

Summer 2017  
**ENGLISH 2010-701**

Thematic Title: *Science Fiction and Genre*  
MW 5:30-9:00 PM  
David Straz Hall 350

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Office Hours: before or after class, or by appointment

What is a “genre”? How does the idea of genre impact the way we read and understand literary texts? In this course we will explore these questions by studying major entries in the science fiction genre of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. What defines science fiction? What makes science fiction different from other sorts of fictions, or other types of texts? Does the name “science fiction” designate a certain set of intellectual concerns, a certain set of narrative and visual clichés, even perhaps a certain type of reader? Is it all just a marketing strategy? What makes one text “science fiction,” another text “literary fiction,” and still other texts “fantasy,” “horror,” or “fairy tale”? Does science fiction imply a certain type of politics, or a particular sort of ethics? Can it teach us anything? Is it good for us or bad for us? We will draw from a wide variety of short stories, comics, novels, games, television series, and films as our archive as we seek to understand how science fiction has adapted and thrived as a genre, even as the “real world” itself becomes more and more indistinguishable from science fiction with each passing year.

### **LEARNING GOALS**

Upon completing English core studies in literature, Marquette University students will be able to:

- Produce oral and written assessments of literary and cultural texts and / or performances using the language and concepts of one of these two knowledge area disciplines.
- Articulate how literary and cultural texts and/or performances can transform one's understanding of self, others, and communities.
- Apply the methodologies of literary criticism to representative works of literature.

In addition, upon completion of this particular course, students will be able to:

- Identify and understand various formal characteristics of the science fiction genre;
- Demonstrate understanding of the cultural, historical, and political contexts in which various works of science fiction have been produced;
- Apply techniques of critical analysis as appropriate to diverse literary forms, genres, and media;
- Use literary study to develop skills for careful reading and clear writing;
- Read and discuss science fiction on the levels of both form and content.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

All texts are available at the BookMarq bookshop on 16<sup>th</sup> Street, though you are not required to purchase them there.

Ted Chiang, *Stories of Your Life and Others*

Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*

Octavia Butler, *Dawn*

Robert Kirkman and Tony Moore's *The Walking Dead*, vols. I & II

Additional readings and course materials will occasionally be made available via ARES and D2L, or during class.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Class Participation: 15%

Weekly D2L Posts: 15%

Discussion Inaugurator: 10%

Exam #1: 20%

Exam #2: 20%

Exam #3: 20%

Additional details on all assignments will be distributed in class well in advance of the due date.

## GRADING

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.

\* **AB**, **BC**, and **CD** grades fall squarely in the gaps between the above categories.

## QUIZZES

I do not like to give reading quizzes; I think they infantilize the college-level scholar. However, this is by necessity a very reading-intensive class; if it seems to me that people are not keeping up with the reading, pop quizzes may become necessary despite my philosophical objections. You have been warned.

## FORMAT OF WRITTEN WORK

Your take-home exams should be typed in twelve-point font, double-spaced with one-inch margins, saved in a format Microsoft Word can open. Your filename should contain *your name and the assignment* in it, for example, yourlastname-firstexam.docx.

I expect you to *edit* and *proofread* all written work. Drafts that contain excessive typos or grammar mistakes may be returned to the author for correction before I offer comments.

Please 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 sources relied upon for the writing of your paper, including the primary text, must be appropriately cited.**

## EXAM SUBMISSION

Your exams should be submitted via D2L's Dropbox by class time on the due date. **Late exams will be penalized a full grade for each day that it is late; due to university policy late final exams will not be accepted at all.** Except in very unusual circumstances, work will not be accepted by email.

Your other written work (which will primarily take the form of discussion forum posts) will be posted on the D2L forums. These mini-papers will have **flexible due dates** driven by your own interests and responses. **It is thus your responsibility to make sure you are properly keeping up with this portion of the course.**

Except in very unusual circumstances, work will not be accepted by email.

## TECHNOLOGY IS TERRIBLE: PLAN AHEAD!

The Internet goes down. Files become corrupted. Computers crash. These are predictable facts of twenty-first century life, not emergencies. For this course, for all your courses, for the rest of your career and your life in this world you need to develop work habits and strategies that take into account the basic, inescapable unreliability of computers. Start your assignments well in advance of the due date; save them often; save backup copies of essential documents, including copies off-site using a service like Carbonite, Dropbox, or Google Drive.

## ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION

Class discussion is an essential component of this seminar; class discussion, not lecture, will be the primary means by which we will investigate these texts together. It is therefore crucial that you come to class every day having read the required material and prepared to discuss it.

**Consequently, attendance in this class is absolutely mandatory.** You should plan on attending every class. Please talk to me (in advance if possible) if you ever find you will need to miss a class meeting.

The course adheres to Marquette University's attendance policy, which can be found on the Internet at <http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/#attendance>.

You are allowed **two absences** over the course of the summer semester. **After that, your class participation will drop by a letter grade for each additional absence.** Upon the fifth absence, you will receive a WA (Withdrawn—Excessive Absences) for the semester.

**Merely being present is insufficient to earn an “A” for class participation.** Each student is expected to *participate in* and *contribute to* our discussions. Just being in the room is not enough.

### **DISCUSSION INAUGURATOR**

Each member of the class will have one day in which they are expected to inaugurate our discussion by articulating a detailed, five-to-ten minute response to the day's reading. The requirements for this are necessarily very loose, as each day of the course will have a very different type of text to be discussed; in general, however, the discussion inaugurator will be asked to (1) articulate a thoughtful and critical response to some aspect of the material and (2) direct our collective attention to one or two problems in, questions about, or particularly important moments from the reading for that day.

A signup sheet for this will be distributed in class.

### **D2L FORUMS**

This course will also make extensive use of the D2L forums at <http://d2l.mu.edu>. In addition to being a place where you can find electronic copies of the syllabus and other course handouts, D2L also features an online forum where you can express your response to the material before class begins and where we can continue our discussions after class is over.

The D2L discussion forums are an excellent place for people who may feel inhibited by in-class discussion to share their opinions with the class. I will be reading the discussion forum regularly and I recommend you do the same. You may choose either to begin a discussion thread on a new topic or to respond to a post composed by one of your classmates.

Before **next class**, every student is required to take the following actions:

- \* **upload a picture of their face to their D2L profile**
- \* **write a short (approximately two to five paragraphs) response to either of the *Black Mirror* episodes, Ursula K. Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," or Ted Chiang's "Liking What You See: A Documentary"**

After that, students must write **at least one short post per week** responding across the remainder of the course. You may miss one week without penalty. These posts should be completed either

by noon before one of the class discussions devoted to that text or by the noon before the following class.

Additional posts beyond the requirement, and posts that respond substantively to other students' arguments, will be looked upon very favorably when I calculate your final grade.

### **EMAIL**

Students in this class are required to check their official Marquette email account—whatever account D2L sends its emails to—at least once the afternoon before a scheduled class meeting, in case there are any last-minute announcements or disruptions.

I endeavor to respond to all emails within 24 hours, usually much less—but please do not send me urgent emails regarding your assignments on the night before they are due and expect an immediate reply.

### **LAPTOP POLICY**

In-class use of laptops, Kindles, iPads, etc. is permitted for access to electronic versions of our texts and for notetaking. However, students *must* refrain from non-class-related computer use, including email, instant messaging, Facebook, Twitter, and the like. I reserve the right to ban individual technological devices if this becomes a problem. No use of cell phones will be permitted during class time; please turn off your ringers and put them out of sight.

### **FLEXIBILITY**

If it will benefit the class, changes may be made to the above.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Students with disabilities who believe they may require accommodations in this course should contact me early in the semester so your learning needs can be appropriately met.

I am of course more than happy to work with you to make sure you are successful in this course and to make this course most accessible for you. However, without documentation, I am limited in what I am able to do. Therefore, in order for me to help you most effectively, I need you to be proactive in contacting Marquette University's Office of Disability Services (located on the fifth floor of the 707 Building).

ODS can be reached by phone at (414) 288-1645 or by email at [ods@marquette.edu](mailto:ods@marquette.edu).

### **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Students are expected to abide by the academic honesty policy outlined in your undergraduate bulletin. 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.** No exceptions or special dispensations will be made.

Marquette students now sign an Honor Pledge, which states:

- *I recognize the importance of personal integrity in all aspects of life and work.*
- *I commit myself to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, by which I earn the respect of others.*
- *I support the development of good character, and commit myself to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity as an important aspect of personal integrity.*
- *My commitment obliges me to conduct myself according to the Marquette University Honor Code.*

Full details of Marquette's academic integrity policy are available on the Internet at <http://www.marquette.edu/provost/academic-integrity.php>.

On a personal level, I (like everyone) hate being lied to. Please, do not feel you need to concoct elaborate stories. Simply be honest with me about whatever is going on and we will work it out.

### **ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

We all enter this classroom with preexisting political, ethical, philosophical, and intellectual commitments. You are all required to engage the material—but you are absolutely *not* required to agree either with any of the writers we will discuss, or with me, in whole or in part.

### **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.

### **SOME THOUGHTS ON THE UNUSUAL NATURE OF SUMMER SCHOOL**

College courses that take place during the summer session are, by their nature, quite different from classes that take place during the fall or spring semesters. That situation is compounded, in our case, by the fact that ours is a night class that meets for several hours at a time only twice a week.

I have endeavored as best I can to schedule the course so that the readings will not be onerous; we will use in-class readings, as well as film and television screenings, to supplement the material you read at home. (I have also attempted to select material that I hope will be interesting and engaging, so that it never *feels* onerous.) I have also—as a pedagogical experiment—eliminated long papers in this class in favor of D2L forum posts, in-class presentations, and two take-home examinations. In doing all this I am trying to be realistic about what is possible for us to achieve together within a six-week summer course, and to develop the richest intellectual experience possible within those constraints.

Despite all of the above, however, I must stress that this course is still *serious business*: it is meant to be the equivalent of the fall or spring fifteen-week course. The fact that the course has been paced for summer should *not* be mistaken for an excuse for you to blow this class off or fail

to take it seriously. I hope, instead, that you will embrace the unique opportunity this course’s unusual pacing offers for intense scholarly engagement with your peers. What will make this class both most fun and most useful to you as emerging scholars is a collective commitment to diving into this experience and getting the most that we can get out of it, together.

### PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

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

Students should come to class prepared to discuss the listed texts or chapters.

M	May 22	<b>INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE</b> core concept: <i>utopia/dystopia/anti-utopia/anti-dystopia</i>  STORY (in class): Ursula K. Le Guin: “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” [D2L] FILM (in class): <i>Black Mirror</i> 3.1, “Nosedive”
W	May 24	Ted Chiang, “Liking What You See: A Documentary”  FILM (in class): <i>Black Mirror</i> 3.4, “San Junipero”
<b>M</b>	<b>May 29</b>	<b>MEMORIAL DAY—NO CLASS</b>
W	June 1	core concept: <i>genre and subgenre</i> Ted Chiang, “Understand”  Ted Chiang, “Story of Your Life”
<b>S</b>	<b>June 3</b>	<b>EXAM #1 DUE VIA DROPBOX BY 5 PM</b>
M	June 5	core concept: <i>difference</i> Kazuo Ishiguro, <i>Never Let Me Go</i> (Part One)
W	June 7	Kazuo Ishiguro, <i>Never Let Me Go</i> (Part Two)
M	June 12	Kazuo Ishiguro, <i>Never Let Me Go</i> (Part Three)
W	June 14	core concept: <i>empire</i> James Tiptree, Jr., “Houston, Houston, Do You Read?” [D2L]  Mark Bould, “The Ships Landed Long Ago” [D2L] FILM (in class): “The Space Traders” (1994)
<b>S</b>	<b>June 17</b>	<b>EXAM #2 DUE VIA DROPBOX BY 5 PM</b>

M	June 19	core concept: <i>Afrofuturism</i> Octavia Butler, <i>Dawn</i> (parts one and two)
W	June 21	Octavia Butler, <i>Dawn</i> (part three)
M	June 26	Octavia Butler, <i>Dawn</i> (whole book) in class: excerpts from Octavia E. Butler, <i>Adulthood Rites</i>
W	June 28	core concept: <i>apocalypse</i>  <i>The Walking Dead</i> , Vols. 1 and 2 in class: zombie film and television, zombie video games <b>LAST DAY OF CLASS</b>
S	July 1	<b>EXAM #3 DUE VIA DROPBOX BY 5 PM</b>

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*On Facebook (group):* [www.facebook.com/groups/496438583889194](http://www.facebook.com/groups/496438583889194)

(search for “Undergraduate English at Marquette”)

*On Twitter:* @MarquetteFAME

I will also be inviting you to events in the pop culture and pizza series I run periodically during the fall and spring semesters. I hope you can attend!