

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES  
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**

www.mlcs.ualberta.ca

2015-2016 C LIT 242 X02: Science Fiction  
(Fall Term)

Instructor: Dr. J. Varsava  
Office: 4-41 Humanities Centre  
Telephone: no phone provided by University of Alberta  
Office Hours: 12:30 to 1:30, Tuesdays, and by appointment  
E-mail: jerry.varsava@ualberta.ca

Time: 5:30 to 8:30 p.m., Monday  
Place: CAB 281  
Fax: 780-492-9106

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**Course Prerequisite:** no prerequisite

**Course-based Ethics Approval** in place regarding all research projects that involve human testing, questionnaires, etc.?

Yes       No, not needed, no such projects approved.

**Community Service Learning** component

Required     Optional     None

**Past or Representative Evaluative Course Material Available**

- Exam registry – Students’ Union  
<http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/infolink/exam/>
- See explanations below
- Document distributed in class
- Other (please specify)
- NA

**Additional mandatory Instructional fees (approved by Board of Governors)**

Yes       No

**Course Description and Objectives:**

An introduction to science fiction as an international literary genre, with emphasis on major works and germinal trends.

**Texts:**

**Required**

Bacigalupi, Paolo. *The Windup Girl*. San Francisco, CA: Night Shade, 2010. 2009. 1597801585

Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*. New York, NY: Ace, 2002. 1984. 0441569595

Haldeman, Joe. *The Forever War*. New York, NY: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2009. 1974. 0312536631

Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. New York, NY: Penguin, 2008. 1949. 0141036141

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. Mineola, NY: Dover, 1994. 1818. 0486282112

<https://ia601607.us.archive.org/19/items/Frankenstein1818Edition/Frankenstein.pdf>

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five*. New York, NY: Dell, 1991. 1969. 978-0440180296

Wells, H.G. *The Time Machine*. Mineola, NY: Dover, 1995. 1898. 0486284727

<http://www.freeclassicebooks.com/H.G.%20Wells/The%20Time%20Machine.pdf>

**Background Reading** (optional; not ordered for Bookstore)

Bould, Mark, Andrew M. Butler, Adam Roberts, and Sherryl Vint. *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*. New York; Routledge, 2011. 9780415453790

**Grade Distribution (see “Explanatory Notes”):**

In-class essay: 20% to be written in class on **Monday, October 5** (one hour)  
Major assignment: 10% 300-word abstract and annotated bibliography **due at noon, Friday, Oct. 30**, via email attachment to instructor.  
35% major essay (2,000 to 2,400 words)  
(essay is **due at 5:30 p.m., in class, Monday, Nov. 23**)  
Class participation: 5%  
Final examination: 30% (two-hour examination, written during classtime)

Date of Final Exam: 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Monday, December 7

Fall / Winter Exam Planner for the 2015-2016 academic year can be found at the following site:

<http://www.registraroffice.ualberta.ca/en/Examinations/Fall-2015-Winter-2016-Exam-Planner.aspx>

**Date of Deferred Final Exam:** 2 p.m., Tuesday, February 2, 2016

[http://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/Regulations-and-Information/Academic-Regulation/23.5.html#23.5.6\(3\)](http://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/Regulations-and-Information/Academic-Regulation/23.5.html#23.5.6(3))

**Explanatory Notes on Assignments:**

Your grade will depend, in part, on the compositional quality of your submissions. The major assignment must be submitted in printed hard copy, without a cover page, and not be put in folders, covers, binders, etc. The formatting of the essay should be in MLA style. MLA style and formatting guide can be found at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/> Instructions for the in-class essay and the major assignment will be provided in class.

**Required Notes:**

“Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) of the University calendar.”

**Academic Integrity:**

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at <http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/en/CodesofConductandResidenceCommunityStandards/CodeofStudentBehaviour.aspx>) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

**Learning and Working Environment:**

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring all students; faculty and staff are able to study and work in an environment safe and free of discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels this policy has been or is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that directs discussion is

inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department. For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the student ombudservice (<http://www.ombudservice.ualberta.ca/>). Information about the University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures is described in UAPPOL at <https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/PoliciesProcedures/Pages/DispPol.aspx?PID=110>

***Academic Honesty:***

**All students should consult the information provided by the Office of Judicial Affairs regarding avoiding cheating and plagiarism in particular and academic dishonesty in general (see the Academic Integrity Undergraduate Handbook and Information for Students). If in doubt about what is permitted in this class, ask the instructor.**

**All students** should consult the information provided by the Office of Judicial Affairs (<http://www.osja.ualberta.ca/Students.aspx>) and the Academic Integrity Undergraduate Handbook (<http://www.osja.ualberta.ca/en/Students/UndergraduateHandbook.aspx>) regarding the definitions of **plagiarism** and its consequences when detected. If in doubt about what is permitted in this class, ask the instructor.

**Students involved in language courses and translation courses** should be aware that on-line “translation engines” produce very dubious and unreliable “translations.” **Students in languages courses** should be aware that, while seeking the advice of native or expert speakers is often helpful, **excessive editorial and creative help** in assignments is considered a form of “cheating” that violates the code of student conduct with dire consequences.

An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. See the Academic Discipline Process (<http://www.osja.ualberta.ca/TheDisciplineProcess.aspx>)

***Recording of Lectures:***

Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

***Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:***

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections 23.3(1) and 23.5.6 of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

**In this course**, 5% of the total course grade will be assigned for in-class participation.

***Policy for Late Assignments:***

A late penalty of 5% per calendar day late will be imposed on tardy written submissions. The condition of being “busy” is not a valid excuse for tardiness. Effective time management is an important element of successful university-level studies.

### ***Student Accessibility Services:***

If you have special needs that could affect your performance in this class, please let me know during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you are not already registered with Specialized Support & Disability Services, contact their office immediately (2-800 SUB; Email sasrec@ualberta.ca; Email; phone 780-492-3381; WEB www.ssd.ualberta.ca ).

### ***Grading:***

Marks for assignments, tests, and exams are given in percentages, to which letter grades are also assigned, according to the table below (“**MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale**”). The percentage mark resulting from the entire term work and examination then produces the final letter grade for the course.

#### ***MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale***

| Letter | %       | Pts | Descriptor   |
|--------|---------|-----|--|
| A+     | 95-100% | 4.0 | <b>Outstanding:</b> Superior performance showing understanding and knowledge of the subject matter far exceeding expectations. |
| A      | 90-94%  | 4.0 | <b>Excellent:</b> Superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.                                  |
| A-     | 86-89%  | 3.7 | <b>Very good:</b> Clearly above average performance with complete knowledge of subject matter.                                 |
| B+     | 82-85%  | 3.3 | <b>Very good</b>   |
| B      | 75-81%  | 3.0 | <b>Good:</b> average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.  |
| B-     | 70-74%  | 2.7 | <b>Good</b>  |
| C+     | 66-69%  | 2.3 | <b>Satisfactory:</b> Basic understanding of the subject matter   |
| C      | 61-65%  | 2.0 | <b>Satisfactory</b>  |
| C-     | 58-60%  | 1.7 | <b>Satisfactory</b>  |
| D+     | 55-57%  | 1.3 | <b>Minimal Pass:</b> Marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.    |
| D      | 50-54%  | 1.0 | <b>Minimal Pass:</b> Marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.    |
| F      | 0-49%   | 0.0 | <b>Fail:</b> Unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.  |

### **Representative Evaluative Course Material**

The final examination will be of two-hour duration and will be a formal sit-down exercise. It will require the writing of two essays that respond to questions such as those below. The essays must be articulate and well-organized; they must make specific references to the literary work(s). There will be limited choice of essay questions; that is, for example, you will be directed to write on two of the four essay topics, or two of the three, as the case may be depending on the generality of the questions themselves. Your grade will depend, in part, on the compositional quality of your essays. The final examination will cover the material of the entire course. Please consult me if you are unclear about the requirements of the final examination.

1. Compare and contrast the discussion of technology in novels A and B.
2. In what ways are style and narrative structure used to present the main themes in novel C.
3. Discuss the significance of the following passage for novel D as a whole.
4. Discuss the thematic relevance of the following quote for novel E.
5. In what ways do novels F and G demonstrate a developmental trend in the history of science fiction as a literary genre.

## TENTATIVE READING SCHEDULE

### PART A: INTRODUCTION AND PRECURSORS

- Week 1 (September 7) Labor Day (no class)  
Week 2 (September 14) Course orientation; introductory lecture

### PART B: CANONICAL WORKS

- Week 3 (September 14, 21) ROMANTIC MYTHOS: Shelley  
Week 4 (September 28) CLASS CONFLICT: Wells  
Week 5 (October 5) ***In-Class essay on *Frankenstein****;  
**this date is firm and NOT tentative**;  
TOTALITARIANISM: Orwell  
Week 6 (October 12) Thanksgiving (no class)  
Week 7 (October 19) TOTALITARIANISM: Orwell

### PART C: CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE FICTION

- Week 8 (October 26) WAR I: Vonnegut  
***Abstract and annotated bibliography due noon, Friday, Oct. 30 via email attachment to instructor; this date is firm and NOT tentative.***
- Week 9 (November 2) WAR I: Vonnegut  
WAR II: Haldeman
- Week 10 (November 9) READING WEEK (no class)
- Week 11 (November 16) WAR II: Haldeman  
CYBERSPACE: Gibson
- Week 12 (November 23) CYBERSPACE: Gibson  
DYSTOPIAN FUTURITY: Baciagalupi;  
***Major Assignment due 5:30 p.m., Monday, Nov. 23 in class;***  
**this date is firm and NOT tentative.**
- Week 13 (November 30) DYSTOPIAN FUTURITY: Baciagalupi
- Week 14 (December 7) **FINAL EXAMINATION (in class)**