

**English 257: Science Fiction (Section 1, CRN 17247)****Spring Session, 2014- MWF from 10:30-11:20 in Room 320, Clark Hall****Instructor: Dibyadyuti Roy****Email: droy2@mix.wvu.edu****Phone: 304-293-3107 (Messages Only)****Office: Room 308, Colson Hall/  
Center for Literary Computing, G20  
Colson Hall****Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday  
(11:30-12:30) and by appointment****Course Description**

Should we look at Science Fiction and Fantasy as literature, high art, kitsch, or merely the fantastical ruminations of deluded minds?

Such questions have been at the forefront of science fiction and fantasy studies since its very inception. Recently our understanding of science fiction or 'SF' as it is popularly known amongst the academic and scholarly community, has been expanded to include the realm of "speculative fiction", which broadens our traditional understanding of this expression. In this course we will engage with cultural tracts, some of which can be understood distinctly as either science fiction/speculative fiction/fantasy, while some will reside in the 'borderlands', blurring the defining line between these fictional spaces. One of our key goals in this course would be to discuss and decipher what our science fiction and fantasies say

about us; our ideas, our beliefs and our hopes for the future. Through looking at unforeseen events such as disasters, apocalypses, artificial life or alien encounters we will try to fathom how such fictional topoi often become allegorical portals—into issues of Nature, gender, race, class, colonialism and human ambitions; enabling us to boldly go where no reader has ever gone before.

**Required Primary Texts Available at the WVU Bookstore**

All books are available at the WVU book store. Except the first book, which is an anthology, any edition of the other three texts is acceptable.

- ❖ Heather Masri, *Science Fiction Stories and Contexts*, Bedford/St.Martin's
- ❖ Octavia Butler, *Dawn*
- ❖ J.K Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*
- ❖ Salman Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*



**Required Primary Texts NOT Available at the WVU Bookstore**

You can access visual material in the following ways: purchase at Amazon or iTunes (used or new or using instant video services), rent from Red Box, Netflix, etc., or view at WVU library via Course Reserve. Many of the television episodes are also available free via the internet (hulu.com or fancast.com, for example). If you choose to use Course Reserve, please note that the material must be used in the library and another member of the class could be using the materials.

Additional reading materials will be available on **WVU eCampus** and available visual material will be on reserve at the downtown library media center. **You are responsible for printing out the additional texts from WVU eCampus and for having the discussed text/s with you in class.** To access WVU eCampus, go to <https://ecampus.wvu.edu> and log on with your MyID user name and password. If you have problems with logging on, contact the Office of Information Technology (293-4444 x 3 or [oihelp@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:oihelp@mail.wvu.edu)).

**Coursework Requirements:**

This is a demanding course, so you must be prepared by reading the assigned texts or viewing the films **before** the date they are due. If I find out in the course of class that any student or students have not done the work assigned for that day, they will be given an absence for the day, **regardless of how much time you have spent in class that day.** This class will not be successful **unless everyone engages with the material and participates.** The grades for the course will breakdown as follows:

❖	Class Participation and Discussion Questions (due every class) :	15%
❖	Unscheduled Quizzes:	15%
❖	Critical Response-Paper and Proposal:	20%
❖	Mid-Term Exam:	20%
❖	Final Exam:	30%

-I will expect you to bring to each class **at least three discussion** questions (preferably printed) related to the readings for the day, which I shall collect at the **beginning of class.** These questions should be well thought **substantive reflections on the text**, which provide evidence to me of your engagement with the course. They will form an important part of our class discussions. **Failure to submit a question or questions that suggest you have not read the text thoroughly (yes/no question, questions with one word answers) will not receive any credit.**

-I will drop your lowest quiz grade; missed quizzes, for any reason, cannot be made up. There will be no extra credit offered in this class.

-For the **critical response**, I expect you to formulate a thesis driven argument about two texts (preferably across two different periods/genres). You will initially write a proposal/abstract of 250-300 words about your chosen topic and submit it for my approval. Once you receive my approval you will compose a **6-8 page paper**, using a few academic secondary sources to support your claims. They should be formatted with one-inch margins, double spacing, and Times New Roman, 12-point font. A proper heading should include your name, the date, and the course. You are welcome to discuss your ideas with me before completing this assignment.

-You must take both the mid-term and final exam in order to pass the class.

-I will give you sample questions for the midterm exam and final exam at both review sessions. Both tests will be essay responses and objective questions aimed at interpretation and application from the texts we read in class.

Grades will breakdown as follows:

<b>A+</b> 98-100	<b>B+</b> 87-89	<b>C+</b> 77-79	<b>D+</b> 67-69
<b>A</b> 94-97	<b>B</b> 84-86	<b>C</b> 74-76	<b>D</b> 64-66
<b>A-</b> 90-93	<b>B-</b> 80-83	<b>C-</b> 70-73	<b>D-</b> 60-63



### Attendance:

This is a reading/discussion-based course; therefore you **must be present** in order to be successful. Furthermore, this course will only be successful with **your** input; each one of my students has valuable life experiences, thoughtful contributions, and a unique perspective. All of you can, and need to, contribute positively to make this class as fruitful as I know it can be. This means that you must attend class.

You will be given **four** penalty-free absences for the semester. In order to escape penalty, you **must** contact me in advance about the absence. More than that will compromise your final grade (it will be lowered by a full letter grade every time you miss the class after you use the four allowed absences).

**At seven absences you will receive a failing grade in the course.**

Lateness occurs for everyone, but do not make it a habit or I will penalize you.

### Class Participation Grading:

#### A to A-

- Student contributes to class every day or almost every day. Contributions are thoughtful and relevant, evidencing that the student has carefully read the assigned material and formed observations or questions about it.
- Student takes an active role in small group discussions, contributing suggestions and helping to keep the group focused (student is praised by classmates for these actions).
- Student listens to what classmates say and responds to the contributions of others, noting how his or her own observations differ or support those preceding. Student takes care not to overwhelm class discussions with more than three or four contributions per class.

#### B+ to B-

- Student makes contributions on  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of class meeting days. Again, contributions are relevant to discussion and show that student has read the assigned material.

- Student listens to other, though his or her comments may not always follow those proceeding.
- Student contributes to small group discussion and gets some recognition from classmates for this.

**C+ to C-**

- Student contributes occasionally, but less than ½ of class meeting days.
- Contributions are more “ad hoc” than based on reading, or they might be off topic.
- Student is quiet in small group discussions, letting others do most of the work.

**D**

- Student shows up, but almost never contributes.
- Student is visibly disengaged from class discussion.
- Student is silent or unhelpful in small group discussion.

**F**

- The same characteristics as the D range student, but with the maximum of absences.
- OR Student behaves in ways that distract or deliberately offend classmates, including interrupting or insulting others, yelling, leaving in the middle of class, etc

**Classroom ethics:**

I expect all students to treat each other with respect, regardless of any differences we may have, whether personal or in the course of class discussions. **We will be discussing personal subjects, such as identity, beliefs, sexuality, etc., and I expect everyone to be respectful of other’s feelings, but also mature enough, and excited, to discuss things openly for the benefit of everyone.** Although uncomfortable subjects may arise, I will always treat them with respect and understanding, which I expect from each student as well. Cultural texts are open to a wide variety of interpretations and there is no “right” or “wrong” opinion on a certain work. Therefore you are strongly encouraged to voice your opinion in the class.

**Computers and Cell Phones:**

We will sometimes be using technology to enhance our class activities, but I need to rely on your responsible use of that technology. Similarly, the discussion of readings, peer reviews of papers, and other workshop activities require your full attention, so please turn off your cell phones, put them out of sight, and refrain from texting in class. If the class is meeting in a computer classroom, please be sure you are using the computers only as instructed for that day’s class session (and not for Facebook or to check e-mail, etc.) It’s good professional behavior that also shows your respect for each other and the work we’re trying to do. If you are ever using technology in a way that is distracting or unrelated to the work of the class, you will be asked to put away the device or log off the computer. **If you have to be asked more than once, you will be counted as absent for that day, and you may even be asked to leave.** If there is an unusual circumstance where you must leave your phone on, please just speak to me privately *before* class.



No kidding ! You really broke all  
the Three Laws of Robotics ?

**Accommodation:**

If you have a documented learning disability, a serious hearing or vision problem, or any other special need that might affect your performance and participation in class, please be sure to let me know. Also, please be aware of the support services available to you through Disability Services in room G30 of the Mountainlair. Their phone number is: (304)-293-6700, and their email is: [access2@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:access2@mail.wvu.edu) .

**Writing Center:**

The WVU Writing Center is another resource that can not only help you to brush up on your basic skills, but also help support you in all aspects of the writing process. It is located in G02 Colson Hall (the lower level). This is a free resource for students! You can meet with a tutor to go over the goals of any assignment or just to get help brainstorming the best topic. Call 304-293-5788 to schedule an appointment or stop by to see if a tutor is available. Check online at: [http://english.wvu.edu/centers\\_and\\_projects/wcenter](http://english.wvu.edu/centers_and_projects/wcenter).

**University Counseling Services:** If things seem tough for you, or if you'd just like someone to talk to (about being homesick, or feeling depressed, or getting overwhelmed by all the obligations in your life, etc.), be sure to check out the Carruth Center for Counseling and Psychological Services on the third floor of the Student Services Building, right next door to the Mountainlair. Their hours are Monday-Friday: 8:15AM-4:45PM. Or you can call their emergency hotline after hours at (304)-293-4431. Their website is: <http://wvu.edu/ccpps>.

**Office Hours:** Office hours are a vital component of this course, because they provide me with an opportunity to talk to you one-on-one. My office hours are on the top of this syllabus. Please drop in to see me at the listed times, or make an appointment with me to talk at other times. I can confer with you via email, too. I will try to respond to you (in email or in class) within 48 hours, Monday through Friday.

**Communication:** Occasionally, I will need to contact the class or individual students via e-mail, so keep your MIX account active.

**Cheating/Plagiarism:** The English 101 community assumes your honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with the sections on Academic Honesty in the **University Student Conduct Code, Policy Bulletin 31**, which is online at: <http://studentlife.wvu.edu/studentconductcode.html>. If you have any questions about when and how to document sources, or any other question that will help you avoid unintentional plagiarism, please come and talk to me. Plagiarism and cheating are serious offences. Clear cases will result in an "F" for the course and appropriate academic discipline.

### Schedule of Work

\*\*Subject to change according to progress.

January		
Monday	Wednesday	Friday
	08 <u>Introductions and Syllabus Review</u>	10 <b>CLASS CANCELLED:</b> <b>Instructor away at professional conference</b> <b>Read:</b> Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, "The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction" < <a href="http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/70/icr70art.htm">http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/70/icr70art.htm</a> > -Definitions of Science Fiction <a href="http://scifi.about.com/od/scififantasy101/a/SCIFI_defs.htm">http://scifi.about.com/od/scififantasy101/a/SCIFI_defs.htm</a>
13 (Last day to register and add new courses is Jan 14 <sup>th</sup> )  <b>CLASS CANCELLED:</b> <b>Instructor away at professional conference</b>  <b>Homework:</b> <b>Read:</b> Baudrillard, <i>The Precession of Simulacra</i> pp.442-455 <u>Reflection:</u> What is your definition of science fiction? Reflect on the material you have read but use your own thoughts.	15 Wells, <i>Island of Dr. Moreau I-VII</i> <b><u>Due today:</u></b> Reflection (Printed Copy)	17 Wells, <i>Island of Dr. Moreau VII - XIV</i> <b>Read:</b> Science, Myth, And Fiction In H. G. Wells's "Island Of Dr. Moreau" (WVU eCampus)
20 <b>NO CLASS—Martin Luther King's Birthday</b>	22  Wells, <i>Island of Dr. Moreau- XIV-</i> till end	24  Čapek- <i>R.U.R</i> pp.231-251 (SFSC) <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> SFSC-Science Fiction Stories and Contexts

27 -Dick, <i>Second Variety</i> pp.296-330 (SFSC)	29 -Gibson, <i>Burning Chrome</i> pp.371-385 (SFSC)	31 - Asimov, <i>Liar!</i> Pp.282-295 (SFSC)
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February		
Monday	Wednesday	Friday
3  -See <i>Metropolis</i> -Fritz Lang (Available on Netflix) <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0Qk7HPMvuA">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0Qk7HPMvuA</a>  -See “The Matrix” (WVU Reserves) -Read Haraway, <i>The Cyborg Manifesto</i> , pp. 455-477 (SFSC)	5 Butler, <i>Dawn</i> , Ch.1-4	7 Butler, <i>Dawn</i> , Ch.5-9
10 See “Equilibrium”	12 - Ellison, “ <i>Repent, Harlequin!</i> ” <i>Said the Tocktoman</i> ”, pp. 758-768 (SFSC)  -Russ, “ <i>When it Changed</i> ”, pp.768-773 (SFSC)	14 See <i>Firefly</i> . 1.1-1.4 (WVU Reserves)  <b>Read:</b> Arendt, <i>Ideology and Terror: A novel form of Government</i> pp. 864-875 (SFSC)
17 See <i>Firefly</i> . 1.5-1.8 (WVU Reserves) <b>Read:</b> Jameson, <i>Progress versus Utopia</i> pp.876-891 (SFSC)	19 See <i>Firefly</i> . 1.9-1.11 (WVU Reserves) <b>Read:</b> Boyer, <i>The Whole World Gaspd</i> , pp.1015-1028(SFSC)	21 <b>(Last Day to Drop)</b> See <i>Firefly</i> . 1.12-1.1.14 (WVU Reserves) <b>Read:</b> Sontag, <i>The Imagination of Disaster</i> ,pp 1002-1014(SFSC)
24 Clarke, <i>The Nine Billion Names of God</i> , pp.915-920 Ballard, <i>The Terminal Beach</i> , pp. 921-936 (SFSC)	26 <b>MIDTERM REVIEW</b>	28 <b>(Mid-Semester)</b>  <b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>

March		
Monday	Wednesday	Friday
3 Rowling, <i>Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban</i> , Ch.1-4	5 Rowling, <i>Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban</i> , Ch 5-9	7 Rowling, <i>Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban</i> , Ch.10-14  <b>Due Today: Proposal for Critical Response Paper</b>
10 <b>NO CLASS – SPRING RECESS</b>	12 <b>NO CLASS – SPRING RECESS</b>	14 <b>NO CLASS – SPRING RECESS</b>
17 <b>STUDENT CONFERENCES</b> -Discuss proposal for Critical Response paper	19 Rowling, <i>Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban</i> , Ch.14-22	21 Marquez, <i>A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings</i> (WVU eCampus)
24 Amis, <i>The Immortals</i> , (WVU eCampus) <b>Due today: Critical Response Paper</b>	26 Willis, <i>At the Rialto</i> , pp.596-613 <b>Read:</b> Sartre, from <i>Being and Nothingness</i> , pp.664-672 Kaku, <i>To Build a Time Machine</i> , pp.685-703	28 Chiang, <i>Story of Your Life</i> , pp.614-650 (SFSC)

April		
Monday	Wednesday	Friday



<p>Mar 31</p> <p>Rushdie, <i>Haroun and the Sea of Stories</i>, Ch.1-3</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Rushdie, <i>Haroun and the Sea of Stories</i>, Ch.4-7</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Rushdie, <i>Haroun and the Sea of Stories</i>, Ch.8-10</p>
<p>7</p> <p>Rushdie, <i>Haroun and the Sea of Stories</i>, Ch. 11-12</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Butler, <i>Bloodchild</i>, pp.119-134 (SFSC)</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Nair, <i>The Witch Wife's Tale</i> (WVU eCampus)</p>
<p>14</p> <p>Weinbaum, <i>A Martian Odyssey</i>, pp.119-133 (SFSC)</p>	<p>16</p> <p>McDonald, <i>Recording Angel</i>, pp.958-969(SFSC)</p>	<p>18</p> <p>NO CLASS – Friday before Easter Recess</p>
<p>21</p> <p>Hopkinson, <i>Something to Hitch Meat Too</i>, pp.838-850 (SFSC)</p>	<p>23 (Last Day to Withdraw from the University – Apr 24th)</p> <p>FINAL EXAM REVIEW</p>	<p>25</p> <p>FINAL EXAM</p>