

Prof. Jared Gardner
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English 372

Science Fiction and/or Fantasy

Deep Play: Exploring Virtual Realities

Course Description: Increasingly we live our lives plugged in, immersed in a networked world. Even our social interactions are increasingly mediated by virtual communities and spaces: Facebook, SecondLife, etc. As with so many of the changes we face today and will face in the future, science fiction has been for many decades thinking through the issues involved. In this class, we will study science fictions explicitly engaged with exploring the politics, possibilities, and dangers of living and playing in virtual worlds.

GEC: English 372 applies to the following GEC category: 2. Breadth; C. Arts and Humanities; (1) Literature. Students evaluate significant writing and develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; interpretation and evaluation; critical listening, reading, seeing, thinking and writing; and experiencing the arts and reflecting on that experience. English 372 introduces students to speculative writing, i.e., science fiction and/or fantasy and provides the opportunity to examine works of science fiction and/or fantasy comparatively and apply this knowledge to the understanding of the tradition and practice of speculative writing.

[*Note: all readings are available at SBX Books*]

Week 1

Reading: Philip K. Dick, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965)

Monday: Philip K. Dick and the history of speculative science fiction

Wednesday: Discussion

Week 2

Reading: James Tiptree, Jr. [Alice Sheldon], *The Girl Who Was Plugged In* (1973)

Monday: "James Tiptree" and women in sci fi

Wednesday: Discussion; Quiz 1

Week 3

Reading: Orson Scott Card, *Ender's Game* (1977)

Monday: Cold War games and the mapping out of virtual realities

Wednesday: Discussion

Week 4

Reading: Greg Bear, *Blood Music* (1983)

Monday: Nanotechnology and the virtual realities within

Wednesday: Discussion; Quiz 2

Week 5

Reading: William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (1984)

Monday: The Birth of Cyberpunk

Wednesday: Discussion; Paper 1 due

Week 6

Reading: Pat Cadigan, *Mindplayers* (1987)

Monday: Cyberpunk comes of age

Wednesday: Discussion; Quiz 3

Week 7

Reading: Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash* (1992)

Monday: Postcyberpunk and the new politics of networked play

Wednesday: Discussion

Week 8

Reading: Greg Egan, *Diaspora* (1997)

Monday: Imagining identity beyond the body: cyborgs and 'acorporeals'
Wednesday: Discussion; Quiz 4

Week 9

Reading: M. T. Anderson, *Feed* (2004)

Monday: the end of the game: new millennial dystopias
Wednesday: Discussion

Week 10

Monday: Screening of *The Matrix*
Wednesday: Conclusions

Final Exam

Final Paper due the Monday of Finals Week

RESPONSIBILITIES

a. readings

All readings are to be completed for the class in which they are scheduled. Screenings will be conducted in class.

b. papers

There will be two 4-6 page papers for the course. The first paper will ask you to focus on a specific set of concerns in one text. The second paper will ask you to make connections across several of our primary texts to consider what issues this literature asks and answers for us. Detailed instructions and discussion of the expectations for the paper will be given 3 weeks before the paper's due date.

c. discussion

This is a fairly large class, but we will be working collaboratively from our varied perspectives, experiences and insights to answer some of the big challenges involved in studying these texts. Discussion is a required component of the class. Toward that end, you will need to come each day with notes, questions, insights--and energy to share all of the above. We will also have an optional web discussion forum at our Carmen site. Here we can discuss the screening and readings, raise questions, try things out, and generally "chat" about these texts and the issues involved in studying them. Informal participation on the web-

based discussion to the site will be considered in calculating your participation grade, which will prove especially helpful for those having a difficult time participating in class.

d. quizzes and exam

There will be a final exam for the course, scheduled by the Registrar.

In addition (in lieu of a midterm) there will be four short in-class quizzes throughout the term; if you are keeping up with the reading and actively participating in class sessions, these will be straightforward and easy.

e. attendance

A strict attendance policy will be enforced. More than two absences *will* negatively affect your final grade; more than three will likely result in a failing grade in the course.

f. grading

The rough formula for the class is:

Papers = 40%; Quizzes = 20%; Participation=20%; Exam=20%

g. academic honesty

Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the [Code of Student Conduct](#).

h. students with disabilities

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 292-3307 in room 150 Pomerene Hall, who will work with you and me to coordinate reasonable accommodations for documented disabilities.

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue;

telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; [OSU Office for disability Services Web Site](#).