

# Introduction to Science Fiction

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Mondays and Thursdays, 10:20–11:40 a.m., in Frelinghuysen A1  
Professor Andrew Goldstone ([andrew.goldstone@rutgers.edu](mailto:andrew.goldstone@rutgers.edu)), Murray 019  
Office hours: Wednesdays, 12:00–1:00 p.m., and by appointment  
[andrewgoldstone.com/sf23](http://andrewgoldstone.com/sf23)

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces the academic study of science fiction, following the history of the genre from its beginnings in the late 1800s to the present. Though very familiar especially in its contemporary TV and film forms, science fiction has been many things over its history: a kind of prophecy, a way of envisioning alternatives to the present, a form of escapist fantasy, a meditation on technology, a challenge to the authority of science or of prestige literature. We will pay particular attention to science fiction's changing cultural position, from its genesis in cheap American pulp-fiction magazines, to attempts to elevate it to serious literary status, to its complex position today as simultaneously a niche subculture and a blockbuster cross-media category. Students will learn how to analyze a genre both in its own terms and in terms of social and historical developments.

## LEARNING GOALS

1. Develop proficiency in using detailed analysis to support the interpretation of literary texts through case studies in science fiction in terms of its forms, themes, and sociocultural contexts.
2. Become familiar with the historical approach to cultural study through a broad survey of English-language science fiction literature since 1890.
3. Understand central problems in the study of popular genre, including formula and innovation, cultural status, the role of the publishing industry, and the agency of individual readers.

This course also satisfies the Arts and Humanities (AHp) Core Curriculum goal: Analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies.

## BOOKS TO BUY

The course texts are available at Barnes & Noble, or order elsewhere (search using the ISBNs below). Other printed editions (not e-books) are usually fine, but please check with me.

Asimov, Isaac. *Foundation*. 1951. New York: Bantam, 1991. ISBN: 9780553293357.

Evans, Arthur B., et al., eds. *The Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2010. ISBN: 9780819569554.

Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Left Hand of Darkness*. New York: Ace, 1969. ISBN: 9780441478125.

VanderMeer, Jeff. *Annihilation*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014. ISBN: 9780374104092.

## SCHEDULE

Readings are to be completed by the day they are listed under and brought to class in print form. Many of the readings are in Evans et al., *The Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction* (hereafter cited as *WASF*); see below for the books to buy for the course. The remaining texts will be made available via Canvas.

### THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7.

- Introduction.

### MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11.

- Wells, "The Star," in *WASF*, 39–49.
- Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, "Sultana's Dream."

### (TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12.)

- Last day to drop the course without a "W."

### THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14.

- Hamilton, "The Man Who Evolved," in *WASF*, 79–95.
- Stone, "The Conquest of Gola," in *WASF*, 96–109.
- Explore the scan of *Wonder Stories* 2, no. 11 (Canvas).
  - Special in-class guest: an actual pulp magazine.

### MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18.

- Lovecraft, "The Colour Out of Space."
- Suvin, "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre."

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21.

- Moore, "Shamblau," in *WASF*, 111-35.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25.

- Asimov, "Reason," in *WASF*, 161-76.
- Asimov, *Foundation*, pts. 1-3.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28.

- Asimov, *Foundation*, complete.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 2.

- Sturgeon, "Thunder and Roses," in *WASF*, 190-210.
- Campbell, "Power."
- Luckhurst, *Science Fiction*, 66-75.
- Special in-class guest: another pulp.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5.

- Rieder, *Science Fiction and the Mass Cultural Genre System*, 13-31.
- Bradbury, "There Will Come Soft Rains," in *WASF*, 235-40.

(FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6.)

- Paper 1 exercise due.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 9.

- Knight, "To Serve Man."
- Bester, "Fondly Fahrenheit," in *WASF*, 284-302.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12.

- Ellison, introduction to *Dangerous Visions*.
- Ellison, "'Repent, Harlequin!' Said the Ticktockman," in *WASF*, 367-78.
- Dick, "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale," in *WASF*, 386-404.

(FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13. LUCKY.)

- Paper 1 due.

## MONDAY, OCTOBER 16.

- Ballard, "The Cage of Sand," in *WASF*, 338–58.
- Ballard, "Which Way To Inner Space?" and Ballard, "Fictions of Every Kind."

## THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19.

- Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, chaps. 1–7.

## MONDAY, OCTOBER 23.

- Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, chaps. 1–14.
- Le Guin, "Is Gender Necessary?"

## THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26.

- Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, complete.

## MONDAY, OCTOBER 30.

- Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, continued.
- Jameson, "World Reduction in Le Guin."

## THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2.

- Delany, "Aye, and Gomorrah . . .," in *WASF*, 406–14.
- Delany, *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw*, 1–15.

## MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6.

- Russ, "When It Changed," in *WASF*, 508–15.
- Tiptree, "And I Awoke and Found Me Here on the Cold Hill's Side," in *WASF*, 516–24.
- Smith, "Women in Science Fiction: A Symposium," 17–22, 73–79.

## THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9.

- Lem, "The Seventh Voyage," in *WASF*, 491–506. The translation is by Michael Kandel, in Lem, *The Star Diaries* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1976).
- Lem, "How Microx and Gigant Made the Universe Expand."

## MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13.

- Gibson, "Burning Chrome," in *WASF*, 548–65.
- Gibson, "Time Machine Cuba."

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16.

- Butler, "Speech Sounds," in *WASF*, 567–79.
- Butler, "Bloodchild."
- Butler, "Positive Obsession."
- Canavan, *Octavia E. Butler*, 76–80, 85–92.

(FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17.)

- Paper 2 preparatory work due.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20.

- Butler, continued.
- Kolbe, "Darmok."

(TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 22. THURSDAY CLASSES TODAY. CLASS TO BE RESCHEDULED.)

(THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23. THANKSGIVING RECESS.)

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27.

- VanderMeer, *Annihilation*, 3–67.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30.

- VanderMeer, *Annihilation*, 3–119.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 4.

- VanderMeer, *Annihilation*, complete.
- Contemplate VanderMeer's yard: [www.jeffvandermeer.com/yard](http://www.jeffvandermeer.com/yard).
- Paper 2 due (extended deadline).

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7.

- Chiang, "Exhalation," in *WASF*, 742–56.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 11.

- Course conclusion.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 8 A.M.–11 A.M.

- Final exam.

## GRADING

The final grade will be calculated as follows:

$$\text{grade} = 0.1(\text{participation}) + 0.15(\text{exercises}) \\ + 0.25(\text{paper 1}) + 0.25(\text{paper 2}) + 0.25(\text{exam})$$

Each grade is given on the four point scale as specified in the Undergraduate Catalog. In converting the final numerical score to a letter, the equivalents in the Catalog are used as follows:

$3.5 < \text{grade} \leq 4.0$	A
$3.0 < \text{grade} \leq 3.5$	B+
$2.5 < \text{grade} \leq 3.0$	B
$2.0 < \text{grade} \leq 2.5$	C+
$1.0 < \text{grade} \leq 2.0$	C
$0.5 < \text{grade} \leq 1.0$	D
$\text{grade} \leq 0.5$	F

The final grade will be based on a numerical score but is subject to my discretion. Unsatisfactory work in all areas of the course will result in an F even if the numerical score corresponds to a passing grade. It is not possible to pass the course without turning in both papers.

## PARTICIPATION

Attendance and active, thoughtful participation in discussion are required. Lateness, lack of preparation (including coming to class without the assigned text in printed form), and disruptive behavior affect the participation mark.

If you miss three classes without excuse, the *maximum* participation mark you can receive is 3.0 out of 4.0; if you miss four, 2.0. Missing more than four meetings without an excuse will normally result in a failing grade for the course.

If you fall ill or miss class for a family emergency, please contact me as soon as possible; you can make up for an excused absence.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students and instructors have a duty to each other and to our community to abide by norms of academic honesty and responsibility. To present something as your own original writing when it is not is plagiarism. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating are serious violations of trust. For the purposes of this course, I will also consider any use of so-called “AI” tools for generating text for assignments as a violation of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will have severe consequences, in accordance with the University Policy on Academic Integrity and the Code of Student

Conduct. For details about the University's academic integrity policies, please see [academicintegrity.rutgers.edu](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu).

#### STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

All reasonable accommodation will be given to students with disabilities. Students who may require accommodation should contact the Office of Disability Services ([ods.rutgers.edu](http://ods.rutgers.edu); 848-445-6800) and speak with me at the start of the semester.

#### READINGS (AND ONE TV EPISODE) AVAILABLE VIA CANVAS

- Ballard, J. G. *A User's Guide to the Millennium: Essays and Reviews*. London: HarperCollins, 1996.
- . "Fictions of Every Kind." In *A User's Guide to the Millennium: Essays and Reviews*, 205–7.
- . "Which Way To Inner Space?" In *A User's Guide to the Millennium: Essays and Reviews*, 195–98.
- Butler, Octavia E. "Bloodchild." In *Bloodchild and Other Stories*, 1–30.
- . *Bloodchild and Other Stories*. 2nd ed. New York: Seven Stories, 2005. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/lib/rutgers-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1790515>.
- . "Positive Obsession." In *Bloodchild and Other Stories*, 123–35.
- Campbell, John W. "Power." *Astounding Science-Fiction* 21, no. 6 (August 1938): 111. <http://www.pulpmags.org>.
- Canavan, Gerry. *Octavia E. Butler*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/lib/rutgers-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4792718>.
- Delany, Samuel R. *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2009. <http://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/lib/rutgers-ebooks/detail.action?docID=776841>.
- Ellison, Harlan. Introduction to *Dangerous Visions*. New York: Doubleday, 1967. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/inu.30000011372871>.
- Gibson, William. *Distrust That Particular Flavor*. New York: Putnam, 2012.
- . "Time Machine Cuba." In *Distrust That Particular Flavor*, 201–9.
- Hamilton, Edmond. "The Man Who Evolved." *Wonder Stories* 2, no. 11 (April 1931): 1266–78. [http://www.pulpmags.org/PDFs/WS\\_1931\\_04.pdf](http://www.pulpmags.org/PDFs/WS_1931_04.pdf).
- Jameson, Fredric. "World Reduction in Le Guin." In *Archaeologies of the Future*, 267–80. London: Verso, 2005.
- Knight, Damon. "To Serve Man." *Galaxy* 1, no. 2 (November 1950): 91–97. <https://archive.org/details/galaxymagazine-1950-11>.
- Kolbe, Winrich, dir. "Darmok." *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Aired September 30, 1991.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. "Is Gender Necessary?" In *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*, edited by Susan Wood, 161–69. New York: Putnam, 1979.
- Lem, Stanisław. "How Microx and Gigant Made the Universe Expand." In *Mortal Engines*, translated by Michael Kandel, 48–54. San Diego: Harvest, 1992.
- Lovecraft, H. P. "The Colour Out of Space." In *Tales*, edited by Peter Straub, 340–69. New York: Library of America, 2005.
- Luckhurst, Roger. *Science Fiction*. Cambridge: Polity, 2005.

- Rieder, John. *Science Fiction and the Mass Cultural Genre System*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2017. <https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/book/57027>.
- Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain. "Sultana's Dream." In *"Sultana's Dream: A Feminist Utopia" and Selections from The Secluded Ones*. New York: Feminist Press, 1988. <https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/book/39463>.
- Smith, Jeffrey D., ed. "Women in Science Fiction: A Symposium." *Khatru*, nos. 3–4 (November 1975). <http://www.fanac.org/fanzines/Khatru/Khatru03.pdf>.
- Suvin, Darko. "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre." *College English* 34, no. 3 (December 1972): 372–82. <https://www.jstor-org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/stable/375141>.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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