

Science Fiction and the Social Imaginary



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Texts and Contexts, Engl. 2000, R 29
Spring 2018

Class Location:
1:00-2:15 pm | TF | Dealy Hall 107

Office Hours:
Dealy 543 or Rodrigue's Coffee Shop
TF 10:00-12:00 am
Or by appointment

Course Overview

This course will study works of late 20th century science fiction authors who explore issues such as race, gender and sexuality in their works. Responding to and influencing postwar social movements, these authors critiqued societal norms through science fiction that envisioned other possibilities. Authors will include Ursula Le Guin, James Tiptree Jr., Octavia Butler, Philip K. Dick, and Samuel Delaney, and topics will include Afro-futurism, feminism, utopia and dystopia, among others.

Course Goals

Texts & Contexts is an introduction to the art of literary interpretation; it develops techniques of close reading, an appreciation of the relations among literary works and the contexts in which they are written and read, and an ability to construct and support an argument out of your own observations about the texts.

The Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction, Wesleyan University Press
978-0819569554

Philip K. Dick, Selected Stories of Philip K. Dick, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
978-0544040540

Octavia Butler, Kindred, Beacon Press
978-0807083697

James Tiptree Jr., Her Smoke Rose Up Forever, Tachyon Publications, 2nd edition
978-1892391209

Ursula Le Guin, The Dispossessed, Harper Voyager, Reprint edition
978-0061054884

Reading Schedule

Tue Jan 30- Unfriendly Visitations

William Tenn- The Liberation of Earth, 1953 (266-282) WASF

James Tiptree Jr.- The Screwfly Solution, 1977 (9-32) HSRUF

James Tiptree Jr- Love is the Plan, the Plan is Death, 1973 (403-419) HSRUF

1. Keyword: Biology _____

Sci-Fi Simulacra

Tue Feb 6- On Simulacra

Jean Baudrillard- Simulacra and Simulations, 1981 (166-184) Handout

Jean Baudrillard- Simulacra and Science Fiction (excerpt), 1991 Handout

Jorge Luis Borges- On Exactitude in Science, 1946 Handout

James Tiptree Jr.- The Girl Who Was Plugged In, 1973 (43-78) HSRUF

Philip K. Dick- I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon, 1980 (449-466) SSPKD

2. Keyword: Spectacle _____

Fri Feb 9- Consumption

Philip K. Dick- Foster, You're Dead, 1954 (157-176) SSPKD

Philip K. Dick- The Days of Perky Pat, 1963 (261-286) SSPKD

Pamela Zoline- The Heat Death of the Universe, 1967 (415-429) WASF

3. Keyword: Consumption _____

Article Presentation #1:

Robert M. Philmus. "The Two Faces of Philip K. Dick (Les deux visages de Philip K. Dick)." *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Mar., 1991): 91-103

Gregg Rickman. "Dick, Deception, and Dissociation: A Comment on "The Two Faces of Philip K. Dick"" *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Jul., 1991): 290-293.

Presenters: _____

Presenters: _____

Tue Feb 13- The Map Overlaps

P.K. Dick- How to Build a Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later (excerpt),
1978 Handout

Philip K. Dick- Second Variety, 1953 (51-96) SSPKD

Philip K. Dick- Imposter, 1953 (97-112) SSPKD

Philip K. Dick- We Can Remember It for You Wholesale, 1966 (325-346) SSPKD

4. Keyword: Technology _____

Article Presentation #2:

Jennifer Rhee. "Beyond the Uncanny Valley: Masahiro Mori and Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*." *Configurations* Vol. 21 No. 3 (Fall 2013): 301-329.

Presenters: _____

Presenters: _____

Fri Feb 16- Cyberpunk to Today

Bruce Sterling- Preface to *Mirrorshades*, 1986 Handout

William Gibson- Burning Chrome, 1982 (547-565) WASF

Philip K. Dick- The Exit Door Leads In, 1979 (419-438) SSPKD

Bruce Sterling- We See Things Differently, 1989 (611-629) WASF

5. Keyword: Digital _____

Sci-fi and the Racial Imaginary

Tue Feb 27 Black Arts Movement, Black Power Movement

Film- *The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975*, 2011

Clip- Amiri Baraka- It's Nation Time, 1970

Larry Neal- The Black Arts Movement (excerpt), 1968 Handout

Haki Madhubuti –*Black Pride*, 1968 Handout

Etheridge Knight- *Poems from Prison* (excerpt), 1968 Handout

Gwendolyn Brooks- *Riot, 1969* (digital .pdf)

6. Keyword: Nation _____

Fri Mar 2 Afrofuturism

Film- Black Panther, 2018

Mark Dery “Black to the Future (excerpt), 1993 Handout

Clips- Afrofuturism, particularly 1-3 (approx. 7 min. total)

Music- Sun Raw- Space is the Place (song), 1973

Music- Parliament– *Mothership Connection*, 1975

Music- Janelle Monae- *Many Moons*, 2010

7. Keyword: Space _____

Tue Mar 6 *Kindred*, 1979

Octavia Butler- *Kindred* 1-107 (Prologue, the River, the Fire, the Fall)

8. Keyword: Black _____

Article Presentation #3:

Philip Miletic. “Octavia E. Butler’s Response to Black Arts/ Black Power Literature and Rhetoric in *Kindred*.” *African American Review* 49.3 (Fall 2016): 261-275.

Presenters: _____

Presenters: _____

Fri Mar 9

Octavia Butler- *Kindred* 108-189 (the Fight)

9. Keyword: Performance _____

Article Presentation #4:

Angelyn Mitchell. “Enough of the Past: Feminist Revisions of Slavery in Octavia E. Butler's “*Kindred*.” *MELUS* Vol. 26, No. 3. (Autumn, 2001): 51-75.

Presenters: _____

Presenters: _____

Tue Mar 13

Octavia Butler- *Kindred* 190-262 (the Storm, the Rope, Epilogue)

10. Keyword: Community _____

Article Presentation #5:

Benjamin Robertson. "Some Matching Strangeness": Biology, Politics, and the Embrace of History in Octavia Butler's *Kindred*." *Science Fiction Studies* Vol. 37, No. 3 (November 2010): 362-381.

Presenters: _____

Presenters: _____

Fri Mar 16

Film- *Get Out*, 2017

Octavia Butler- *Speech Sounds*, 1983 (566-579) WASF

Octavia Butler- *Bloodchild*, 1984 Handout

11. Keyword: Racialization _____

Article Presentation #6:

Amanda Thibodeau. "Alien Bodies and a Queer Future: Sexual Revision in Octavia Butler's "Bloodchild" and James Tiptree, Jr.'s "With Delicate Mad Hands" *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (July 2012): 262-282

Presenters: _____

Presenters: _____

An Ambiguous Sci-fi Utopia

Tue Apr 3 "Utopia"

"Utopia" *New Keywords*, 2005 Handout

Samuel Delany- *Aye and Gomorrah...*, 1967 (405-414) WASF

Samuel Delany- *Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-precious Stones*, 1968 Handout

Samuel Delany- *Times Square Blue* (excerpt), 1999 Handout

12. Keyword: Queer _____

Fri Apr 6 *The Dispossessed* 1974

Ursula Le Guin *The Dispossessed* 1-125 (Chap. 1-4)

13. Keyword: Prison _____

Tue Apr 10

Ursula Le Guin *The Dispossessed* 126-191 (Chap. 5-6)

Simone de Beauvoir *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (excerpt), 1947 Handout

14. Keyword: Freedom _____

Fri Apr 13

Ursula Le Guin *The Dispossessed* 192-307 (Chap. 7-9)

15. Keyword: Time _____

Article Presentation #7:

Bülent Somay. "From Ambiguity to Self-Reflexivity: Revolutionizing Fantasy Space." *The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin's "The Dispossessed."* Laurence Davis and Peter Stillman, eds. New York: Lexington Books (2005): 233-247

Presenters: _____

Presenters: _____

No Forum Post This Week

Tue Apr 17

Ursula Le Guin *The Dispossessed* 308-387 (Chap. 10-13)

Ursula Le Guin- *The Day Before the Revolution*, 1974 Handout

16. Keyword: Reform and Revolution _____

Article Presentation #8:

Laurence Davis. "The Dynamic and Revolutionary Utopia of Ursula K. Le Guin." *The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin's "The Dispossessed."* Laurence Davis and Peter Stillman, eds. New York: Lexington Books (2005): 3-36

Presenters: _____

Presenters: _____

Tue Apr 24

Film: *La planète sauvage (The Fantastic Planet)*, 1973