

Spring 1-15-2016

ENG 5061-001: Topics Literat/Literary Theory

Jad Smith

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Office Hours: T 10:45-2:30; R 10:45-12;
and by appointment

English 5061.001, SF Vanguard: New Wave, Cyberpunk, and Beyond, Spring 2016, CRN 39404

Texts

J. G. Ballard, *Crash* (Picador, 2001)
Alfred Bester, *The Stars My Destination* (iPicturebooks, 2011)
Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (Norton, 1995)
Thomas M. Disch, *Camp Concentration* (Vintage, 1999)
William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (Ace Trade, 2000)
Nicola Griffith, *Ammonite* (Ballantine/Del Rey, 2002)
Heather Masri, *Science Fiction: Stories and Contexts* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008)
Joanna Russ, *We Who Are About To . . .* (Wesleyan, 2005)
Bruce Sterling, *Schismatrix Plus* (Ace Trade, 1996)

Catalog Description

In this seminar, we will examine the complex histories of two SF vanguards, New Wave and cyberpunk. The New Wave took shape in the U.K. during the mid-1960s, largely after Michael Moorcock assumed the editorship of *New Worlds* and pushed the magazine in avant-garde directions. Cyberpunk emerged in the U.S. in the early 1980s, after Bruce Sterling and other writers associated with what was then called “The Movement” declared genre SF a “backwater anachronism” and aimed to turn it into a “cultural force” instead (*Cheap Truth* 4). Both of these vanguards fostered literary experimentation, shook up the genre at large, and left a lasting impact on the field. We will consider the work of a germinal influence on both New Wave and cyberpunk—Alfred Bester—and discuss a range of representative texts and writers related to both movements.

Assignments

Reading Journal (25%): 10 entries of 250- to 500-words each.

Paratext Analysis (20%): a 10-minute presentation examining an SF text’s paratexts and how they have changed over time.

Group-Selected Reading (5%): a small group project centering on selecting an SF short story for the class to read and facilitating discussion of it.

Final Project Proposal (5%): a short paper proposing the topic and format of the final project.

Final Project (25%): a 12-page research or creative project. Possible formats include Craft Analysis, Adaptation, Critical Biography, Transmedia Analysis, and Literary Analysis.

Final Project Presentation (10%): a 20-minute presentation focused on the results of your final project.

Participation (10%): in a graduate seminar such as this one, good citizenship involves careful preparation of the reading and regular, measured contributions to class discussions (that is, comments that introduce, advance, or usefully complicate a specific line of inquiry into the subject matter).

Final grades will be calculated on a ten-point scale (i.e., 100 to 90 =A, 89.99 to 80 = B, and so on).

Policies

Late work: extensions on assignments will be granted at my discretion and only in the case of extenuating circumstances. Presume that late work will not be accepted.

Absence: if you must miss class, you should consult with me about the matter. Excessive absence may result in a significantly lower final grade in the course.

Academic honesty: submit only original work in this class, and carefully document all sources according to the 7th edition of the *MLA Handbook* or the 15th or 16th edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

The Office of Disability Services

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

The Student Success Center

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

Provisional Schedule

Critical material about the stories and novels will be assigned on a week-to-week basis.

SFSC = *Science Fiction: Stories and Contexts*

Week 1

T Jan 12 Introduction to the course

Week 2

T Jan 19 From Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, provided
 Bester, "Adam and No Eve" (1942), SFSC 905
 Dick, "Second Variety" (1953), SFSC 296
 Godwin, "The Cold Equations" (1954), provided

Week 3

T Jan 26 Bester, *The Stars My Destination* (1957), including Gaiman's preface

Week 4

T Feb 2 Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), including the author's preface
 Latham, from "Cyberpunk and the New Wave," provided

Week 5

T Feb 9 Disch, *Camp Concentration* (1968)

Week 6

T Feb 16 Delany, "Aye, and Gomorrah . . ." (1967), provided
 Russ, *We Who Are About To . . .* (1977)

Week 7

T Feb 23 Haraway, from "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1985), SFSC 456-67
 Butler, "Bloodchild" (1984), SFSC 119
 Yamamoto, "A Virtual Romance" from *The Stories of Ibis* (2010), provided

Week 8

T Mar 1 Ballard, *Crash* (1973)

Week 9

T Mar 8 Tiptree, Jr./Sheldon, "The Girl Who Was Plugged In" (1973), SFSC 342
 Final Project Proposals due

Spring Break Mar 14-18, no classes

Week 10

T Mar 22 Latham, from "Cyberpunk and the New Wave"
 Sterling et al., selections from *Cheap Truth* (1983-1986), provided
 Sterling, "Swarm" (1982) and "Spider Rose" (1982) from *Schismatrix Plus* 239-71
 Cadigan, "Pretty Boy Crossover" (1986), provided

Week 11

T Mar 29 Gibson, *Neuromancer* (1984)

Week 12

T Apr 5 Griffith, *Ammonite* (1992)

Week 13

T Apr 12 Group-Selected Readings

Week 14

T Apr 19 Final Project / Presentations

Week 15

T Apr 26 Final Project / Presentations

Addendum: Reading Journal Assignment

10 typed entries, 250 to 500 words each, due as indicated on the schedule

As you read, take notes about key and/or difficult passages, recording observations and questions that come to mind. Pick an idea from these notes and develop it into a reading journal of 250 or more words. Write the journal with an eye toward topics or issues for the class to discuss. That is, focus on problems of interpretation. A strong entry might even set out to answer a question in the following manner: "Why does Bester intercut his prose in chapter one of *The Stars My Destination* with Gully Foyle's Merchant Marine record, a nursery jingle, a snippet from a press conference, and so on? What does he aim to achieve through this patchwork development of the narrative? I think that . . ." Whatever approach you take, your journal entry should not read like a string of disconnected notes—you should engage with a specific question, idea, concept, or theme in a sustained manner. Guidelines: head the journal with your name and the date; write clearly and analytically; develop your ideas sufficiently by engaging in close reading and citation of the text; cite texts parenthetically by page number. You need not include a bibliography unless you cite secondary materials from outside the course reading.

You will receive a ✓+, ✓, or ✓- on each entry. These roughly translate to "excellent," "satisfactory," and "in need of improvement." I will assign the journal a grade *in toto* at the end of the semester.