Science Fiction Present and Past. (3-0). Origins and development of the science fiction genre.

Course Description and Goals: English 334 is an exploration of Science Fiction. Students will be introduced to the major themes and techniques of the genre and to some of the most important writers and works of the form. The course will focus on the ideas, issues, and aesthetic values that mark the development of science fiction from the 18th century to the present.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will be able to richly analyze different genres of science fiction writing from the 18th century to the present.

2. Students will be able to identify major authors in the history of science fiction writing from the 18th century to the present.

3. Students will be able to articulate key aesthetic values that mark science fiction writing from 18th century to the present.

Core Curriculum Objectives:

Critical Thinking Skills (CTS): The course will enhance critical thinking skills through consistent reading and class discussion of key ideas in works of science fiction writers from the 18th century to the present.

Communication Skills (CS): The course enhances communication skills through small and large group discussion of and writing about ideas, issues, questions, visual representations and themes central to course reading.

Personal Responsibility (PR): The course will enhance personal responsibility through engagement with moral and thorny ethical issues that arise in class readings.

Social Responsibility (SR): The course enhances social responsibility by providing students with a cross cultural understanding of how history, region, and broader social forces have shaped the distinctive literary traditions in works of science fiction writers from the 18th century to the present.

Evaluation of Core Objectives

CTS: The evaluation of critical thinking skills will be based on exams and class participation and may include written work. Exams will be designed to allow students to
demonstrate their ability to evaluate and synthesize key ideas from the assigned reading. Class room discussion will focus on helping students better understand the nuances and complexities in works of science fiction writers from the 18th century to the present.

CS: The course will help students learn how to develop a greater understanding of works of science fiction writers from the 18th century to the present that may involve guided writing assignments in which they will receive feedback, exams in which students will be expected to effectively convey key ideas from the course succinctly and clearly, and class room discussion in which students will learn how to express questions and thoughts about the subtleties of each text under examination. Material from this course will include written texts and such visual representations as photographs, illustrations, films, or theatrical performances.

PR: The course material throughout the semester will offer students an opportunity to reflect upon personal responsibility through such topics as the implications of new forms of knowledge, creator’s responsibility to its creation, the ethics of scientific work dealing with the mysteries of life and death, moral decision to value forgiveness over judgment, and what makes us human. Students will explore these topics through group discussion, writing assignments, and exams.

SR: The evaluation of social responsibility will be based upon an end-of-the-semester short writing assignment in which students will be asked to reflect upon how their knowledge of literatures from previous historical periods and cultures outside of their own has changed in light of the new information that they now possess. Students will be expected to demonstrate how key insights from the course have helped broaden their understanding of how history, culture, and philosophical outlooks have shaped the literary traditions of science fiction writers from the 18th century to the present.

Required Texts:
Orson Scott Card, ed. Masterpieces: The Best Science Fiction of the Twentieth Century
Jonathan Swift, Gulliver’s Travels
Mary Shelley, Frankenstein
Robert Louis Stevenson, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
HG Wells, The Time Machine
George Orwell, 1984
Ray Bradbury, The Martian Chronicles
Isaac Asimov, The Caves of Steel
Douglas Adams, The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy
Suzanne Collins, The Hunger Games
Alan Moore, Watchmen

Assignments, Expectations, and Grading: Regular attendance and timely completion of all reading assignments are expected. Your final grade will be based on three exams (20% each for a total of 60%) and writing assignments (40%--two at 20% each). The exams will be made up of a mixture of short and long answers and emphasize class reading and material covered in class. The papers will provide you with opportunities to explore
science fiction in a variety of ways, including traditional analyses of literary texts, research papers, creative work, reports of your own discoveries in the genre, and explorations of the transformation of written texts into film.

**Paper Assignments:**

40 Percent of your final grade will be based on your writing assignments. Each Paper is worth 20% and you must write at least two papers on at least two of the topics below.

Each paper should be about 4-5 typed double spaced pages (1,000-1,250 words). It is all right if one of the papers is a bit longer than that – provided that the paper does not suffer from wordiness. It is not all right to hand in a paper that is substantially shorter than 1,000 words.

**Paper Topic 1:** Provide a literary analysis of some aspect of one of the texts we have read in class. You might choose to focus on the development of the protagonist or narrator or the use of setting or figurative language or on an exploration of some central theme or technique. You must have a focus and develop your thesis with a close analysis of the details of the text.

**Paper Topic 2:** You may write a research paper in which you explore the scientific underpinnings of one of the texts we read. The research should lead you into a greater understanding of how an author transforms scientific knowledge into a literary text.

**Paper Topic 3:** Compare and Contrast two of the texts we have read this semester. You must have a focus and develop your thesis with a close analysis of the details of the text.

**Paper Topic 4:** Your paper can explore the way in which one of the classics of science fiction has been transformed into a film. Discuss the ways in which the film is faithful to the original text and the ways in which it varies from its source. You may wish to argue for the superiority of either the text or the film or simply to provide an analysis of how the film develops ideas and images present in the text. Both Frankenstein and Jekyll and Hyde will provide fruitful opportunities but you may also explore the ways in which Shakespeare’s Tempest is transformed into Forbidden Planet or how Matheson’s I am Legend becomes The Omega Man.

**Paper Topic 5:** Write your own short science fiction story and then provide a brief analysis (about 250-400 words) explaining how your story reflects ideas and themes developed in this course. Your grade will be based on both the story and your analysis of your story.

**Paper Topic 6:** Write a paper arguing that I should add a specific work of science fiction to the syllabus of this course. Your goal is to persuade me that a specific text and author merits literary attention.

**Grading Scale:** 90-100 = A; 80-89 = B; 70 – 79 = C; 60 – 69 = D; 59 and lower = F

**For Attendance policy** see University Student Rules: [http://studentrules.tamu.edu/rule07](http://studentrules.tamu.edu/rule07)

**Academic Dishonesty**
All policies, including those on academic dishonesty, outlined in TAMU’s Student Rules (http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/) apply: “An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.”

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities, in Room B118 Cain Hall, call 845-1637 or visit: http://disability.tamu.edu/.

Reading Assignments: English 334

Week 1  Introduction: Defining Science Fiction
         Clarke, “The Nine Billion Names of God,” 110-115;
         LeGuin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas,” 212-217

Week 2  Jonathan Swift, Gulliver’s Travels, parts I & II
         Gulliver’s Travels, part III & IV
         Reread Gulliver’s Travels

Week 3  Mary Shelley, Frankenstein
         Reread Frankenstein
         View James Whale’s film of Frankenstein (1931) on media matrix.
         Discussion.

Week 4  Robert Louis Stevenson, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
         Reread Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
         From Masterpieces: Martin, “Sandkings,” 243-275;
         Silverberg, “Passengers,” 166-176;

Week 5  HG Wells, The Time Machine
         Reread The Time Machine
From Masterpieces: Heinlein, “All you Zombies,” 36-46;

First Due Date for Papers

Week 6
From Masterpieces: Biggle, “Tunesmith,” 47-79;

First Exam

Week 7
View Rouben Mamoulian’s film of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1932)
From Masterpieces: Ellison, “Repent Harlequin....,” 145-155;
Pohl, “The Tunnel Under the World,” 177-20
From Masterpieces: Niven, “Inconstant Moon,” 218-239;
Turtledove, “The Road Not Taken,” 276-298
Kessel, “A Clean Escape,” 384-395;

Week 8
George Orwell, 1984

Reread 1984

1984 Continued. Second Due Date for Papers

Week 9
Asimov, Caves of Steel

Reread Asimov, Caves of Steel

From Masterpieces: Asimov, “Robot Dreams,” 91-96;
Aldiss, “Who Can Replace a Man?” 203-211;

Week 10
Ray Bradbury, The Martian Chronicles

Ray Bradbury, The Martian Chronicles Continued

Reread The Martian Chronicles. Third Due Date for Papers

Week 11
Second exam

Adams, The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy

Reread Hitchhiker’s Guide

Week 12
From Masterpieces: Kelly, “Rat,” 364-374;
Gibson and Swanwick, "Dogfight," 297-315;

Collins, The Hunger Games. Fourth due date for papers

Week 13  Reread Hunger Games

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving

Week 14  Moore, Watchmen

Moore Watchmen Continued

From Masterpieces: Bisson, "Bears Discover Fire," 375-383;
Fowler, "Face Value, 316-326. Fifth and final due date for papers

Final Exam. The exam will emphasize both the assigned reading and the material covered in class. On the final exam students will be asked to answer a question in which they will have to reflect upon how their knowledge of literatures from previous historical periods and cultures that may be different from their own has changed in light of the new information that they now possess.