**Science Fiction Fall 2018**

**Course Syllabus**

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# Course Description

The focus of this writing-intensive course is to introduce students to skills and critical vocabulary for image and narrative analysis while building their academic writing and critical thinking abilities. By reading science fiction stories, and watching films and TV series that speculate on the impact of technology on the human condition students will gain a familiarity with the genre in order to compose responses, using a variety of writing genres and styles. The core question that students will collaboratively answer is: how will technology shape our collective future? In answering this topic students will be directed to examine course materials, perform research, and create projects that deal with issues that include but are not limited to: the posthuman, technology as a part of the human condition, technology and the environment, virtual worlds, technology and human survival, technology and the limits of time and space, and the scientific imagination.

No prerequisites. 3 credit hours.

# Schedule

## Lecture/Studio, Room 212

Section 01: Wednesday 1:50 – 4:25pm

Office Hours: Tuesday 10:00-12:00pm; 1:00-3:00pm

Wednesday 10-12:00pm

Thursday 10:00-12:00pm; 1:00-3:00pm

Friday 1:00-3:00pm

# Instructors

Prof. James McDougall 麦剑辉 jmcdoug@icloud.edu.cn

When emailing the instructors, include “SCI-FI” in the subject field of your message. Use your university email account (student\_number@stu.scu.edu.cn); mail from other accounts such as qq.com and 163.com will be stopped by the SCU spam filter.

# Textbook

*Course Pack* prepared by instructor; Film and TV Show Screenings; a time will be set for screenings of visual texts; DVDs and Files will be made available for students with time conflicts.

# Web Site

This course uses the Blackboard system; the web site is

**https://learn.scupi.cn/**

(Note: the **https** is important, otherwise it may not load.) There you will find the course syllabus, studio and homework assignments, and other materials. Current announcements and assignments will be posted on the home page. All assignments will be uploaded through the Blackboard system. Please check the class page frequently.

# Class Format

Science Fiction is taught using a combined lecture/studio format. Each class may include a combination of lecture, workshop, and discussion sessions. Teams will be formed during the first week of class; team makeup will remain constant for the entire semester.

Each week you will turn in a forum response. These are around 250 words and are designed to get you used to writing frequently about the class topics, sharing your ideas, and getting used to public writing.

You will be asked to write a textual analysis, where you compare two texts, and use details from these text in order to interpret the relationship between the structure of the narrative, the writer’s stylistics, the content of the story, and how the comparison generates ways of interpreting themes and ideas in the text. These comparisons should focus on the representation of technology, and the anxieties or desires for future technology.

You will be asked to write a scene or image analysis where you need to explain how the elements of a visual texts works together in order to construct meaning. While focusing on representations of technology it will be important for you to also think about the technologies of representation, and how we learn to make meaning through technology as well as how these technologies attempt to blur the boundary between representation and reality.

You will also work on a semester-long collaborative, multi-modal project that will involve some digital writing, video work, and oral presentation that will show your group’s intervention into the questions concerning technology that we will raise during class. This project is designed to develop creative and critical skills while working in teams as well as giving you a chance to gain more experience performing interdisciplinary research. Some of our class time will be devote for workshopping the project, and developing skills in compositing digital media.

**It is imperative that you come to class prepared.** This will generally involve reading, writing This is a three credit hour class, which means you should expect to devote at least 9 to 12 hours of effort outside the scheduled class time every week.

**Assignments and Evaluation**

You will be evaluated in many activities according to the grading policy. Activities can include:

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| Textual Analysis | * + a 4-page analysis paper comparing two texts | 20% |
| Image or Scene Analysis | * + a 4-page analysis of one image or one scene, using detailed language of how meaning is constructed in a visual text | 20% |
| Collaborative Post-Apocalyptic Survival Project | * + Power Point Presentation and a WikiHow article | 50% |
| Forum Journaling | * + weekly forum posts in response | 10% |
| Total | | 100% |

# Phones and Laptops

Out of respect for your fellow students, please mute and put away your phones, and close your laptops when class begins.

Web surfing, emailing, text messaging, and the like during lecture is distracting to other students and the instructor, and is likely to result in your missing some important information.

# More About the course

This course is about Genre, and how elements of a genre keep their internal coherence over time, space, and media. For engineering students this course allows you to think about the implications of technology and how technology shapes society, and the possible future horizons we share as people. There are horrifying prospects, but there is also radical potential to make a difference. Furthermore, as engineering is about problem solving and thinking, this course allows us to consider the challenges that face us all, and ways that we can engineer a new tomorrow.

# Course Goals

With successful completion of this course, students will

* gain a knowledge of the science fiction genre across different media in order to understand its aesthetic features, conventions, and sociocultural context as well as philosophic issues regarding technology
* learn and employ correct terminology for narrative analysis
* summarize and critically respond to popular and academic readings on science fiction
* employ aesthetic principles to analyze still images and narratives created through moving images
* write fluently in a variety of genres, including journaling, essay writing, and digital writing
* compose a collaborative, research-based project that has a visual, written, and oral component

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|  | ***Topic(s)*** | ***Textbook*** | ***Major Assignments*** |
| **Week 1** | Introduction | Read: “The Enormous” Radio (for the following week) |  |
| **Week 2** | Narrative analysis;  Technology in everyday life | Read: “There Will Come Soft Rains” | Forum 1 |
| **Week 3** | Plot in Sci-Fi; Technology and the post-human | Screening: *Black Mirror* “Nosedive” | Forum 2; Assign Essay 1 |
| **Week 4** | Peer Review; Technology and identity | Read: “The Machine Stops” | Forum 3; Draft due |
| **Week 5** | Sci-Fi Text and Contexts—problems and prophecy | Screening: *2001 Space Odyssey* | Forum 4; Final Essay 1 due |
| **Week 6** | Image Analysis; Scene Analysis | Read: “The Cyborg Manifesto” | Forum 5; Assign Essay 2 |
| **Week 7** | Peer Review; cyborg-human relations | Screening: *Black Mirror* “Men Against Fire” | Forum 6; Draft due |
| **Week 8** | Narrative: character and conflict in Sci-Fi | Screening: *I am Legend* | Forum 7; Final Draft |
| **Week 9** | Survival; Janus-headed nature of technology | Read: “Private Eye”; “Bloodchild”; | Forum 8; Assign Group Project |
| **Week 10** | Sci-Fi Settings; Sci-Fi Hard Boiled | Screening *Bladerunner* | Forum 9 |
| **Week 11** | Wiki Workshop; Utopian Futures | Read: “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelos” | Forum 10 |
| **Week 12** | “A question concerning technology” discussion, and presentation workshop | Read: Neural Alchemist |  |
| **Week 13** | Presentations |  | Group Wiki and final presentation |
| **Week 14** | Presentations |  |  |
| **Week 15** | Wiki Peer Review | Screening: “Howl’s Moving Castle” |  |
| **Week 16** | Final Submission | Blending the past and future to understand the present | Final Wiki Project Due |

**Student Use of Electronic Technology Policy:**

Students must use electronic technology (including cell phones, laptops, tablets, and iPads) in appropriate ways during classes. Out of respect, cell phones should generally be turned off or on silent and stored out of sight. They should not be used during classroom activities unless the instructor has given permission. Electronic devices are forbidden during quizzes, tests or other in-class graded assignments, unless the instructor has given permission. Technology use in this class is meant to improve the learning environment for all students. Please be respectful of your instructor and classmates and use the technology appropriately. If you have questions about what this means, please talk to your individual instructor.

**Recording:**

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may NOT record classroom lectures, discussions, and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly recorded in advance can be used solely for the student’s own study.

**Make-up Policy for Missed Assignments and Tests:**

Students are responsible for the assignments in their classes. Assignments include in-class activities, quizzes, tests, homework, and any other work related to classes.

* If you are absent from class, you should try to contact one of the students in your class to find out what work was missed.
* If you cannot find out from another student about what work you have missed, when you return to class you must talk to your instructors about the missed work and if/when you can make up the work. You are responsible for talking to your teacher; your teacher is not responsible for reminding you about missed work.
* If you are absent from class on the due date of an assignment, you must hand in the assignment and be prepared to make up tests the day that you return to class or on a date decided with your teacher.
* If you know you will be absent, talk to your teacher before you leave or email your teacher to find out about the work that you will miss while you are away.
* If you have not been absent from class and you want to hand in an assignment late, you must first discuss the reason with your teacher before or on the due date. Do not assume that your teacher will accept late assignments. Also, you will lose points for late work in this situation.
* If you and your teacher arrange to meet so that you can make up an assignment and you miss that meeting, you will receive a “0” for that assignment.

**SCUPI Honor Code:**

Students in this course must follow the SCUPI Honor Code. This includes:

* must not get help from anyone to do his/her work without the teacher’s permission.
* must not get help from any outside sources to do his/her work without the teacher’s permission.
* must not copy the words of another and present those words as his/her own work.

Participating in these activities can result in an F. Turning in work that is not your own can result in an F