ENG 3504-001: Film and Literature: Science Fiction

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English 3504, Film and Literature: Science Fiction

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Fall 2004, Thursday, 7-9:30
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Course Description:

Margaret Tarrat claims that even though “The majority of science fiction films appear to express some kind of concern with the moral state of contemporary society, many are more directly involved with an examination of our inner nature” (our concept of self) (330). As a way to explore multiple constructions of the ‘self,’ this course will allow students to ‘read’ science fiction films and literature that, like Frankenstein, provide openings to both psychology and psychiatry. Through an analysis of form and stile in film and literature you will, I hope, answer questions regarding the “deep and fearful concern with the foundations of the self.”

Texts:

Heinlein. *Stranger in a Strange Land.*
LeGuin. *Left Hand of Darkness*
Pullman, *The Golden Compass*
Shelley. *Frankenstein*
Vonnegut. *Slaughterhouse Five*
Wells. *The Time Machine*
Grant, Barry Keith, Editor. *Film Genre Reader II*

Please Note: You will be assigned one of two books twice during the semester.

Course Requirements:

1. **Weekly Responses and Participation:** Responses are about two pages typed and reflect careful reading and synthesis of course materials and/or films. Your responses will serve as a source for discussion in class as a whole or in small groups so are part of your participation grade. Responses should analyze, critique, argue for or against, or evaluate—they should not summarize except to make the writer’s point(s). You must be in class to receive credit for your response or for any in-class work.

2. **Midterm Paper:** This take-home “exam” will provide an opportunity to internalize material all students read for class and to carefully read the first films in the class.

3. **Group Novel Teaching and Presentation:** Members of four different groups will each read a different novel and be responsible for teaching it to the rest of the class (with my help). Film clips from films that build from the novel(s) should be included in your presentation—as well as information about author/director.

4. **Final Exam:** This exam will not be cumulative. It will provide an opportunity to internalize material read for class as a group and as a class from Midterm forward and carefully to read the last films in the class.
5. **Final Paper and Presentation:** The final paper should either expand one of your responses—which you focus and then develop using information from the film and/or literature—or revolve around a film you have chosen on your own. For the second option, choose a science fiction film, with my approval, and write a detailed and focused analysis of its form and style—especially in relation to your own definition of science fiction. This paper should be approximately 5 pages long.

**Grades:** Grades will be determined as follows for a total of 100%.

- **Weekly Responses and Participation**----------------------------- 20%
- **Midterm**--------------------------------------------------------- 20%
- **Group Teaching/Presentation**------------------------------------ 20%
- **Final Exam**------------------------------------------------------ 20%
- **Final Paper**------------------------------------------------------ 20%

**Grading of Responses, Presentation, and Paper:**

Response grades will be based on analytical complexity. Each will be worth twenty points. If a response only summarizes a film or novel, the response gets only half credit. Adequate analysis (or argument or critique) will result in 14 points (C level). Good analysis, etc., in 16 points (B level). Great analysis, etc., from 18-20 points, depending on clarity, precision, and sense of voice.

Paper grades will be based on the following areas: Audience awareness, organization, development, sentence structure, word choice, grammar/usage/mechanics. The first three areas will be weighted more heavily than the second three (60% vs. 40%). I will also distribute the English Department’s grade analysis in class.

Presentations will be evaluated according to a rubric I will distribute in class. Groups should also turn in any class handouts or visuals with novel responses.

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

**Plagiarism:** The English Department states, "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism -- 'The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work' -- has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of "F" in the course."

**Electronic Writing Portfolio:** This class is a writing intensive class, so you may submit your paper as a writing portfolio sample, following the instructions on the CASL Website. Submissions must be made during the course of the class to receive my approval. Please note that the Writing Center is available for help with all writing assignments, as well. Take advantage of this free service.
Tentative Course Calendar, Subject to Change—Film and Lit Sci Fi
Please Note that all days are Thursdays

August
26—Introduction to Course. Melies’s “Trip to the Moon,” Edison’s “Frankenstein”; Film Form.

September
2—*Frankenstein* – read as much of the novel as possible, and **write a response**.

9—*Frankenstein* in film and literature, continued. *Genre Reader II*.

16—Early Science Fiction in literature and film—Jules Verne (*Journey to the Center of the Earth*, etc.) and *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. **Response to Bride of *Frankenstein* due. Genre Reader II.**

23—*The Time Machine* or *Slaughterhouse Five*—Two groups present but each student reads one of the two novels and **writes a response**. Group members should also show film clips from the movies associated with the novels. *The War of the Worlds?* Gregg Toland Festival this weekend!

30—**Response to group presentation(s) or film due. View *Alien* and respond in class.**

October
7—*Stranger in a Strange Land*—**Response due. Genre Reader II.**

14—*Brother from Another Planet*. Read Octavia Butler stories (handout) for 10/21 and complete Midterm. **In Class Response to film.**

21—**Midterm “Exam” due. Octavia Butler and Race. Film Style.**

28—*The Left Hand of Darkness* or *The Golden Compass*. Two groups present but each student reads one of the two novels and **writes a response.**

November
4—*Tank Girl*. **Response to Group Presentation(s) due.**

11—*Terminator* and “La Jette.” **Response to *Tank Girl* due.**

18—*Dark City*. **Response to film(s) from 11/11 due.**

25—No Class: Thanksgiving Break

December
2—Contemporary Science Fiction.

9—Contemporary Science Fiction.—**Paper Due.**

16—**Final Exam! Have a great break!**