices such as laptops, I-pods, I-pads, netbooks, notebooks and tablets, smartphones, cell phones, etc. are **NOT** allowed unless you have express permission from the faculty or you have been instructed to do so. If you require an accommodation to use any type of electronic equipment, inform the Director of Academic Affairs or the Resident Director at the beginning of Term.

Use of Electronic Translators: In Language courses students are NOT allowed to use electronic translators for writing texts in the target language: those submitting compositions and texts of whatever kind translated in such a fashion will receive a final F grade for the course.

Late Submission: Late submission of papers, projects, journal entries, pieces of homework and portfolios is only permitted with prior approval. A request must be made to the relevant Faculty member no later than two days prior to the due date. Late submission without prior approval will result in a full alpha grade penalty. In either case, work cannot be submitted after feedback has been provided to the rest of the class on the relevant assessment or one week after the due date whichever comes first, after which point a grade of F will be given for the assessment.

Behavior during Examinations: During examinations, you must do your own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.

