

## English 257: Science Fiction and Fantasy

Fall 2018

MWF 11:30-12:20 – Armstrong Hall 422

**Instructor:** April McGinnis

**Email:** am0165@mix.wvu.edu

**Office:** Colson Hall 244

**Office Hours:** MW 11:00-11:30 or by appointment

### Course Description:

English 257 will introduce you to a variety of science fiction and fantasy (SFF) texts. We will be approaching these texts with an eye toward their ecocritical implications; in other words, we will seek out ways in which the texts inform and enrich our understanding of the environment and humankind's place within it. Along the way, we will explore the development of SFF as a genre and the emergence of significant themes and motifs such as the scientific over-reacher, the foray into new worlds, and the sometimes menacing response of the natural world to human interference.

### Required Texts:

J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

Jules Verne, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*

H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*

Alan Moore, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (Vol. 1)*

Jeff VanderMeer, *Annihilation*

Terry Pratchett, *The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents*

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

### Other Required Materials:

- A dedicated notebook for note-taking. Your written assignments will call on you to draw from ideas that arise during our class discussions. I strongly encourage you to take good notes!
- Computer and printer access. You will need access to eCampus in order to view most of the short reading assignments for this course. I would like you to either bring printed copies of these texts or digital versions with you to class to aid in discussion. You will also be required to type and print your final essay. Finally, I will share any last-minute announcements (such as class cancellations) *via* email, so I expect that you have access to your WVU MIX account and will check it regularly.

## **Assignments:**

Reading responses and participation - 40%

We will begin each class with informal written responses to questions that I have prepared (don't worry – they aren't designed to trip you up – I just want to make sure that you read). These responses, along with your contributions to class discussions, will make up your participation grade.

“Science Non-fiction” presentation - 10%

For this project, you will collaborate with three of your classmates to research a topic of scientific or environmental concern and present your findings to the class. These presentations can be as casual or as formal as you like as long as you offer a thorough overview of your topic.

Midterm exam (in-class, short answer) - 20%

Final essay (minimum 5 pages) - 30%

## **Grading:**

Grades will be reported at midterm and at the end of the semester. If you have questions about your grade at any other time, please email me.

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| A | 90-100      |
| B | 80-89       |
| C | 70-79       |
| D | 60-69       |
| F | 59 or below |

## **Attendance and Participation:**

As this is a discussion-based course, its success depends on everyone being present and engaged. You may miss up to three classes without penalty, but I urge you to use this allowance for emergencies only, as I do not meddle in “excused absences,” regardless of the excuse. I will deduct one letter grade for each missed class beyond three. If you need to miss more than three classes, I recommend dropping the course and taking it again at a later time. Missing more than six classes will constitute grounds for failing the course.

Participation will be gauged based on your in-class reading responses and the frequency and quality of your contributions to class discussions. If you arrive late, you will not receive credit for missed response questions. If you miss class, you cannot make up this credit.

## **Late Work Policy:**

I do not accept late work. Aside from the final essay, the work you submit for grading will be completed (or delivered) in class. You must be present in order to receive credit for this work. Missed presentations cannot be made up. The due date for the final essay is firm.

**Inclement Weather Policy:**

In the case of adverse weather, please use your judgment as to whether you can safely make it to campus or not. If you feel unsure, simply email me (do this *before* class), and we will work out an arrangement for completing your work. If I am unable to make it to campus, I will email the class, and we will hold our discussion *via* eCampus for that day.

**The Eberly Writing Studio:**

The Eberly Writing Studio is a resource that can support you in all aspects of the writing process. It is located in G02 Colson Hall. For more information about the Eberly Writing Studio visit [speakwrite.wvu.edu/writing-studio](http://speakwrite.wvu.edu/writing-studio).

**Social Justice Statement:**

The West Virginia University community is 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 at <http://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu> or (304) 293-6700. For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>. And of course, feel free to talk with me about how we can work together most effectively.

**Academic Integrity Policy:**

The following definitions are from the *West Virginia University Undergraduate Catalog*. Please see the section on Academic Integrity/Dishonesty for the full definition and discussion of procedures.

Plagiarism: "Submitting, without appropriate acknowledgment . . . material that has been knowingly obtained or copied in whole or in part, from the work of others, whether such source is published or not, including (but not limited to) another individual's academic composition, compilation, or other product, or commercially prepared paper."

Cheating: "Doing academic work for another student, or providing one's own work for another student to copy and submit as his/her own."

Plagiarizing or otherwise cheating will result in a 0 for the assignment, or depending on the seriousness of the offense, an F for the course.

### Tentative Schedule of Readings:

|        | Date     | Assignment                                                                                                       |
|--------|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 1 | W - 8/15 | Course Introduction                                                                                              |
|        | F - 8/17 | *Sign-up period for presentations ends at 11:59pm*<br>J. R. R. Tolkien, <i>The Hobbit</i> , ch. 1-3              |
| Week 2 | M - 8/20 | J. R. R. Tolkien, <i>The Hobbit</i> , ch. 4-6                                                                    |
|        | W - 8/22 | J. R. R. Tolkien, <i>The Hobbit</i> , ch. 7-8                                                                    |
|        | F - 8/24 | J. R. R. Tolkien, <i>The Hobbit</i> , ch. 9-11                                                                   |
| Week 3 | M - 8/27 | <b>Presentation:</b> Mountaintop removal<br>J. R. R. Tolkien, <i>The Hobbit</i> , ch. 12-14                      |
|        | W - 8/29 | J. R. R. Tolkien, <i>The Hobbit</i> , ch. 15-19                                                                  |
|        | F - 8/31 | Willard Hawkins, "The Dwindling Sphere"<br>E. M. Forster, "The Machine Stops"                                    |
| Week 4 | M - 9/3  | <b>Labor Day - no class</b>                                                                                      |
|        | W - 9/5  | Jules Verne, <i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea</i> , pt. 1, ch. 1-10                                               |
|        | F - 9/7  | Jules Verne, <i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea</i> , pt. 1, ch. 11-18                                              |
| Week 5 | M - 9/10 | <b>Presentation:</b> Deep-sea exploration<br>Jules Verne, <i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea</i> , pt. 1, ch. 19-24 |
|        | W - 9/12 | Jules Verne, <i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea</i> , pt. 2, ch. 1-6                                                |
|        | F - 9/14 | Jules Verne, <i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea</i> , pt. 2, ch. 7-12                                               |
| Week 6 | M - 9/17 | <b>Presentation:</b> Undersea communities<br>Jules Verne, <i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea</i> , pt. 2, ch. 13-17 |
|        | W - 9/19 | Jules Verne, <i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea</i> , pt. 2, ch. 18-end                                             |
|        | F - 9/21 | Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"<br>Samuel Delany, "Driftglass"                        |
| Week 7 | M - 9/24 | <b>Presentation:</b> Chemical warfare<br>H. G. Wells, <i>The War of the Worlds</i> , bk. 1, ch. 1-10             |
|        | W - 9/26 | H. G. Wells, <i>The War of the Worlds</i> , bk. 1, ch. 11-16                                                     |
|        | F - 9/28 | H. G. Wells, <i>The War of the Worlds</i> , bk. 2                                                                |

|         |           |                                                                                                                       |
|---------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 8  | M - 10/1  | <b>Presentation:</b> Air pollution<br>Alan Moore, <i>The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen</i> , v. 1, iss. 1-3       |
|         | W - 10/3  | Alan Moore, <i>The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen</i> , v. 1, iss. 4-6                                             |
|         | F - 10/5  | Ray Bradbury, "The Wind"<br>Chen Qiufan, "The Smog Society"                                                           |
| Week 9  | M - 10/8  | Edgar Allan Poe, "The Unparalleled Adventure of one Hans Pfaall"                                                      |
|         | W - 10/10 | <b>Midterm</b>                                                                                                        |
|         | F - 10/12 | <b>Fall Break - no class</b>                                                                                          |
| Week 10 | M - 10/15 | <b>Presentation:</b> Ecological imbalance<br>Jeff VanderMeer, <i>Annihilation</i> , ch. 1                             |
|         | W - 10/17 | Jeff VanderMeer, <i>Annihilation</i> , ch. 2-3                                                                        |
|         | F - 10/19 | Jeff VanderMeer, <i>Annihilation</i> , ch. 4                                                                          |
| Week 11 | M - 10/22 | <b>Presentation:</b> Plant intelligence<br>Jeff VanderMeer, <i>Annihilation</i> , ch. 5                               |
|         | W - 10/24 | Philip Dick "Piper in the Woods"<br>Stephen King, "Weeds"                                                             |
|         | F - 10/26 | Lewis Carroll, "The Garden of Live Flowers"<br>Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Rappaccini's Daughter"                           |
| Week 12 | M - 10/29 | <b>Presentation:</b> Animal intelligence<br>Terry Pratchett, <i>The Amazing Maurice</i> , ch. 1-3                     |
|         | W - 10/31 | Terry Pratchett, <i>The Amazing Maurice</i> , ch. 4-6                                                                 |
|         | F - 11/2  | Terry Pratchett, <i>The Amazing Maurice</i> , ch. 7-8                                                                 |
| Week 13 | M - 11/5  | Terry Pratchett, <i>The Amazing Maurice</i> , ch. 9-10                                                                |
|         | W - 11/7  | Terry Pratchett, <i>The Amazing Maurice</i> , ch. 11-12                                                               |
|         | F - 11/9  | <b>No in-class meeting – see eCampus</b><br>Daphne du Maurier, "The Birds"<br>Rachel Carson, "A Fable for Tomorrow"   |
| Week 14 | M - 11/12 | <b>Presentation:</b> Bioengineering<br>Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , vol. 1, letters from R. Walton and ch. 1-7 |
|         | W - 11/14 | Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , vol. 1, ch. 8-13                                                                  |

|            |            |                                                                                                                      |
|------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            | F - 11/16  | Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , vol. 1, ch. 14-15; vol. 2, 1-3                                                   |
|            | 11/19-23   | <b>Thanksgiving Recess - no class</b>                                                                                |
| Week 15    | M - 11/26  | Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , vol. 2, ch. 4-11<br><b>Due: rough draft of essay (3 pages)</b>                   |
|            | W - 11/28  | Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , vol. 2, ch. 12-15                                                                |
|            | F - 11/30  | Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , vol. 2, ch. 16-18                                                                |
| Week 16    | M - 12/3   | <b>Presentation:</b> Artificial intelligence<br>Howard Waldrop and Steve Utley, "Black as the Pit from Pole to Pole" |
|            | W - 12/5   | Octavia Butler, "Amnesty"<br>Brian Aldiss, "Supertoys Last All Summer Long"                                          |
| Final Exam | Th - 12/13 | <b>Final essay due by noon</b>                                                                                       |