

# Speculative Fiction Studies

## Spring 2019 Course Syllabus & Policies

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**Teacher:** Mr. Michael Dean

**Office:** A115B

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**Office hours:** Walk-ins on Tuesday (B-Day) 9:00 to 11:00 or by appointment (email me to arrange).

### Course Description:

Speculative Fiction Studies explores and illuminates a genre apart from, and in some ways broader than, the traditional canon of literary fiction. The goal of this course is to explore in what sense the act of “speculation” is central to all literature, but particularly crucial to this genre, which encompasses what we recognize today as fantasy and science fiction as well as alternative histories and futures, utopias and dystopias. The course will focus on a variety of short- and long-form readings, with class discussion, individual and group projects, analytical writing, speculative writing, and finally research writing as the avenues of assessment. Students will also be presented with scholarship and literary theory in the field of speculative fiction, the better to understand the deep philosophical, literary, and cultural implications of this genre.

### Meeting Days/Times

Time	Room	Schedule
9:00 – 9:55am	A113	A, C, D
12:20 – 1:15pm	A110d	A, B, D

## Required Materials

### Textbooks<sup>1</sup>

*A Princess of Mars* by Edgar Rice Burroughs

*Binti* by Nnedi Okorafor

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick

### Additional Materials

Additional readings and supplementary texts will be provided electronically through Moodle and as printed handouts.

## SSLs and Outcomes

This course will focus on a range of concepts central to the English team learning standards, and the SSLs but most particularly:

A.1 describing relationships between and among the author's style, literary form (**in this case, the genre of Speculative Fiction and its conventions**), and intended effect on the reader. [SSL-IV.C; IL-2.A.4c]

A.2 identifying and analyzing the philosophical assumptions and axioms underlying an author's work (**particularly those axioms and assumptions which provide foundation to, or exemplify the ideologies of, speculative fiction**). [SSL-II.A; McREL-5.IV]

A.7 drawing upon their work in other disciplines and their understanding of concepts in other disciplines to gain new insights into literature (**students will use their knowledge of the sciences and social sciences, as gained in past and current coursework and reinforced in class discussion, to provide lenses for substantive literary analysis**). [SSL-I.B]

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<sup>1</sup> Readings are subject to change based on text availability and other factors.

A.8 applying knowledge gained from literature as a means of understanding contemporary and historical economic, social, and political issues and perspectives (**particularly as this relates to Speculative Fiction’s use of allegory and metaphor for social and political commentary**). [SSL-III.B; IL-2.B.5b]

B.4 identifying and analyzing the defining characteristics and structures of a variety of complex literary genres (**the largest purpose of this course will be to help students understand the many definitions of, and arrive at their own conclusions about, the Speculative Fiction genre**). [SSL-IV.C, IL-1.B.4b, 5b]

C.1 using speaking and discussion skills to participate in and lead group discussions. [SSL-I.A, IV.B; IL-4.B.5b]

C.2 delivering formal and informal oral presentations

- D.3 creating a research presentation related to academic topics and presenting the findings in oral or multimedia formats, using contemporary technology. [SSL-III.A, IV.B, V.B, IL-3.B.5, 5.C.5a]

## **Instructional Design and Approach**

In this course, we will develop further the critical thinking and critical reading skills introduced in your core coursework and previous electives, using the framework for genre construction and contemporary literary criticism as our guide. We will read and discuss a wide variety of texts ranging from SF’s infancy to its more recent triumphs. At least one research-based student presentation will complement our readings, and you will routinely be asked to express your growing understanding of the critical discourse of Speculative

Fiction through written assignments. Because we are a community of learners, everyone's full participation in regular collaborative work is integral to the course. Also, because it is the instructor's belief that writing is an iterative and imperfect process, students will have opportunities to revise written work for a higher grade.

## **Student Expectations**

### Participation

My expectation is that, at least once per class, you voluntarily respond to a question or comment from your teacher or another student. I want this class to be based on your questions and discussions about them. Students should arrive to class prepared having actively read any assigned readings. Students will also seek out help during office hours on major projects and essay assignments.

### Academic Honesty Policy

Please refer to the Academic Behavior Code on page 10 of the Student/Parent Handbook.

### Laptops

The default position for your laptop in this class is closed. This means, from the moment class starts, unless I ask you to use it, I don't expect to see it open. We will use the laptops frequently for in-class work and research and even for online readings, but to the greatest extent possible, this will be a laptop-free class.

If you have a special need that requires accommodation in this area, please see me.

This policy likewise extends to all electronic devices such as phones, tricorders, telegraphs, etc.

### Book Returns

During this course, you will be given a number of texts from the English Department's collection. It is your responsibility to treat these books carefully and to make sure they are returned when asked to do so. Late returns or lost textbooks will result in a penalty to your participation grade, and you will be expected to replace lost or damaged textbooks.

## **Assessment Practices, Procedure, and Processes**

### Assignment Descriptions

#### ESSAYS

During our class, you will be responsible for completing four essays (a formal document between 3 to 5 pages in length). Each essay will have a different focus and will cover material from the class. It is my expectation that final submissions are essays that have gone through more than one draft.

#### HOMEWORK

"Homework" refers to non-essay assignments completed in and out of class. All homework must be completed by the date assigned. A homework assignment can be submitted late for half credit, but after three days, the assignment will not earn any credit. Keep in mind that if an assignment is due at midnight and it is submitted at 12:01am, it is considered late.

#### PRESENTATIONS & PROJECTS

Occasionally, we will have special projects and presentations. These assignments will typically ask you to radically change your thinking or to engage with your peers through public speaking. More detailed information will be provided in future handouts.

#### PARTICIPATION

A participation grade will be awarded at the end of each quarter. I will take into account many factors when considering your participation grade. Having meaningful contributions in class helps, but sometimes participation also involves asking questions or seeking out extra help when it's needed. Reading quizzes will also be a strong factor for your participation grade.

#### Grade Scale

Your grade will be weighted as follows:

Essays	60%
Homework / Daily Work	5%
Participation	10%
Presentations and Projects	25%

#### English Department Grading Guide

- A = Exceeds course requirements (90-100%)
- B = Meets course requirements (80-89%)
- C = Credit awarded but needs improvement (70-79%)
- D = Does not meet course requirements.

#### Essay Revision Policy

After submitting an essay assignment, you may have the option to revise that essay for an improved grade. Any essay that was submitted *on time* and

earned *lower than an A* will be eligible for revision.

To revise an essay, a student must arrange for a tutoring session at the Writing Center. After attending this session, students will make significant changes to their draft then resubmit their essay with proof of the tutoring session. Along with a writing center slip, you will submit with your new essay a "changes memo" that describes the work that you've done to improve your document. Information about what should appear on that memo can be found on Moodle.

A student who earns a C or lower on an essay **must** revise that essay and **must** also meet with me during office hours or by appointment to discuss the assignment. The conference with me must take place within one week of receiving the graded paper. Avoiding a required revision will strongly impact a quarter participation grade.

Once a student has revised and resubmitted their essay, the original grade of the assignment will be averaged with the grade of the revised draft. Students have one week once their essay has been returned to complete a revision.

**Late papers cannot be revised.**

#### Late Work Policy

As noted above, "Homework" can be submitted late for half credit up to three days after the due date. In some instances, an assignment or activity will not be eligible for makeup due to the nature of the work. I will notify the class when this is the case.

Major essay assignments are always submitted electronically. Consequently, the electronic submission method will determine whether an essay is late. It is your responsibility to make sure that an essay is submitted on time. Technological mishaps, faulty hard drives, viruses, and other events will not be considered valid excuses. Keep in mind that if an assignment is due at 12:00 am and it is

submitted at 12:01 am, it is considered a day late because it was submitted after the deadline.

The first day an essay is late you will lose the opportunity to revise it. For each day after the first, your essay will lose a letter grade. After five days, the essay will receive a "zero."

### Grade "Bumping"

Officially, the English Department does not round or "bump" quarter or semester grades, and I adhere to this policy. Please do not contact me at the midterm or near the end of the semester with requests to increase a grade.

### Response Time on Assignments

It is my intent to return all assignments that receive a grade within two weeks of their submission date.

## **Policies and Expectations**

### Winning Strategies for Students

#### CONSISTENT ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

All students should be prepared and on time for class. The most effective students will use their enrollment as an opportunity to expand their knowledge about a variety of skills and to improve their ability to write.

#### RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR

This is a learning environment, and the class is made up of your peers and colleagues. As such, you will always treat your classmates with the utmost respect and courtesy. Likewise, I expect to receive the same consideration. While it is common to refer to a class by a teacher's last name, when speaking to me directly, please call me "**Mr.** Dean." I won't respond to anything else.



#### TIMELINESS AND HONESTY

As mentioned above, you are expected to complete your assignments on time and on your own. Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course. Likewise, essays that are written shortly before a deadline will likely not be as successful as drafts that have gone through more revision.

#### Faculty Expectations

#### GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

I'm here to help you, and yes, I want you to do well in my class. Never be afraid to ask questions or approach me for advice or extra help. Email is a fantastic way to contact me outside of class and you can always make an appointment to see me during my office hours. But remember, I expect you to take ownership of your education. If you're confused, talk to me. If you need clarification on an assignment, ask.

#### FLEXIBILITY AND RESPECT

Just as I expect you to treat each other with interest, compassion, and civility, I strive to do the same for you.

#### HIGH STANDARDS

Grades in my class are not "given," they are **earned**. At IMSA a "B" means that you have met expectations for a class. A "C" grade means that you did not meet expectations, and an "A" grade means you exceeded expectations. I am happy to spend time with you helping you improve your performance and meet the standards you set for yourself.