



Science Fiction: Visions and Universes Macaulay Honors College General Syllabus (Online version is up-to-date)

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- (my office is at Macaulay, at 35 W 67 Street)
- I'm jugoretz on googletalk
- and jugoretz on skype (we'll do some "skype your professor" office hour sessions, if you like)
- And jugoretz on twitter, too

With all of that, I think the best way to get in touch with me is by email--I always answer emails in less than 24 hours. Sometimes much less.

ITF: TBA

One quick note. In this course, we use the abbreviation "SF," and never use the term "Sci-Fi." I'll explain that more clearly in class, but for now, don't use that term, unless you want to see your professor's angry face! 😡

Description:

This course examines the literary and cultural genre of science fiction. Science fiction's role as a cultural and counter-cultural force, the impact of fandom and fans, as well as its history and reception, will be seen through the lens of standard science fiction tropes and themes including:

- Time Travel
- Alien Invasion/Contact
- Biological/Genetic Manipulation
- Cyberpunk
- Alternative History
- Space Opera/Future War
- Post-Apocalypse
- Utopia/Dystopia

The course will also use science fiction as an example and testing ground for exploring separations between "literary" and "popular" (or "high" and "low") culture.

Learning objectives:

- To make students aware of the history and diversity of science fiction
- To examine the ways in which science fiction uniquely deals with vital literary and cultural themes.

- To examine the reasons for and nature of the separation between "literary" and "popular" fiction.
- To improve students' skills in literary and cultural analysis.

Course Materials (specific readings subject to change each year)

For each Module, you'll need to read three short stories (or two or four). The short stories will be linked on the reading assignments page (which is password protected. I'll give you the password in class). You'll also need to read a few novels, which you'll need to buy. They're all widely available in a number of formats and from a number of vendors. It doesn't matter which edition you use, so feel free to buy an older copy or a used copy. We definitely want you to own these books (and some of them you might own already!)

(Buy these!)

1. *The Martian* by Andy Weir
2. *Hominids* by Robert J. Sawyer
3. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* by Phillip K. Dick
4. *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card
5. *Kindred* by Octavia Butler
6. *The Female Man* by Joanna Russ
7. *Underground Airlines* by Ben Winters

We'll also be seeing at least two (maybe three or four) films. Those will be shown during class time in the screening room here at Macaulay, but you can feel free to also buy or rent them yourself to review them on your time.

1. *Terminator 2*
2. *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*
3. *Blade Runner* (maybe)
4. *Contact* (maybe)

Assignments

For each reading, you will need to post a brief response on the class site. These can be informal and personal, but will work as a way to get us started in discussion, so they should be posted before class time.

For each Module (except the first and last), you'll need to write a 3-5 page paper (see the Writing Assignments page). All papers must be submitted on time. NO late papers! (a total of six formal essays)

You'll also have a final project which will be more creative/exploratory/innovative. We'll talk much more about that later on.

You'll also need to attend every class and to participate (actively, productively, consistently) in all class discussions. Every time!

Grading Policies

Your grade will be based on three criteria, equally weighted (33.33333% for each criterion)

1. Your grades on your papers (and the final project) will be averaged together (weighted to reward improvement) for one grade. (33.33333%)
2. Your reading responses will count for one grade (33.33333%).
3. You will receive a grade for your participation in class discussions (quality and quantity). This will be the third grade (33.33333%).

Your final grade in the course will be the average of these three grades.

The alert student will have noticed the extra .00001%...that's the bonus point for good behavior (maintaining the integrity of the time-stream, upholding the prime directive, respecting the laws of physics, and so on.)

Plagiarism Statement

Do not plagiarize. EVER.

Disability/Accessibility

If you have any special needs or requirements to help you succeed in the course, please let me know (privately, if you prefer). I will do whatever is needed to make sure that all students have equal access and opportunity in this course.

Language and Concepts

Since this is a literature course, we will be reading about and discussing the full spectrum of the human experience. Some of that will be disturbing and uncomfortable (and some will be uplifting and beautiful). I will try to give you advance notice of concepts or language that might be difficult to deal with, but if at any time you find the course material to be troubling for you, let's discuss it! As a class we can help each other to understand and work with a wide range of ideas and issues. It's part of what literature is for!

Schedule/Topics

	<p>Module One “What if?” Welcome and Introductions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do we stand and where will we go? 	<p>Weeks 1-2</p>
	<p>Module Two “To Boldly Go” Space Exploration and Space Colonies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Cold Equations,” Tom Godwin • “Night’s Slow Poison” Ann Leckie • “Down and Out On Ellfive Prime” Dean Ing • <i>The Martian</i> Andy Weir (buy it!) 	<p>Weeks 3- 4</p>
	<p>Module Three “The Star Beast” Animals and Aliens...What is Human?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Jerry Was a Man” Robert Heinlein • “Dolphin’s Way” Gordon Dickson • “Davey Jones’ Ambassador” Raymond Gallun • <i>Hominids</i> Robert J. Sawyer (buy it!) 	<p>Weeks 5- 6</p>
	<p>Module Four “I, Robot” Artificial Intelligence, Artificial Life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Fondly Fahrenheit” Alfred Bester (radio play) • “The Life and Times of Multivac” Isaac Asimov • “<i>Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein</i>” (film) (in class!) • <i>Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep</i> Phillip K. Dick (buy it!) 	<p>Weeks 7-8</p>
	<p>Module Five “Childhood’s End” Coming to Faith and Coming of Age</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream” Harlan Ellison • “The Star” Arthur C. Clarke • “Weyr Search” Anne McCaffrey • <i>Ender’s Game</i> Orson Scott Card (buy it!) 	<p>Weeks 9- 10</p>

	<p>Module Six “The Past Through Tomorrow “Time Travel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Light of Other Days” Bob Shaw • “A Sound of Thunder” Ray Bradbury • <i>Terminator 2</i> (film) (in class!) • <i>Kindred</i> Octavia Butler (buy it!) 	<p>Weeks 11-12</p>
	<p>Module Seven “The New Romancers” The New Wave, Gender and Race</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Underground Airline</i> Ben Winters (buy it!) • “Nine Lives” Ursula LeGuin • <i>The Female Man</i> Joanna Russ (buy it!) • “The Women Men Don’t See” James Tiptree 	<p>Weeks 13-14</p>
	<p>Module Eight “Five-Year Mission” Overview and Envoi</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Projects 	<p>Week 15</p>