

## English 258-01: Pop Culture

# SPACE

## THE FINAL FRONTIER

Spring Semester 2015 MWF 12:30-1:20 Clark Hall 317

Instructor: Sharon Kelly

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Office: Colson G23

Office Hours: MWF 11:30-12:20

### Required Texts:

1. *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, eds Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, 2003
2. *A Princess of Mars*, Edgar Rice Burroughs
3. *Ender's Game*, Orson Scott Card
4. *Stars in my Pocket like Grains of Sand*, Samuel R. Delaney
5. *Trillium*, Jeff Lemire

Feel free to purchase texts as we go through the semester (as opposed to all at once).

PLEASE NOTE you will also be responsible for watching episodes of TV shows and a number of full-length films. I highly recommend that you subscribe to Netflix, which has some of the items, and that you set aside some money to either rent or purchase the rest (hard copies or digital). If WVU owns any of these media items, they will be on hold for this class.

### Introduction:

Section 01 of English 258, Popular American Culture, will focus on texts which use (outer) space as a primary feature or setting. We will move through four distinct yet overlapping types of space sci-fi and analyze and evaluate their similarities, differences, and reflections or critiques of our own society. My hope is that after this class you will be able to think critically and analytically about themes and topics in literature, film, and TV, and that you will have a good understanding of different sci-fi genre conventions and modes.

### Course Goals:

This course fulfills Objective 7 of the General Education Curriculum at West Virginia University. This goal is defined as:

7. American Culture: Students are expected to develop knowledge critical to the understanding of the issues that shape the culture of the United States. Successful completion of one course that explores issues that have shaped the development of society in the United States including but not limited to issues pertaining to age, ethnicity, race, region, religion, or social class. This course may also satisfy a major course requirement.

### Office Hours and Email:

My office hours are MWF from 11:30-12:20 in Colson Hall room G23 and by appointment. Office hours provide you with an opportunity to come talk to me about your work outside the classroom. I will also be

communicating with you regularly via eCampus and WVU email. It is your responsibility to check for updates or messages. If you need to email me, please give me 24 hours to respond to your email before emailing me again. Your email subject line should include the class section number and a concise, accurate subject (e.g. “ENGL 258 Presentation Handout”). I expect you to use standard English and good manners when you email me.

**Grades** will be based on the following criteria:

Item	Description	Points
Tests (4 total)	Objective and short answer questions, non-cumulative	100 (25 each)
Text Response (2 total)	2-3 Page written response to any reading or TV/film (prompts listed below)	50 (25 each)
Presentation	5 minutes on an assigned topic	20
Reading Quizzes	12 quizzes, 2 dropped, pass/fail	10 (1 each)
Participation (twitter / in-class)	Class twitter account: @KellyENGL258 #WVUscifi	10 (1 point per tweet) 10 (in-class)
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>200</b>

**Tests:**

There will be **four** tests, roughly dividing the semester into quarters, made up of standard objective question formats including but not limited to identification, matching, fill in the blank, and multiple choice, and possibly short answer subjective questions. Tests will not be rescheduled and cannot be made up unless you contact me *before* the scheduled date of the test (i.e. if you know you will be unable to come to class, tell me *in advance* and we may be able to work something out). Readings on the syllabus, class discussions, eCampus uploads, and any handouts circulated in class are all fair game for tests. Tests will not be cumulative. For each test, I will be holding an in-class review session. It is definitely in your best interest to attend the review sessions, and there may be candy involved.

**Text Responses:**

You will be required to electronically submit **two** reading responses **2-3 pages** in length, one due during each half of the semester **due on or before the second test and the fourth test**. Keep summary to a minimum. Be concise, and have a coherent thesis (main idea / opinion / claim). I would prefer that you not use any outside resources, but you may refer to the *Cambridge Companion* if necessary. You may choose any two of the following topics, and apply any topic to any text on the syllabus.

Topics—please indicate on each of your papers which one you are addressing

1. Analyze the text’s portrayal of gender, sexuality, race, or species.
2. Analyze the text’s portrayal of the relationship between man and space.
3. Analyze the text’s portrayal of technology, science, or unexplained phenomena.
4. Analyze the text’s portrayal of politics or psychology.

The responses will be graded on the following characteristics:

- Is your thesis interesting, unique, different, or novel in some way?
- Are you engaging with the text and providing direct quotes as evidence?
- Are your tone, grammar, organization, and mechanics satisfactory?

Your reading responses **MUST** be in Times New Roman size 12 with 1” margins with a standard MLA heading. I reserve the right to refuse papers which are not formatted correctly. Not understanding how to change your default settings or not knowing what an MLA heading looks like are not good excuses.

Google it! Also, please don’t plagiarize. It’s unfair to the person you’re stealing from, it cheapens your education, and I will catch you and there will be serious consequences.

**Presentation:**

You will be responsible for presenting for 5 minutes on a topic you will sign up for during the first week of class. This could be an author, article, chapter, or context section. You are welcome to meet with me in advance for guidance/feedback. Please create a short **handout** (not to exceed one page) for your classmates. The handout should then be emailed to me at least 24 hours before class so that I can make copies for your classmates. I would like you to **use at least one scholarly resource** other than the *Cambridge Companion*.

The presentation will be graded on the following characteristics:

Handout: Is it concise? Is it informative? Does it look professional? Is it engaging? Is it creative?

Content: Is it concise? Is it informative? Is it accurate? Does it sufficiently cover the topic?

Delivery: Is your language appropriate? Are you comfortable with your topic? Do you look professional? Are you able to take questions?

**Reading Quizzes:**

There will be 12 random “reading” quizzes throughout the semester. These are meant to encourage attendance and reading/watching, and are a way for us to get a running start on the day’s discussion. Reading quizzes will be very easy if you do the reading and impossible if you don’t. Grades will be pass/fail, and I’ll drop two quiz grades. Quizzes may not be made up.

**Attendance:**

You will be most successful in this class if you attend regularly. I cannot stress that enough. Coming to class will have a remarkable positive impact on your grade. Repeated or excessive tardiness, coming to class unprepared, and/or being disruptive will not be tolerated and I may ask you to leave. Basically, if you are going to be present, I expect you to be fully *present*.

**Participation:**

This is a small course that relies on discussion and working together as a class. You are expected to attend every class and make a commitment to both me and your peers to actively participate in our discussions. I assure you our readings are not boring, and so the more engaged you are the more you will enjoy the class. Students taking good notes is one of my favorite things. (We can talk about how to take good notes if you want.)

Part of your participation grade will be active posting to our **class Twitter account, @KellyENGL258, and class hashtag #wvuscifi**. I would like you to post at least once before each class to get discussion started, and welcome livetweeting while you are doing homework watching/reading. Your tweets will be evaluated for frequency and quality.

**Extra Credit:**

There are several methods of getting extra credit in this class:

1. Get a passing score on all 12 reading quizzes: 2 points
2. Perfect attendance: 2 points
3. Attendance at a variety of movie screenings related to our readings throughout the semester (e.g. I’ll be showing *Serenity* when we cover *Firefly* and the 3-hour pilot of *Battlestar Galactica*): 1 point each

Other options for extra credit perhaps TBA.

## **Policies and Procedures**

**Reading and watching:** You will be asked to read a significant amount in this class. Readings include roughly one book per quarter AND selected chapters from the *Cambridge Companion* and articles on eCampus which will complement our class discussions. You'll also be asked to watch multiple episodes of TV shows and several full-length films. Hopefully some of it will be fun, and hopefully not much of it will be torture. Please remember to manage your time wisely and look ahead on the syllabus to make sure you are able to complete the readings and watch the TV episodes/movies.

**Cell Phones:** Cell phones must be turned off entirely or set to the silent function so as not to disturb the class. For excessive cell phone use, I reserve the right to ask you to leave the class.

**Classroom/Lab and Laptop Policy:** It is my belief that technology is an integral part of your education—not only because we all type papers, but also because print and visual media (largely accessible through the internet) are important outlets for the consumption and processing of information. Therefore, I encourage you to bring your laptop to class and will use technology aids for instruction whenever possible. I reserve the right to ask you to put away your laptop if I believe it has become a distraction to other students.

**Standard of Work:** You are expected to use appropriate grammar, mechanics, and writing conventions. It is important to remember that this is not a course in composition, and we will not have time to address writing methods in class. If you need help with writing, please go to the Writing Center or see me in office hours. **All of your work must be in Times New Roman, size 12 font with one inch margins and double-spaced.** I reserve the right to refuse work that is not formatted correctly.

**Using Sources:** I prefer that you NOT use outside sources in your two short writing assignments, but you are required to include one scholarly resource in your presentation. Keep in mind that **Wikipedia, Google and other tertiary sources (encyclopedias, dictionaries) are not acceptable sources in any college paper.** However, due to the nature of the texts we will be studying, individual “wikis” will be permitted.

**Social Justice Policy:** In this class and in our discussions, readings, and writing throughout the semester, we will be examining ideas from diverse perspectives. Please always be mindful that our classroom will be a space of **respect and collaboration**. Challenging issues and ideas may arise, but none of these should be expressed in an inappropriate manner either verbally or in writing. Racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of discrimination (spoken or written) will not be tolerated.

**Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism is unacceptable. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of dishonesty by others, submitting work of another person or work previously used in other courses, or tampering with the academic work of other students. If you are caught plagiarizing or committing any other form of academic dishonesty (willful or accidental), disciplinary action will be taken and you may receive an “F” or an “unforgivable F” for the course.

**Office of Accessibility Services:** If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services. Accessibility Services has moved to Suite 250 at 1085 VanVoorhis Rd (beside Applebee's and across from the Mountaineer Station transportation center). The phone number is 304-293-6700, and email is [access2@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:access2@mail.wvu.edu). Access the website at <http://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/>.

## Units at-a-glance

### 1. Space Westerns

- *Star Trek*
- *Firefly*
- *A Princess of Mars*
- *Avatar*

### 2. Military and Politics

- *Battlestar Galactica*
- *Ender's Game*
- *Aliens*
- *Star Wars*

### 3. Science or Magic?

- *The Fifth Element*
- *Guardians of the Galaxy*
- *Contact*
- *Stars in my Pocket like Grains of Sand*

### 4. Histories and Futures

- *Wall-E*
- *2001: A Space Odyssey*
- *Trillium*

## Schedule of Work

\*\*Subject to change according to progress\*\*

	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
1	January 12 Greetings and Syllabus	14 <i>Introduction CC</i>	16 <i>Star Trek</i> , eps. from Season 1, TOS: 11, 12 “The Menagerie” Parts I and II, and 28 “The City on the Edge of Forever”, <i>Ch. 11 CC</i>
2	19 MLK Jr. Day NO CLASS	21 <i>Firefly</i> eps. 1 “Serenity”, 4 “Shindig”, and 6 “Our Mrs. Reynolds”	23 <i>Firefly</i> eps. 8 “Jaynestown”, and 9 “Ariel”, <i>Ch. 18 CC</i>
3	26 <i>Princess of Mars</i> Chs. I-XI	28 <i>Princess of Mars</i> Chs. XII-XX	30 <i>Princess of Mars</i> Chs. XX-XXVIII
4	February 2 <i>Avatar</i>	4 <i>Avatar</i> , <i>Ch. 19 CC</i>	6 Test Review
5	9 Test #1	11 <i>Battlestar Galactica</i> eps. S2E8 “Final Cut”, S3E11 “Eye of Jupiter”, S3E12 “Rapture”	13 <i>Battlestar Galactica</i> , eps. S4E7 “Guess What’s coming to Dinner?”, S4E9 “The Hub”, <i>Ch. 17 CC</i>
6	16 <i>Ender’s Game</i> Chs. 1-7	18 <i>Ender’s Game</i> Chs. 8-11	20 <i>Ender’s Game</i> Chs. 12-15
7	23 <i>Aliens</i>	25 <i>Aliens</i> , Carroll article on <i>eCampus</i>	27 <i>Star Wars III: Revenge of the Sith</i>
8	March 2 <i>Star Wars VI: Return of the Jedi</i> <i>Ch. 14 CC</i>	4 Test Review	6 Test #2, Paper 1 due
9	9 <i>Fifth Element</i>	11 <i>Fifth Element</i> , Sullivan article on <i>eCampus</i>	13 <i>Guardians of the Galaxy</i>

10	16 <i>Guardians of the Galaxy</i>	18 <i>Contact</i>	20 <i>Contact, Ch. 13 CC</i>
SPRING BREAK NO CLASS: March 23-27			
11	30 <i>Stars in my Pocket</i> Prologue – Ch. 3	April 1 <i>Stars in my Pocket</i> Chs. 4-10	3 Friday before Easter NO CLASS
12	6 <i>Stars in my Pocket</i> , Chs. 11- Epilogue, <b>Ch. 10 CC</b>	8 Test Review	10 Test #3
13	13 <i>Wall-E</i>	15 <i>Wall-E, Ch. 16 CC</i>	17 <i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i>
14	20 <i>2001: A Space Odyssey, Ch. 9 CC</i>	22 <i>Trillium</i> , beginning-Ch. 4 (stop at Ch. 5 “Starcrossed”)	24 <i>Trillium</i> Ch. 5-end
15	27 Test Review	29 Test #4, Paper 2 due	May 1 Tests returned, SEIs, candy