

**Department of English
Carleton University
Fall 2013**

ENGL 2107B: Science Fiction

Time: Tue/Thurs 6:00 pm-7:30 pm

Location: Tory Building 240

Please confirm location on Carleton Central

Instructor: Dr. Mayurika Chakravorty

Office: DT1915

Office Hours: Mon 12:30-1:30 or by appointment

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Course Description

Science fiction, like fantasy or speculative fiction, is often seen as a fringe genre dealing with non-serious, low-brow and even escapist themes. This course challenges such a perspective and aims to study science fiction as a dynamic genre that provokes reflection on society – its history and politics. The course will explore various traditions and movements in the history of the genre while discussing some of the major tropes in science fiction literature including inter-galactic warfare, alien encounters, construction of dystopia, alternate realities, and representation of medical/biological sciences. The course will also bring into focus the issues of race, culture, gender and sexuality through the study of representative science fiction texts.

Texts:

H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*
Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles*
Ursula LeGuin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*
Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*
Arthur C. Clarke, *The Songs of the Distant Earth*
Amitav Ghosh, *The Calcutta Chromosome*

NOTE: Texts will be available for purchase at Octopus Books (116 Third Ave; www.octopusbooks.ca; 613.233.2589)

In addition, we shall read three short stories which will be available on our course website (on CuLearn) or reserved in the library. The details will be available at the beginning of the course.

We shall also watch and analyze a film: *Avatar* (Dir. James Cameron; 2009)

Evaluation:

20 % Participation. Students will be graded in terms of preparedness for the class as well as the level of participation in class discussions.

[***NOTE***: Students are expected to attend all classes, having read and reflected upon the materials according the syllabus. Absence from more than 5 classes per term may result in not being allowed to sit in an in-class exam or to hand in the final essay]

30 (15+15) % -- Short Response Papers (2).

25% -- In-class Mid-term Exam. On materials covered in class. Open-book.

25% -- Final Essay (2000 words). The topic must be decided by a stipulated date in consultation with me.

Course Policies/ Class Etiquette

-- All Assignments are mandatory and in-class assignments need to be written on the dates specified. If you are unable to make it to class on the day of an in-class assignment, please send me an e. mail in advance as soon as you can. You will need to provide a doctor's note (if you are ill) or other relevant documentation.

-- In the case of late submission of an assignment, there will be a penalty of 5% of the total mark per day unless there is a pressing and well-documented reason and the student has informed me beforehand.

-- All assignments (take-home, essays and term papers) need to be handed in class. Please do not drop in the department drop-box (unless specified in the syllabus or in class) or slip it under my door. If one of your assignments is lost, misplaced, or not received by the instructor, you are responsible for having a backup copy that can be submitted immediately upon request.

-- You must come to class with a copy of the textbook. You are expected to come to class having done the readings and prepared to discuss them at length. To ensure active participation and lively discussion in class, I do not recommend the use of laptops in class. However, if you wish to type your notes on the computer, you may do so using a word-processing software (e.g. MS Word). **But absolutely no internet browsing/e.mail checking/social-networking in class.** All

computers need to be closed during in-class assignments/tests. **Cell-phones need to be put away in silent mode during class hours.**

-- In this class, you will be using CuLearn to communicate with me or with one another, submit assignments, post reflections or questions about the readings etc. You are responsible for ensuring that you have a Carleton computer/email account and for checking this account on a regular basis. I will be using CuLearn to post announcements, reminders, and grades as well as to email about anything related to class. Please use the “mail” function in CuLearn to send me any messages. This will help to ensure that you have a record of any sent message in case it does not reach me.

-- Although it is expected that we shall discuss a wide variety of perspectives on the topics discussed in this class, we are also required to do so in a respectful manner. Racist, sexist, homophobic, or ableist comments are unacceptable. To this end, students must familiarize themselves with the regulations concerning conduct and academic standing as outlined in the Undergraduate Calendar.

Schedule of Classes:

Week 1 (September 5): Introduction

Day 1 (Thursday, September 5): Introduction

Week 2 (September 10-12):

Day 2 (Tuesday, September 10): War of the Worlds

Day 3 (Thursday, September 12): War of the Worlds

Week 3 (September 17-19):

Day 4 (Tuesday, September 17): War of the Worlds

Day 5 (Thursday, September 19): Martian Chronicles

Week 4 (September 24-26):

Day 6 (Tuesday, September 24): Martian Chronicles

Day 7 (Thursday, September 26): Martian Chronicles **[First response paper due]**

Week 5 (October 1-3):

Day 8 (Tuesday, October 1): Martian Chronicles

Day 9 (Thursday, October 3): The Left Hand of Darkness

Week 6 (October 8-10):

Day 10 (Tuesday, October 8): The Left Hand of Darkness

Day 11 (Thursday, October 10): The Left Hand of Darkness + short story 1 (to be circulated)

Week 7 (October 15-17):

Day 12 (Tuesday, October 15): **[Mid-term Exam]**

Day 13 (Thursday, October 17): LHD/The Handmaid's Tale

Week 8 (October 22-24):

Day 14 (Tuesday, October 22): The Handmaid's Tale

Day 15 (Thursday, October 24): The Handmaid's Tale + short story 2 (to be circulated)

[Second response paper due]

Week 9 (October 29- 31): Fall Break

Week 10 (November 5-7): The Handmaid's Tale

Day 16 (Tuesday, November 5): Songs of Distant Earth

Day 17 (Thursday, November 7): Songs of Distant Earth **[Research Paper Topic/Outline Due]**

Week 11 (November 12-14):

Day 18 (Tuesday, November 12): Songs of Distant Earth

Day 19 (Thursday, November 14): TBD

Week 12 (November 19-21): TBD

Day 20 (Tuesday, November 19): Calcutta Chromosome

Day 21 (Thursday, November 21): Calcutta Chromosome

Week 13 (November 26-28):

Day 22 (Tuesday, November 26): Calcutta Chromosome + Short Story 3 (To be circulated)

Day 23 (Thursday, November 28): *Avatar*

Week 14 (December 3-5):

Day 24 (Tuesday, December 3): *Avatar*

Day 25 (Thursday, December 5): Review [**Research Paper Due**]

Academic Honesty

All students are expected to be aware of and abide by the University's academic integrity policy. Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;

-- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website http://www.carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/student_guide.htm.

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but are not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by Nov. 8, 2013 for the Fall term and March 7, 2014 for the Winter term.

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation>.

For Religious Observance:

Students requesting academic accommodation for religious observance should make a formal, written request to the instructor for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Please make requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. Accommodation will be worked out directly, and on an individual basis, between the student and instructor. Instructors

will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student. If you have any questions about this, please refer to the Equity Services website (<http://www.carleton.ca/equity/>) for a list of holy days and Carleton's Academic Accommodations policies. You may also contact an Equity Services Advisor in the Equity Services Department for assistance.

For Pregnancy:

Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Studies Advisor in Equity Services (<http://www.carleton.ca/equity/>) to complete a Letter of Accommodation. The student must also make an appointment with me to discuss her needs at least two weeks prior to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.