

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**

<https://uofa.ualberta.ca/modern-languages-and-cultural-studies>

2016-2017 C LIT 242, Section B1: Science Fiction
(2017 Winter Term)

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

Time: 10:00 to 10:50 a.m., M, W, F
Place: TB 3 65
Fax: 780-492-9106

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 literary science fiction as an international literary genre, with emphasis on major works and germinal trends. The course will draw from a variety of cultural traditions and geopolitical areas extending from the early nineteenth century to the contemporary era, and will engage such topics as scientific hubris, class conflict, totalitarianism, genetic cloning, and environmental ruination. At the end of the course, successful students will be able to develop independence analyses of the aforementioned topics through enhanced close-reading and writing skills, and understand their relevance to life in the early twenty-first century.

**Texts:
Required**

Bacigalupi, Paolo. *The Windup Girl*. San Francisco, CA: Night Shade, 2010. 2009.
1597801584

Houellebecq, Michel. *The Possibility of an Island*. New York, NY: Vintage, 2007. 2005.
9780307275219

McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*. New York, NY: Vintage, 2007. 2006. 9780307387899
Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. New York, NY: Penguin, 2008. 1949. 0141036144
Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. Mineola, NY: Dover, 1994. 1818. 9780486282114
<https://ia601607.us.archive.org/19/items/Frankenstein1818Edition/Frankenstein.pdf>
Vonnegut, Kurt. Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five*. New York, NY: Dell, 1991. 1969.
978-0440180296
Wells, H.G. *The Time Machine*. Mineola, NY: Dover, 1995. 1898. 0486284729
<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, NY: Routledge, 2011. 9780415453790

Grade Distribution (see “Explanatory Notes”):

In-class essay: 20% to be written in class on **Wednesday, Feb. 1** (50 minutes)
Major assignment: 10% 300-word abstract and annotated bibliography
due 10 a.m., Wednesday, March 15, in class
35% major essay (2,000 to 2,400 words)
due at 10 a.m., in class, Wednesday, Apr. 5
Class participation: 5%
Final examination: 30% (two-hour examination)

Date of Final Exam: 9 to 11 a.m., Tuesday, April 25.

Fall / Winter Exam Planner for the 2016-2017 academic year can be found at the following site:
<http://www.registraroffice.ualberta.ca/en/Examinations/Fall-2016-Winter-2017-Exam-Planner.aspx>

Date of Deferred Final Exam: 10 a.m. to noon, Monday, June 12, 2017

[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 the [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#) 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 that 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 that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels that 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 direct 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 [Office of the Student Ombuds](#). Information about the [University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures](#) is described in [UAPPOL](#).

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 content author(s) 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)) <http://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/Regulations-and->

[Information/Academic-Regulation/23.3.html#23.3](http://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/Regulations-and-Information/Academic-Regulation/23.3.html#23.3)) and 23.5.6 (<http://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/Regulations-and-Information/Academic-Regulation/23.5.html#23.5>) 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 [Student Accessibility Services](#), contact their office immediately (1-80 SUB; Email sasrec@ualberta.ca; Email; phone 780-492-3381).

Grading:

Assessment of the individual course components may be in the form of numerical marks or letter grades. The final letter grade will be based on "a combination of absolute achievement and relative performance in a class" (University Calendar, [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#)). The University Grading Procedure mandates that "a student’s level of achievement of the goals/outcomes of a course, their grade, and the descriptor of that grade must be aligned" (<https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/>). The following guidelines have been adopted by the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies:

MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale

Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	%
Excellent. A+, A or A- is earned by work which is superior in content and form and demonstrates an exceptional grasp of the subject matter. The grade of A+ designates work that far exceeds course expectations. Grades in the A range are normally achieved by a small number of students.	A+	4.0	97-100
	A	4.0	93-96
	A-	3.7	90-92
Good. B+, B or B- is earned by work that demonstrates a thorough comprehension of the course material and a good command of relevant skills. Grades in the B range are normally achieved by the largest number of students.	B+	3.3	87-89
	B	3.0	83-86
	B-	2.7	80-82
Satisfactory. C+, C or C- is earned by work that demonstrates an adequate grasp of the course material and relevant skills. Grades in the C range designate work that has met the basic requirements of the course.	C+	2.3	77-79
	C	2.0	73-76
	C-	1.7	70-72

Poor/Minimal Pass. D+ or D is earned by work that demonstrates minimal familiarity with the course material. Grades in the D range generally indicate insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.	D+	1.3	65-69
	D	1.0	60-64
Failure.	F	0.0	0-59

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 (Jan. 9, 11) Course orientation; introductory lecture

PART B: CANONICAL WORKS

Week 1 (Jan. 13) ROMANTIC MYTHOS: Shelley

Week 2 (Jan. 16, 18, 20) Shelley

Week 3 (Jan. 23, 25, 27) CLASS CONFLICT: Wells

Week 4 (Jan. 30) Wells

Week 4 (Feb. 1) ***In-Class essay on *Frankenstein*:***
this date is firm and NOT tentative;

Week 4 (Feb. 3) TOTALITARIANISM: Orwell

Week 5 (Feb. 6, 8, 10) Orwell

Week 6 (Feb. 13, 15) TOTALITARIANISM: Orwell

PART C: CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE FICTION

Week 6 (Feb. 17) WAR: Vonnegut

Week 7 (Feb. 20, 22, 24) **READING WEEK; NO CLASS**

Week 8 (Feb. 28, Mar. 1, 3) Vonnegut

Week 9 (Mar. 6, 8) Vonnegut

Week 9 (Mar. 10) DYSTOPIAN FUTURITY I: CLONING: Houellebecq

Week 10 (Mar. 13, 15, 17) Houellebecq

Abstract and annotated bibliography due 10 a.m., Wednesday,
Mar. 15, in class; this date is firm and NOT tentative.

Week 11 (Mar. 20) Houellebecq

Week 11 (Mar. 22, 24) DYSTOPIAN FUTURITY II: ENVIRONMENTAL RUIN:
McCarthy

Week 12 (Mar. 27, 29) McCarthy

Week 12 (Mar. 31) DYSTOPIAN FUTURITY III: CORPORATE PREDATION:
Bacigalupi

Week 13 (Apr. 3, 5, 7) Bacigalupi

Major essay due 10 a.m., Wednesday, Apr. 5, in class;
this date is firm and NOT tentative.

Week 14 (Apr. 10) Bacigalupi

Week 14 (Apr. 12) Course wrap-up