

STSC 110. SCIENCE & LITERATURE

This course explores the emergence of modern science fiction as a genre, the ways it has reflected our evolving conceptions of ourselves and the universe, and its role as the mythology of modern technological civilization. We will discuss such characteristic themes as utopias, time travel, superman, robots, aliens, and other worlds—and the differences between European and American treatment of these themes. The course is structured chronologically and thematically around a series of classic SF novels (available for purchase at the Penn Book Center). Monday and Wednesday lectures will set the novels in historical, scientific, and thematic context. Friday sections will provide the opportunity for in-depth comparative discussion. David Reinecke will be assisting with the course and handling the sections. This course is cross-listed as ENGL75a, HIST117, and HSOC110, and it satisfies SAS distribution requirements in “arts and letters.”

Office Hours: ADAMS, Mondays, 12:00–1:30, 366 Logan Hall (madams@sas.upenn.edu).
REINECKE, Wednesdays, 1:30–3:00, Logan 3rd floor lounge (davimre@sas.upenn.edu).

Requirements: This course has no prerequisites. Students should attend all lectures and sections, and plan on roughly 600 pages of fiction reading per week. Grading will be based on two hour-exams, weekly 1-page assignments, two longer papers (4-, 7-pages), class participation, and other incidental assignments.

SCHEDULE: LECTURES & READINGS

Week 1. INTRODUCTION TO SF

January 16 What is Science Fiction? Science, Literature, and Culture.
January 18 Jules Verne and the Century of Progress

Week 2. VOYAGES IN TIME AND SPACE

• Jules Verne, *From Earth To Moon* (1863).
• H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (1895).

January 21 (Official Holiday: NO CLASS)
January 23 H. G. Wells: The Discovery of the Future
January 25 SECTION

Week 3. IMAGINING MARS

• H. G. Wells, *War of the Worlds* (1898).
• C. S. Lewis, *Out Of The Silent Planet* (1938).

January 28 The Great Martian Controversy
January 30 Imagining Mars: Two Worldviews
February 1 SECTION

Week 4. SCIENCE & UTOPIA

• Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932).
• George Orwell, *1984* (1948).

February 4 The Utopian Vision
February 6 SF, Totalitarianism, and Technocracy
February 8 SECTION

Week 5. BEYOND UTOPIA

- Arthur C. Clarke, *Childhood's End* (1953).
- Arthur C. Clarke, *The City and the Stars* (1956).

February 11	The European Superman
February 13	Beyond Utopia: Arthur C. Clarke
February 15	SECTION

Week 6. ROOTS OF AMERICAN SCIENCE FICTION

- Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Princess of Mars* (1912).
- Hugo Gernsback, *Ralph 124C 41+* (1925).

February 18	ERB, Gernsback, and the Origins of American SF
February 20	John W. Campbell, Jr. and "The Golden Age"
February 22	SECTION

Week 7. THE GOLDEN AGE: ROBOTS & HISTORY

- Isaac Asimov, *Foundation* (1951).
- Isaac Asimov, *Caves of Steel* (1954).

February 25	The Evolution of the Robot
February 27	Campbell, Asimov, and "Future History"
February 29	SECTION

Week 8. EUROPE & AMERICA

March 3	European <i>vs.</i> American Traditions in SF
March 5	HOUR EXAM
March 7	FIRST PAPER DUE

Week 9. SPRING BREAK (March 8–16)

Week 10. THE GOLDEN AGE: DOMESTICATING THE FUTURE

- Robert A. Heinlein, *Beyond This Horizon* (1942).
- Robert A. Heinlein, *The Door Into Summer* (1956).

March 17	The Heinlein Phenomenon
March 19	Heinlein and the "Mainstream"
March 21	SECTION

Week 11. ALIENATION

- Walter M. Miller, Jr., *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959).
- Kurt Vonnegut, *Sirens of Titan* (1959).

March 24	The 'Fifties: SF in the Atomic Age
March 26	Broadening the Format: Postwar Reconfigurations
March 28	SECTION

Week 12. ECOLOGY, ECONOMICS, AND EMPIRE

• Frank Herbert, *Dune* (1965).

March 31	SF in the 'Sixties
April 2	Eco-Fiction: The Dialectics of Complexity
April 4	SECTION

Week 13. OTHER WORLDS: THE 1960s

• Robert A. Heinlein, *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* (1966).
 • Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968).

April 7	Revolutionary Visions
April 9	The Dick Phenomenon
April 11	SECTION

Week 14. VIRTUAL REALITIES

• Orson Scott Card, *Ender's Game* (1985).
 • Orson Scott Card, *Ender's Shadow* (1999).

April 14	Computers, Cyberspace, and "Cyberpunk"
April 16	Science, Technology, and War
April 18	SECTION

Week 15. EXPLORATIONS

April 21	SF: Our Future's Past
April 23	HOUR EXAM.
April 25	FINAL PAPERS DUE.

Lectures: Lectures are a central part of the course, and are cumulative: alert attendance is required. You should carefully review the lecture hand-outs, and will be responsible for what was covered. After the lecture, copies of the hand-outs will be available in 303 Logan Hall from Ms. Pat Johnson.

Readings: We will be reading some 21 novels (roughly two per week, available for purchase at the Penn Book Center—and also available in Rosengarten). They have been carefully chosen to build on one another. Reading the books carefully, noting interesting passages, and taking notes is only the beginning: you should actively engage the ideas they contain, and think about them in the context of the lectures and the previous readings. All the books assigned for a given week should be read *by the Monday* of that week *at the latest*.

Sections and Assignments: Sections will be held on Fridays and will begin meeting the second week. In class each Wednesday, students must hand in a 1-page sheet comparing and contrasting the week's readings, responding to a specific assigned topic or question. These will be returned on Friday, with comments, and will serve as preparation for section discussions. In addition, there will be a midterm 4-page paper, and a final 7-page paper (on assigned or approved topics).

References: For background on particular authors and themes, and when preparing your papers, always use the definitive reference: John Clute and Peter Nicholls, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (1993). For reading, I especially recommend James Gunn, *Alternate Worlds: The Illustrated History of Science Fiction*; Brian Aldiss, *The Billion [Trillion] Year Spree*; and Lester del Rey, *The World of Science Fiction (1926–1976)*. See also John Clute, *SF: The Illustrated Encyclopedia*; Dieter Wuckel & Bruce Cassiday, *The Illustrated History of Science Fiction*; and, on films, Phil Hardy (ed.), *The Overlook Film Encyclopedia: Science Fiction*.