

Science Fiction Course Syllabus

Spring 2022

Course Description

The focus of this 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

Section 02:	Monday	6:30 to 9:00pm
Section 01:	Wednesday	6:30 to 9:00pm
Office Hours:	Monday	10am-12pm; 1-5pm
	Wednesday	10am-12pm; 1-5pm

Instructors

Prof. James McDougall 麦剑辉

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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 between 50 and 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 discuss class texts, and use details from these texts in order to interpret the relationship between the structure of a narrative, the writer's stylistics, the content of the story, and interpreting themes and ideas in the text. Your analysis should focus on the representation of technology, and the anxieties or desires for future technology.

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, and sharing ideas. 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:

In-Class Participation	○ Routine Participation in Class	20%
Passage, Image, or Scene Analysis	○ a 4-page analysis of one image or one scene, using detailed language of how meaning is constructed in a sci-fi text	20%
Collaborative Future Design Project	○ Power Point Presentation and a collaborative Wiki article; or other Digital Project	40%
Forum Journaling	○ weekly forum posts in response	10%
Flash Fiction/Future Design	○ Practice creating sci-fi concepts	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

	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	Read: "The Machine Stops"	Forum 2; Assign Essay 1
Week 4	Peer Review; Technology and identity	Watch: <i>Invasion of the Body Snatchers</i> : https://v.qq.com/x/cover/zo0hd4aw7qcppca.html	Forum 3
Week 5	Sci-Fi Text and Contexts—problems and prophecy	Flash Fiction https://dailysciencefiction.com/recent	Forum 4
Week 6	Image Analysis; Scene Analysis	"Robot Visions," Isaac Asimov	Forum 5;
Week 7	Space Colonies from a different perspective	Screening: <i>2001 Space Odyssey</i>	
Week 8	Peer Review; cyborg-human relations	"Bloodchild"	Forum 6; Draft due
Week 9	Narrative: character and conflict in Sci-Fi	Screening: <i>Black Mirror</i> "Men Against Fire"	Forum 7; Final Draft
Week 10	Survival; Janus-headed nature of technology	Screening: <i>I am Legend</i> Cyborg Manifesto	Forum 8; Assign Group Project
Week 11	Sci-Fi Settings; Sci-Fi Hard Boiled	Screening: <i>Le Jetée</i>	Forum 9
Week 12	Wiki Workshop; Utopian Futures; Cyberpunk	Screening: <i>Blade Runner</i>	Forum 10

Week 13	"A question concerning technology" discussion, and presentation workshop	Read: "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelos"	Forum 11
Week 14	Horror of Nature	"Empire of Ants"	Forum 12; Project Draft
Week 15	AI, Big Data, Social Media and personal identity; Peer Review	Read: "Screening: <i>Black Mirror</i> "Nosedive"	Project Draft 2
Week 16	Final Projects	Final Project Submission	Final Project Submission

Note: Scheduled assignments, lectures, materials, and activities may be subject to change based on the needs of the class at the instructor's discretion.

Attendance Policy

After two unexcused absences students will lose 3 points or half a letter grade from their final grade. Students with more than five absences will fail the course. Students who are late or leave early three 3 times or more will be counted as one absence.

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 permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly recorded in advance can be used solely for the student's own private study.

Any reposting of recorded course materials may result in expulsion from course.

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 may lose points for late work based on teacher discretion.
- If you and your teacher arrange to meet so that you can make up an assignment and you miss that meeting, you may receive a “0” for that assignment.

Use of Machine Translation and Other Online Writing and Language Tools

While students are encouraged to use dictionaries and other language resources, they should not rely on machine translators for large sections of text. Papers must be written in English. Any paper that is written in Chinese and then processed through an online translator will be considered unacceptable.

If an instructor believes that a paper was written using machine translation, the instructor reserves the right to ask the student to re-write (potentially with a different topic), or give an alternative assignment, which may include a timed-writing essay assignment. Until the re-write is submitted the student will have an F for the assignment.

Use of non-English sources

All non-English sources must be cited. The translation of non-English sources is equivalent to quoting. When using Chinese sources, use quotation marks to directly quote the sources and include the original text in brackets. For example:

Wang Chao in describing nanocarriers says, “Interaction between nanomaterials and organisms, especially Interaction between the Immunological Effect of Nanomaterials and the Immune System in vivo further clarification is needed to optimize the shape, physicochemical properties, size and surface of nanocarriers [纳米材料与生物机体内的相互作用，特别是纳米材料本身的免疫学效应与体内免疫系统的相互作用需要进一步阐明，优化纳米载体的形状、大小、表面、理化性质等]” (Wang 96).

Policy on Graduating Seniors Course Requirements During the Spring Semester of Their Senior Year

Seniors taking HSS courses during the spring semester will have to complete course assignments by week 14. The instructor will provide an alternative final project/exam for graduating seniors that will be due by week 14. If a senior does not submit all work, fails assignments, or does not attend class regularly, the student may not graduate, and will have to retake the course in its entirety in a later semester in order to graduate. This may delay graduation for a complete calendar year.

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.

Writing Center Policy on Plagiarism: first instance will result in a failing grade with option of re-writing the assignment; a second instance will result in failure of assignment and meeting with

Writing Center director and no option for re-writing the assignment; a third instance will result in failure in the course and referral to university officials for Honor Code violation.

Participation:

Active participation is crucial for language learning. Participating in class makes you an engaged learner of English. In this class, participation means:

- arriving to class on time
- staying on task (including appropriate use of technology)
- actively listening to your classmates and teacher when they speak in class
- asking questions
- bringing all class materials
- attending class regularly
- completing all homework on time
- actively and constructively participating in class activities
- being prepared to answer questions
- using English in class

Student Responsibility

This syllabus is a contract between you and the instructor. It is the first place you should look for answers to your questions about course requirements, expectations, and policies. By enrolling in this course, you are agreeing to adhere to the requirements, expectations and policies outlined in this syllabus, including sections on the SCUPI Honor Code. Students who fail to submit their work on time or miss more than 5 classes could receive a failing grade and may not graduate.