

ENGL 257, Science Fiction and Fantasy:
The Empire Strikes Back

Section 001, CRN: 85048

Clark Hall Room 317

Instructor: Mary Rose Manspeaker

Science fiction and fantasy can help us engage the intense and sometimes overwhelming realities of the present, taking hold of and extrapolating it into new worlds. These stories both extend and critique logics of colonialism and empire through the worlds they explore. They also have the great potential to imagine “otherness” and other ways of living as they present us with alien beings, fantastic settings, and the potential limits of expansion and progress.



In this course, we will take a broad view of science fiction and fantasy dating from the 1960s to the current day. We will engage with topics such as war, colonialism and post-colonialism, climate change, afro-futurism, gender, and race to examine the links between our world and these fictional otherworlds. We will consider whether and how speculative literature might animate social movements and make space for new futures as we think through the pasts, presents, and possible futures of science fiction and fantasy.

Possible readings include novels, stories, and poetry by writers like Octavia Butler, Philip K. Dick, N. K. Jemisin, Ursula Le Guin, Amitav Ghosh, Yoko Tawada, Sun Ra, Leslie Marmon Silko, Cathy Park Hong, Salman Rushdie, and Gene Wolfe. We may also incorporate film, graphic novels, music videos, and other subgenres.