

Department of English & Writing Studies

**Speculative Fiction: Science Fiction
English 2071F/G (650)
Summer 2016**

Instructor: John Kelly

Course Description

The science fiction course explores a selection of science fiction short stories and novels by

Readings:

Due to the short length of the course, difficult choices needed to be made considering the specific texts chosen and how to approach these texts. Hence, famous and influential authors like Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, Stanislaw Lem, and Frank Herbert have not been included. Instead, the texts presented in the course package were chosen to reveal the evolution of science fiction as a literary genre in the Twentieth century and to explore the critical themes that define this literature. In the course of reading through the materials, students should remember that the texts are not simply sites for imaginative speculation, but rather reflect and respond to very specific historical conditions. This means that when H.G. Wells describes the conflict between the Eloi and the Morlocks as representing the future development of English society, he is metaphorically discussing the oppressive class structure of late Victorian England.

Neuromancer as a crucial expression of the contemporary era, he is referring to the recent development of Cyberpunk as an expression of transnational corporate realities and global paranoia. What these references should remind students as they read is that science fiction constitutes a literature of social criticism anchored in its historical context.

Frankenstein and ending with two contemporary novels-- *Neuromancer* and *He, She and It*--that offer a dialogue on the possible effects and changes brought about by the technological advancements in what many define as the present age of information or the postmodern age. In between these novels, the course explores two of H.G. *The Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds*) that are

the time and embodied a synthesis of evolutionism, pragmatism, and strands of socialism. Next, we exa *A Canticle For Leibowitz*, a Cold War novel that reflects both the apocalyptic sensibility of the era of nuclear confrontation in the sixties and the feelings of historical inevitability that marked the era. Following Miller, we t *The Left Hand of Darkness* that explores the possibilities of an androgynous society unmarked by the divisions of gender. *Forever Peace* that examines the utopian possibility for achieving peace and eliminating war in the mid twenty-first century. *Neuromancer* *He, She and It*, novels that foreground what many critics see as a coming crisis in defining human identity.

Timetable
WEEK 1

WEEK 8 *The Left Hand of Darkness.*

WEEK 9 Alien Encounters. Begin

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

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Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.