

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 2071G (001)
Speculative Fiction: Science Fiction
Winter 2024

Course Description

Science fiction is a speculative art form that interrogates and (re)imagines humanity's relationships with scientific discovery, social progress, technological advancement, the planet, the Other, and time. This course explores the weird, wonderful, and/or worrisome worlds of classic and contemporary science fiction in literature, television, film, and art. Students will encounter works from across history and the globe to see how texts from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to Jordan Peele's *NOPE* tackle questions about the body, personhood, exploration/colonization, exploitation, consumption, the climate, and the future.

Objectives:

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- recognize and identify science fiction's changing forms and social critiques in various historical, geographical, political, and cultural contexts;
- appropriately use and analyze genre-specific terminology, narrative devices, plot structures, themes, and motifs in science fiction novels, novellas, short stories, television, and film;
- conduct a close-reading of texts to bring attention to and comment on their important structural, rhetorical, historical, cultural, and critical elements;
- participate in thought-provoking, scholarly discussions about difficult topics with respect, nuance, and empathy;
- evaluate and incorporate well-researched secondary sources into a research essay to support an essay's argument;
- frame a research question, respond constructively to comments, and produce formal essays that have a clear, persuasive, and well-argued thesis supported by appropriate textual evidence.

Course Materials

All texts below are required:

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein; Or, the Modern Prometheus*. 3rd ed. Ed. D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf. Broadview Press, 2012. [NOTE: Any other edition of the 1818 version of the text is acceptable].

Campbell, Rebecca. *Arboreality*. Stelliform Press, 2022.

Bazterrica, Agustina. *Tender is the Flesh*. Translated by Sara Moses. Scribner, 2020.

Additional course readings available on OWL.

Films for this course are available through [Western Libraries' Audio-Cine Films](#) portal at no additional cost or subscription to students.

Class Content

Science fiction engages with difficult topics that some students may find disturbing, upsetting, and/or triggering. Topics and materials discussed in this class include (but are not limited to) mentions, depictions, scenes of, and conversations about: discrimination (racism, sexism, homo-/transphobia, classism, ableism); abuse and assault (physical, mental, emotional, sexual); self-

harm and/or suicide, death, and dying; substance use; animal cruelty/death; and cannibalism. Students are encouraged to take the necessary steps for their emotional safety, which may include asking about a particular text/topics ahead of time, leaving class during a discussion/lecture, or speaking with someone at Support Services. Students who choose to sit out on the discussion of a particular topic are responsible for the material they miss; please arrange to get notes from another student or arrange to meet with me individually.

Confronting these topics and themes requires all of us to work together to ensure our classroom is a space for open, critical, and civil exchange of ideas. Discussions can be critical, honest, and intellectual, while also being sensitive, respectful, and empathetic to the experiences and positions of others.

Methods of Evaluation

The grade for the course will be arrived at as follows:

Academic Integrity tutorial (certificate submission due January 19)	Pass/Fail
Attendance & Participation	5%
Reading Quizzes (best 5/8)	10%
Essay #1 (Due February 15 @ 11:55PM; 5 pages, double-spaced)	20%
Essay #2 (Due April 4 @ 11:55PM; 7-8 pages, double-spaced)	30%
Final Exam (Date TBD)	35%

NOTE: All course assignments will be handed in via the Assignments tab on OWL. Assignments should adhere to the 9th edition of the MLA Manual of Style.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

Participation

There are many ways students can participate in this course: asking clarifying questions, answering a question posed to the class, making meaningful connections between texts and/or ideas shared in class, being an active member in group activities, actively listening while others are speaking, emailing questions/ideas you might have before class, or arranging to chat during office hours. Participation informed by completing assigned readings and regular attendance to lectures enriches the course for everyone.

Reading Quizzes

Students will have the opportunity to complete 8 reading quizzes throughout the course. The best 5 scores will make up 10% of the final grade. All reading quizzes will be available on the course's OWL site.

Essay #1

Students will conduct a close reading of one of the course texts from the first half of the course. The essay must present a coherent argument, but does not require students to use secondary sources. Questions/prompts will be provided at the start of the course.

Essay #2

Students will write a research essay about two texts, one of which must be from the second half of the course. **Students are not allowed to write about the same text they chose to analyze in Essay 1.** Students must present a coherent, well-structured argument that defends a clear thesis statement. Additionally, students must cite at least **two peer-reviewed secondary**

sources to support their overall argument. Questions/prompts will be provided later in the course.

Final Exam

This course has a final exam in April during the university's exam period. Students must pass both term work and the final examination to pass the course. Students who fail the final examination (regardless of their term mark) automatically fail the course.

Students who miss an exam or require a last-minute extension for medical or compassionate reasons must notify their academic counsellor immediately and follow the appropriate procedure as outlined below.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Accommodation Policies

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Accommodation for Students on Medical Grounds:

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

The full policy is set out here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Religious Accommodation:

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

Academic Integrity Tutorial

All students are required to enroll in and complete the Centre for Teaching and Learning's Academic Integrity Tutorial. To access the tutorial, please use the link provided in the Resource tab in the course OWL site. Once the tutorial has been completed, you will receive a downloadable certificate. You must upload the certificate and submit it through the course Assignments tab in order to complete this assignment. The tutorial must be completed by Friday in the second week of term. This tutorial is mandatory in order for you to complete and pass the course. If you have completed the tutorial already for another course, you may upload the same certificate for this course; you do not need to repeat the tutorial.

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced gender-based or sexual violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, [here](#). To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support & Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Timetable

Tues. Jan. 9	Course & Syllabus Overview
Thurs. Jan. 11	Charles Yu, “The Future of Work: Placebo”
Tues. Jan. 16	Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i>
Thurs. Jan. 18	Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i>
Tues. Jan. 23	Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i>
Thurs. Jan. 25	Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i>
Tues. Jan. 30	Pat Murphy, “His Vegetable Wife”
Thurs. Feb. 1	Octavia E. Butler, “Bloodchild”
Tues. Feb. 6	Greg Egan, “Dream Factory”
Thurs. Feb. 8	Ted Chiang, “Story of Your Life” Damon Knight, “To Serve Man”
Tues. Feb. 13	Drew Hayden Taylor, “Superdisappointed”
Thurs. Feb. 15	Isaac Asimov, “Runaround” Essay #1 Due
Tues. Feb. 20	READING WEEK – NO CLASS
Thurs. Feb. 22	READING WEEK – NO CLASS

Tues. Feb. 27	Ursula K. Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"
Thurs. Feb. 29	Stanley G. Weinbaum, "A Martian Odyssey" Alette de Bodard, "Immersion"
Tues. Mar. 5	Mamoru Oshii, <i>Ghost in the Shell</i>
Thurs. Mar. 7	Ray Bradbury, "A Sound of Thunder"
Tues. Mar. 12	Rebecca Campbell, <i>Arboreality</i>
Thurs. Mar. 14	Campbell, <i>Arboreality</i>
Tues. Mar. 19	Jordan Peele, <i>NOPE</i>
Thurs. Mar. 21	Arthur C. Clarke, "History Lesson"
Tues. Mar. 26	Agustina Bazterrica, <i>Tender is the Flesh</i>
Thurs. Mar. 28	Bazterrica, <i>Tender is the Flesh</i>
Tues. Apr. 2	Bazterrica, <i>Tender is the Flesh</i>
	Bazterrica, <i>Tender is the Flesh</i>
Thurs. Apr. 4	Exam Review Essay #2 Due
Apr. TBD	Final Exam