“It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.”
—Donna Haraway*

Course Description:

Science fiction and speculative fiction (SF) are genres that record people’s desires for a different way of life because they resist the view that history is over and the future is merely (and can only be) an extension of the present. SF’s imagined scenarios and technologies create different possibilities—either as hope for a better world or as a warning about a worse world to come—or as a reconfiguration of the past from alternative points of view. SF also raises important questions about the independence of the technological from the social and the political realms.

This course will ask how SF has shaped popular receptions of science (and even stimulated science research projects) at the same time that it asks how SF shapes knowledge and reflects on, shapes, and criticizes the present. Whether utopic or dystopic, SF imagines alternative scenarios for social relations and ways of living. This course reads and analyzes the force of this utopian/dystopian impulse from the mid-twentieth century to the present.

SF implodes many binary divides—between art/science, body/mind, organic/artificial, M/F, human/animal, and entertainment/art (high-brow/low-brow; literary fiction/genre fiction). Asking readers to imagine the (technologically) impossible, SF demands different reading strategies. It rejects the assumption that the future is (and can only be) an extension of the present by embracing “what-if” scenarios. Indeed, its themes are time travel, intergalactic space travel, androids and robots, alien worlds, cyberspace, AI, and virtual technologies that presume radically-different social practices and institutional worlds.

Or, following SF theorist Darko Suvin in defining SF as entailing “cognitive estrangement” and presenting readers with a “novum” [a new thing] that characterizes fictive worlds that are different from our empirical, realist present. SF imagines worlds, relations, experiences, and institutions that are better than or worse than, and different from, present, empirical commonsense life. For better and for worse. SF takes up the search for community (or dealing with its lack), the conflict between individual and community, the role of individual agency, domination and colonization, the destructiveness of war, exploitive social relations, embodiment, artificial life, viruses, genetic engineering, the role of machines and robots, surveillance, apocalyptic environmental degradation, and others. The stories and novel this course reads presume alternate worlds that are peopled by racialized and gendered androids,

*Donna Haraway, Science Fiction Research Association Talk, July 2011
robots, and AIs—enacting unconventional virtual or real relations among people, machines, and animals. A central question this course asks is how science fiction’s imagining of utopic and/or dystopic projections give us insights about equality, justice, and difference—and their competing and contested institutional histories of exploitation and oppression.

This course will examine how SF can help us imagine (and demand) better futures that include social justice and equality as well as better forms of association, work, play, and social organization—and how “better” futures might go beyond the techno-optimism of better AI, robots, and self-driving cars or business-as-usual, globalized digital capitalism of offshored labor, job elimination, and lionization of the “free” market, the role of the state or centralized governance (for whom?), and the goals of ever-increasing consumption and profit—all to the end of preserving the power, money, and conquest that is the legacy of the global North—the context that ironically provides much, though not all, SF authorship and readership.

As such, this course explores how SF explores some of the contradictions that overlay our present—siloed isolation (exacerbated under pandemic conditions), the attack on democratic processes (like voting access), ubiquitous surveillance, continual data bombardment, compulsory consumption, intensified carceral systems, and routinized, catastrophic environmental crisis—to name a few.

**Required Reading – Fiction**: 

All readings are available on Canvas, so you do not need to purchase anything.**

Isaac Asimov. “The Fun We Had.” 1952. (very short story)


Max Barry. “It Came from Cruden Farm.” In *Slate* (Feb. 29, 2020).


Liu Cixin. “Moonlight.”

________. “The Circle.”


Harlan Ellison, “Repent, Harlequin!” Said the Ticktockman. *Galaxy Science Fiction* 1965


Ken Liu. “Mono no aware.”


Kavelina Torres. “Qamaq Technician North.” In *Carousel* (2022)

Rivers Solomon, “Blood Is Another Word for Hunger. Tor (July 25, 2019)


** While all the readings are available either online or as a PDF, whenever possible, please print the reading. Hardcopy allows you to read texts off-screen and mark and cross-reference them in a variety of ways that are not available electronically. In addition, the scale and the materiality of reading articles or books in hard copy is different from screen reading in its aspect ratio (like in film) and corporeal engagement.

**Required Reading History/Theory**


Salman Sayid. “Do Post-Racials Dream of White Sheep?”
Sherryl Vint. “Introduction to the Futures Industry”

**Learning Outcomes:**

- Developing strategies for critical reading, understanding, and analyzing challenging SF texts
- Understanding of the history of discourse about tools and machines (technology)
- Increased ability to think independently, understand, and analyze the arguments of others, and argue persuasively in an academic classroom community
- Understanding the historical context of science and technology production and reception in the U.S. including its ties to military weapon development
- Attunement to a text’s rhetorical situation, purpose, audience, context, and genre
- Ability to craft well-supported arguments in discussion and writing by using examples from source texts
- Broad familiarity with the diversity of styles and subject matters of U.S. and U.K. SF
- Ability to provide helpful feedback to peers in class discussion and respond to student presentations

**Course Methods**

This course will use a variety of methods to explore a selection of science fiction texts and a sampling of critical literature about them. These include lecture, textual analysis (close reading of the text), reading and discussing literary and historical criticism, student oral presentations, discussion in both small and large groups, Go-Arounds, and brief (timed) writing in class.

**Course Requirements**

- **One required in-class Presentation** (3-5 minutes)
  - Beginning on the second day of class, students (who have signed up in advance) will lead the discussion by noting what they found interesting, provocative, or challenging about one (or more) of the assigned texts.
Does the text make an argument, advance a thesis, or question an assumption? Are its warrants well supported? What does the text add to, or challenge, about your understanding of the world? Identify the element of “cognitive estrangement” in the novel, and note what is significant about it.

Say what you think about the novel or story; don’t merely summarize it. Note a significant argument, point, or thesis of the text. Discuss how the text relates to challenges and dilemmas of your life—contemporary life—as well as the contemporaneous period in which it was written.

Two Response Papers

Course Requirements with grade weight:

- One in-class oral presentations (20% each) 20%
- TWO Response Papers (60%). See below.
  - The Prompt for each appears under the vertical nav bar in “Assignments.”
  - Students will address only one or two of the several questions (from array of micro-questions) in the Prompt.
  - Use reflection, close reading, criticism, contextualization, personal experience, historical knowledge, research—or a combination of these methods.
- Response Paper 1 (1,250-word min.) 30%
- Response Paper 2 (1,250-word min.) refer to a specific reading.
  - Two options:
    - Interpretation and analysis
    - Science Fiction story 30%
      - details to come on Canvas

All Response Papers—except for the Fiction Option—must include:
- At least three (brief) quotations from the text that support your observations, analysis, and assertions
- Critical analysis (connecting the text to at least one contemporary social, political, or philosophical issue, question, or theme)
- No Plot summaries; we’ve all read the story/book
- What oppositions or framework/s does the text use to center its themes and worldview—and your evaluation of these?

Regular attendance and punctuality* 20%
- Two or more absences (in summer session) jeopardize your ability to pass the course.

Class participation* in discussion, Go-arounds, Small Group Discussion, Discussion of the whole, etc. 20%
Please listen respectfully to your peers.
Disagreement is welcome and enriches the course.
Optimal engagement entails being present, prepared, and intellectually alert at each class meeting. Come prepared to discuss. Be collegial, listen, and engage viewpoints with which you disagree.

* You cannot earn the grade of “A” unless you are a regular participant in class discussion. Two absences for any reason put you at risk of failing the course. This is Summer Session, and it’s doing an entire quarter of work in half the time, so it is super-intensive.

Late Paper policy:
All Response Papers are due on their due date. Please note that Canvas submissions close on that date. If you have an extreme personal or family emergency that prevents you from getting your paper in on time, please write me a brief note explaining why you need an extension. When that new, agreed-upon date is reached, please email your Response Paper to me and your TAs in an email as a Word attachment because Canvas submissions close by the end date.

Reading/Writing Schedule:

**Module 1: Weeks 1 and 2 – Asimov, Pohl, Delaney, Merrill, Cherryh + History/Theory**

**Week 1**

**Tuesday, June 27, 2023** – Introductions: Syllabus; Asimov, Pohl, *Dangerous Visions* excerpt, historical background

**Reading due: (We will read in class on the first day.)**
- Short stories
  - Isaac Asimov, “The Fun We Had.” 1952. (very short story)
- Theory/History
  - Rjurik Davidson, “Imagining New Worlds: Sci-Fi and the Vietnam War.” In *Dangerous Visions* (pp. 5-10)

**Thursday, June 29 – Delaney, Merrill, Cherryh**

**Reading due:**
- Short stories
• Judith Merril. “Wish Upon a Star” (1958), Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction: Vol 15, No. 6 (pp. 87-100)

• Theory
  • Rob Latham, “Sextrapolation in New Wave Science Fiction” In Dangerous Visions [pp. 11-22]
  • Adam Roberts. “Chronology of Science Fiction”

In class:
• Student Presentations (1-4 people each day): Students sign up to present (Google Sheet on Canvas). (Please do not all cluster together in the last week.)

Week 2

Tuesday, July 4 – No Class – National holiday – Independence Day

Thursday, July 6 – Ellison, Saxton, Asimov, Barry
Reading due:
• Short stories
  • Harlan Ellison. “Repent, Harlequin!” Said the Ticktockman. (1965)
  • Josephine Saxton. “Ne déjà vu pas” (1967) (pp. 31-42)
  • Max Barry. “It Came from Cruden Farm.” In Slate (Feb. 29, 2020).
• Theory/History

Module 2: Philip K. Dick, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?
Week 3 – Androids

Tuesday, July 11 – Philip K. Dick, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (1968)
Reading due:
• Androids, Chapters 1-13 (pp. 3-153)
Supplementary Reading:
• Sherryl Vint, “Introduction to ‘The Futures Industry’”
• Edward Simon, “The Science Fiction that Came before Science,”
• Eva Short, “Prediction or Influence? Science Fiction Books that Forecast the Future”

In class:
• Student Presentations

Discuss:
• Connect the text to larger contemporaneous trends, events, or institutions
  (E.g.: fear of nuclear war; environmental consciousness [Earth Day in 1970], etc.)
• What are Deckerd’s motivations for doing his job, which is “retiring” androids?
• Describe Deckerd’s social relations? His affect and worldview? Other characters?
• What are some differences/similarities between the world of the novel and your world?
• How does technology influence feeling (affect)—in the novel? In your life?

Thursday, July 13
Reading due:
• Androids, Chapters 14-22 (pp. 154-244 [end])
• Theory/History
  o Salmon Sayid. “Do Post-Racial Dream of White Sheep?”

In class:
• Student Presentations

Discuss:
• Which characters struggle with marginalization, persecution, contingency, piecework/gig economy, survival, and consumption?
• Does Deckerd think for himself, and if not, where does he get his orders—and his ethics? Does work constrain his freedom? Ours? How?
• Which characters struggle with marginalization, persecution, contingency, piecework/gig economy, survival, and consumption?
• Does Deckerd think for himself, and if not, where does he get his orders—and his ethics?
• Does work constrain our freedom? How? Under what conditions could work be freeing?

Sunday, July 16
Writing due: Response Paper 1

Module 3: Chinese-American Sci-fi (2 classes)

Week 4 – Guest Lecture – Dr. Marilyn Patton

Tuesday, July 18 – Guest Lecture – Dr. Marilyn Patton
Reading due:
- Ken Liu. “Paper Menagerie”
- Ken Liu. “Mono no aware”

In class:
- Student Presentations
- Note Arrival’s themes of passenger ships
- We will watch a section of Passengers, considering themes such as:
  - going to distant systems
  - the arrival of armed aliens ready to colonize the planet
  - different theories of time

Thursday, July 20 – Chinese-American Sci-fi – Guest Lecture – Dr. Marilyn Patton
Reading due:
- Ma Boyong. “The first Emperor’s Games.”
- Liu Cixin. “Moonlight”
- Lie Cixin. “The Circle”

In class:
- Student Presentations
- Watch videos on two important epics by Liu Cixin: "Wandering Earth" (a novella) and The Three Body Problem (a trilogy of novels).
- The science fiction elements are addiction to video games, how to save the planet (both from ourselves—global warming—and from aliens in Three Body Problem), and communication with other civilizations.

Module 4: LeGuin, Jemison, Huang, Torres, Wijeratne, Kingfisher

Week 5

Tuesday, July 25 – LeGuin, Jemison, Huang, Torres
Reading due:
- Kavelina Torres. “Technician Qamaq North.” In Carousel (2022)

Thursday, July 27 – Wijeratne, Kingfisher – LAST CLASS
Reading due:

In class:
- Student presentations
Sunday, July 30
Writing due:
• Response Paper 2

Course Tips:

➤ Regular reading is critical for success in this course.

➤ Pace yourself. Read each text carefully and completely. Whenever possible, re-read and refer to your notes, markings of the text, etc.

➤ Write and take notes as you read. Whenever possible, read and mark up hard copy.

➤ Regardless of the medium you read in, be sure to mark the text; highlight, underline, or circle important words, phrases, or sections. Use the margins of the text or write on a separate digital text or piece of paper (or index cards, whatever). Find the method that works for you. Review your notes before class. This will refresh your memory.

➤ Come to class prepared to discuss the reading. Lectures will introduce key questions, considerations, and themes. Please participate actively in the discussion—exploring, questioning, and arguing with the text, each other, your TAs, and me.

➤ Listen to your fellow students as they give their presentations. Be prepared to respond to their questions and comments with your own considered ideas.

Good writers and thinkers are made, not born, and all academic success is a result of experience, training, and hard work. There is nothing mystical or pre-ordained about it. If you come from a family and/or background that did not have access to, or experience with, higher education and its culture, it is more difficult to excel because you lack the models and the self-confidence that come from believing you are an heir to higher education.

Successful completion of this course includes thorough preparation and active participation. Being prepared includes, but is not limited to, actively reading the required texts, taking notes, and marking the text. In addition, participating in discussion in both large groups and in Breakout Rooms, and critically (and respectfully) commenting on your peers’ presentations will help you generate ideas, engage in dialogue with others, and make your more aware of your—and their—intellectual choices. You are each other’s great resource. Please participate.

Supplementary Reading (on Canvas under “Files/Supplementary Reading”)


Nick Dyer-Witheford, “Cybernetic” [chapter 3] and “Silicon” [chapter 4], *Cyber-Proletariat: Global Labour in the Digital Vortex* [PDF of entire text is on Canvas]


William Gibson. Interview *Mother Jones*. “The Future Will View Us as a Joke.” [mentions LeGuin and Butler]

https://www.motherjones.com/media/2014/10/william-gibson-peripheral-vision-time-travel-interview/


Donna Haraway. SFRA Talk, July 2011, “SF: Science Fiction, Speculative Fabulation, String Figures, So Far,”

N. Katherine Hayles. “Print is Flat; Code is Deep: The Importance of Media-Specific Analysis.” *Poetics Today*. 25. 1 (2004), pp. 67-90

S.L. Huang. “As the Last I May Know.” Tor (October 23, 2019)


____________. “Varieties of the Utopian,” pp. 1-9
____________. “Journey into Fear,” pp. 182-210
____________. “Utopia and its Antinomies,” pp. 142-169

Ruth Levitas, *Utopia As Method*, chapter 1 [text of entire book is on Canvas]


Donald Wollheim, “Introduction: New Wave SF” in *England Swings SF*
Students with Disabilities:

This class is open to and supportive of all students, and I seek to accommodate different learning styles. I want you to succeed in this class, so if you have any learning issues, please see me in Office Hours to explain what specific help you need to succeed.

If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please get an Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center (DRC, 1476 Hahn Student Services Bldg.) and submit it to me in person before or after class or during Office Hours in the first two weeks of the quarter. For more information on the requirements and/or process, contact DRC at 459-2089 (voice), 459-4806 (TTY), or http://drc.ucsc.edu. They are helpful, friendly, and welcoming, and they offer free printing services at their office.

CARE: UCSC Campus Advocacy, Resources and Education

The CARE program provides support, advocacy, resources and violence prevention education to the UC Santa Cruz community. We respond to the needs of students, staff, faculty and non-affiliates impacted by stalking, dating/domestic violence and sexual assault by providing free and confidential services.

CARE also works collaboratively with students, faculty and staff to educate the campus community about the vital role that each of us has in preventing violence and creating social justice locally and globally.

For an appointment: Call (831) 502-2273 or Email care@ucsc.edu
Fill out an appointment request.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of using another person's ideas, writings, or materials without giving specific credit, known as a citation. In an academic environment, plagiarism is considered theft. If you plagiarize any materials, you February fail the assignment, fail the course, or face other penalties, up to and including expulsion. More information regarding plagiarism and disciplinary policies can be found on the University's Academic Integrity website at the page: http://www.ucsc.edu/academics/academic_integrity/index.html

You are responsible for your own intellectual behavior and conduct, and you must cite sources for all referenced materials in course writings. Accusations of plagiarism can be easily avoided by properly citing all resources and materials you use in your assignments. For additional information on how to cite your sources, please see: http://library.ucsc.edu/ref/howto/citation_master.html

Excellent information regarding plagiarism, what it is and how it can be avoided, can be found at: Indiana University Writing Tutorial Services. I urge you to visit this site. http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml#plagiarized
Excellent information regarding plagiarism, what it is and how it can be avoided can be found at: Indiana University Writing Tutorial Services. I urge you all to visit this site. 
http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml#plagiarized

**Office Hours:** Either immediately before or after class, or by appointment for a Zoom.
**DRC Accommodations**

The Disability Resources Center reduces barriers to inclusion and full participation for students with disabilities by providing support to individually determine reasonable academic accommodations. Operations continue via remote appointments. If you have questions or concerns about exam accommodations or any other disability-related matter, email the DRC Schedulers at drc@ucsc.edu for an appointment.

**Academic Dishonesty**

Academic integrity is the cornerstone of a university education. Academic dishonesty diminishes the university as an institution and all members of the university community. It tarnishes the value of a UCSC degree. All members of the UCSC community have an explicit responsibility to foster an environment of trust, honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. All members of the university community are expected to present as their original work only that which is truly their own. All members of the community are expected to report observed instances of cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty in order to ensure that the integrity of scholarship is valued and preserved at UCSC.

For the full policy and disciplinary procedures on academic dishonesty, students and instructors should refer to the Academic Integrity page at the Division of Undergraduate Education.

**Title IX**

The university cherishes the free and open exchange of ideas and enlargement of knowledge. To maintain this freedom and openness requires objectivity, mutual trust, and confidence; it requires the absence of coercion, intimidation, or exploitation. The principal responsibility for maintaining these conditions must rest upon those members of the university community who exercise most authority and leadership: faculty, managers, and supervisors.

The university has therefore instituted a number of measures designed to protect its community from sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, and other related prohibited conduct. Information about the Title IX Office, the online reporting link, applicable campus resources, reporting responsibilities, the UC Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment, and the UC Santa Cruz Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Reports of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment can be found at titleix.ucsc.edu.

The Title IX Office is actively responding to reports and requests for consultation. If you are not currently working with someone in the office and want to make a report/request a consult, you can expect the fastest response by using our online reporting link.

For more information please visit the Title IX Operations under Covid-19 page.