



## Course Description:

This course will examine how otherworlds in science fiction and fantasy resemble our multifaced realities in terms of social, cultural, and political aspects. We will analyze how social and historical occurrences, such as colonialism, slavery, racism, anti-Semitism, among others, are represented and re-signified in the worldbuilding of science fiction and fantasy texts to denounce and criticize prevailing contemporary injustices. Combining different genres, such as films, short stories, and novels dating from the 1960s until the Marvel Era with *Black Panther*, we will discuss various topics, such as war, colonialism and post-colonialism, afro-futurism, gender, and race. While examining how science fiction and fantasy construct their worlds, this course focuses on how these works challenge formal and social conventions, presenting cultures that engage with traditions and, at the same time, critique our current practices and envision a future.

## Outcomes:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of literary genres and conventions from science fiction and fantasy.
2. Use close reading skills to interpret a variety of science fiction and fantasy texts (novels and films).

3. Demonstrate knowledge of worldbuilding techniques by creating and presenting a fictional world.
4. Produce well-reasoned written arguments about science fiction and fantasy texts based on textual evidence.

## Required texts:

Samuel R. Delany, *The Einstein Intersection* (Foreword by Neil Gaiman)  
 LeGuin's *The Wizard of Earthsea* (with a new Afterword from the author)  
 Naomi Novik's *Spinning silver*  
 Octavia Butler's *Kindred*  
 Nnedi Okorafor's *Binti* trilogy  
 Jeanette Winterson's *The stone gods*

## Movies:

*Avatar* (2009)  
*Black Panther* (2018)  
*Interstellar* (2014)

*All other readings will be available through our class Brightspace page.*

## Assignments:

### Participation: 20%

To earn an A in participation, you must come prepared to class with course materials (a notebook, pencil/pen, and the day's reading material) as well as partake in class and group activities.

### Presentations: 20%

In pairs or trios, you will "start" class discussion on a set date. In your groups, you will provide your classmates with a theme from the week's readings and conduct class discussion for **twenty** minutes. You will hand in a 3-4-page (up to 1000 words) reading response on the theme you chose to discuss. Each student must participate in **TWO** presentations.

### Reading Quizzes: 10%

At the beginning and/or ending of each novel, we will have quizzes. These are supposed to help me keep track of your reading and understanding. They will be available on Brightspace.

### **Midterm — Worldbuilding presentation: 25%**

In groups of four or five, you will use what you learned from our class to create a world of your own. You will present this world in form of electronic poster to class during Week 9. This world should draw allegories to historical events or social and/or racial issues related to current problems. Your electronic poster should accompany a one-page handout containing the most important information of your world for reference by the instructor and students.

### **Final paper: 25%**

Your final paper for this course will be between five and six pages (1250 to 1500 words) on a text of your choice (only the novels). You will make an argument about a current issue your text deals with and use textual evidence to support your ideas.

**Please note:** These are just brief descriptions; each project has several required components, and full assignments will be posted on Brightspace. Please see the class schedule for due dates.

## **Assessment and grading:**

**Grading Policy:** Grades will be posted for all course assignments within one week (7 calendar days) of their due dates.

**Late Work:** I do not accept late work unless arrangements have been made at least 48 hours prior to the due date. Final drafts of projects 1–4 must be uploaded to Brightspace by 11:59pm on the assignment due date, unless otherwise specified on the syllabus.

**Formatting and File-naming:** Refer to assignment sheets for formatting requirements for each assignment. Filenames for electronic documents must include your name and the title of the assignment. Don't save your project as "Essay.doc." Save it as: **YOURLASTNAME\_project1.doc** or **something similar**, so that your (and my) files stay neatly organized.

**Grade Breakdown:**

percentage	letter grade	Round ups
100–97 = A+	4.0 = A	<p>Your FINAL grade will be round up if it is over 0.6.</p> <p>For instance, in case you get 96.6, your grade will be round up to 97. If you however get 96.5 or lower, it will stay as it is.</p>
96–94 = A	3.7 = A-	
93–90 = A-	3.3 = B+	
89–87 = B+	3.0 = B	
86–84 = B	2.7 = B-	
83–80 = B-	2.3 = C+	
79–77 = C+	2.0 = C	
76–74 = C	1.7 = C-	
73–70 = C-	1.3 = D+	
69–67 = D+	1.0 = D	
66–64 = D	0.7 = D-	
63–60 = D-	0.0 = F	
59% or below = F		

**Checklist for an A grade.**

- Attend class regularly (health permitting).
- Complete nearly all of the course readings on time and demonstrate this by participating regularly in class: by speaking or using office hours and email.
- Complete your presentations and your reading response, and submit an essay that is persuasive, make full use of evidence, complete the required assignment checklist, and are mostly free of grammatical and typographical errors
- Attentively and thoughtfully revise at least one of your essays (the final paper, preferably. We will have classes for you to work on your essay, it is important that you do it for an A on participation).
- Attend the Writing Center at least once during the semester to consult on the revision process and provide a brief (1-page) written reflection on that

experience (by the end of the semester). During the final paper, you will have time to do this, but you can do it before too.

- Complete all quizzes and maintain an average of 90% or higher.
- Have an average of 85/100% in your midterm and final paper.
- Show respect and thoughtfulness to your classmates and instructors.

#### **Checklist for a B grade.**

- Attend class regularly (health permitting)
- Complete most of the course readings on time and demonstrate this by participating regularly in class: by speaking or using office hours and email.
- Complete your presentations and your reading response, and submit an essay that is mostly free of grammatical and typographical errors
- Attentively and thoughtfully revise at least one of your essays (the final paper, preferably. We will have classes for you to work on your essay, it is important that you do it for an A on participation).
- Complete 80% of quizzes and maintain an average of 80% or higher.
- Have an average of 80/100% in your midterm and final paper.
- Show respect and thoughtfulness to your classmates and instructors.

#### **Checklist for a C grade.**

- Attend class regularly (health permitting)
- Complete your presentations and your reading response.
- Complete at least 60% quizzes and maintain an average of 70% or higher.
- Have an average of 70/100% in your midterm and final paper.
- Show respect and thoughtfulness to your classmates and instructors.

A grade of **D** will be assigned if you fail to fulfill the requirements of either of the presentation assignment, miss more than 5 quizzes, allow your quiz grade to fall below 70%, or repeatedly demonstrate disrespect or hostility in class.

A grade of **F** will be assigned if you submit plagiarized work, fail to fulfill the requirements of the assignments, or fail to complete the midterm and final exam.

## Course Schedule:

<b>Unit 1 – What is Speculative fiction?</b>	
<b>Week 1: “<i>This is our land</i>”</b>	
<b>Days of the week</b>	<b>Required Reading</b>
Mon 08/23	Syllabus and icebreakers.  Getting to know students’ names and interests.
Wed 08/25	Reading: “Speculative Fiction” by Marek Oziwicz.  <b>Discuss Concepts:</b> Speculative fiction, Mimetic and non-mimetic fiction, science fiction and fantasy.
Fri 08/27	Film discussion: <i>Avatar</i> 2009  Discuss common themes in Sci-fi and Fantasy: Colonialism criticism; exploration and exploitation; multiculturalism; multi-speciesism; race, gender behavior as culturally constructed; science can save and destroy us;
<b>Week 2: “<i>You’re living in the real world now</i>”</b>	
<b>Days of the week</b>	<b>Required Reading</b>
Mon 08/30	<b>Reading:</b> S. R. Delany: “About 5750 words”  <b>Discuss:</b> the three major types of science-fiction
Wed 09/01	<b>Reading:</b> Delany, <i>The Einstein Intersection</i> , part 1
Fri 09/03	<b>Reading:</b> Delany, <i>The Einstein Intersection</i> , part 2  <b>Group 1 leading discussion + Reading response due.</b>  <b>Quiz 1 due.</b>
<b>Week 3: “<i>It is one thing to read about dragons and another to meet them.</i>”</b>	
<b>Days of the week</b>	<b>Required Reading</b>
Mon 09/06	LABOR DAY

Wed 09/08	<b>Reading: Reading:</b> LeGuin, "The Rule of Names" <b>Discuss:</b> Fantasy Vs. Sci-fi
Fri 09/10	<b>Reading:</b> LeGuin: The Wizard of Earthsea (Chapters 1 to 4) <b>Group 2 leading discussion + Reading response due.</b> <b>Quiz 2 due.</b>
<b>Week 4: "To light a candle is to cast a shadow..."</b>	
Days of the week	<b>Required Reading</b>
Mon 09/13	LeGuin: The Wizard of Earthsea (Chapters 4 to 7)
Wed 09/15	LeGuin: The Wizard of Earthsea (Chapters 6 to 9)
Fri 09/17	LeGuin: The Wizard of Earthsea (Chapters 9 to end +Afterword) <b>Group 3 leading discussion + Reading response due.</b> <b>Quiz 3 due</b>
<b>Unit 2 — A whole new world, just around the corner</b>	
<b>Week 5: "The real story isn't half as pretty as the one you've heard."</b>	
Days of the week	<b>Required Reading</b>
Mon 09/20	Discussion: Social criticism in Fantasy Short story: Spinning silver — Naomi Novik (Short Story)
Wed 09/22	Spinning silver — Naomi Novik (Chapters 1 to 5)
Fri 09/24	Spinning silver — Naomi Novik (Chapters 5 to 9) <b>Group 4 leading discussion + Reading response due.</b> <b>Quiz 4 due</b>
<b>Week 6: "A power claimed and challenged and thrice carried out is true"</b>	

Days of the week	Required Reading
Mon 09/27	Spinning silver — Naomi Novik (Chapters 9 to 18)
Wed 09/29	Spinning silver — Naomi Novik (Chapters 18 to 21)
Fri 10/01	Spinning silver — Naomi Novik (Chapters 21 to end) <b>Group 5 leading discussion + Reading response due.</b> <b>Quiz 5 due</b>
<b>Week 7: “Repressive societies always seemed to understand the danger of “wrong” ideas.”</b>	
Days of the week	Required Reading
Mon 10/04	Butler — Kindred (pages 9 to 52)
Wed 10/06	Butler — Kindred (pages 52 to 108)
Fri 10/08	Butler — Kindred (108 to 189) <b>Group 6 leading discussion + Reading response due.</b> <b>Quiz 6 due.</b>
<b>Week 8: “Slavery was a long slow process of dulling.”</b>	
<b>Second Reading Response due Friday 10/15</b>	
Days of the week	Required Reading
Mon 10/11	OCTOBER BREAK
Wed 10/13	Butler — Kindred (Pages 189 to 240)
Fri 10/15	Butler — Kindred (till the end) <b>Group 7 leading discussion + Reading response due.</b> <b>Quiz 7 due.</b>
<b>Week 9: Midterm</b>	
Days of the week	Required Reading



Mon 10/18	Presentation groups 1 and 2 + Handout due
Wed 10/20	Presentation groups 3 and 4 + Handout due
Fri 10/22	Presentation groups 5 and 6 + Handout due
<b>Unit 3: In Outer Space!</b>	
<b>Week 10: “Wakanda Forever”</b>	
Days of the week	<b>Required Reading</b>
Mon 10/25	Film: Black Panther Discussion: Africanfuturism
Wed 10/27	Binti (part 1)
Fri 10/29	Binti (part 1)
<b>Week 11: “We prefer to explore the universe by traveling inward, as opposed to outward.”</b>	
Days of the week	<b>Required Reading</b>
Mon 11/01	Binti (part 2)
Wed 11/03	Binti (part 2) <i>Nnedi Okorafor will visit Purdue on this date. Depending on the time, our class will meet in this event.</i>
Fri 11/05	Binti (part 3) <b>Group 8 leading discussion + Reading response due.</b> <b>Quiz 8 due.</b>
<b>Week 12: “What it means to be human is to bring up your children in safety”</b>	
Days of the week	<b>Required Reading</b>
Mon 11/08	The stone gods — Jeanette Winterson (Planet Blue)

Wed 11/10	The stone gods — Jeanette Winterson (Planet Blue)
Fri 11/12	The stone gods — Jeanette Winterson (Easter Island) <b>Group 9 leading discussion + Reading response due.</b> <b>Quiz 9 due.</b>
<b>Week 13: “Life has never been All or Nothing- it’s All and Nothing. Forget the binaries.”</b>	
Days of the week	Required Reading
Mon 11/15	The stone gods — Jeanette Winterson (Post 3 War)
Wed 11/17	The stone gods — Jeanette Winterson (Wreck City)
Fri 11/19	The stone gods — Jeanette Winterson (Wreck City) <b>Group 10 leading discussion + Reading response due.</b> <b>Quiz 10 due.</b>
<b>Week 14: “Mankind was born on Earth ... it was never meant to die here.”</b>	
Days of the week	Required Reading
Mon 11/22	Film: Interstellar  Discussion: Other common elements in outer-space fiction
Wed 11/24	THANKSGIVING VACATION
Fri 11/26	THANKSGIVING VACATION
<b>Unit 4: Final Paper and Considerations</b>	
<b>Week 15</b>	
Days of the week	<b>Required Reading</b>
Mon 11/29	Wrapping up. Final paper assignment.
Wed 12/01	Writing workshop – Making arguments
Fri 12/03	Writing workshop – Making outlines

<b>Week 16</b>	
Days of the week	<b>Required Reading</b>
Mon 12/06	Writing workshop – peer editing
Wed 12/08	Writing workshop – peer editing
Fri 12/10	<b>Final considerations</b> <b>Final paper due</b>