

V41. 0728-001
*** Science Fiction ***
Summer 2011 - Session I

MTTh 1:15-3:25
194 Mercer Room 205

Prof. Eliot Borenstein
19 University Place
Room 212

Office Hours:

(212) 998-8676

T/W 12-1
By appointment

eb7@nyu.edu

Course Description: All fiction allows authors to create their own worlds; science fiction (SF) brings this element of the creative process to the forefront. In this course, we will look at science fiction as a literary genre, examining its rules and the way in which these rules are broken. While we will confront a good deal of SF's most famous tropes (travel through time and space, artificial life, utopia and apocalypse), this course is less a historical survey than an introduction to SF's strengths and potential. What does science fiction do that mainstream fiction does not?

Blackboard and the Internet. Blackboard, which is accessible through the "Academics" tab of NYU Home, is an important part of course, facilitating announcements and the distribution of course materials.

Please keep in mind that, by default, Blackboard uses your NYU email account. Many of you may have other email accounts that you use. If so, it is a quite simple matter to arrange for your email from one account to be forwarded automatically to the other. I strongly urge you to do so. It is **your responsibility** to make sure that you are receiving official email sent to your NYU account.

Writing Assignments: There will be two short papers, a midterm paper (5-7 pages), and a final paper (8-10).

The *short analysis papers* may be no longer than *three* pages, and they can be about any of the works we are reading. These papers are a tool to help you think about an aspect of the text that interests you, and any ideas you generate in the course of these assignments would be welcome contributions to class discussion. You must turn in the short paper by the beginning of the last class during which the text is being discussed, and you must show up for that class. That is, if you want to write a short paper about "Bloodchild," you must turn this paper in no later than **June 21**. If we are only spending one class period on the work, then you must turn in the short paper at the beginning of that class.

No late short papers will be accepted under any circumstances, nor will short paper be accepted from students who did not attend that day's class.

You may not wait until August to turn in two short papers. The semester has been divided into two parts, and you must write one short paper by each of these two deadlines. That is, your first short paper must be turned in no later than **June 6**, and your second is due no later than **June 27**. Though you are not allowed to wait to do all the short papers until the end of the course, if you feel you would rather do your short papers earlier (turning two short papers during the first segment of the course), you are free to do so.

The topics of your *midterm paper* and *final paper* are yours to choose, but you must come talk to me about them in advance. It is hoped that the short papers will lead you toward topics for your longer papers. Both your mid-semester and your final papers can be based on two-page papers, as long as you are not tapping the same paper for both longer works.

The midterm paper is due on **June 16**, and the final must be turned by **June 30**.

I welcome full or partial drafts of any of these writing assignment. Drafts of the papers must be shown to me no later than one week before the due date..

Electronic submission of written assignments. You are welcome to submit hard copies of your short and long papers. However, I prefer to receive students' papers electronically. Blackboard has a "digital drop box" feature, but I have not found it to be particularly reliable. Therefore, please send me your assignments by email, as attachments. The preferred format is any version of Word (97 or above, any platform)--such documents usually take the ".doc" extension. Failing that, .rtf files (which can be generated by most word processing programs) are also fine. I can open most other formats as well, including Word Perfect (.wpd), but this requires some extra effort on my part. Please feel free to consult with me about file format questions.

When you submit a paper electronically, please give it a descriptive filename. I have dozens of students, and if all of you send me files called "Science Fiction Assignment" or "Asimov Paper," this will be confusing and frustrating. After the first time you make this mistake, I will not accept another paper with an unidentifiable file name.

The preferred (but not required) format for file names is <Student last name> <Type of assignment> <Assignment number> <Topic >. Examples: if Bonnie Tyler has written a second short paper on Malzberg, the file should be something like "Tyler Short Paper 2 (Malzberg).doc". If Eric Roberts has written a midterm paper on Walter M. Miller, Jr., then the file should be something like "Roberts Midterm (Miller.doc)". A final paper on Joanna Russ by Scott Baio would be "Baio Final (Russ).doc".

Finally, please note that I have two different email accounts (eb7@nyu.edu and eliotb2002@me.com). The NYU account automatically forwards mail to the me account. Please do not send email to both accounts at once (“cc”); if you do, I will end up with three copies of your message.

Final Grade. Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Class participation:	20%
Two-page papers:	30%
Midterm paper:	20%
Final paper:	30%

Class participation. Most class periods will be a mix of lecture and discussion; only occasionally will I spend the entire class giving a lecture. Everyone is encouraged to participate in discussion, which will be facilitated by questions that I will be distributing in advance over electronic mail, and by the short papers.

Active and constructive class participation can significantly improve your final grade. Frequent absences can have a negative effect on your final grade.

**Required Texts, Part One
(NYU Book Store)**

Delany, Samuel R. *Babel-17/Empire Star*
Dick, Philip K. *Ubik*.
Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Lathe of Heaven*.
Lem, Stanislaw. *Solaris*.
Miller, Walter M. Jr. *A Canticle for Leibowitz*.
Mieville, China. *The City & The City*.
Watts, Peter. *Blindsight*.

**Required Texts , Part Two
(On Blackboard)**

The rest of the readings for this class will be available in two formats on Blackboard: Rich Text Format (.rtf), which can be read and printed using virtually any word processing program on any platform, and .pdf, which treats the articles as images rather than texts. Occasionally, the files are in .html format rather than .rtf.

Please also note that the first two readings on Blackboard are not assigned for specific days; rather, they are ancillary materials designed to help you perform well in the class. I expect you to familiar yourself with them before you turn in any written assignment.

Finally, please note that you must **bring the texts with you to class**.

A-1 Advice for Student Writers.
A-2 Citation
Asimov, Isaac. "The Ugly Little Boy."
Butler, Octavia E. "Bloodchild."
Chiang, Ted. "Exhalation."
Chiang, Ted. "Hell Is the Absence of God."
Delany, Samuel R. "1. A Letter from New York."
del Rey, Lester. "Helen O'Loy."
Dick, Philip K. "The Father Thing."
Gardner, "Three Hearings on the Existence of Snakes in the Human Bloodstream"
Gibson, William. "The Gernsback Continuum."
Godwin, Tom. "The Cold Equations."
Gregory, Daryl, "Second Person, Present Tense."
Heinlein, Robert. "All You Zombies."
Malzberg, Barry N. "A Galaxy Called Rome."
Mandigma, Kristin. "Excerpt from a Letter by a Socialist-Realist Aswang."
Russ, Joanna. "Speculations: The Subjunctivity of Science Fiction"
Russ, Joanna. "Towards an Aesthetic of Science Fiction"
Russ, Joanna. "When It Changed."
Sheldon, Racoona. "The Screwfly Solution"

Silverberg, Robert "Schwarz between the Galaxies."
Tiptree, James Jr.. "The Women Men Don't See."
Smith, Cordwainer. "Scanners Live in Vain."
---. "The Lady Who Sailed the Soul"
Vonnegut, Kurt. "The Big Space Fuck."

Required Texts, Part Three: The EBook Options

Some of you might prefer to read the required texts as eBooks. You should feel free to do so. Many of the books ordered at the NYU bookstore are available as eBooks from various Internet vendors (Amazon, eReader, Fictionwise, iBooks, etc.). To my knowledge, these include the books by Brooks, Eagleman, Morrison, Sebald, and Stoker.

In addition, I have made all of the Blackboard readings available in the "Course Documents" tab as eBooks. They are combined into files called "Course Packs," which are an amalgamation of all the assigned texts on Blackboard.

I have made them available in three different formats:

- 1) PDB format. This is the native format for the eReader/Fictionwise/Barnes and Noble/Nook applications. It can also be read in Stanza.
- 2) Mobi format. This is the format that Amazon acquired for the Kindle, and can be read natively by any Kindle application.
- 3) Epub format. This is the format that was designed to be an industry standard. It is the only format read by Apple's iBooks app, and can also be read in Stanza.

CLASS SCHEDULE

May 23 (M) Introduction

May 24 (T) Out of Time

- ▼ For Today:
- ✪Heinlein, "All You Zombies"
 - ✪Asimov, "The Ugly Little Boy"
 - ✪Russ, "Toward an Aesthetic of Science Fiction"

May 26 (Th) Little Faith (1)

- ▼ For Today:
- ✪Chiang, "Hell is the Absence"
 - ✪Gardner, "Three Hearings"
 - ✪Russ, "Speculations"

May 30 (M) NO CLASS

May 31 (T) Little Faith (2)

- ▼ For Today:
- ✪Miller, *A Canticle for Leibowitz*

June 1 (Th) All Possible Worlds (1)

- ▼ For Today:
- ✪Delany, *Empire Star*

June 6 (M) All Possible Worlds (2)

- ▼ For Today:
- ✪Le Guin, *The Lathe of Heaven*
 - ✪Delany, "A Letter from New York"

Final Deadline for First Short Paper

June 7 (T) The Extremes of the Body

- ▼ For Today:
- ✪Smith, "Scanners Live in Vain"
 - ✪Smith, "The Lady Who Sailed the Soul"

June 9 (Th) All Possible Worlds (2)

- ✪Dick, *Ubik*

June 13 (M) Outer and Inner Space (1)

- ▼ For Today:
- ✪Lem, *Solaris*

June 14 (T) Men, Women, Machines (1)

- ▼ For Today:
- ✪Godwin, "The Cold Equations"
 - ✪del Rey, "Helen O'Loy"
 - ✪Vonnegut, "The Big Space Fuck"

June 16 (Th) Men, Women, Machines (2)

- ▼ For Today:
- ✪Sheldon, "Screwfly"
 - ✪Tiptree, "The Women"
- MIDTERM PAPER DUE**

June 20 (M) Outer and Inner Space (1)

- ▼ For Today:
- ✪Watts, *Blindsight*

June 21 (T) The Birth of the New (2)

- ▼ For Today:
- ✪Butler, "Bloodchild"
 - ✪Russ, "When It Changed"
 - ✪Dick, "The Father Thing"

June 23 (Th) Outer and Inner Space (2)

- ▼ For Today:
- ✪Malzberg, "A Galaxy"
 - ✪Silverberg, "Schwarz"

June 27 (M) Superpositions

- ▼ For Today:
- ✪Mieville, *The City & the City*
- Final Deadline for Second Paper**

June 28 (T) Undefined Terms

- ▼ For Today:
- ✪Gregory, "Second Person, Present Tense"
 - ✪Mandigma, "Excerpt from a Letter"

June 30 (Th) Looking Backward

- ▼ For Today:
- ✪Chiang, "Exhalation"
 - ✪Gibson, "Gernsback"
- Final Paper Due**