

ENG 181: Writing about Science Fiction Literature and Film

ENG 181: Section 004: Writing about Literature

Meeting time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30–12:45

Meeting location: Calloway N204

Instructor: Marlo Starr

Contact: Marlo.Starr@emory.edu

Office Hours: by appointment

Course website: <https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/writingscifi/>



Course description: In our modern industrialized society, science fiction allows us to reflect on our present by imagining our future. In this composition course, we'll explore elements of writing through the lens of speculative fiction, considering the position of humans in relation to the environment, technology, time and space, and each other. We'll look at how increased globalization and rapid technological changes have altered human relations and power dynamics, and we'll evaluate arguments about whether we should welcome or resist these changes. Readings and screenings include classic examples of the genre (*Frankenstein* and the film version of *Fahrenheit 451*) and more recent representations of the not-so-distant future (*Super Sad True Love Story*, *The Fly*, and *Her*, among others). We'll consider how each of these works of art takes a position about current cultural and technological trends, and in order to develop our own arguments about the role of science fiction, we'll develop a portfolio with a variety of artifacts: weekly blog posts, a visual presentation, a literary response letter, and a researched analysis.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

Outcome 1: Rhetorical Composition.

- Engage and persuade a range of audiences in a variety of genres, using a various modes and composing technologies
- Use and adapt generic conventions, including organization, development, and style

Outcome 2: Critical Thinking and Reading Resulting in Writing

- Summarize, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the ideas of others

- Examine the role of technology in shaping cultural practices, perceptions, and communities
- Analyze arguments, both literary and non-literary, that deal with advances in science and technology
- Ethically integrate other texts into your own writing
- Demonstrate knowledge of relationships between language, knowledge, and power

Outcome 3: Writing as Process

- Write using a process of research, drafting, revision, editing, and reflection
- Locate, evaluate, organize, and use research material collected from electronic and other sources
- Constructively critique your own writing and the writing of others
- Build to a final writing product in stages by developing flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proofreading

These learning outcomes are drawn from and modeled on the Council of Writing Program Administrators' Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition. The full list of outcomes and original language can be found here:

<http://wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html>.

Course texts:

Print books:

- Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. Third edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009.
- Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. New York: Dover Thrift Editions, 1994.
- Shteyngart, Gary. *Super Sad True Love Story*. New York: Random House, 2010.

Films:

- *Fahrenheit 451*, 1966 (dir. Françoise Truffaut)
- *The Fly*, 1986 (dir. David Cronenberg)
- *Her*, 2013 (dir. Spike Jonze)

Other required works (will be provided via Emory Course Reserves—please bring a print or electronic copy with you to class):

- Butler, Octavia. "Bloodchild." *Bloodchild and Other Stories*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005.
- Hulme, Keri. "The Eyes of the Moonfish See Moonfish Pain" *Stonefish*. New Zealand: Huai Publishers, 2004.

- LeGuin, Ursula K. "Paradises Lost." *The Birthday of the World and Other Stories*. New York: HarperCollins, 2002.
- Lunsford, Andrea, et al. "Presenting Arguments." *Everything's an Argument*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin, 2012.
- Rich, Adrienne. "Planetarium." *The Fact of a Doorframe: Selected Poems 1950-2001*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2002.
- Rushdie, Salman. "Chekov and Zulu." *East, West*. New York: Random House, 2012.
- Saunders, George. "The Semplica Girl Diaries." *The Tenth of December*. New York: Random House, 2014.
- Smith, Tracy K. "My God, It's Full of Stars." *Life on Mars*. New York: Graywolf Press, 2011.

Assignments and weights:

This is a composition course, and so your writing will count for the vast majority of your grade. Attendance and participation will also count as part of your grade. Throughout the semester you will assemble a portfolio of your work. The portfolio will include short writing assignments, drafts, reflections about writing in progress, and final drafts. Toward the end of the semester, you will use this collection as evidence to argue in a reflective essay that you have achieved the learning outcomes for the course.

Assignments are due **via email and hardcopy**. Email me with your assignment attached as a Word Doc before the start of class and bring a paper copy to hand in during class on the day that it is due.

First Assignment

- *Literary Response Letter*: Our first assignment is a low-stakes way to introduce you to college-level literary analysis. It will serve as a way for me to give you feedback on your writing before we get to higher-stakes, graded assignments. Written in the voice of one of the characters from one of our course texts, your letter will require imagination but also close reading and analysis of the text. This paper will be worth 5% of your grade, although you will receive full credit if all requirements are met and the paper is turned in on time. Include a 200-word reflection describing your writing process and rationale.

Rhetorical Analysis

- *Pecha Kutcha (20 x 20 Visual Presentation)*: A Pecha Kutcha is an oral presentation, which shows 20 images, spending 20 seconds on each image (<http://www.pechakucha.org/faq>). We will spend substantial time in class going over format guidelines in more detail. For your 6-minute-and-40-second presentation, you will choose a physical object (such as a book or album cover, a print advertisement, a movie poster, or an artifact from

MARBL's archive). Your chosen object should engage with an issue raised by one of our course texts, such as privacy, surveillance, solitude, identity, etc. You will analyze how the object engages that issue and present your rhetorical analysis to the class. Worth 15% of your grade. Include a 200-word reflection describing your creative process and rationale.

Researched Argument

- *Paper proposal and annotated bibliography:* Worth 10% of your grade, this short proposal will sketch out the topic for your final paper. You will choose one literary text that we are studying this semester and analyze how the text addresses a social or ethical issue (you can use the same issue addressed in your Pecha Kucha presentation). The second step will be to compile an annotated bibliography. This means that you will assemble 4-5 sources you intend to use for your final paper with about a paragraph of explanation as to why you chose the sources and what you intend to do with them. I will provide feedback on your proposals before you begin composing the rough draft.
- *Rough draft:* You will submit a rough draft of your final paper of at least 6 pages. The feedback and commentary I leave on this will shape your editing and revision for the final draft. The rough draft will be worth 10% of your final grade.
- *Final paper:* Due in finals week, the final paper will need to be 8 pages and will be worth 25% of your final grade. What you write for this will be determined by the feedback I have given you on the prior three steps.

Ongoing and Final Assessment

- *Attendance, participation, and low-stakes writing:* You will be allowed three excused absences; after that, your grade will be reduced a third of letter grade for each additional absence. It is important, however, not only to show up, but to participate in a meaningful way. You are expected to show up **on time** and to **bring required texts** with you to class. In preparation for class discussion, you will compose weekly posts (about 200 words per post) for our class blog reflecting on assigned readings. **Posts are due at 11:59 p.m. Monday night before class.** Participation may affect borderline grades either positively or negatively. Attendance and participation will count for 20% of your grade.
- *Final portfolio reflection.* Your final portfolio will include your letter assignment, five of your best blog posts, Pecha Kucha powerpoint with a summary and reflection, paper proposal, annotated bibliography, rough draft, and final paper. In your final reflection, which will be between 750-1000 words, you'll evaluate your portfolio using the Final Portfolio

Assessment Rubric, which we will discuss in more detail later in the semester.

Literary Response Letter	5%
Pecha Kutcha	15%
Paper proposal and annotated bibliography	10%
Rough draft	15%
Final draft	25%
Attendance, participation, and low-stakes writing	20%
Final portfolio and reflection	10%
Total	100%

Grading Scale

93.00-100	A
90.00-92.99	A-
86.00-89.99	B+
83.00-85.99	B
80.00-82.99	B-
76.00-79.99	C+
73.00-75.99	C
70.00-72.99	C-
66.00-69.99	D+
60.00-65.99	D
0-59.99	F

Explanation of Letter Grades

A: An excellent response to the assignment. Demonstrates a sophisticated use of rhetorical knowledge, writing, and design techniques.

B: A good response to the assignment. Demonstrates an effective use of rhetorical knowledge, writing, and design techniques. May have minor problems that distract reader.

C: An average response to the assignment. Demonstrates acceptable use of rhetorical knowledge, writing, and design technique. May have problems that distract reader.

D: A poor response to the assignment. Demonstrates a lack of rhetorical knowledge and writing and design technique. May have significant problems that distract reader.

F: A failure to respond to the assignment appropriately.

Course policies and campus resources:

Email policy: Email is the best way to contact me if you have questions or concerns. Generally, I will respond to all student email within 24 hours (although on weekends and holidays, it may take a little longer). Likewise, there may be instances when I will need to contact you by email. It is your responsibility to check your Emory-based email account at least once every 24 hours.

Late Assignments: Extensions will be granted, no questions asked, if the request is made to me at least 48 hours before the paper's due date. Papers arriving after the due date (or extension date) will be down-graded one-third of a grade for each elapsed class session.

Technology Policy: If you prefer to use a computer in class, I ask that you do so respectfully. Cell phone use will not be tolerated. I reserve the right to ask students to stop using their devices if they become a distraction. Students who are using their devices for purposes unrelated to the class will be marked absent for the day.

Academic honesty: See

http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policy/honor_code.html for information regarding Emory's honor code. I take academic honesty very seriously, and I expect my students to do the same. Any assignment found to be plagiarized will receive a zero at the minimum, but I also plan to report instances of academic misconduct to the Honor Council.

Tutoring for Multilingual Students: If English is not your first language and if you need additional help with assignments in this or other college classes, you may benefit from working with specially trained ESL Tutors. The tutors are undergraduates who will support the development of your English language skills. Like Writing Center tutors, ESL tutors will not proofread your work. Language is best learned through interactive dialogue, so when you come to an ESL tutoring session, be ready to collaborate! ESL tutors will meet with you in the ESL Lab in Callaway S108 and other designated locations, and they will help you at any stage of the process of developing your essay or presentation. You may bring your work on a laptop or on paper. If you schedule an appointment in the ESL Lab, you may also bring your work on a USB stick - computers are available in the lab.

Visit the website of the Office for Undergraduate Education (<http://college.emory.edu/oue/>) and select "Student Support" and then "ESL Program" to schedule an appointment, read the tutoring policies, and view the offerings of the ESL Program (direct link to ESL Tutoring: <http://college.emory.edu/oue/student-support/esl-program/esl-tutoring.html>). If

you do not have a scheduled appointment, you may want to meet with a drop-in tutor in the ESL Lab, Callaway S108. Here, you may have less time with a tutor if other students are waiting, but you can briefly discuss an assignment and some of your concerns. For more information, visit the website or contact Levin Arnsperger at larnspe@emory.edu.

Emory counseling services: Free and confidential counseling services and support are available from the Emory Counseling Center (404) 727-7450. This can be an invaluable resource when stress makes your work more challenging than it ought to be.

Access and disability resources: I strive to create an inclusive learning environment for all. I am invested in your success in this class and at Emory, so please let me know if anything is standing in the way of your doing your best work. This can include your own learning strengths, any classroom dynamics that you find uncomfortable, ESL issues, disability or chronic illness, and/or personal issues that impact your work. I will hold such conversations in strict confidence.

Students with medical/health conditions that might impact academic success should visit Access, Disability Services and Resources (ADSR formerly the Office of Disability Services, ODS) to determine eligibility for appropriate accommodations. Students who receive accommodations must present the Accommodation Letter from ADSR to your professor at the beginning of the semester, or when the letter is received.

Public nature of the course: As learning to respond to feedback from an audience is a major goal of the class, we will be devoting much time—both in and out of class—to sharing our work as it progresses towards a graded copy. Keep this in mind as you develop your ideas. Likewise, I expect that students take their role as listener and reader seriously: this classroom aims to be a safe space for all to express their opinions and experiences without judgment or ridicule. Disagreements can and will happen, of course, but those disagreements will be investigated in a way that respects every participant's right to her or his own opinion.

Attendance policy: Much classroom time in this course will be devoted to classroom discussions and writing workshops. As such, your attendance in class is necessary not only to your success but also to the success of your classmates. Students are allowed 3 unexcused absences without penalty.

Emory Writing Center: The Emory Writing Center staff includes talented and welcoming undergraduate and graduate students from a range of disciplines. They are eager to work with all writers at all stages of the composing process. Whether you are exploring ideas, revising a draft, or polishing a final version of a project, the

Writing Center is the place for you. They offer discussion- and workshop-based tutorials for individuals and groups that enable writers to approach their work with fresh eyes and to consider a variety of strategies for writing, revising, and editing. Tutors can talk with you about the purpose, organization, and audience of your work, your design choices, or how you engage other texts. They can also work with you on sentence-level concerns, including grammar, syntax, and word choice; however, they will not proofread for you. Instead, they will discuss strategies and resources you can use to become a better editor of your own work.

The Writing Center is located in Callaway N212. Regular appointments are 45 minutes long. You should bring a copy of your assignment, any relevant writing (notes, a draft, the url for your website, etc.), and a plan for what you want to work on. If you have a laptop, we encourage you to bring it, especially if you're working on a digital text. If you are working on a traditional paper, please also bring a hard copy of your work. In addition to our regular appointments, we offer walk-in visits, a good resource when you have a quick question or can't get an appointment. To view our hours, make an appointment, and get more information, go to writingcenter.emory.edu.

Calendar: Subject to change.

Thursday, August 27: Introductions. What is science fiction, and why is it valuable?

Tuesday, September 1: Preface, Introduction, and Chapter 12 of *They Say, I Say*.

Listen to RadioLab podcast "Eye in the Sky." Link:

<http://www.radiolab.org/story/eye-sky/>

Sign up for Pecha Kucha presentations.

Thursday, September 3: Part 1, Chapter 1 of *They Say, I Say*

"Semplica Girl Diaries"

"Eyes of the Moonfish See Moonfish Pain"

Tuesday, September 8: **Begin Unit 1: Modern Love.**

Part 1, Chapter 2 of *They Say, I Say*

Super Sad True Love Story, 3-43

Thursday, September 10: Part 1, Chapter 4 of *They Say, I Say*

Super Sad True Love Story, 44-75

Visit to MARBL

Tuesday, September 15:

Letter assignment due.

"Presenting Arguments" excerpt from *Everything's an Argument*.

Continue *Super Sad True Love Story*, 75-98

In class: viewing of model Pecha Kucha presentations and brainstorming of presentation topics.

Thursday, September 17: Part 2, Chapter 5 of *They Say, I Say*

Super Sad True Love Story, 99-142. Continued discussion of guidelines for oral presentations.

Tuesday, September 22: Part 2, Chapters 6 and 7 of *They Say, I Say*

Continue *Super Sad True Love Story*, 143-177.

Thursday, September 24: Part 2, Chapter 8 ("Connecting the Parts") of *They Say, I Say*

Continue *Super Sad True Love Story*, 178-203

Tuesday, September 29: Continue *Super Sad True Love Story*, 204-248

Day One: Pecha Kucha Presentations.

Thursday, October 1: Continue *Super Sad True Love Story*, 248-294

Day Two: Pecha Kucha Presentations.

Tuesday, October 6: Continue *Super Sad True Love Story*, 295-334

Day Three: Pecha Kucha Presentations.

Thursday, October 8:

Watch Spike Jonze's *Her*.

Guest speaker: Erin Mooney, librarian

Tuesday, October 13: Fall break. No class.

Thursday, October 15: **Begin Unit 2: Transformations.**

Part 3, Chapter 9, 10 of *They Say, I Say*

Frankenstein, 1-34

Tuesday, October 20: Part 3, Chapters 11 of *They Say, I Say*

Continue *Frankenstein*, 34-65

Thursday, October 22: Continue *Frankenstein*, 65-97

Guest speaker: Corey Goergen

Tuesday, October 27: Part 1, Chapter 3 ("The Art of Quoting") of *They Say, I Say*

Frankenstein, 97-136

Paper proposal and annotated bibliography due.

Thursday, October 29: *Frankenstein*, 136-166

Tuesday, November 3: Watch *Fahrenheit 451* and read "Memory in the

Technological World." **Guest speaker: Dustin Peone**

Thursday: November 5:

Poems: "My God, It's Full of Stars" by Tracy K. Smith. Link:

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/243880>

"Planetarium" by Adrienne Rich. Link:

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/175906>

Tuesday, November 10: **Begin Unit 3: Old and New Worlds.**

"Bloodchild" by Octavia Butler

Thursday, November 12: "Chekhov and Zulu."

In-class peer review.

Rough draft due.

Tuesday, November 17: Begin "Paradises Lost." (first half)

Thursday, November 19: Finish "Paradises Lost."

Discussion of revision process and final portfolios. Overview of Final Portfolio Assessment Rubric.

Tuesday, November 24: Watch Cronenberg's *The Fly*.

Continued discussion of final portfolios. What is a reflective essay?

Thursday, November 26: Thanksgiving Day. No class.

Tuesday, December 1: No class today; individual conferences throughout the week re: final paper.

Thursday, December 3: No class today; individual conferences throughout the week re: final paper.

Tuesday, December 8: Last day of class. Wrap-up. **Final papers due.**

Final portfolio and reflection will be due December 15 via email to me.