

## Introduction to SF

LIT 61u  
Summer 2024

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Virtual office hours: by appointment via zoom

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

During the quarter we will closely read a variety of speculative and science fiction texts (short stories, novels, episodes, and films) with the aim of analyzing and interpreting them as critiques of science, technology, and culture. We will explore themes like: encounters across species; novelty and change; expanded concepts of life; and the role of technology in human development. (General Education Code: PE-T)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify the main themes of speculative and science fiction
- Describe the key theoretical definitions of SF
- Analyze speculative fiction texts as expressions and critiques of the social and cultural consequences of science and technology
- Compare and contrast SF worlds to both historical and contemporary worlds

**Course prerequisite:** none

**COURSE WEBSITE:** <https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/74323>

If you're getting too many notifications, or not receiving them at all, you can change your notification settings here: <https://canvas.ucsc.edu/profile/communication>

### TEXTS

- *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Ursula K. Le Guin, ISBN 978-0441478125
- *Childhood's End*, Arthur C. Clarke, ISBN 978-0345347954
- *Lilith's Brood*, Octavia Butler, ISBN 978-0446676106
- "The Cold Equations", Tom Godwin, available on course site
- "Sail On! Sail On!", Philip José Farmer, available on course site

### VIDEO

- *The Matrix*
- "Hated in the Nation", Season 3 Episode 6 of *Black Mirror*, available on [www.netflix.com](http://www.netflix.com). Free one month trial subscription available.

If purchased new, the total cost for books will be around \$42. Bookshop Santa Cruz is located downtown and usually keeps those novels in stock. Used copies are plentifully available in second-hand bookstores and online. E-book editions are acceptable; I prefer to read paperbacks I've purchased in a local bookstore. The **UCSC Library has all required books [on reserve](#)**. Please note: if you purchase a different *edition* of an assigned title, the page numbers will differ.

## A NOTE ON ONLINE COURSE FORMAT

This course is an intensive 5-credit course, equal to 150 hours in a conventional classroom setting (including the time you spend preparing, studying, and completing homework assignments). However, the class is structured to be **asynchronous and partially self-paced**, and you can begin studying/completing assignments as early as you prefer. As long as you meet the weekly deadlines beginning June 24, you are free to structure your class experience as best suits your needs. That said, the weekly deadlines are **firm**. **No late work will be accepted** (with the exception of a documented medical excuse). **Required written assignments can always be submitted early; plan accordingly if you have a conflict.**

## A NOTE ON CANVAS

Canvas has analytic tools that track your data as students. I believe that this should be publicly disclosed, so I've include a few example screen shots below. You'll see that Canvas measures both the number of interactions and their duration ("Total Activity").

	Page Views °	Participations °	Submissions	On Time	Late	Missing	Current Score °	Last Activity	Total Activity
User a	404	28	55	5	25	6	96.11%	Jun 13 at 11:40am Jun 13 at 11:40am	66:18:25
User b	755	28	55	21	12	4	96.26%	Jun 15 at 3:04am Jun 15 at 3:04am	16:14:26
User c	615	31	55	21	15	1	84.86%	Jun 15 at 12:15am Jun 15 at 12:15am	24:33:40
User d	716	25	55	17	16	3	85.92%	Jun 15 at 12:47pm Jun 15 at 12:47pm	32:28:23
User e	1098	35	55	17	9	10	93.06%	Jun 12 at 10:28pm Jun 12 at 10:28pm	42:46:42
User f	579	30	55	21	12	3	93.89%	Jun 12 at 10:14am Jun 12 at 10:14am	66:35:56
User g	647	26	55	16	14	6	78.49%	Jun 19 at 1:01pm Jun 19 at 1:01pm	58:16:10
User h	256	7	55	1	6	29	50.2%	Jun 14 at 6:30pm Jun 14 at 6:30pm	18:25:48
User I	601	34	55	22	13	1	95.76%	Jun 12 at 12:28pm Jun 12 at 12:28pm	28:07:31
User j	674	25	55	20	9	7	85.2%	Jun 11 at 12:59pm Jun 11 at 12:59pm	48:38:37
User k	583	28	55	15	21	1	92.13%	Jun 12 at 7:39pm Jun 12 at 7:39pm	47:15:16

Data for individual user:

(Including pages views and last time viewed; screen shots from 2017)

Content	Times Viewed	Times Participated	Last Viewed
🏠 Course Home	154		Jun 15, 2017 3:04am
📊 Course Grades	139		Jun 14, 2017 5:23pm
📄 Examen Final	4	1.0	Jun 12, 2017 1:23am
💬 Course Discussions	35		Jun 12, 2017 12:04am
📁 Course Assignments	38		Jun 12, 2017 12:04am
📢 Course Announcements	16		Jun 11, 2017 11:38pm
📄 Examen final	1		Jun 11, 2017 11:32pm
📄 Sobre el examen final	2		Jun 11, 2017 11:32pm
📄 Consideraciones finales	3	1.0	Jun 8, 2017 3:31pm
📄 Course Quizzes	23		Jun 8, 2017 3:27pm
📄 B: Sor Juana 4	2	1.0	Jun 7, 2017 2:17am
📄 B: Sor Juana 3	4	1.0	Jun 7, 2017 2:17am
📄 Sor Juana El sueño I	5	1.0	Jun 6, 2017 4:25pm
👤 Course People	6		Jun 6, 2017 12:34am
📄 Naufragios	4		Jun 5, 2017 11:25pm
📄 Course Modules	29		Jun 5, 2017 11:25pm
📄 B: Naufragios II	8	1.0	Jun 5, 2017 11:24pm
📄 B: Naufragios I	4		Jun 5, 2017 11:24pm

## HOMEWORK

Each unit/text will have a corresponding homework sheet. Each homework assignment is divided into two sections: **comprehension questions and analysis questions**. The homework sheets are for reference only, and you will not turn in written answers. Instead, **you will take a multiple choice comprehension quiz based entirely on the questions in the comprehension section**; you can consult your notes during the quiz. These questions are meant to establish a basic understanding of characters, plot, themes, style, etc., and will almost always have clear and unambiguous answers. The **analysis questions** build from a basic understanding of the text to develop your own interpretation. These questions will be open-ended, and not have definitive answers, as your own **personal interpretations and analysis** will come into play. The analysis questions will serve as inspiration for your own written responses to the texts. You should carefully consider all of the analytical questions, and expect your answers to develop as you move through the course materials and gain a deeper understanding of SF.

## COURSE PODCAST LECTURES

In order to gain access to each week's lecture materials, you will need to complete the comprehension quiz and post a pre-lecture blog.

## GRADING

30% Comprehension Quiz

45% Blogs, broken down into:

    Your own written responses: 30%

    Your comments on classmates' posts: 15%

25% Final Exam

### Comprehension Quizzes

Each unit/text will begin with a short comprehension quiz. **All quiz questions will come from the comprehension section of the corresponding homework sheet**, and you can consult the texts and your notes during the quizzes. The purpose of the quiz is to assure a basic understanding of the assigned text, and the quiz must be completed in order to gain access to the week's additional materials.

### Blogs

We will run class discussion boards as part of the course Canvas site. Each student will be responsible for posting **one original short essay per assignment** (an approximately 250 word analytical response) to the appropriate discussion board, **in addition to a substantive comment** on at least one of your classmates' posts. **Before you watch the recorded lecture, you will need to post your analytical response.** You can use one of the analysis questions from the corresponding homework as a starting point for your response; your response must be posted in order to gain access to the week's additional materials.

**After** you watch the recorded lecture, **you will post an additional response (a substantive comment) to one of your classmate's original blogs.** You can use this post to respond to something interesting they said, to further develop your own interpretation and analysis, to revise your original interpretation of the text, etc.

Your **analysis posts and comments** will be evaluated on a five-point scale. Although your blog posts are not formally submitted academic papers, you are expected to write with clarity, and to proofread your work before publishing. You are encouraged to take advantage of the digital format of the forum, and to include embedded media and links in your posts.

0 = no post (or trolling post)

1 = basic summary of course material

2 = beginnings of original analysis; attempt to engage broader themes

3 = developing analysis and engagement of broader themes.

4 = thoughtful analysis of material; engagement with course themes, topics, and ideas.

5 = deep reflective analysis of material; full engagement with course themes, topics, and ideas.

Your **comments** on your classmates' posts need to be substantive engagements: build upon another person's interpretation, register your disagreement and back it up with your own evidence, make a connection with another text, link to an image or video, etc.

In addition, our online discussions need to be **scholarly, thoughtful, and civil**. Do not harass any members of our virtual classroom community. Trolling or shitposting will receive an automatic zero.

### **Final Exam**

The final exam will be a mixture of text identifications, short essay questions, and your interpretation of a previously unread short story. In order to prepare for the exam, review the **course objectives** along with your homework and notes. Also: be prepared to write a one paragraph personal definition of SF.

### **Important Dates and Information about Grade Options**

The deadline to **Drop** this course is **Monday July 1**.

The deadline to **Request a W** is **Sunday July 14**.

Neither Summer Session nor instructors drop students for non-attendance or non-payment. Students must drop themselves. Dropping results in full tuition reversal/refund. Withdraw posts a W for the grade and full tuition is charged (no refund).

For all dates and deadlines, including 'change of grade option' (P/NP) and grades due, here is the summer academic calendar: <https://summer.ucsc.edu/studentlife/index.html>

For questions about dropping, requesting a W grade for a course, or withdrawing from the summer quarter, email [summer@ucsc.edu](mailto:summer@ucsc.edu).

**TECHNICAL SKILLS REQUIRED**

For this class you will be required to use the class's Canvas site on a regular basis. The skills required to fully participate online include:

- The ability to regularly access the course Canvas site and blog at least once daily.
- The ability to use word processing software and to export files in common formats (.doc, .txt, .pdf, etc.).
- The ability to upload and download a variety of digital media, including audio/visual media.
- The ability to collaboratively edit media using cloud-based services (google drive, etc.).
- **If you are having any trouble with Canvas please contact [canvas.help@ucsc.edu](mailto:canvas.help@ucsc.edu).**

**ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMMODATION**

UCSC's Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides resources and support for students with documented disabilities. Students in need of accommodation should send let me know asap. If you already have an Accommodation Authorization letter from the DRC, please send me a copy within the first week of the summer session.

**MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES**

UCSC Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides a wide range of short-term and long-term mental health services. Counseling services are confidential and free of charge to all UCSC students. For more information, contact CAPS at 831-459-2628 or visit <http://caps.ucsc.edu/>.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

All work submitted for this course must be your own. Any evidence of plagiarism or cheating will be dealt with in accordance with university policy. For more information, please see the University policy on academic integrity for undergraduate students at [http://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic\\_integrity](http://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_integrity).

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This course took a lot of work to put together. Thanks to Kristen Koopman, Aaron Zachmeier, Vernon Legakis, Kelsey Detwiler, and the rest of the staff at UCSC's FITC and Humanities Academic Services for their help and inspiration.

**CALENDAR** (Subject to change)**Week 1 Introduction: Speculation and Defining.**

Philip José Farmer's "Sail On! Sail On!" (1952)

Defining SF: various authors

Tom Goodwin's "The Cold Equations" (1954)

**Week 2 SF as Carrier Bag.**

Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969)

**Week 3 Post-Human Futures I: Transhumanism.**

Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End* (1953)

**The Drone Hive.**

"Hated in the Nation", Season 3 Episode 6 of *Black Mirror* (2016)

**Weeks 4-5 Simulation.**

*The Matrix* (film; 1999)

**Post-Human Futures II: *Xenogenesis*.**

Octavia Butler, *Dawn* (1987), Book I of the *Lilith's Brood* Trilogy