

WRITING 20.35 (Spring 2010)
MWF 11:55 AM -12:45 PM
Keohane Quad 4D 201

Instructor: Gerry Canavan (gc24@duke.edu)
Office Hours: TR 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM at
Trinity Café, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND TRAJECTORY

From *1984* and *Terminator* to *Wall-E* and *Dawn of the Dead*, the possible futures we imagine for ourselves seem to range only from the merely disturbing to the hopelessly apocalyptic. What has happened to our ability to imagine a better tomorrow for ourselves and for our children? Where has Utopia gone? This course will seek an answer in American science fiction from the second half of the twentieth century, beginning with John F. Kennedy's New Frontier and its defining television outgrowth, *Star Trek* (1966) and moving into an in-depth study of Ursula K. Le Guin's seminal "ambiguous Utopia" *The Dispossessed* (1974). We will end the term with a sustained consideration of the Utopian dimensions of distributed consciousness in the Internet age, as reflected in two very different works: Cory Doctorow's *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom* (2003) and Joss Whedon's *Dollhouse* (2009). Alongside each of these major works we will examine multiple secondary sources (ranging from academic journal articles to informal blog posts) in order to better understand the important position popular culture occupies in our political and cultural discourse, not only in the academy but in the everyday imaginative lives of the population at large. We will take these essays as models for taking pop culture seriously as we seek, through our writing, to expose what our fictions can teach us about ourselves.

Our assignments will cross a variety of writing genres from traditional literary analysis to political argument to blog posts. In addition to two major (6-8 pg.) interpretive essays that will interrogate our contemporary relationship with Utopia, which we will carry through several rounds of revision, major written work in this course will include five short (2-3 pg.) response essays. Your effort will center not only around your own critical writing but around close engagement with the writing and opinions of your peers. Accordingly, our in-class conversations will continue after class on our shared blog at <http://blogs-dev.oit.duke.edu/writingthefuture/>, to which you will be expected to contribute weekly. You will also participate in periodic peer workshops, during which you will both give and receive detailed feedback on assignments currently in process.

The culminating assignment in this class will be an articulation of your own Utopian vision of the future, in either narrative or manifesto form. As with the two major essays, this assignment will pass through several revision stages, including a class workshop.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Use literary study to develop skills for careful reading and clear writing
- Understand the aims and methods of intellectual discourse
- Express themselves in a number of academic writing forms
- Evaluate different viewpoints
- Identify and understand various formal characteristics of Utopian science fiction

- Demonstrate understanding of the cultural and historical contexts in which various literary and filmic works have been created
- Read and discuss science fiction on the levels of both form and content

These goals (specific to this course) operate within the general framework of the Writing 20 curriculum here at Duke:

GENERAL WRITING 20 GOALS

- Engage with the work of others
- Articulate a position
- Situate writing within specific contexts

WRITING 20 PRACTICES

- Researching
- Workshopping
- Revising
- Editing

Writing 20 is the *one course* all undergraduates at Duke take, reflecting the centrality of writing in all academic practice. For more information about Writing 20's goals and practices, please visit <http://uwp.aas.duke.edu/writing20/students/goals.html>.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at the Duke University Bookstore)

Joe Harris, *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts* (ISBN: 9780874216424)

Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* (ISBN: 9780061054884)

Cory Doctorow, *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom* (ISBN: 9780765309532)

Selected additional articles will be made available on Blackboard. Episodes of *Star Trek* (1966) are available at CBS.com. Episodes of *Dollhouse* (2009) will be screened in class. Additional video clips will occasionally be made available at our storage space at <http://itunes.duke.edu/>.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

I will give two types of grades in this course: check-grades (✓+, ✓, ✓-) and letter grades (A, B, C, D, F).

With regard to check-grades, your work should receive nearly all ✓+ and ✓ grades; with that in mind, if you receive a ✓- your grade for that assignment will be lowered.

Letter grades will follow the following rubric:

* To earn a **C**, you must clearly restate the meaning or project of a text in your own terms. A C essay may volunteer an original argument, but will likely lack evidence or analysis of its sources. C essays are clearly written, though they might display some grammatical weakness.

* To earn a **B**, you must begin to raise important questions about the text under consideration and to use those questions to drive your own interpretive agenda. A B essay

typically advances an original argument and provides solid analysis of the text(s) under consideration. B essays are clear, concise, and free of grammatical errors.

* To earn an **A**, you must construct an essay that does more than simply comment on the work of others; you must forward, counter, or transform what they have to say. An A essay advances an original argument that builds toward a climax and makes a persuasive case for its own significance. A essays are clearly written, and often eloquent.

* A **D** means that you have not written in clear prose or that you seem to have deeply misunderstood the text. An **F** means that you did not fully or seriously engage the assignment.

Your final grade in the course will be determined as follows:

- 20% Essays (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5) (letter grades)
- 15% Final Draft of MP1 (letter grades)
- 20% Final Draft of MP2 (letter grades)
- 10% Final Draft of FP (letter grades)
- 5% Blog Posts (4) (check grades)
- 5% Blog Comments (minimum 10) (check grades)
- 5% Research Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (check grades)
- 5% Group Interview Questions (check grades)
- 5% Workshop Critiques (check grades)
- 10% Class Participation (check grades)

Detailed descriptions of all assignments will be distributed in class in advance of the due date.

FORMAT OF WRITTEN WORK

Written work must be typed in twelve-point font, double-spaced with one-inch margins, saved in a format Microsoft Word can open. I expect you to *edit* and *proofread* all written work, even blog posts and first drafts. Drafts that contain excessive typos or grammar mistakes may be returned to the author for correction before I offer comments.

Please give each piece of writing an original title, and include your name, assignment, and due date in a header on the first page. Insert page numbers if your work spans more than one page.

All written work should be submitted via Blackboard's Digital Dropbox **by 8:00 AM the day it is due**. Late work will be penalized a half-grade if it is in by class time and a full grade thereafter. Except in unusual circumstances, work will not be accepted by email.

ATTENDANCE

Class discussion is an essential component of this course. It is important that you come to class every day having read the required material and prepared to discuss it.

Attendance in this class is mandatory. You should plan on attending every class. **You are allowed three unexcused absences over the course of the semester. After that, your final grade will drop by a third (A- becomes a B+, a B becomes a B-) for each additional**

unexcused absence. Missing a scheduled conference with me will count as one absence. Excessive tardiness, or coming to class unprepared, will also count as absences.

Please talk to me (in advance if possible) if you find you will need to miss class for any reason.

BLOG

One of the most important locations for class discussion in this course will take place on our shared blog, located at <http://blogs-dev.oit.duke.edu/writingthefuture/>. Each of you will be responsible for four posts on the blog over the semester, one post about each of the major science-fiction texts we will be working with: *Star Trek*, *The Dispossessed*, *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom*, and *Dollhouse*. (A sign-up sheet will be distributed in class.) Blog days are marked with a "*" on the syllabus; please post by 5 PM the night before class and please comment by 8 AM.

Assuming appropriate revision and elaboration reflecting the format shift from blog post to academic paper, I am happy for your blog posts to be reused for your essays and papers.

Full details concerning this aspect of the course will be distributed in class.

EMAIL

Students in this class are required to check their Duke email account at least once a day, in case there are any last-minute announcements or disruptions.

IN-CLASS USE OF LAPTOPS

Because of the length and formal characteristics of some of the material we will discuss, in-class use of laptops will be allowed and encouraged when such works are under discussion. However, students *must* refrain from all other computer uses, including email, instant messaging, Facebook, and so on. The ability to use your laptop during class is a privilege and I reserve the right to ban individual laptops if this becomes a problem.

HONOR CODE

Students are expected to abide by the terms of the student code of academic conduct, available in your undergraduate bulletin or online at <http://www.integrity.duke.edu>. I urge you all to examine this material and consult me with any questions you may have about plagiarism or academic integrity *before* it becomes an issue.

Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not an acceptable excuse for plagiarism. **Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the course.**

ACADEMIC ACCOMODATIONS

Students with learning or other disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class should visit <http://www.aas.duke.edu/trinity/t-reqs/ld.html> to learn about Duke's

policies concerning academic accommodations. If you anticipate a need for accommodations due to disability, please contact me as early in the semester as possible. All communication about disabilities will be kept confidential.

WRITING STUDIO

All students in this course are strongly encouraged to visit the Writing Studio, with locations at Perkins, Lilly, and the Art Building on East Campus, at any stage of the writing process. You may also make use of the Writing Studio’s e-tutor program. Please visit the Writing Studio’s website at <http://uwp.duke.edu/wstudio/> to find out how to schedule an appointment and to access the studio’s online resources.

RESPECT

This classroom is a community. It is crucial that we treat each other with the appropriate level of courtesy and respect. No one should be made to feel unwelcome here.

Failure to treat other students with the respect they deserve will **severely** negatively impact your class participation grade.

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class as they become necessary.

DATE	READING, FILM, OR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE BY 8 AM
W 1/13	FIRST DAY OF CLASS
F 1/15	Lakoff, “The Future Is Up” (Bb)
<i>M 1/18</i>	<i>MLK DAY—NO CLASS</i>
W 1/20	Harris, Ch. 1 Roberts, “Defining Science Fiction” (Bb)
F 1/22	E1 due (Coming to Terms)
*M 1/25	Harris, Ch. 2 <i>Star Trek</i> , “Let That Be Your Last Battlefield” (Internet)
W 1/27	E2 due (Forwarding)
F 1/29	<i>SCIENCE AND RELIGION SYMPOSIUM—NO CLASS</i>
*M 2/1	Harris, Ch. 3 <i>Star Trek</i> , “The City on the Edge of Forever” (Internet)
W 2/3	E3 due (Countering)
F 2/5	Library Instruction Day: Meet in Rare Book Room, Perkins Library
*M 2/8	<i>The Dispossessed</i> , Chapters 1-3
*W 2/10	<i>The Dispossessed</i> , Chapters 4-6
F 2/12	E4 due (Close Reading)

*M 2/15	<i>The Dispossessed</i> , Chapters 7-9
*W 2/17	<i>The Dispossessed</i> , Chapters 10-13
F 2/19	E5 due (Ideology Critique)
*M 2/22	<i>The Dispossessed</i> Criticism Day 1 (Bb)
*W 2/24	<i>The Dispossessed</i> Criticism Day 2 (Bb)
F 2/26	CONFERENCES—NO CLASS
M 3/1	MP1.d1 due (on <i>Star Trek</i> or <i>The Dispossessed</i>)
W 3/3	MP1 small group workshops (WCs due)
F 3/5	MP1 small group workshops (WCs due)
M 3/8 – F 3/12	SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS
M 3/15	MP1.d2 due
W 3/17	Research Proposals Due for MP2
F 3/19	CONFERENCES—NO CLASS
M 3/22	Annotated Bibliography Due
*W 3/24	<i>Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom</i> , p. 1-58
*F 3/26	<i>Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom</i> , p. 59-109
*M 3/29	<i>Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom</i> , p. 110-157
*W 3/31	<i>Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom</i> , p. 157-208
F 4/2	GROUP INTERVIEW PREP—NO CLASS
	Submit your final interview questions by 5 PM on this day.
M 4/5	MP2.d1 due (Research Topic of Your Choosing)
W 4/7	MP2 small group workshop (WCs due)
F 4/9	MP2 small group workshop (WCs due)
M 4/12	<i>Dollhouse</i> 1.6, “Man on the Street” (in-class)
*W 4/14	<i>Dollhouse</i> discussion
F 4/16	MP2.d2 due
M 4/19	<i>Dollhouse</i> 1.13, “Epitaph One” (in-class)
*W 4/21	<i>Dollhouse</i> discussion
	FP Elevator Pitch Due
F 4/23	FP.d1 due (Personal Utopia or Manifesto)
M 4/26	FP small group workshop
W 4/28	FP small group workshop
	LAST DAY OF CLASS
W 5/5	All Final Revisions Due