



## **English 300-03 I Syllabus—Summer Pre-Session 2009**

### **“Science Fiction Film & literature as Social Commentary”**

**1pm-3:50pm MTWRF Modern Languages Room 310**

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**Office Hours:** By appointment

Welcome to English 300! The purpose of this course syllabus is to provide a quick source of information about what is required of you as a student in this class. It will also give you information about what you can expect of me as your instructor this semester. You must have a copy of this syllabus with you in all class meetings so that we can refer back to this document for clarification of information or occasional adjustment to the schedule of classes. Please read over this document carefully. The information contained in this syllabus is contractual—your continued presence and participation in class after receipt of this syllabus indicate your acceptance of the terms outlined within this document. So—what exactly can you expect to take place in this class, and what are the specific work requirements for the semester? You will find answers to these questions and more below—read on!

#### **General Course Information**

This course is a survey of film and literature, viewed through the lens of science fiction literary and filmic works as speculative sites of social analysis and commentary. Although it is possible to track the emergence of science fiction film and literature as a historical progression, this course will employ a more general focus on identification of the general conventions of science fiction—both literary pieces and filmic interpretations of science fiction-related topics—and will attempt to interrogate the differences between this specific genre and closely related ones such as horror and fantasy.

#### **Required Texts (bring to every class period):**

1. Roberts, Garyn G. *Prentice Hall Anthology of Science Fiction and Fantasy*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2003.
2. Telotte, J. P. *Science Fiction Film*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2001.

#### **Additional required visual text (loaned):**

Each student will also be assigned one double-sided DVD containing 4-6 classics of science fiction film. These film selections will form the basis for some of the required written work for the course. Please note that these loaned disks are my personal property and **must** be returned to me in pristine condition no later than five days after they have been checked out.

#### **Other Required Materials:**

1. Materials for note-taking—needed in every class period.
2. Some type of 3-ring binder—you will use these to keep track of the syllabus, class handouts, notes, etc. You should have these types of materials and your binder on hand in every class period.
3. **Not allowed in class:** Cell phones, PDA devices, computers, pagers, ipods, other electronic items.

**Email Requirement:** As part of your participation in this course, you are required to check your UA email account DAILY. I frequently send out updates and additional information via email (sometimes more than once in a day), so you will NOT be able to stay in the loop if you fail to regularly check your email account. Any emailed changes to reading or writing assignments, books required for a particular class, etc. are entirely each student's responsibility. Failure to check email will not prevent grades being lowered for late or missing work. As a rule of thumb, I strongly suggest that you check email twice per day, particularly on days we have class. Check before you come to class and again in the evening.

### General Requirements for Written Assignments:

It should first be noted that a pre-session course goes by VERY quickly. What this means in practical terms is that it is extraordinarily easy to get off track in keeping up with assignments, which in turn can negatively affect your final course average. You should also be aware that your instructor in a short-semester course operates under similar time constraints when grading student work. For all of these reasons, I quite simply do NOT accept late work, for any reason. Written assignments are due when they're due, and it is YOUR responsibility to attend to the logistics of preparing for, writing, printing out, and submitting your work for this course. I strongly suggest that you do not leave printing of work until a short time before class meetings, as this creates many issues for you when problems come up, such as paper jams, need for new ink cartridges, etc. You should also assume that you must be prepared to print your work ON CAMPUS (library, ILC, etc.) in the event that your personal printer isn't working properly.

### General Assignments/Responsibilities:

Your assignments/responsibilities for the course consist of the following components. Details for each can be found below:

- Readings—in a short semester, the pace of readings is aggressive—stay on track so that you don't get hopelessly behind!
- In-class film screenings (no, you cannot skip class in order to watch films on your own—don't ask!)
- Independent, out-of-class film screenings (total of two)
- Note-taking (if I find it important enough to say it or write it on the board—it's important. Write it down.)
- Active participation in class—preparation of discussion questions, as well as active discussion of films and readings

### Written Assignments:

- **Film Info Sheets**—Two of these, one for each of the two independent film screenings. Must bring enough copies of these 1-page papers to hand out to the entire class. I will provide a sample for each of you to use as a model.
- **Discussion Questions**—The evening after we complete a film viewing, you will compose a minimum of four thought-provoking questions relating to the just-completed film. Your questions should be typed and printed out—these will be handed in to me during the next class period. We will use your lists of questions as starting points for class discussion of the films, so be prepared to share these. Please make sure your name and the film title are on the top of these papers.
- **Comprehensive Final Exam**—will take place on Friday, June 5<sup>th</sup>. Attendance that day is MANDATORY. Failure to attend the final exam period will result in failure of the entire course.

### How Your Course Grade will be Calculated:

Your final course grade will be determined by combining the following percentages. Additional assignments carrying no point values (such as in-class activities) must be completed in order for you to receive full credit for the course.

<b>Film Info Sheet #1</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Film Info Sheet #2</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Discussion Questions (one set for each film covered in class; averaged together)</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Class Participation (I will evaluate you on this each class day—be visible!)</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Comprehensive Final Exam (Essay and short answer)</b>	<b>30%</b>

**Final Course Grade/Course Credit:** The five grading percentages on the preceding page will be added together in order to calculate your final course average. **There is no extra credit offered for this course.** All work is due on time and cannot be submitted late—no exceptions. Consistent failure to complete and submit assignments may result in failure of the course. Additionally, any student who fails to maintain regular class attendance may be subject to administrative drop. Please see the section titled "Attendance" for details.

### Attendance:

**Attendance is mandatory.** Pre-session courses condense an entire semester's worth of learning into three short weeks of class. In practical terms, this means that a single class period counts roughly as an entire week of class time in a regular 16-week semester. Therefore, students should not be late and should not miss classes. If you must miss a class, contact me as soon as possible to discuss your absence. The best way of contacting me is through e-mail, but you may also call my phone number listed above (leave a message if I don't answer). You are responsible for finding out about and making up any missed assignments. In-class writing

generally may not be made up. If you are absent on the day an assignment is due, you must arrange to get the work to me on time, or it will not be accepted.

***Students who miss more than one class may be dropped from the course without further notice, at my discretion.*** I handle those situations on a case-by-case basis, but I do lean towards dropping students once they have a second absence. Regardless, any student who carries an absence beyond the 1 allowed absence will pick up a 2 point reduction of the final course average for every class absence. In other words, if you have 1 absence, no points are lost. If you have 2 absences and are allowed to remain in the class, you would pick up a 2 point reduction for each of those absences, for a total of 4 points off the top of your semester average—and so on. These can add up quickly, so plan to keep absences to a minimum. I do not differentiate between “excused” and “unexcused” absences, so use your time wisely. If you have a potential conflict, discuss it with me as soon as possible in order to evaluate your options (if any). Please refer to the General Catalog link below for specific details concerning grade outcomes in the event that you are dropped from the course: <http://catalog.arizona.edu/2008-09/policies/classatten.htm>

**SIGN-IN SHEETS:** I keep attendance via daily sign-in sheets. This sheet will be located on a desk just inside the classroom door. It is YOUR responsibility to ensure that you sign in to every class period, regardless of circumstances such as late arrival, sign-in sheets ‘passing by’ you, forgetting to sign in, etc. I adhere to a strict policy of counting attendance based on these sign-in sheets. If your signature is not on the page—you are absent, regardless if you showed up or not. Also, keep in mind that a late arrival may complicate the sign-in process, as you may forget to sign the sheet in your rush to slip into a seat. I will not allow students to retroactively sign themselves in on an old sheet when the class next meets, so keep up!

**Tardiness and Leaving Class:** While I \*do\* sympathize with those of you who find it difficult to drag yourselves into class, persistent late arrivals disrupt the entire class and make it extremely difficult for you to stay on track. This is particularly true of film viewing days. Please come to class on time and limit trips outside of the classroom (i.e., the restroom) to occasional events, rather than everyday ones. That said, if you have a medical condition that requires frequent restroom use, by all means catch me at the beginning of the semester and let me know what’s going on—we’ll work out a system that matches your individual situation. You absolutely may not leave class simply to take phone calls! You also should not leave class during a film viewing.

#### **Expectations for Student Behavior during Film Screenings and Other Class Activities:**

A large part of our total class time for the semester will be spent viewing films in class. You should be prepared to conduct yourselves responsibly and respectfully during these screenings. This means you should be attentive, upright (and awake—no snoozing during screenings ☺), and avoid unnecessary noises and conversation. You should also demonstrate reasonable respectful conduct during all other class activities, such as discussion of films and readings. All personal items other than note-taking materials must be OFF the desks during film screenings. Laptops, cell phones, Blackberries and similar, pagers, etc. must be powered off and stowed during the entire class period, both during screenings and during other class activities. I reserve the right to confiscate any such items that I see out during class. In this event, your belongings will be returned to you at the close of class. Repeat offenders will be dropped from the course. All UA students are responsible for upholding the Student Code of Conduct, which can be read online at <http://dos.web.arizona.edu/uapolicies/index.html>.

**Course Content:** If course materials, subject matter, or requirements in this course contain materials that are offensive to you, speak to your instructor. Usually, the resolution will be to drop the course promptly.

**Students with Disabilities:** Students who anticipate accessibility issues related to the format or requirements of the course should meet with their instructor to discuss ways to ensure their full participation. If formal disability-related accommodations are needed, it is necessary that these students register with Disability Resources (621-3268; [drc.arizona.edu](http://drc.arizona.edu)) and notify the instructor of their eligibility for reasonable accommodations so that they and their instructor can coordinate these accommodations.

**Printing of Non-Textbook Readings:** Students will be responsible for printing and bringing to class hard copies of any essays not included in the two primary textbooks. I suggest 2-in-1 page printing options—this will cut down on the costs for printing long essays. The exception to this printing requirement is the “Farewell to the Master” online story—you may skip printing that one if you choose, but make sure you read it for the exam in particular. Personally, I think it’s one of the better readings this semester!

## Weekly Class Schedule (total of 14 class meetings)

(subject to change and adjustment, as deemed necessary by the instructor—again, check your email daily!)

Textbook KEY: **SFF**= Science Fiction Film book; **PHA**=Prentice Hall Anthology of Science Fiction and Fantasy

### Day 1: Monday, May 18

- Introductions/Syllabus/Discussion of semester assignments/expectations
- Introduction to Science Fiction as a genre—what are its conventions and characteristics? What sets it apart from the closely related genres of horror and fantasy?
- Class handout—Film Terminology (use as study guide for Final Exam)
- Film Screening: **The Day the Earth Stood Still** (1.32 hours; original 1951 version)

#### Read/Prepare for next class period:

1. PHA—*Introduction* (pages 1-3)
2. SFF—*Introduction: The World of the Science Fiction Film* (pages 3-32)
3. Harry Bates' *Farewell to the Master*: <http://thenostalgialeague.com/olmag/bates-farewell-to-the-master.html>
4. Prepare first set of 4 Discussion Questions—due in class on Tuesday

### Day 2: Tuesday, May 19

- **DUE:** Set of discussion questions
- Short discussion of readings 1 and 2
- Film Screening: **Invasion of the Body Snatchers** (1.57 hours; 1978 version)

#### Read/Prepare for next class period:

1. PHA—Frank Belknap Long's *Invasion* (pages 723-727)
2. Handout—Matthew Hughes's *Passion Play* (pages 3-29)—will be emailed; **print out** and bring to Wednesday's class
3. PHA—Frank Herbert's *Seed Stock* (pages 922-930)
4. Prepare set of 4 Discussion Questions—due in tomorrow's class

### Day 3: Wednesday, May 20

- **DUE:** Set of discussion questions
- Entire class period will involve discussion of first 2 days of readings and first 2 films

#### Read/Prepare for next class period:

1. Gregory A. Waller's *Re-placing The Day After* (pdf file—will be emailed—print out and bring to Thursday/Friday classes)
2. Peter R. Beckman's *Sociology and Nuclear Weapons: A View from Outside* (also a pdf file—same requirements as above)

### Day 4: Thursday, May 21

- Film Screening: **The Day After** (2.06 hours; 1983)

#### Read/Prepare for next class period:

1. PHA—Ray Bradbury's *There Will Come Soft Rains* (pages 719-722)
2. PHA—Robert A. Heinlein's *The Long Watch* (pages 709-718)
3. Prepare set of 4 Discussion Questions—due in tomorrow's class

**Day 5: Friday, May 22**

- **DUE:** Set of discussion questions
- Discussion of film/readings from Thursday

**Read/Prepare for next class period:**

1. SFF—*A Trajectory of the American Science Fiction Film* (pages 63-120)

**Day 6: Monday, May 25**

**NO CLASS—MEMORIAL DAY**

**Day 7: Tuesday, May 26**

- Discussion of “Trajectory”
- Film Screening: **The Quiet Earth** (1.31 hours; 1985)

**Read/Prepare for next class period:**

1. PHA—Zenna Henderson’s *The Anything Box* (pages 297-306)
2. PHA—Edward Page Mitchell’s *The Clock that Went Backward* (361-370)
3. Additional Henderson piece—will be emailed. Print out and bring to class.
4. Prepare set of 4 Discussion Questions—due in tomorrow’s class

**Day 8: Wednesday, May 27**

**\*\*Hamlet is a LONG reading—I suggest you start this a few days early!\*\***

- **DUE:** Set of discussion questions
- Discussion of Tuesday film/readings

**Read/Prepare for next class period:**

1. PHA—Doc Smith’s *Robot Nemesis* (pages 544-556)
2. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*: <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/hamlet/full.html>

**Day 9: Thursday, May 28**

- Film Screening: **Casshern** (1.20 hours; 2004)

**Read/Prepare for next class period:**

1. War on Terror reading—TBA (tie-in from: Hamlet **to** Casshern **to** Bush administration, which Casshern critiques)
2. Japanese history reading—TBA
3. Prepare set of 4 Discussion Questions—due in tomorrow’s class

**Day 10: Friday, May 29**

- **DUE:** Set of discussion questions
- Discussion of Casshern/readings from Thursday

**Read/Prepare for next class period:**

Use the weekend to get caught up on any outstanding work, particularly independent film screenings!

**Day 11: Monday, June 1**

- Film Screening: **Close Encounters of the Third Kind** (2.15 hours; 1977)

**Read/Prepare for next class period:**

1. SFF—*The Science Fiction Film as Marvelous Text* (pages 142-160)
2. SFF—*Conclusion: A Note on Boundaries* (pages 197-203)
3. Prepare set of 4 Discussion Questions—due in tomorrow's class

**Day 12: Tuesday, June 2**

- **DUE:** Set of discussion questions
- Discussion of film/readings from Monday's class

**Read/Prepare for next class period:**

1. SFF—*Science Fiction Film: The Critical Context* (pages 33-60)
2. PHA—Isaac Asimov's *Robbie* (pages 574-587) **\*\*will feature heavily on final exam—so read accordingly\*\***

**Day 13: Wednesday, June 3**

- Film Screening: **I, Robot** (1.54 hours; 2004)

Pay particular attention during this film screening—you should expect to have questions pertaining to this film and to the Isaac Asimov short story *Robbie* on Friday's final exam. Now is the time to demonstrate your ability to synthesize stories and film interpretations--prepare!

**Day 14: Thursday, June 4**

- **Discussion/Review to Prepare for Exam**

Read/Prepare for next class period: **STUDY for exam!**

**Day 15—Final Day of Class!**

Final Exam will be given during this class period. Failure to show up for this final exam will result in failure of the course.