

## English 372 Science Fiction and/or Fantasy

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### Course Objectives.

When she was at college, the late, great Science Fiction writer Octavia Butler was asked by a well-meaning creative writing instructor

“Why do you write all that weird stuff?”

“All that weird stuff” – the sleek rockets, the robots, the moon maidens and mad scientists, the sultry swamps of Venus and the predatory invaders of Mars – are not just devices that set the genre apart, and contribute to an exciting tale. In the right hands, the themes and metaphors of Science Fiction *defamiliarize* things that have become invisible because we are just too familiar with them. SF allows us to see our world, our lives, in a fresh and wholly unexpected light.

As a literary form, science fiction offers writers unlimited opportunities to stretch language and narrative to their limits, and it offers us readers an equal opportunity to read actively and understand. In this class, we will use classic and modern texts of science fiction to develop the skills of close reading and critical analysis, as well as considering how these texts reflect the concerns of the time in which they were written – and why they continue to resonate today.

At the end of this course, students should be able to analyze any fiction text -- but particularly Science Fiction texts -- confidently, identifying and commenting intelligently upon the narrative choices made by the author. Able, in fact, to answer a similar question to the one that Octavia Butler was asked so long ago ...

“Why do you read all that weird stuff?”

**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.

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## Required Texts

*Visions of Wonder*. Ed. David G. Hartwell and Milton T. Wolf. Publ: Tor. 1996

H. G. Wells, *War of the Worlds*

Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Course Packet (Zip Publishing)

Carmen – online texts

## Students' Obligations.

Your first obligation is to come to each class meeting having read the material assigned, and prepared to discuss the readings.

### Written Assignments

3 response papers (3-4 pages each)                      30% (10% per paper)

Three short written reflections on the topics covered so far will be due on **Days 5, 9 and 17**. When I say “3-4 pages,” I mean a minimum of 3 full pages.

You will have the option of developing one of your response papers into a 6-8 page paper which you can submit during Exam Week, in place of the final exam.

### Exams

Mid-term	20%
Final (OR extended response paper)	30%
Weekly Quizzes	10%

**There will a short weekly quiz. Your two lowest quiz scores will be disregarded – the remaining 8 scores will count as 10% of your final grade. This is to encourage *both* regular attendance *and* careful reading of the texts assigned for the week.**

Participation	10%
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Good participation means

- coming to class on time, having read the material assigned for the day, and being prepared to contribute your views on the assigned reading
- listening actively, and maintaining a positive attitude
- doing all writing required of you, in and outside of class,
- collaborating appropriately, and showing respect to your classmates and to me.

## Course Policies

**Attendance** There are no automatic excused absences. If you know you will need to miss class for some good reason, you must contact me in advance, either in person or by e-mail, to clear it with me. If you miss a class-meeting for some reason beyond your control, such as illness, you must contact me with an official excuse or other documentary evidence. Absences that have not been cleared, or “pardoned” by me will result in the lowering of your final grade, at my discretion. **Five unexcused absences will automatically result in failure for the course.**

**Lateness** Stuff happens – please don’t skip class because, just once, you couldn’t find a place to park, or your alarm clock failed. Abject apologies after class are usually sufficient to put the matter behind us.

BUT ... habitual lateness is very rude and disruptive, and it will be reflected in your final grade. IF there is a serious issue causing your lateness (having to dash across campus from your previous class, for example), please speak to me. Not being a morning person is not a serious issue.

**Plagiarism** is the unauthorized use of the words or ideas of another person. **DON’T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT.** Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. Proper use of sources and citations will be something we talk about in the course of the class, and I am always available to answer questions and offer suggestions. **It is never plagiarism to ask.** Just remember that at **NO POINT** during the writing process should the work of another be presented as your own.

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](#).

**Student Work** must be completed and submitted on time. All assignments must be turned in at the beginning of the class period when they are due. If you know that you will miss class when the assignment or draft is due, contact me as soon as possible to arrange to submit your work.

Late papers -- unless due to an absence which has been cleared with me -- will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade (B+ to B) for each day past the due date.

End-of-quarter work can be picked up during the following term, by appointment. Student papers will be held for two quarters, and then destroyed.

### Resources

Me! Take advantage of my office hours. Feel free to contact me by email with any questions. I am here to help!

All members of the OSU community are invited to discuss their writing with a trained consultant at **The Writing Center**. The Center offers the following services: one-to-one tutorials at Mendenhall (Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:30) or the Younklin Success Center (Monday-Thursday, late

afternoons); one-to-one online tutorials via an Internet Messenger system (no ads or downloads); online appointment scheduling (available 24 hours a day). Please visit [www.cstw.org](http://www.cstw.org) to make an appointment or have an online tutorial.

The **Office for Disability Services**, located in 150 Pomerene Hall offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS at 2-3307.

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](#).

### Schedule

Day 1:	<b>Why are we here? What is a “trope”? What is a story?</b>	<b>Introductions, explanations, syllabus</b>	
<b>WEEK 1:</b> Day 2:	<b>“But isn’t it, like, just a story?”</b>	<b>Zip: Godwin, “The Cold Equations” Zip: Kelly, “Think Like a Dinosaur”  VoW: Knight “Critics”</b>	
Day 3:	<b>“What is a <b>plot</b> for but to bring in fine things?”</b>	<b>Zip: Heinlein, “All You Zombies ...” VoW: Benford, “Doing Lennon”  Suggested Reading: VoW: Stableford “To Bring in Fine Things”</b>	
<b>WEEK 2:</b> Day 4:	<b>My Own Private Venus:  Setting</b>	<b>Zip: Zelazny, “The Doors of his Face, the Lamps of his Mouth” Zip: Brackett, “Enchantress of Venus” (excerpt)  Suggested Reading: Zip: Delany “About Five Thousand Seven Hundred and Fifty Words”</b>	
Day 5:	<b>Point of View  *** DUE Response 1</b>	<b>Zip: Silverberg, “Sundance” Zip: Bradbury, “There Will Come Soft Rains”</b>	

		<p><b>Suggested Reading:</b>  <b>VoW: Russ</b> “Towards an Aesthetic of Science Fiction”</p>	
<p><b>WEEK 3:</b>  Day 6:</p>	<p><b>“What do you mean ... human?”</b>   ... Character</p>	<p><b>ONLINE: Bixby</b>, “It’s a <i>Good Life</i>”  <a href="http://www.lucifera-shadow.com/inanna_cornfield.html">http://www.lucifera-shadow.com/inanna_cornfield.html</a></p> <p><b>Required reading:</b>  <b>VoW: Campbell</b>, “What do you mean ... Human?”</p>	
<p>Day 7:</p>	<p><b>Bug-eyed Monsters ...</b></p>	<p><b>Zip: Butler</b>, “Bloodchild”  <b>Zip: Sterling</b>, “Swarm”</p>	
<p><b>WEEK 4:</b>  Day 8:</p>	<p><b>... and other little monsters.</b></p>	<p><b>VoW: Kelly</b>, “Mr. Boy”</p> <p><b>Suggested Reading:</b>  <b>VoW: Hartwell</b> “The Golden Age of Science Fiction is Twelve”</p>	
<p>Day 9:</p>	<p><b>The Alien Among Us</b>   *** DUE Response 2</p>	<p><b>Zip: Clarke</b>, “The Sentinal”  <b>VoW: Bisson</b>, “Bears Discover Fire”</p>	
<p><b>WEEK 5:</b>  Day 10:</p>	<p><b>Space Invaders – 1897, 1936 and 2001</b>   <b>Historical perspective (Online material)</b></p>	<p><b>Wells</b>, <i>War of the Worlds</i> chapters 1-10</p> <p><b>ONLINE:</b> “War of the Worlds – Invasion: A Historical Perspective.” <a href="http://www.war-of-the-worlds.co.uk/war_of_the_worlds.htm">http://www.war-of-the-worlds.co.uk/war_of_the_worlds.htm</a></p>	
<p>Day 11:</p>	<p><b>Talking about movies: Book to film --- and other media</b></p>	<p><b>Refresh your memory: Bradbury</b>, “There Will Come Soft Rains”</p> <p><b>ONLINE: Aldiss</b>, “Supertoys Last All Summer Long”  <a href="http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/5.01/ff_supertoys.html">http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/5.01/ff_supertoys.html</a></p> <p><b>ONLINE: Palmer, James.</b> “The Ultimate Halloween Prank: The War of</p>	

		the Worlds Radio Broadcast.” <i>Strange Horizons</i> . 27 Oct. 2003 <a href="http://www.strangehorizons.com/2003/20031027/radio.shtml">http://www.strangehorizons.com/2003/20031027/radio.shtml</a>	
<b>WEEK 6:</b> Day 12:	<b>***Mid-term***</b>		
Day 13:	<b>In-class Film</b>	Film: <i>War of the Worlds</i> (Spielberg, 2001)	
<b>WEEK 7:</b> Day 14:	<b>“Yet across the gulf of space ...”</b>	<b>Finish reading ...</b> <b>Wells, <i>War of the Worlds</i></b>	
Day 15:	<b>Toasters and Daleks: But can they climb stairs?</b>	Finish discussion of WotW Johanson, MaryAnn. “Ever-Changing Portents of Fear: Wells and Spielberg versus the Martians, and Each Other.” <i>Internet Review of Science Fiction</i> . 2 July, 2005. <a href="http://www.irosf.com/q/zine/article/10172">http://www.irosf.com/q/zine/article/10172</a>	
<b>WEEK 8:</b> Day 16:	<b>All Plugged in</b>	<b>Dick, <i>Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?</i> Chapters 1-5</b>	
Day 17:	<b>“Doubt puts the pants on the monkey.”</b> Pre-discussion of <i>Blade Runner</i> <b>*** DUE Response 3</b>	<b>Dick, <i>Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?</i></b> <b>“Aren't We All Just Replicants on the Inside?” <i>New York Sun</i>, 10/2/2007</b> <a href="http://www.nysun.com/article/63805?page_no=2">http://www.nysun.com/article/63805?page_no=2</a>	
<b>WEEK 9:</b> Day 18:	<b>Film: <i>Blade Runner</i></b>		
		<b>THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY</b>	

<b>WEEK 10:</b> Day 19:	<b>“I have seen things with your eyes ...”</b> <i>Blade Runner</i> and <i>Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?</i>	<b>VoW: Delany</b> , “Science Fiction and Literature”	
Day 20:	<b>Winding Up –</b> <b>“ ... it means what we point to when we say it.”</b>	<b>Zip: Zoline</b> , “The Heat Death of the Universe”  <b>Zip: Sheckley</b> , “Zirn Left Unguarded, The Jenghik Palace in Flames, Jon Westerley Dead.”  <b>Refresh you memory:</b> <b>VoW: Knight</b> “Critics”	
Exam week		*** <b>Expanded Response Paper (Optional)</b> <b>Time to be arranged.</b>  *** <b>Final Exam – time as per finals week schedule</b>	