

🕒 It's A Clockwork Universe, Victoria: 🕒
An Exploration of Steampunk Literature and Culture



English 257, Section 1—Science Fiction and Fantasy
12:30-1:20 MWF
Stansbury Hall 48
Fall 2015

Instructor: Phillip Zapkin
Office: Colson Hall G07
Office Hours: 1:30-2:15 MWF
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Steampunk is a relatively young science fiction and fantasy genre, combining futuristic technologies with historical aesthetics. While many stories are set in Victorian Britain, the British Empire, or the Wild West, the technology is decidedly advanced, including computers, lighter than air ships, advanced weapons, and cyborgs. In this class we will explore some of the roots of steampunk, including the work of H.G. Wells and Jules Verne, and then encounter some of the major works of steampunk, like *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, *The Peshawar Lancers*, *Wild Wild West*, and steam powered poetry. Our critical discussions will revolve around how we use fiction, film, poetry, and culture to (re)imagine both the future and the past, coming to terms with colonialism and imperialism, the position of women in society, thinking about the role of technology in society, and grappling with the purposes and goals of subcultures.

Course Objectives

In this course we will focus on steampunk as a specific literary/cinematic genre and as a subculture, therefore the objectives for this course are:

1. Students should develop critical thinking and analytical skills necessary to respond comprehensively to literature and film.
2. Students should learn to identify genre conventions, limits, and forms, not only for steampunk but across genres.
3. Students should understand connections and differences in how fiction, poetry, film, and fashion deal with related subject matter.
4. Students should be able to critically analyze connections between culture, literature/art, history, and technology.
5. Students should understand some of the reasons why and the methods through which subcultures relate to, resist, challenge, and modify mainstream culture.

Required Texts and Films

Required Texts:

- 🕒 *Steampunk*. Ann and Jeff Vandermeer, Eds.
- 🕒 *The Sleeper Awakes*. H.G. Wells. (Please try to get the Penguin edition because there is more than one version of this novel)
- 🕒 *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, Vol. 1*. Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill.
- 🕒 *The Peshawar Lancers*. S.M. Stirling.

⌚ *The Golden Compass*. Philip Pullman.

Recommended Text:

⌚ *Easy Writer*, 5th Custom ed. for WVU. Andrea Lunsford.

Films and Television:

⌚ *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Richard Fleischer, Dir.

⌚ *Doctor Who*: “A Town Called Mercy” Series 7, episode 3. Saul Metzstein, Dir.

⌚ *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. Stephen Norrington, Dir.

⌚ *Firefly*: “Serenity” Season 1, episode 1. Joss Whedon, Dir.

⌚ *The Brothers Grimm*. Terry Gilliam, Dir.

⌚ *Wild, Wild West*. Barry Sonnenfeld, Dir.

⌚ Steampunk music videos on eCampus

These films are available streaming in our electronic course reserves, or you may attend a movie night to watch them.

Additional readings—poems, critical and cultural theory, visuals, etc.—will be available through eCampus.

Grading and Assignments

I do not believe in exams for literature classes, so graded material will consist of a mix of short and medium length papers and participation. The breakdown is as follows:

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| ⌚ Steam-Powered Short Story | 20 Points |
| ⌚ Term Paper Proposal | 10 Points |
| ⌚ Steam and Magic Paper | 15 Points |
| ⌚ Term Paper | 30 Points |
| ⌚ Participation | 25 Points |
| | 100 Total Points |

Participation and Attendance

- ⌚ I believe strongly in the discussion of literature and film, so participation counts heavily in your grade for this class. The majority of our class time should be spent in critical conversation about the literature, films, and ideas we will explore.
- ⌚ This course is part of your professional career, so all behavior in the classroom should be professional and courteous to your classmates, the literature and films under discussion, myself, and the class at large.
- ⌚ I am also a big believer in promptness, so I would appreciate it if you could make every effort to joins us by the class start time of 12:30 MWF.
- ⌚ Attendance for this class is not mandatory. You are adults, I trust you to appreciate the responsibilities that come with being a student and I will allow you to decide if another commitment is more important than class attendance. Please be aware, however, that non-attendance does mean non-participation and missed information from discussions and announcements.

Late Work

Typed, printed, and stapled papers will be turned in at the beginning of class time (12:30) on the day the assignment is due.

Late work is unprofessional, and I have distributed a schedule at the beginning of the semester with all of the assignment due dates listed, so I do not accept late work. If a paper is not turned in on time it will not receive credit.

Office Hours and Email

This class will push you to think in new ways about literature, film, and culture. This should not be easy. But you have an excellent resource in my office hours, which are 1:30-2:15 MWF in Colson Hall G07. This time is available for you to come ask questions, get clarifications, seek assistance on assignments, ruminate on the meaning of existence, etc. For reasons I don't fully understand, most students seem to have an aversion to office hours, even though talking one on one with an instructor is incredibly useful and generally boosts grades.

You may also email me at pzapkin@mix.wvu.edu, which is the best way to get a hold of me outside class or office hours. I always answer emails within 24 hours, so if you don't hear back from me by the next evening, please resend your email.

If the answer to a question is already in the syllabus or an assignment sheet, I will direct you there rather than retyping in an email answers I've already given you.

Academic Integrity

The English department and I assume that you will approach academic work honestly, and you will turn in your own original work. Failure to do so will result in a failing grade for the assignment, for the course, or more serious penalties.

It is your responsibility to become fully familiar with the Student Conduct Code, which is linked on eCampus or in *Easy Writer* pages WVU5-WVU7 (near the beginning).

If you are at all confused about what counts as plagiarism, please ask.

Eberly Writing Studio (formerly the Writing Center)

The Eberly Writing Studio is a service your tuition dollars have already paid for. The tutors are your fellow students, and they are trained to help with all aspects of the writing process.

The Studio is in Colson Hall G02, near my office. Their website is <http://speakwrite.wvu.edu/writing-studio>, which includes a link to sign up for an appointment online, or you can stop by. Their hours are 10-5 MTWR, and 10-3 F.

Social Justice and Accessibility Services

West Virginia University and I are committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (304-293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.sandbox.wvu.edu/ddei>.

University Counseling Services

The Carruth Center provides resources to help manage stress, improve relationships, make healthy lifestyle choices, and face new challenges and transitions. The Center is in the newly constructed Health and Education Building, 390 Birch Street, located on the Evansdale campus adjacent to the Student Recreation Center. Its website is <http://well.wvu.edu/ccpps>, and its phone number (answered 24 hours) is 304-293-4431.

Schedule

This schedule is subject to change by me. I will inform you by email and if possible in class of any changes as early as possible.

Please Note: All readings must be done by the class period in which we will discuss them. This includes reading introductory material.

► Week 1

◇M 17 Aug: Introduce the course, syllabus and policy information

◇W 19 Aug: **Section I: Steam Powered Roots**; Jess Nevins' "Introduction: The 19th Century Roots of Steampunk" in *Steampunk*; Steampunk Art and Fashion, part 1

◇F 21 Aug¹: H.G. Wells' *The Sleeper Awakes* ch. 1-7

► Week 2

◇M 24 Aug: *SA* ch. 8-12

◇W 26 Aug: *SA* ch. 13-19

◇F 28 Aug: *SA* ch. 20-25

► Week 3

◇M 31 Aug: Victorian Poetry on eCampus

Movie Night: 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea in Library 104, at 6 PM

◇W 2 Sept: *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*

◇F 4 Sept: *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*

► Week 4

◇M 7 Sept: *Labor Day Recess; University Closed; No Class*

◇W 9 Sept: **Section II: Mechanical Glories**; James P. Blaylock's "Lord Kelvin's Machine" in *Steampunk*

◇F 11 Sept: Paul Di Filippo's "Victoria" in *Steampunk*

► Week 5

◇M 14 Sept: Molly Brown's "The Selene Gardening Society" in *Steampunk*

◇W 16 Sept: Mary Gentle's "A Sun in the Attic" in *Steampunk*

¹ End of Add/Drop Period

◇F 18 Sept: Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill's *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, Vol. 1*; Introduce Steam-Powered Short Story Assignment

► Week 6

◇M 21 Sept: *LoEG, Vol 1*

Movie Night: The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (film) in Library 104, at 6 PM

◇W 23 Sept: *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (film)

◇F 25 Sept: *LoEG* (film)

► Week 7

◇M 28 Sept: Excerpts from Stephen Sanders' *Songs for a Mechanical Age* on eCampus

Movie Night: Doctor Who "A Town Called Mercy" in Library 104, at 6 PM

◇W 30 Sept: *Doctor Who "A Town Called Mercy"*

◇F 2 Oct: *Mid-Semester*. Steampunk music videos on eCampus

HW: Steam-Powered Short Story

► Week 8

◇M 5 Oct: S.M. Stirling's *The Peshawar Lancers* ch. 1-3

Due: *Steam-Powered Short Story*

◇W 7 Oct: *PL* ch. 4-6

◇F 9 Oct²: *PL* ch. 7-10

► Week 9

◇M 12 Oct: *Columbus Day; University Closed; No Class*

◇W 13 Oct: *PL* ch. 11-14

◇F 16 Oct: *PL* ch. 15-16

► Week 10

◇M 19 Oct: *PL* ch. 17-18

◇W 21 Oct: *PL* ch. 19-20

◇F 23 Oct³: *PL* ch. 21-epilogue

► Week 11

² Mid-Semester Grades Due by Noon

³ Last Day to Withdraw from a Class

◇M 26 Oct: Excerpts from Janice T's *Echoes: Neo-Victorian Poetry* on eCampus; Introduce Term Paper

Movie Night: Firefly "Serenity" in Library 104, at 6 PM

◇W 28 Oct: *Firefly* "Serenity"

HW: Read and bring a copy of "Critical Writing in English" handout on eCampus

◇F 30 Oct: Critical Writing in English

► Week 12

◇M 2 Nov: **Section III: Steampunk Fairy Tales**; Philip Pullman's *The Golden Compass* ch. 1-3

◇W 4 Nov: *GC* ch. 4-6

◇F 6 Nov: *GC* ch. 7-9

HW: Term Paper Proposal

► Week 13

◇M 9 Nov: *GC* ch. 10-14

Due: Term Paper Proposal

◇W 11 Nov: *GC* ch. 15-17; Introduce Steam and Magic Paper

◇F 13 Nov: *No Class; Phillip is out of town*

► Week 14

◇M 16 Nov: *GC* ch. 18-23

Movie Night: The Brothers Grimm in Library 104, at 6 PM

◇W 18 Nov: *The Brothers Grimm*

◇F 20 Nov: Subcultures, Style, and Rebellion

HW: Steam and Magic Paper; Read excerpt from Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* on eCampus

► Week 15

◇M 23 Nov: *Fall Recess; University Closed; No Class*

◇W 25 Nov: *Fall Recess; University Closed; No Class*

◇F 27 Nov: *Fall Recess; University Closed; No Class*

► Week 16

◇M 30 Nov: Steampunk Art and Fashion, part 2

Due: Steam and Magic Paper

Movie Night: Wild Wild West in Library 104, at 6 PM

◇W 2 Dec: *Wild Wild West*

◇F 4 Dec: *Wild Wild West*; Course Evaluations

► Week 17 (and beyond)

◇M 7 Dec: *Last Day of Class*. Wrap up discussions of Steampunk

HW: Term Paper

◇F 11 Dec: *Term Papers Due* to my office Colson G07 or mailbox (in the English dept. main office) by 1:20

DUE: Term Paper

◇M 14 Dec: Term Paper pick up (optional) at my office Colson G07, 12:30-2:30