Fall 2012

ENG 2091G-099: Literature, Self, World: Fiction, Honors

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Eastern Illinois University

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Syllabus for English 2091: Literature, Self, & the World: Fiction, Honors, Fall 2012, Section 099

Required Texts

Thomas M. Disch, *Camp Concentration* (Vintage, 1999)
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)

* Additional readings will be provided through library reserve or photocopy

Course Description

Darko Suvin defines science fiction (SF) as the literature par excellence of "cognitive estrangement." By disrupting normal frames of reference, he argues, SF tends to complicate the distinction between self and other, to unsettle the relationship of self to world. In this course, we will consider SF stories, novels, and films that raise questions about selfhood and identity in precisely these terms. Topics will include commercialism and the media, gender and sexuality, science and technology, and race and colonialism, among others.

Writing Intensive Course

Please consider submitting an essay written for this class to the Electronic Writing Portfolio (EWP). Visit the following web address for more information: <www.eiu.edu/~assess/ewpmain.php>. The course deadline for EWP submissions is Friday, December 7, 2012.

Short Descriptions of Assignments

For full descriptions of the major assignments, flip to the back of the syllabus.

Reading Journal: you will complete twelve entries in a weekly reading journal.

Film Scene Analysis: with a partner, you will analyze a scene from an SF film of your choice and present your interpretation to the class.

Annotated Bibliography and Presentation: you will compile a six-item annotated bibliography on a topic and give a presentation based on your reading.

Mid-term and Final Examinations: these examinations will test your knowledge of course readings and discussions through a variety of question formats, including identification, short answer, and essay.

Daily Assignments: quizzes, reading responses, peer reviews, in-class writing, and other work may be assigned on a day-to-day basis.

Policies

Email: During summer 2012, the English Department removed phone lines from most faculty offices. If you need to speak to me outside of class, email me or drop by during my office hours. I try to answer emails quickly, but please do not expect (or depend on) an immediate response to an email. Sometimes my schedule will not permit me to answer emails within a day, much less an hour or two.

Attendance: More than four unexcused absences will result in the loss of your participation grade for the semester. If you miss class, you are responsible for finding out what happened and picking up missed handouts. Absences will be excused
only in the case of a documented illness or emergency, or of documented participation in an official university activity. You must provide me with a legible photocopy of your documentation for my records, and if your absence is excused, I will return a copy of your documentation indicating as much. You must provide documentation either before you miss class or on the day you return. Missing a mandatory conference will count as two absences. Please do not come to class late. Every four times you come to class late, you will forfeit half of your participation grade for the semester.

Late work: Daily assignments cannot be made up. Presentations must be given on the dates for which you have scheduled them, except under the most extenuating circumstances. Major assignments are due at the start of class on the final due date. If you want an extension on a major assignment, you must seek the extension twenty-four hours in advance of the class period during which the assignment is due and cite compelling reasons for the request; otherwise, you will be penalized one letter grade for not turning it in on time and an additional letter grade for every twelve hours thereafter. After forty-eight hours, the assignment will not be accepted, and you will receive a zero on it. Only in the case of an excused absence may an examination be taken before or after the scheduled date. An absence will be excused in the case of a properly documented illness or emergency, or of properly documented participation in an official university activity. A rescheduled examination may cover different material than the original.

Grading Scale: 100 to 90 = A, 89.99 to 80 = B, 79.99 to 70 = C, 69.99 to 60 = D, 59.99 and below F

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentages for Major Assignments</th>
<th>Exams and Other Requirements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SF Media Analysis</td>
<td>Mid-term Examination</td>
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<td>15%</td>
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<td>Annotated Bibliography/Presentation</td>
<td>Final Examination</td>
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<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Journal</td>
<td>Daily Assignments</td>
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Assessment: Formal assignment sheets are provided for each of the major assignments (see below). Your grade for a given major assignment will be determined by how well your work fulfills the requirements outlined in the assignment sheet. You must submit all major assignments to receive a passing grade in the class. You will receive written or verbal descriptions of daily assignments. Your participation grade will be based on the regularity and quality of your contributions to class discussions, and your level of engagement during group work and class activities.

Academic Dishonesty: According to the *MLA Style Manual*, the word "plagiarism" has its origin in the Latin term for "kidnapper": plagiarists kidnap other writers' sentences, phrases, or ideas and present them as their own. The *Random House Dictionary* defines "plagiarism" as "The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work." As these sources suggest, plagiarism often results from faulty documentation or careless note taking. Always place quoted materials in quotation marks, and always cite quoted and/or paraphrased sources, even in rough drafts of papers or presentations. Respect for the intellectual work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources. Inexcusable acts of plagiarism include downloading or buying a paper from the internet; copying and pasting phrases or passages from electronic sources into your paper without citing them; submitting a paper written by another student as your own; borrowing the language and content of a website verbatim and using it as an "original" presentation; and so on. The penalty for academic dishonesty is failure in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs.

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.
Provisional Schedule
Note: Please complete each reading before class on the day it is listed.

Science Fiction Stories and Contexts = SFSC

Week One
T Aug 21 Introduction to the course
R Aug 23 Philip K. Dick, "Second Variety" (SFSC 296)
Darko Suvin, cognitive estrangement

Week Two
T Aug 28 (one reading journal due, either day)
R Aug 30 Clip from Alien
Ray Bradbury, "Mars Is Heaven!" (SFSC 73)
Freud, the uncanny
Octavia Butler, "Bloodchild" (SFSC 119)
Beauvoir, self and other; Jung, the shadow

Week Three
T Sept 4 Bruce Sterling, "Swarm" and "Spider Rose," in Schismatrix Plus (239, 258)
Haraway, the cyborg, posthumanism
R Sept 6 Hiroshi Yamamoto, "A Romance in Virtual Space" (provided)
Baudrillard, simulation and simulacra

Week Four
T Sept 11 (one RJ due)
R Sept 13 James Tiptree, Jr (aka Alice Sheldon), "The Girl Who Was Plugged In" (SFSC 342)
Greg Bear, "Blood Music" (SFSC 1175)

Week Five
T Sept 18 (RJ about Greenberg or Henry due)
R Sept 20 James Cameron, Aliens
Harvey Greenberg, "Fembo: Aliens' Intentions" (provided)
Cameron, Aliens
Katherine Henry, "Life-in-death: the Monstrous Female and the Gothic Labyrinth in Aliens and 'Ligeia'" (provided)

Week Six
T Sept 25 (RJ about Aliens due)
R Sept 27 Cameron, Aliens
Clip from The Matrix
SF Media Analysis, meeting

Week Seven
T Oct 2 SF Media Analysis, presentations
R Oct 4 SF Media Analysis, presentations

Week Eight
T Oct 9 (one RJ due)
Bester, The Stars My Destination, Part 2 (107-223)

Week Nine
T Oct 16 (one RJ due)
Sedgwick, the epistemology of the closet
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<tr>
<th>Week Ten</th>
<th>(one RJ due)</th>
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<tr>
<td>T Oct 23</td>
<td>Tom Godwin, &quot;The Cold Equations&quot; (provided)</td>
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<td>Delany's introduction to <em>We Who Are About To...</em> (v-xv)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Joanna Russ, <em>We Who Are About To...</em> (1-39)</td>
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<td>R Oct 25</td>
<td>Russ, <em>We Who Are About To...</em> (40-65)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week Eleven</th>
<th>(one RJ due)</th>
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<tr>
<td>T Oct 30</td>
<td>Russ, <em>We Who Are About To...</em> (finish)</td>
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<td>R Nov 1</td>
<td>Maureen F. McHugh, &quot;Nekropolis&quot; (SFSC 386)</td>
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<td>F Nov 2</td>
<td>Last day to withdraw with a W</td>
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<th>Week Twelve</th>
<th>(one RJ due)</th>
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<tr>
<td>T Nov 6</td>
<td>Thomas M. Disch, <em>Camp Concentration</em> (1-81)</td>
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<td>R Nov 8</td>
<td>Disch, <em>Camp Concentration</em> (82-110)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week Thirteen</th>
<th>(one RJ due)</th>
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<tr>
<td>T Nov 13</td>
<td>Disch, <em>Camp Concentration</em> (finish)</td>
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<td>R Nov 15</td>
<td>Conferences about research projects</td>
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<tr>
<th>Fall Break</th>
<th>No classes</th>
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<tr>
<th>Week Fourteen</th>
<th>(RJ due on <em>Another Earth</em>)</th>
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<tr>
<td>T Nov 27</td>
<td>Mike Cahill/Brit Marling, <em>Another Earth</em></td>
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<td>R Nov 29</td>
<td>Cahill/Marling, <em>Another Earth</em></td>
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<tr>
<th>Week Fifteen</th>
<th>Presentations</th>
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<tr>
<td>T Dec 4</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>R Dec 6</td>
<td>Deadline for EWP submissions</td>
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<td>F Dec 7</td>
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| Final Exam       | Wednesday, December 12, 8:00-10:00 a.m. |
Major Assignments

**Reading Journal (20%)**
Due: weekly, excluding weeks one, seven, and fifteen*

Use a notebook to engage in close reading of key or difficult passages, and to record various observations and questions that come to mind as you read. Each week (excluding weeks one, seven, and fifteen), pick one or two ideas and develop them into a 250-word reading journal (about a page, double-spaced). At the top of the journal, clearly indicate what part of the reading prompted your response. For instance, note the first few words of the passage, indicating the text's author and title, and citing the page number: "This was a Golden Age . . ." (Bester, *Stars* 11). Keep the journal with an eye toward topics for the class to discuss. That is, focus on problems of interpretation, for example: "Why does Bester intercut his prose in chapter one of *The Stars My Destination* with a snippet from a press interview, a repeated 'nursery jingle,' Gully Foyle's Merchant Marine record, and so on? What does he aim to achieve through the use of this collage technique? I would suggest that he aims to . . . ." Develop your ideas sufficiently. The reading journal should not be a string of disconnected notes. Write clearly and analytically, citing the text, making specific points, and/or raising specific questions. Type each entry.

You will receive a ✓+, ✓, or ✓- on each entry. These roughly correspond to A, B, and C or below. I will assign the journal a grade in toto at the end of the semester.

* You may submit the journal either day of a given week and focus on any part of the reading for that week.

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**SF Media Analysis (15%)**
Due: Tuesday, October 2 or Thursday, October 4 (as scheduled)

With a partner, analyze a clip from a science fiction film of your choice. Employ close reading to discuss sound (music, sound effects), visuals (lighting, cinematography, costuming, visual effects, etc.), acting, narrative (setting, plot, editing, character development, dialogue, flashbacks, etc.), and theme (meaning) in the scene. Rather than attempting to deliver the final word on the scene, (1) make a specific argument about the scene by breaking down its visual elements and (2) raise issues for the class to discuss. If possible, link your presentation to concepts and ideas introduced in class discussions: cognitive estrangement, the uncanny, self and other, the shadow, the cyborg, posthumanism, simulation and simulacra, and so on.

**Guidelines and Evaluation Criteria**

1. Choose a 5- to 6-minute clip from an SF film. That will be your "scene."
2. Do research about the film and the director. Consider looking at interviews, articles, and reviews.
3. At the start of the presentation, briefly introduce your argument. At some point in the presentation (probably early), introduce and show a quality version of the clip.
4. Employ close reading to analyze sound, visuals, acting, narrative, and/or other elements of the scene. Point out specific features of the scene and explain how they relate to a theme (or themes) apparent in it.
5. Speak for 10-12 minutes, dividing the time evenly. Be prepared to field questions afterward.
6. Consider using a visual aid in addition to the clip (for instance, a still or a PowerPoint).
7. Turn in a detailed outline of the presentation, including an MLA-style Works Cited page listing your secondary sources.
Annotated Bibliography/Presentation (20%)
Due: Tuesday, December 4 or Thursday, December 6 (as scheduled)

Depending on your preference, your annotated bibliography could be focused on an SF author (Joanna Russ, Bruce Sterling, etc.), a specific SF work (Russ's *We Who Are About To* . . ., Scott's *Aliens*), a subgenre of SF (cyberpunk, New Wave, biopunk, steampunk, space opera, science fantasy, horror SF, etc.), or a theme (sexuality in New Wave SF, artificial intelligence in Japanese anime, posthumanism in cyberpunk, etc.). You are not confined to SF authors or filmmakers on the syllabus.

The point of the assignment is to review novels, films, stories, or articles related to your focus. You should annotate at least six sources. At least three of these sources must be critical (or secondary) sources. All secondary sources should offer sustained commentary on the subject. (No short, amateurish reviews or blogs from the internet, please.). Look around to find strong sources in academic books and journals, in magazines and fanzines, and online. Do not go with the first six items you come across.

Sample Topics and Sources:
Joanna Russ (author) -- *The Female Man* (her most famous novel), an interview with Russ, two academic articles, one review of *The Female Man* from *The New York Times Book Review* and another from an SF magazine such as *Analog*, the author entry about Russ in *SFE: The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* at the SF Gateway.

James Cameron's *Aliens* (film) -- interview with Cameron, three articles from film studies books, a review of the film from *The New York Times* and Thomas Caldwell's article "'*Aliens*: Mothers, Monsters and Marines" from his blog *Cinema Autopsy*.

Cyberpunk (subgenre) -- three cyberpunk short stories (by Pat Cadigan, William Gibson, and Bruce Sterling), a chapter from the academic essay collection *Fiction 2000: Cyberpunk and the Future of Narrative*, an interview with Samuel R. Delany about cyberpunk in the magazine *SF Eye*, and an online article about cyberpunk in *SFE: The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* at the SF Gateway.

Annotating Primary Sources
Each annotation of a novel, film, or short story should read like a mini review, consisting of at least one fully developed paragraph. What is the work about? What are some of its main themes? Is it worth reading or viewing? Is it important in the field of SF? Why or why not?

How to Annotate Secondary Sources for the Annotated Bibliography
Each annotation of a secondary source should provide a concise summary of the critic's approach and main idea, and consist of at least one fully developed paragraph.

A good annotation will make a summary statement about a critic's methodology, purpose, and argument (especially the conclusions reached). However, it will also go beyond mere summary to address the quality of the argument. Is the critic's essay or review useful? How? Does the critic contribute to understanding of the topic?

An MLA-Style Entry for an Article in an Anthology (see the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers for citation formats for various kinds of sources)

A Weak Annotation
The scholarly article, "The Comedy of Class in Stoker's Dracula," was written by Carol Senf, a notable literary critic on Dracula. This talks about the language of class, which is its central argument. Aspects of Dracula's vampirism are discussed in this context.
A Better Annotation (Though Too Brief)

Combining Marxist analysis with close reading of the text, this essay takes the notion of Dracula as a bloated aristocrat to its logical extreme, reading Stoker’s novel as a metaphor for class relations. In Senf’s smart but poorly supported reading, Dracula is the supreme aristocrat and his feeding on blood symbolizes the way he saps the lower classes of their economic power. Specifically, she argues that his character is constructed in opposition to the interests of Victorian England’s growing middle class.

Guidelines and Evaluation Criteria for the Annotated Bibliography

1. Conduct appropriate research to learn more about the topic;
2. Write analytically, giving evidence of close reading of the material;
3. Write concise, polished prose;
4. Annotate six sources, at least three critical;
5. Format according to MLA style.

Presentation

Present the results of your research project to the class in 8-10 minutes. (Time constraints will be determined by the size of the class). Ask yourself this question, "What did I learn about the topic through my reading?” Try to convey the most interesting and important of your insights to the class.

Sample Presentations

Focus / author Joanna Russ - provide an introductory overview of the author's career, including her current reputation in the field; give a broad sense of the critical reception of the author’s work at various points in his or her career, noting key stories and novels; create a PowerPoint or handout to display key passages from The Female Man and explicate some of the quotations, making reference to criticism about the novel

Focus / gender in James Cameron's Aliens - show a clip of the film, using it as a spring board for talking about gender in the film; make reference to criticism about gender in the film and/or explain Cameron's view of gender in the film (as elaborated in interviews)

Focus / cyberpunk - explain the main characteristics of cyberpunk as a subgenre, perhaps using a well-known film such as Blade Runner for illustrative purposes; compare and contrast two cyberpunk stories you read in terms of how they "fit” in this subgenre; project significant passages from the stories or critical quotes as a visual aid

Guidelines and Evaluation Criteria for the Presentation

1. Explain the purpose of your presentation at the beginning;
2. Convey important information about the topic;
3. Make interesting, well-supported points about the topic, engage in close reading;
4. Employ helpful audio/visual aids to illustrate points;
5. Turn in an outline of the presentation.

You will not receive a separate grade on the presentation. I will take the quality of your presentation into consideration when assigning a grade to your Annotated Bibliography. For instance, a "B" Annotated Bibliography bolstered by an excellent presentation will likely receive a "B+" or an "A-". You will not receive a passing grade on the Annotated Bibliography if you fail to do the presentation.