

**Instructor:**

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**Texts:**

Robert Silverberg, editor, *The Science Fiction Hall of Fame, Volume One, 1929-1964* (Orb Books, 2005) ISBN-13: 978-0765305374

H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (Reprint, Dover Thrift Editions)  
ISBN-13: 978-0486284729

David Brin, *The River of Time* (Reprint, Createspace, 2014)  
ISBN-13: 978-1480234253

Ted Chiang, *Exhalation* (2019)  
ISBN-10: 1101947888

**Course Description:**

This course examines the genre of science fiction (as well as other genres that are often grouped together under the term speculative fiction). Science fiction is much more broad than spaceships and time travel or dragons and unicorns. Science fiction is different from other genres in its emphasis on ideas and examining what it means to be human within the context of the scientific worldview. We will study key texts and key ideas, striving to understand the larger questions of how to define science fiction, how the scope of the genre has changed over time, and what are the boundaries of the genre. The class is oriented around reading and writing.

**Grading Policies:**

Grades will be determined on the following basis:

Essays	70%
Term Paper	30%

Grades:    A: 90 - 100%    B: 80 - 89%    C: 70 - 79%    D: 60 - 69%    E: 0 - 59%  
(Grades at the high or low ends of these ranges will earn plus and minus grades.)

**Academic Dishonesty:**

As specified in PPM 6-22 IV D, cheating and plagiarism violate the Student Code. Plagiarism is “the unacknowledged (uncited) use of any other person’s or group’s ideas or work.” Students found guilty of cheating or plagiarism are subject to failure of a specific assignment, or, in more serious cases, failure of the entire course.

**Core Beliefs:**

According to PPM 6-22 IV, students are to “[d]etermine, before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with a student's core beliefs. If there is such a conflict, the student should consider dropping the class. A student who finds this solution impracticable may request a resolution from the instructor. This policy does not oblige the instructor to grant the request, except in those cases when a denial would be arbitrary and capricious or illegal. This request must be made to the instructor in writing and the student must deliver a copy of the request to the office of the department head. The student's request must articulate the burden the requirement would place on the student's beliefs.”

**Disability Accommodation:**

PPM 3-34 notes: “When students seek accommodation in a regularly scheduled course, they have the responsibility to make such requests at the Center for Students with Disabilities before the beginning of the quarter [semester] in which the accommodation is being requested. When a student fails to make such arrangements, interim accommodations can be made by the instructor, pending the determination of the request for a permanent accommodation.”

**Student Expectations for Fall 2020 Courses:**

See this [document](#) for campus policies in light on the pandemic.

**Digital Addendum for Campus Course Policies:**

See this [document](#) for other campus course policies.

**Schedule:**

Due Date	Readings/Worksheet
August 30	<p>Watch Youtube video: "They're Made Out of Meat" <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tScAyNaRdQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tScAyNaRdQ</a></p> <p>Read Gale E. Christianson, "Kepler's Somnium: Science Fiction and the Renaissance Scientist," available online at &lt;<a href="http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/8/christianson8art.htm">http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/8/christianson8art.htm</a>&gt;</p> <p>Terry Bisson wrote a dialogue-only short story in 1991 called "They're Made Out of Meat," which was made into an award-winning short video. Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) was an important mathematician and astronomer who figured out the mathematical laws of planetary motion. This corrected the serious mathematical flaws in Copernicus's heliocentric theory of the solar system and laid the foundation for the work on gravity and motion by Isaac Newton. He also wrote one of the first works that can be considered science fiction. A question to ponder: what is science fiction?</p> <p>I should point out that referring to Kepler's work as science fiction is anachronistic in that the term science fiction was not coined until 1929. Before that date such stories were often called fantasy, fantastical, or scientific romances (the term romance has changed over time and this use of the word refers to a literary genre).</p> <p>While this class is primarily about science fiction, that genre exists within a larger genre of speculative fiction. Within that umbrella are the genres of science fiction, fantasy, and horror. These three genres are often all read by the same group of fans. In a pithy summary, science fiction is what we think might happen in the future, fantasy is what can never happen, and horror is what we fear will happen.</p> <p>Essay: One page contrasting the two approaches to science fiction portrayed in the work of Kepler four centuries ago and the contemporary short video (based on a short story).</p>

<p>September 6</p>	<p>Read - Read first three chapters of Jules Verne's <i>From the Earth to the Moon</i> - available online at <a href="http://www.online-literature.com/verne/earth_to_moon/">http://www.online-literature.com/verne/earth_to_moon/</a></p> <p>Read <i>Science Fiction Hall of Fame</i>, Isaac Asimov, "Nightfall" (1941).</p> <p>Jules Verne (1828-1905) was a French science fiction writer who was famous for the detailed care he put into his extrapolations. <i>From the Earth to the Moon</i> was his imaginative effort to figure out how to send people to the Moon. He put such care into his thinking that he picked the ideal spot for such a cannon and chose Cape Canaveral in Florida, which is where NASA later located its launch facilities. His travellers do not land on the moon, but loop around it and return to Earth.</p> <p>Isaac Asimov (1920-1992) was a famous science fiction writer and prolific writer of books on science and other non-fiction books. His "Nightfall," published when he was just 21, has been lauded as the best science fiction story ever written. That honor was based on a vote of his peers for the period 1929-1964, an effort which led to the contents of one of your texts, <i>The Science Fiction Hall of Fame</i>.</p> <p>Essay: One page on your reaction to these two works. This reaction may be from the perspective of literary values or your own personal tastes.</p>
<p>September 13</p>	<p>Read H. G. Wells, <i>The Time Machine</i> (1895)</p> <p>H.G. Wells (1866-1946) basically invented the time travel story, alien invasion story, invisible person story, biological horror story, and space travel story in a seven-year period. This does not mean that he was the first, but his examples essentially established these sub-genres to science fiction.</p> <p>Essay: One page contrasting this novel with other examples of time travel that you have read or watched.</p>

<p>September 20</p>	<p>Read <i>Science Fiction Hall of Fame</i>, Lewis Padgett, “Mimsy Were the Borogoves” (1943)</p> <p>Read <i>Science Fiction Hall of Fame</i>, Frederic Brown, “Arena” (1944)</p> <p>Read Robert A. Heinlein, “The Green Hills of Earth,” (1947) (found at 1947RobertA.HeinleinGreenHillsOfEarth.pdf on Canvas)</p> <p>Lewis Padgett was a pseudonym for writers Henry Kuttner and C. L. Moore, who were spouses. They also published under their own names, though C. L. Moore chose to publish under her initials to avoid possible problems at her day job.</p> <p>Robert A. Heinlein (1907-1988) was a giant among science fiction writers in the mid-twentieth century. This story was published in 1947 in the <i>Saturday Evening Post</i>, one of the prestigious “slick” magazines, rather than the pulp magazines where most science fiction was published.</p> <p>Science fiction has often been characterized as the genre that relied on evoking a “sense of wonder,” just as thrillers thrill you and horror stories are supposed to horrify or scare you.</p> <p>Essay: One page contrasting these three stories. Do each story have a sense of wonder?</p>
<p>September 27</p>	<p>Read Murray Leinster, “A Logic Named Joe” (1946) (Available online at <a href="http://www.baen.com/chapters/W200506/0743499107_2.htm">http://www.baen.com/chapters/W200506/0743499107_2.htm</a>.)</p> <p>Read “Murray Leinster and ‘A Logic Named Joe’,” (This is located on pages 54-67 of the file named 1946FerroSwedinAnalysisALogicNamedJoe.pdf on Canvas).</p> <p>Essay: Do you agree with the evaluation of “A Logic Named Joe” by the two scholars. Is it fair to evaluate a science fiction story purely on the basis of how well the author predicted the future? Should we only evaluate the story based on its literary qualities?</p>

<p>October 4</p>	<p>Read <i>Science Fiction Hall of Fame</i>, Daniel Keyes, “Flowers for Algernon” (1959)</p> <p>Read Orson Scott Card, “Ender’s Game” (<i>Analog</i>, 1977) - the original short story, available at <a href="http://www.hatrack.com/osc/stories/enders-game.shtml">http://www.hatrack.com/osc/stories/enders-game.shtml</a></p> <p>Daniel Keyes (1927-2014) was not a very prolific writer, but his “Flowers for Algernon” was so successful that he later turned it into a novel and a play. A movie was also made based on the story. An editor for a science fiction magazine wanted Daniel Keyes to change the ending of his story so that Charlie retained his advanced intelligence. Keyes refused and took the story to another magazine.</p> <p>Orson Scott Card (1951-) has been a prolific writer for the past four decades. His <i>Ender’s Game</i> series won numerous awards and the novel has sold millions of copies. His publisher has also given away many copies of the novel in an effort to use the novel as a “gateway drug” to draw more readers into speculative fiction.</p> <p>Essay: Do you think that the editor or Keyes was right? You might also write about the role of popularity in science fiction.</p>
<p>October 11</p>	<p>Read Ted Chiang, “The Lifecycle of Software Objects” (2010), found in Ted Chaing, <i>Exhalation</i> text.</p> <p>Ted Chiang (1967) is an Asian-American writer who only works in shorter forms of science fiction. He writes less than one story a year and that story is usually nominated for numerous awards.</p> <p>Essay: Do you think something like this story might happen in the future? Why or why not?</p>

<p>October 18</p>	<p>Read Octavia Butler, “Bloodchild” (1984) (found at 1984OctaviaButlerBloodchild.pdf on Canvas)</p> <p>Read Kate Wilhelm, “Naming the Flowers,” <i>Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction</i> (Feb. 1993) (found at 1993KateWilhelmNamingTheFlowers.pdf on Canvas)</p> <p>Octavia Bulter (1947-2006) was a noted African-American science writer who wrote mainly novels and rarely wrote short fiction. This 1984 story often disturbs my students.</p> <p>Kate Wilhelm (1928-2018) was a Hugo Award-winning author who was very influential with the annual Clarion Workshop that she co-founded to foster new science fiction writers.</p> <p>Essay: While science fiction in the past was predominantly written by men, there were also important writers who were women. Women have also become more prominent in the present and have come to dominate in the young adult fantasy genre. In these two stories, how has the female perspective of the authors been effectively used?</p>
<p>October 25</p>	<p>Watch a science fiction movie of your own choice.</p> <p>Essay: Briefly describe the movie you watched, explain your reaction to the movie, and explain how you think this movie fits within the history of science fiction.</p>
<p>November 1</p>	<p>Read David Brin, “The Heresy of Science Fiction,” (found at 0000DavidBrin_TheHeresyOfScienceFiction.pdf on Canvas)</p> <p>Read “The Crystal Spheres,” “Senses Three and Six,” and “The River of Time” from David Brin, <i>River of Time</i> (reprint 2014).</p> <p>David Brin (1950-) is an astrophysicist and award-winning science fiction writer. He is considered one of the top “hard” science fiction writers in the field.</p> <p>Essay: In his essay, “The Heresy of Science Fiction,” David Brin describes his perspective on what science fiction is and what role the genre plays in society. Having read three of his short stories, how does Brin’s own work fit within his own perspective of the genre?</p>

November 8	<p>Read <i>Science Fiction Hall of Fame</i>, Arthur C. Clarke, “The Nine Billion Names of God” (1953)</p> <p>Read Eric James Stone, “That Leviathan, Whom Thou Hast Made” (2010) [Obtain on Amazon Kindle.]</p> <p>Essay: Contrast the approach to religion in these two stories.</p>
November 15	<p>Read excerpt from Eric G. Swedin, <i>When Angels Wept</i> (2010), (found at 2010EricSwedinWhenAngelsWeptChapterConclusion.pdf on Canvas)</p> <p>This novel, written in form the form of a history book from an alternate timeline, won the 2010 Sidewise Award in Alternate History.</p> <p>Essay: For children of the Cold War, the possibility of nuclear war was an ever-present threat. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 was one of the times that the world came closest to such a war. What are your thoughts on nuclear war?</p>
November 22	<p>Read Rebecca Roanhorse, “Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience™” (2017), available online at <a href="https://www.apex-magazine.com/welcome-to-your-authentic-indian-experience/">https://www.apex-magazine.com/welcome-to-your-authentic-indian-experience/</a></p> <p>Read an interview of Rebecca Roanhorse at <a href="https://locusmag.com/2018/09/rebecca-roanhorse-from-legend-to-fantasy/">https://locusmag.com/2018/09/rebecca-roanhorse-from-legend-to-fantasy/</a></p> <p>Rebecca Roanhorse (1971-) is a Native American and African American science fiction writer. This story won multiple awards.</p> <p>One of the functions of the science fiction genre is examining what it means to be human. While all fiction does this to a degree, the perspective of science fiction recognizes that intelligence might be found elsewhere, in aliens or computers or virtual reality.</p> <p>Essay: How has the science fiction genre been used to examine issues of personal and ethnic identity?</p>
November 29	Thanksgiving (no readings or essay)

December 6	<p>A 10-page, double-spaced term paper is due that reflects autobiographically about your personal relationship with the genre of science fiction. You can also consider the other genres of speculative fiction (fantasy, horror, and similar flavors of young adult and middle grade fare). When did you become aware of science fiction or related genres and began to interact with it both as a written form and in media? How have you intellectually interacted with science fiction? How have your views changed over time? Instead of this paper, you may write a science fiction short story instead.</p> <p>You may turn in the essay or short story early and I will respond to it with a week, which will allow you to turn in a new version of the work that you want to be graded.</p>
	No final exam