

English 257.003: Science Fiction MWF 2:30-3:20 ARM D 403
“Creativity, Imagination, & Commentary”

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Required Texts:

The Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula Le Guin; *Starship Troopers* by Robert Heinlin; *I, Robot* by Isaac Asimov; *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, *The Norton Book of Science Fiction*; *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sleep?* by Philip Dick; *Neuromancer* by William Gibson; *The Power of Myth* by Joseph Campbell; *The Martian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury

Course Description:

This course will explore the importance of science fiction as contemporary commentary on social economic, and political issues including cloning, mythology, and cyborgs. We will read major works of science fiction to determine the issues and questions science fiction raises about technology, imagination, and identity. We will consider our relationships to technology and how it defines us. Does our creation reflect our creative natures or our destructive natures? How do we conceive of ourselves now and how does science fiction reflect that conception?

Attendance:

If you miss 3 or more days of class, your final grade will go down one letter. Missing 5 or more constitutes grounds for failure. If you need to miss class, talk to me about it early. If you must be absent, it is your responsibility to check with a classmate to discover what you missed or inform me at least 2 class periods ahead of the date of your intended absence. Attendance is not just showing up for class. It includes *participation* in class discussions, in-class writings, quizzes, homework, and peer editing participation. In addition to regular class attendance, you will be responsible for all assigned reading material. Much of class time will consist of discussions of material read; student input is necessary. Attendance is a part of your participation grade. Chronic lateness or tardiness will affect your grade. Each day late is a .5 days absent.

Late Work:

Late work will result in an F for that grade. Beware: any work left in my mailbox or the English drop box may not be picked up on time and will be considered late. Work is due at the beginning of each class period on the day it is due.

Grading and Course Assignments:

3 papers: 20% each totaling 60%
Participation: 10%
7 Response papers: 30%

Response papers:

We will divide into groups. On Friday of each week your group will be given a question to answer. That question can be found on WebCt. Each group member will write a 2 page response

to it and turn it in by Monday on WebCt. We will share our work on the following Friday and discuss your responses to the questions.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism means representing someone else's work as your own. It includes recycled papers, stolen papers, etc. It will result in a failing grade for the course. I also report all incidents of plagiarism.

Special Needs:

If you have special educational or physical needs which require accommodation please see me if I can help you in any way.

Tentative Calendar:

Week 1

Jan. 8 Intro to Class

10 Discuss *Norton* Intro. 15-42

12 *Norton*: Haldeman 300, Malzberg: 313, Atwood: 794

Week 2

15 No Class MLK

17 Discuss Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles*

19 Discuss Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles*; Discuss Response Question #1

Week 3

22 No Class

24 Discuss *Starship Troopers*

26 *Starship Troopers*; Discuss Response Question #2

Week 4

29 Movie: Starship Troopers

31 Movie: Starship Troopers

Feb. 2 Movie: Starship Troopers; Discuss Response Question #3

Week 5

5 Discuss Norton: Le Guin 317; Ellison 350

7 *Left Hand of Darkness*

9 *Left Hand of Darkness*; Discuss Response Question #4

Week 6

12 *Handmaid's Tale*

14 *Handmaid's Tale*

16 *Handmaid's Tale*; Discuss Response Question #5;

Week 7

19 Movie: Gattaca

21 Movie: Gattaca

*23 Movie: Gattaca; Discussion of Movie; Paper 1 Due

Week 8

26 Movie: Star Wars

28 Movie: Star Wars

March 2 Movie: Star Wars; Discuss Response Question #6

Week 9

5 Campbell; Discuss Movie; *Norton*: Silverberg 242, Dick 386

7 *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

9 *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Week 10

12 Movie: Blade Runner

14 Movie: Blade Runner

16 Movie: Blade Runner; Discuss Response Question #7

Week 11

19 Discuss Movie

21 Harrawoy; *Norton*: Gloss 571

23 Paper 2 Due; Discuss Paper 3

Week 12 Spring break

Week 13

April 2 *I, Robot*; Post paper 3 topics on WebCt

4 *I, Robot*; Post paper 3 sources on WebCt

6 No Class

Week 14

9 *Neuromancer*; Post Outlines of Paper 3 paper on WebCt

11 *Neuromancer*

13 *Neuromancer*

Week 15

16 Edit Paper 3

18 Edit Paper 3

20 Paper 3 Due

Week 16

23 No Class

25 No Class

27 Pick up paper 3

**Mid-Semester*

Sci Fi Class: Papers

Use MLA format for all papers in this class.

Paper 1:

Choose a story from *Norton* or a story in one of our novels and analyze the questions it raises. How are the questions it raises typical of this genre or how do they expand it if you feel they are not typical? Do we get a feel for the time period it was written in? What questions about humanity or about the time period do you see here? Explain.

Paper 1 should be 2-3 pages. Paper 1 is due on February 23.

Paper 2:

In paper 1 you discussed the questions a story raises about the genre of science fiction or about a topic or theme in science fiction. You also included how the questions raised in that novel or story might reflect the period in which it is written. Now, tell me if you think the novel is answering these questions and what that answer might be. Use the text and another outside source to argue for the answer you see to the questions these texts raise and the significance of those questions and answers.

Paper 2 should be 5-7 pages and include 1 outside print source. Paper 2 is due on March 23.

Paper 3:

This is a research paper on a topic within the novel or movie of your choice. It requires two sources beyond our texts: one print source and one reliable internet source. (The magazine *Wired* may be a wonderful internet source and/or print source for your topic/paper.) Pick a topic we have discussed in class that you are interested in learning more about or writing more about.

By class time on April 2, post your paper 3 topic on WebCt. I will respond to that topic and we will work on narrowing it down to a manageable size.

By class time on April 4, post your paper 3 sources on WebCt and how you will use them in your paper. I will respond to your post.

By class time on April 9, post outlines of your paper 3 on WebCt. Again, I will give you comments/advice by responding to your post.

April 16 and 18 will be reserved for peer editing paper 3. Bring 2 copies to class on both days.

Paper 3 is due on April 20.