

Science Fiction: East and West  
College of General Studies  
Slavic Department of Languages and Literature  
Fall 2009 (2101)

**SYLLABUS and COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Fall 2009 (2010)

CRN: 37226

Location: CL244B

Day: Wednesday

Time: 6:00-8:30pm

Instructor: Carrie Marquette (Carrie.Marquette@gmail.com)

Office hours: Wednesdays 2:00-4:00 and Thursdays 11:00am-1:00pm in 1417CL

***COURSE DESCRIPTION***

This course compares Slavic and Anglophone science fiction on the page and screen. We will examine how a given culture's dominant concerns are articulated in a genre popular in the East (i.e., Eastern and Central Europe) and the West (i.e., American and Great Britain). These concerns emerge in works that imaginatively posit "fantastic" situations rooted in spatial, temporal, and biological explorations beyond those currently verified by science. Based on a wide range of novels, stories, essays, TV shows, and films, we will discuss such topics as progress, utopia/dystopia, human perfectibility, the limits of science, gender, the nature of knowledge, and human/other identity. We will also engage in a range of specific theoretical approaches to our texts, and a portion of our discussion will involve an attempt at applying these approaches to particular SF works.

***COURSE FORMAT***

This course will be conducted as a combination of lecture and discussion, with films viewed in class as well as outside. Preparation is vital for meaningful class discussion, so keeping up with the reading schedule is imperative.

***COURSE REQUIREMENTS***

Students are required to:

1. Complete the assignments scheduled for each class meeting, and be prepared to summarize and discuss the material in class on the appropriate day;
2. Participate actively and intelligently in class discussions;
3. Take the two (2) scheduled exams, as well as regular, unannounced quizzes administered throughout the semester;
4. Write two brief (2 pages), directed response papers (topics TBA)

## **GRADES**

The final grade will consist of the following:

1. Two exams (75 points each)—150 points
2. Quizzes—25 points
3. Attendance and Participation—50 points
4. Response Papers—75 points

**TOTAL—300 points**

## **DISABILITY SERVICES AND ACCOMMODATIONS**

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting accommodation, you are required to contact your instructor and Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 216 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890 or 412-383-7355 (TTY). DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. No accommodations can be made without verification by DRS.

## **READING LIST**

Evgeny Zamyatin, *We*

H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine, War of the Worlds*

Stanislaw Lem, *The Futurological Congress, Solaris*

Orson Scott Card, *Ender's Game*

Karl Capek, *War with the Newts*

William Gibson, "Burning Chrome" and "Johnny Mnemonic"

Octavia Butler, "Bloodchild"

## **VIEWING LIST**

*Forbidden Planet* (in-class viewing)

*War of the Worlds* (1953, 2005)

*The Time Machine* (1960, 2002)

*The Matrix* (in-class viewing of clips)

*Alien* (in-class viewing)

*Blade Runner* (in-class viewing)

*Solaris* (2002)

## Syllabus

### Wednesday, September 2, 2009:

-introduction to science fiction

-in-class viewing of *Forbidden Planet*

-introduction to Freudian psychoanalysis

**\*assignment for next week: read *The Time Machine* (Wells) and view *The Time Machine* (1960)**

### Wednesday, September 9, 2009:

-apply Freudian dynamics of individual development to *Forbidden Planet*

-discussion of *The Time Machine*

-view clips from *The Time Machine* (2002)

-introduction to Marxism (orthodox and "Western")

**\*assignment for next week: read *The War of the Worlds* (Wells) and view *The War of the Worlds* (1953)**

### Wednesday, September 16, 2009:

-discussion of *The War of the Worlds*

-view clips of *The War of the Worlds* (1953)

-comparison of the two works

**\*assignment due in two weeks: read *We* (Zamyatin)**

**\*\*\*NO CLASS ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2009**

### Wednesday, September 30, 2009

-view clips from *The War of the Worlds* (2005)

-categorical comparison of all 3 works

-begin discussion of SF and politics

-discussion of *We*

**\*assignment for next week: read *Anthem* (Rand)**

### Wednesday, October 7, 2009:

-discussion of *Anthem*

-comparison of *We* and *Anthem*

-Freud and Marx in *We* and *Anthem*

**\*assignment for next week: read *War with the Newts* (Capek)**

### Wednesday, October 14, 2009:

-begin discussion of *War with the Newts*

**\*assignment for next week: study for Exam 1!!!**

**\*\*Response paper 1 due next week!!**

**Wednesday, October 21, 2009:**

**-Response paper 1 due!!**

-EXAM 1

**\*assignment due next week: read *Solaris* (Lem) and view *Solaris* (2002)**

**\*optional reading over the next two weeks: Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation***

**Wednesday, October 28, 2009:**

-general discussion of *Stanislaw Lem*

-discussion of *Solaris*

-general introduction to aspects of Lacanian psychoanalysis

**\*assignment for next week: read *The Futurological Congress* (Lem)**

**Wednesday, November 4, 2009:**

-general discussion of *The Futurological Congress*

-brief introduction to Jean Baudrillard's *Simulation and Simulacra*

**\*assignment due next week: read "Burning Chrome" and "Johnny Mnemonic" (Gibson)**

**Wednesday, November 11, 2009:**

-general discussion of "cyberpunk"

-discussion of Gibson's stories

-view clips from *The Matrix* (1999)

**Wednesday, November 18, 2009:**

- view *Blade Runner*

**\*assignment due in two weeks: begin reading *Ender's Game* (Card), review *War with the Newts* and read "Bloodchild" (Butler)**

**\*\*NO CLASS ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2009\*\***

**Wednesday, December 2, 2009:**

-discussion of *Blade Runner*

-general discussion of feminist science fiction

-discussion of "Bloodchild"

**\*assignment due in two weeks: finish reading *Ender's Game* (Card)**

**Wednesday, December 9, 2009:**

-general discussion of *Ender's Game*

-discussion of similarities between *Ender's Game* and *War with the Newts*

**\*assignment due next week: Study for EXAM 2, and Response paper 2 due next week**

**Wednesday, December 16, 2009:**

*-Exam 2*