



DEPARTMENT OF ARTS & EDUCATION

COURSE OUTLINE – WINTER 2015

EN1220 (A3): TEXTS AND CONTEXTS – SPECULATIVE FICTION – 3 (3-0-0) 45 HOURS

INSTRUCTOR: Dr Anna Lapointe **PHONE:** 780-539-2992
OFFICE: C420 **E-MAIL:** alapointe@gprc.ab.ca
OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays 3-4:30pm and Thursdays 11:30-12:50pm

PREREQUISITE(S)/COREQUISITE: General College Admission. May not be taken by students with 6 credits in approved junior English.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Masri, Heather, ed. Science Fiction: Stories and Contexts. New York: Bedford/St Martin's, 2009.
- Brooks, Max. World War Z.

Film texts will be screened in class. No purchases are required.

RECOMMENDED BUT NOT REQUIRED:

William E. Messenger et al. *The Canadian Writer's Handbook: Essentials Edition*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford UP, 2014.

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION: This course will explore a specific issue (to be determined by the instructor) using a variety of genres and media. Instruction will include essay writing skills. The topic as determined by the instructor for this course is speculative fiction.

CREDIT/CONTACT HOURS: 3 credits / 3 hours per week

DELIVERY MODES: Lecture/Discussion

OBJECTIVES: This section of the course will focus on speculative fiction (SF), and the issues involved in SF about the near future. What does it mean to write about a world almost like this one? How can this kind of SF writing be used as political commentary about the contemporary world? We will read novels, short fiction, and critical essays. Students will develop their critical reading and writing skills, as well as their ability to approach ideas of the future thoughtfully and in context. Students are expected to have workable essay-writing skills, which will be further developed and refined in this course.

TRANSFERABILITY:

University of Alberta

University of Calgary

University of Lethbridge

Athabasca University

Grant MacEwan University

King's University College *

Other (transfers in combination with other courses or to other institutions)

* An asterisk (*) beside any transfer institution indicates important transfer information. Consult the Alberta Transfer Guide.

**** Grade of D or D+ may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability**

GRADING CRITERIA:

Grading will assess students' critical grasp of the course material and compositional skills in approximately equal measure. Be aware that extreme deficits in composition may hinder the instructor's assessment of student's critical grasp of the material. (Translation: if the paper is badly written to the point of incoherence, with the result that I can't figure out what you mean, I can't give you content credit!)

All assessments will be given as letter grades.

| GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL COLLEGE | | | |
|--|---------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| GRADING CONVERSION CHART | | | |
| Alpha Grade | 4-point Equivalent | Percentage Guidelines | Designation |
| A⁺ | 4.0 | 90 – 100 | EXCELLENT |
| A | 4.0 | 85 – 89 | |
| A⁻ | 3.7 | 80 – 84 | FIRST CLASS STANDING |
| B⁺ | 3.3 | 77 – 79 | |
| B | 3.0 | 73 – 76 | GOOD |
| B⁻ | 2.7 | 70 – 72 | |
| C⁺ | 2.3 | 67 – 69 | SATISFACTORY |
| C | 2.0 | 63 – 66 | |
| C⁻ | 1.7 | 60 – 62 | |
| D⁺ | 1.3 | 55 – 59 | MINIMAL PASS |
| D | 1.0 | 50 – 54 | |
| F | 0.0 | 0 – 49 | FAIL |
| WF | 0.0 | 0 | FAIL, withdrawal after the deadline |

EVALUATIONS:

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| Response papers | 10% (2 x 5%) |
| Critical essay #1* | 15% |
| Quizzes | 10% |
| Critical essay #2* | 25% |
| Attendance and participation | 10% |
| Final exam | 30% |

* Creative Writing Option

Students have the option to submit a speculative fiction short story in place of **one** critical essay. (All students must still submit at least one critical essay.) Students considering taking up the creative writing option are encouraged to consult the instructor (who teaches creative writing and has been known to be helpful in this area). Stories will be graded on compositional skills, grasp of course concepts, and literary unity.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Requirements for Essays:

All essay-assignments in this course must be written in academic essay format, which we will study throughout the course. Spelling and grammar, structure, and comprehension and analysis of the course material are key grading elements. Expectations for the quality of writing will rise in the course of the term.

Formatting expectations are posted on Moodle, and will be distributed as a handout. All essays must be typed, double-spaced, and stapled together. Assignments not meeting these criteria will not be accepted.

2. Attendance and Participation

Attendance and participation are crucial to this course. Each unexcused absence results in a deduction of about 3% from your attendance and participation grade. Significant numbers of excused absences will result in students needing to complete a small project to “make up” the grades.

If your absence is for a legitimate reason (illness, family crisis, hit by a bus), let the instructor know **by e-mail**. I appreciate it when you tell me verbally, but I need the e-mail so that I can check my records at the end of the term. In your e-mail, please indicate your course number and section (EN1240 A3).

That said, simply showing up is not sufficient. You are expected to comment, respond to questions, interact with classmates, and otherwise contribute to the class dialogue. Questions are welcomed and encouraged. If you're wondering about something, most likely several classmates are as well, only they're afraid to speak up. So ask!

Students are responsible for all missed material, including material missed due to legitimate/excused absences. Missed material should be obtained from classmates rather than from the instructor, who needed 80 minutes to deliver it the first time. Take a moment early in the course to find a “note buddy” who is willing to share

notes with you in the event of your absence.

3. Late Assignments

Assignments are due in class and on paper. No paper may be submitted by e-mail. Late papers may be left in the mailbox on my office door (C420). It is the student's responsibility to confirm I have received assignments left on my door.

Late papers are penalized at the rate of 1% per day, to a maximum deduction of 10% (one letter grade). Weekends count as one day.

I grant extensions for the following reasons: computer failure (may be used only once), sick children/family crisis, illness or injury of student (with doctor's note), alien abduction (documentation required). Extensions are not open-ended; rather, we will agree on a new deadline, after which late penalties apply.

4. Moodle

Students are responsible for checking Moodle regularly for updates, announcements, and handouts. Ensure you check Moodle each morning before coming to class.

All handouts distributed in class are also posted on Moodle. If you miss a class or lose a handout, go online to access it. In addition, you are responsible for the contents of all posted handouts, whether or not they have been taken up in class. Take time at the beginning of the course to explore our Moodle page and discover the resources being shared there!

Some readings for this course are posted on Moodle. Please ensure that you can access these files well in advance of the classes in which we take them up.

If you have trouble accessing Moodle, contact the technical support office immediately.

5. Electronics in Class

I permit the use of electronic devices (laptop computers, tablets, and phones) in the classroom for note-taking and document-access purposes. Please turn off all sound-generating functions.

I cannot reliably determine whether students are using their devices for class-related purposes. If you choose to use your device for non-class purposes (such as texting

and Facebook), please be aware that those activities actually damage the learning experience of those around you. Thus, if you absolutely *must* text in class, please sit in the back so as to distract as few of your classmates as possible.

STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING:

Refer to the College Policy on Student Misconduct: Plagiarism and Cheating at

https://www.gprc.ab.ca/files/forms_documents/Student_Misconduct.pdf

**Note: all Academic and Administrative policies are available at

<https://www.gprc.ab.ca/about/administration/policies/>

COURSE SCHEDULE/TENTATIVE TIMELINE:

(Except for the novel *World War Z* and the short story “The Winter Market” (posted on Moodle), all readings are taken from *Science Fiction: Stories and Concepts*, edited by Heather Masri. Film segments will be screened in class.)

This schedule is subject to change. Alterations to the schedule will be posted on Moodle.

Jan 9 – Welcome and Introduction

Jan 12 – Ray Bradbury – “Mars is Heaven!”

Jan 16 – Ursula K. Le Guin – “Vaster Than Empires and More Slow”

Jan 19 – Theory readings: de Beauvoir, Jung, Fanon

Jan 23 – theory continued, Alien Encounters film clips (*E.T.*; *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*)

Jan 26 – Mary Shelley – from *Frankenstein*

Jan 30 – Philip K. Dick – “Second Variety”

Feb 2 – James Tiptree, Jr. – “The Girl Who Was Plugged In”; William Gibson – “The Winter Market” (posted on Moodle)

Feb 6 – theory readings: Freud, Baudrillard, Haraway; **first response paper due**

Feb 9 – theory continued; Artificial Life film clip (*The Animatrix: The Second Renaissance*)

Feb 13 – Robert Heinlein – “All You Zombies –”; Ted Chiang – “The Story of Your Life”;
first critical essay due

Feb 16-20: No classes – Reading Week

Feb 23 – Robert Silverberg – “When We Went to See the End of the World”; film clip
(*Doctor Who* – “*The End of the World*”)

Feb 28 – Harlan Ellison – “‘Repent, Harlequin!’ Said the Ticktockman”

Mar 2 – Joanna Russ – “When It Changed”

Mar 6 – Geoff Ryman – “Dead Space for the Unexpected”; Nalo Hopkinson –
“Something to Hitch Meat to”

Mar 9 – theory readings: Arendt, Whyte, Jameson

Mar 13 – theory continued; Film clips (*Fight Club*; *Gattaca*)

Mar 16 – J.G. Ballard – “The Terminal Beach”; Sakyo Komatsu – “Take Your Choice”

Mar 20 – William Saunders – “When This World Is All on Fire”; **second response paper
due**

Mar 23 – *World War Z*

Mar 27 – *World War Z*

Mar 30 – *World War Z*

Apr 3 – Good Friday (no class)

Apr 6 – *World War Z*

Apr 10 – Theory readings: Eliade, Sontag, Boyer

Apr 13 – theory continued; review for exam; **second critical essay due**

Final exam date TBA. Please ensure you are available for the entire exam period.