



English 257: Science Fiction and Fantasy

Instructor: Kristen J. Davis, MA, Doctoral Candidate
English Department, West Virginia University
Fall 2014, CRN: 88355, T/Th 11:30am-12:45pm, Clark 312

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Course Description and Goals

This course will cover a variety of science fiction and fantasy texts written over the past 150 years in the English language. While most are considered canonical, others are new or fan favorites. Because these genres are so diverse (especially fantasy), we will only be able to cover a small selection of texts and must unfortunately leave out some great works. Our readings include poems, short stories, a novella, young adult and adult novels, television series, film, comix, introductory readings, and critical articles. We will explore the definitions, characteristics and evolution of both genres. We'll also take a special interest in discovering the ways in which these texts critique and comment on social ills and cultural anxieties.

Required Texts and Materials

Doctorow, Cory. *Little Brother* (also available free online)
Harris, Charlaïne. *Dead Until Dark* (Sookie Stackhouse novel)
Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*
Moore, Alan. *Watchmen*
Wells, H.G. *Island of Dr. Moreau*
Game of Thrones Season 1 (HBO series—rent, borrow, or buy)
Misc. short stories/poems, introductory and critical readings (eCampus)
Recommended: a 3-ring binder to hold handouts, readings, syllabus, exam reviews, notes, etc

Course Requirements and Policies

- Midterm exam= 25%
This exam will be open-note and consist of mostly short answer questions on readings and class discussion/notes from the first half of the semester.
- Final exam= 25%
This exam will be open-note and consist mostly of short answer questions. It will address material from the second half of the semester.
- Participation and in-class work = 25%
This includes participation in discussion groups, class lectures, performance on in-class quizzes, assignments, etc. Obviously, you must be present to participate and in-class work cannot be made up. You are expected to be physically and mentally present for all classes. We should remember that the progress of our class's community relies on open discussion—the free sharing of ideas, points of view, interpretations, and feelings—about the texts and social issues we encounter. As with any group of this size, we inevitably come from a wide range of backgrounds,

histories, experiences, and cultures. Your respectful contributions to class are vital to our community.

- Online Discussion posts on eCampus = 25%

General requirements. **You will submit 10 discussion posts throughout the semester. These responses must be made before class meets on the reading's due date.** I will typically put up various discussion questions or assignments on eCampus although your own original thoughts are very welcome.

Note: to get credit, all posts **MUST** be made on eCampus (Blackboard). Please allow extra time in case of technical or internet malfunctions, etc. Emailed, printed, handwritten, etc responses/questions will not be accepted for credit.

Posts should demonstrate that you:

- Read the required readings
- Engaged critically with the text
- Approached the assignment with originality
- Are able to stay on topic with relevant discussion responses or questions
- Read ALL the other posts/questions (at least by the end of the semester)
- Followed the guidelines for college-level writing (proofread, use of MLA format when needed, formal language, etc)
- Are respectful to other classmates
- Did not plagiarize!

High Quality Posts/Discussion Questions:

- Original thoughts not already contained in the threaded discussion
- Awareness and critical consideration of others' posts is evident
- Use of details, examples, etc to support your point
- Cited examples from the text (use MLA documentation such as page numbers for quotes)
- Information clearly relates to the main topic and adds new concepts/info
- May connect the current reading with other texts from our class
- Solid outside sources may be integrated (though this is not required) with proper documentation
- Posts are regularly spaced throughout the semester

Medium Quality Posts/Discussion Questions:

- Information clearly relates to the main topic
- Some original thoughts are present
- Some evidence of engagement with other classmates' posts is present
- Main points/arguments have some support (textual, experiential, etc)
- Some repeat of other posts may be present
- A few or no proofreading errors
- Responses are somewhat spaced out throughout the semester

Low Quality Posts/Discussion Questions:

- Simple "agree" or "disagree" statements with no or little accompanying explanation
- Little originality is present
- Post includes irrelevant or off-topic information
- Language is too colloquial (informal)
- Response is too short or discussion questions are brief or yes/no questions
- Several proofreading errors are present
- Awareness of others' points/posts/questions (the class's conversation) is not evident in your response
- Posts lack respect or careful consideration of others contributions
- Posts are not spaced throughout the semester

A Few Expectations

This is a literature class. That means there is a lot of reading required. Please keep up with the readings and be sure to have the required texts read or viewed before the class period in which we discuss them. You will be expected to print out the various readings on eCampus and bring them to class. Please also bring your books to class when we discuss them. I expect you to make it to (almost) every single class. You will be able to participate, complete unannounced assignments, ask questions, and take notes that will become crucial for our open-note exams. For this course, I won't be taking attendance; however, being absent will undoubtedly lead to a poorer grade, especially where participation and in-class assignments are concerned. Please DO NOT use electronic devices during class – texting in class is especially distasteful.

College Texts and In-Class Discussions

As readers, we all approach a text with our personal agendas and issues. University is one of few places where we can safely conduct thoughtful and respectful discussion about serious, adult-themed texts and debates. Throughout this semester, we will examine controversial and sometimes graphic materials and our subsequent reactions to them. I hope that we will learn various viewpoints from one another so that we will then possess additional skills with which to approach our reading and writing processes. Please be forewarned that this classroom is a safe forum for expressions and opinions, but is NOT a place for unmerited or ill-spirited discussions. *Prejudicial or intolerant opinions* concerning race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and other personality elements have *no place* in the classroom. Let's act like adults and have respect and tolerance for varying points of view and each other.

Plagiarism and Cheating

Plagiarism is defined as “material that has been knowingly obtained or copied in whole or part, from the work of others...including (but not limited to) another individual's academic composition (WiP xxi). Cheating refers to “doing academic work for another student, or providing one's own work for another student to copy and submit as his or her own” (WiP xxi). Plagiarism and cheating are forms of academic dishonesty and are never acceptable; they are taken very seriously by both the university and myself. Such behavior typically leads to an F in the course and is reported to the department/university. Please let me know if you're having a crisis and we'll try to work something out before you feel you need to resort to desperate measures such as academic dishonesty.

Special Needs

If you have an issue (such as a learning disability, hearing or vision impairment, etc) that could affect your class performance or productivity, please let me know about this during the first week of class and I will try to accommodate you. Also, be aware of the support services available here on campus through the Office of Accessibility Services, <http://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu>, (304) 293-6700.

Schedule of Work

**Subject to change according to progress.

TUESDAY	THURSDAY
Aug 19 Class Activities: syllabus, introductions	Aug 21 Class Activities: general intro material HW: Read Fantasy intro material (eCampus)
Aug 26 Class Activities: Fantasy intro material	Aug 28 Class Activities: “Goblin Market” and “Christabel” (eCampus)
Sept 02 Class Activities: “A Company of Wolves” (eCampus) HW: Read vampire materials (eCampus)	Sept 04 Class Activities: the vampire in culture/society
Sept 09	Sept 11

watch True Blood episode 1 in class	Class Activities: <i>Dead Until Dark</i> (first half)
Sept 16 Class Activities: <i>Dead Until Dark</i> (second half)	Sept 18 Class Activities: discuss <i>Dead Until Dark</i> criticism (eCampus); British history for <i>Game of Thrones</i>
Sept 23 Class Activities: <i>Game of Thrones</i> (have Season 1 viewed by class time)	Sept 25 Class Activities: <i>Game of Thrones</i> , cont'd Hand out exam review sheet
Sept 30 Class Activities: discuss <i>Game of Thrones</i> criticism (eCampus) Comic fantasy: excerpts from <i>Sword in the Stone</i> in class	Oct 02 Midterm EXAM HW: Read intro materials for Science Fiction (eCampus)
Oct 07 Class Activities: Science Fiction : intro materials	Oct 09 Class Activities: <i>Island of Dr. Moreau</i>
Oct 14 NO CLASS - Mid-Term Break	Oct 16 <i>Brave New World</i> (first half)
Oct 21 Class Activities: <i>Brave New World</i> (second half)	Oct 23 (Last Day to Drop with "W" - Oct 24) Class Activities: <i>Brave New World</i> criticism (eCampus)
Oct 28 Class Activities: Bradbury: "And the Moon Be Still as Bright"; "There Will Come Soft Rains" (eCampus)	Oct 30 Class Activities: Bradbury, cont'd: "The Veldt" (eCampus)
Nov 04 NO CLASS - General Election Day	Nov 06 Class Activities: <i>Little Brother</i> (first half)
Nov 11 Class Activities: <i>Little Brother</i> (second half) HW: read comix intro materials (eCampus)	Nov 13 Class Activities: comix; <i>Watchmen</i> (first half)
Nov 18 Class Activities: <i>Watchmen</i> (second half)	Nov 21 Class Activities: discuss <i>Watchmen</i> criticism (eCampus). Watch <i>Hunger Games</i> film over break
Nov 25 NO CLASS - thanksgiving Break	Nov 27 NO CLASS - Break
Dec 02 Class Activities: discuss <i>Hunger Games</i> (film)	Dec 04 (Last Day to Withdraw from All Classes - Dec 08) Class Activities: discuss <i>Hunger Games</i> criticism (eCampus)
Dec 09 (Last Day of Classes) Class Activities: review for Final Exam; course evaluations	FINAL EXAM: in our classroom