

# Liberal Studies 2212-110

## Literature and Culture: Science Fiction

Fall 2013

Dr. Aaron A. Toscano (atoscano)

Office: Fretwell 280F

Office hours: Tues. & Thurs. 1:00 – 3:00 pm (and by appt.)

Classroom: Denny 200

Time: Tues. & Thurs. 3:30 – 4:45 pm

<http://webpages.uncc.edu/~atoscano/>

### Course Description and Purpose

This class explores science fiction as a product of the culture and time period from which it comes. Students can also expect the course to demonstrate how science and technology play a role in these often speculative works. Science fiction isn't simply a prediction of the future; instead, it's a critical examination of the social, economic, and aesthetic conditions of the author's culture. In order to understand both the texts and the cultural contexts, we will read works from authors such as Douglas Adams, Issac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, Octavia Butler, Philip K. Dick, Ursula K. LeGuin, F. T. Marinetti, and H. G. Wells among others. Viewing films and video games related to this exciting genre will also be part of the class.

### Texts and Materials

**Required:** Adams, Douglas. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. 1979.  
Calvino, Italo. *Cosmicomics*. 1968 [1965].  
Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*. 1984.  
LeGuin, Ursula K. *The Dispossessed*. 1974.  
Wells, H. G. *Time Machine*. 1895.  
Evans, Arthur, et. al. *The Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction*. 2010.  
Access to [Moodle2](#)  
Willingness To Learn

### Expectations

I expect students to be prepared when they come to class. **There is quite a bit of reading in this course, but it's manageable if you plan your school-work-life needs. Again, there is quite a bit of reading in this course.** Students should have read the assigned reading prior to coming to class. Also, to get the most out of this course, students should read and take good notes on the reading. I will have a Web page devoted to this class, and [Moodle2](#) will have additional information. This is a large lecture class, so it's vital that you follow along with the syllabus and class Web page. Don't expect detailed notes about the readings via e-mail. In addition to the reading and exams, students must post 250-word reflections weekly about a specific topic or the reading in general. Students can expect responses from me at least once (but probably more times) a semester, so make sure you post reflections. Reflections aren't right or wrong; instead, they're chances for you to write out your thoughts and have a record—this is vital for developing critical thinking faculties. Remember, you are here to learn. This course (and LBST requirements in general) is supposed to help you expand your thinking. It's not to tell you what to think—that's up to you. My goal is to demonstrate how we may interpret literature to identify the implied questions good literature asks. Liberal studies is a discipline that attempts to foster learning not for any specific job but to be an informed (perhaps, well-rounded) citizen. The critical thinker and informed citizen don't look to be spoon fed ideas. He or she strives to ask appropriate questions about topics or situations or life itself. These questions are ways to discover meaning and meanings related to the texts cultures produce. Education is neither about reinforcing your beliefs nor indoctrinating you in any specific ideology. Unlike more technical subjects or disciplines that have exact answers, this course is located in the Humanities and might deal with prevailing evidence, but exact answers aren't always possible. Context, which changes, will often dictate the answer to a question or conclusion to a topic. However, you should leave with more questions than answers and learn to cope with ambiguity. You're entering a conversation.

### Work Requirements

In order to assess how well students understand the readings and class lectures, students will take two tests, a Midterm Exam, and a Final Exam. If all goes according to plan, those tests and exams will be on [Moodle2](#), and students will take them wherever they have Internet access, so we won't meet as a class on those days.

## Grading Policy

Tests, Exams, Posts	pts.	Grading Scale
Test 1	50	A= 90 – 100
Midterm Exam	100	B= 80 – 89
Test 2	50	C= 70 – 79
Final Exam	200	D= 60 – 69
Moodle2 Posts	300	F= Below 60
Total	700	

## Late Work

Although you aren't turning anything in as a hardcopy, I expect you'll post the reflections by 11:59 pm on Thursdays on which the [Moodle2](#) posts are due. Late posts may not be recorded as complete depending on how late the posts come in. At the least, late posts will be penalized 10%. Students are responsible for making sure they have access to the Internet (at home, on campus, on a handheld device, etc.). Get on [Moodle2](#), and make sure you have reliable access. You don't want to find out you don't have a good connection the day a test. If you are absent, get the follow along with the syllabus or get class notes from another student. Do not expect me to e-mail the class notes to you. Of course, never e-mail me and ask, "so...like, Dr. Toscano, man...did we...like...you know...do anything the other day in class?"

## Attendance

I won't be taking attendance. We have over 100 students, so monitoring who's here and who isn't wastes valuable class time. It is very important that you attend every class in order to keep up with the discussion. Ultimately, your success in this course lies with your decision to commit to the course requirements and appropriately balance school-work-life needs. There are no such things as excused absences. Only students participating in UNCC sponsored activities (with the proper documentation) will be allowed to change test or exam times. I will ask you to request a meeting with the Dean of Students if you have situations that you feel should allow you an exception to these course policies. Remember, cars break down, parking is limited, students get sick, and traffic is brutal, but class still happens. Please get to class on time, and, if you're late, be courteous and don't disturb the class with your noise.

## Academic Integrity

All UNC Charlotte students have the responsibility to be familiar with and to observe the requirements of *The UNC Charlotte Code of Student Academic Integrity*. This Code forbids cheating, fabrication, or falsification of information, multiple submission of academic work, plagiarism, abuse of academic materials (such as Library books on reserve), and complicity in academic dishonesty (helping others to violate the Code). Any further specific requirements or permission regarding academic integrity in this course will be stated by the instructor, and are also binding on the students in this course. Students who violate the Code can be punished to the extent of being permanently expelled from UNC Charlotte and having this fact recorded on their official transcripts. The normal penalty is zero credit on the work involving dishonesty and further substantial reduction of the course grade. In almost all cases, the course grade is reduced to "F." If you do not have a copy of the Code, you can view it on **UNC Charlotte's Academic Integrity** Web site at <http://integrity.uncc.edu/>. Standards of academic integrity will be enforced in this course. Students are expected to report cases of academic dishonesty they become aware of to the course instructor who is responsible for dealing with them.

**If you try to pass off any work in full or part as your own without proper credit being given to the original source—you will receive an 'F' in this course. If you use non-sanctioned resources (e.g., other classmates) to complete test and exams, you will receive an 'F' in this course.**

In addition to the above identification of Academic Dishonesty, students should be aware of technology-mediated concerns related to Academic Integrity. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "integrity" as "The condition of having no part or element taken away or wanting; undivided or unbroken state; material wholeness, completeness, entirety." A second definition states that integrity means "The condition of not being marred or violated; unimpaired or uncorrupted condition;

original perfect state; soundness." Therefore, anything that draws students' attention away from course activities and goals is a violation of academic integrity because it corrupts the soundness and condition of learning. For instance, engaging in critical thinking/awareness is a sound, perfect state activity for this course; on the other hand, devoting attention to facebook, texting/messaging, non-class-related Web surfing or e-mailing, etc. violates or corrupts the learning goals of this course. Although we may point to the Internet in general and social media sites specifically in our discussions of 21st-Century communication, engrossing oneself in them during class to "catch up with friends" divides your attention and may be distracting to members of this class. This violation is as serious as plagiarism and will result in an 'F' in participation the first time and an 'F' in this course for a subsequent violation. This syllabus section is your warning. Yes, it is obvious when you are using laptops and handheld devices to take notes or when you use them to corrupt the learning environment.

You will also receive an 'F' in the course for other academic integrity violations. Do not expect another warning—this is it. Please see me if you need further clarification regarding cheating, fabrication or falsification of information, multiple submission of academic work, plagiarism, or complicity in academic dishonesty. Again, so there's no confusion, you will most likely fail the course if you violate any part of the academic integrity code.

### **A Note to Students from UNC Charlotte's English Department, Statement on Diversity (April 2009)**

The English Department strives to create an academic climate that respects people of varied cultural backgrounds and life experiences. As a community of scholars and teachers who study language, literature, and writing, we are committed to nurturing intellectual and aesthetic diversity. In all our activities, we invite participation by diverse groups, including, but not limited to, those who define themselves in the following terms: race and ethnicity; gender; political orientation; sexual orientation; special health needs; age; religion; country of origin; and socio-economic status. Finally, by fostering multiple perspectives in our coursework, we can help our students prepare to participate in our increasingly diverse society, as well as in the global community.

The Department of English is committed to the centrality of writing in our curriculum.

### **Instructional Modifications**

Students who have a condition that may impair their ability to complete assignments or otherwise satisfy course criteria are encouraged to meet with professionals to identify, discuss, and document any feasible instructional modifications or accommodations. Please inform me about circumstances as soon as possible. I don't need specifics, but I do need to know what accommodations to make. For information and assistance, contact the Disabilities Resource Center: <http://ds.uncc.edu/>.

### **Statement of Academic Freedom**

I strongly encourage students to use class as a place for free inquiry and intellectual growth. Although we as a class will not always agree or be comfortable with the views of others, every student has the right to his or her own tastes and convictions. I promise to be fair and always support your right to look at the world from your own position, but I encourage all students to branch out and consider multiple perspectives. If you think texts have single, objectively reasoned meanings ...well, you're about to get a radical new perspective in this course. Our biases filter our interpretations of the world around us. Family, culture, media, law, religion, etc. influence how we perceive the world. Your perspectives might be similar to those close to you, but your worldview isn't universally held. **I will not tolerate any harassment or abuse (emotional or physical) or any instance where others adversely affect students' learning. Remember, harassment isn't just verbal—making harassing or abusive posts won't be tolerated.**

### **Inclement Weather/Building Issues**

Some buildings can have HVAC problems. Occasionally, the powers that be close buildings and classes are canceled because it is too brutally hot to remain inside. If a building related "issue" cancels class, continue to keep up with the class web page, readings, and [Moodle2](#) posts. The library has lots of space and many computers. We'll pick up where we left off on the syllabus when we return to class. This also goes for inclement weather.

## Important Dates and Administrative Information

The syllabus schedule on the last two pages has important dates marked. Students are responsible for not only knowing course deadlines but also knowing UNCC deadlines (drop/add, billing, vacation, etc.). Please visit the following link for the registrar's calendar: <http://registrar.uncc.edu/calendar>.

## Right to Make Changes

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus when necessary to meet learning objectives, to compensate for missed classes, or to make our lives easier. I also reserve the right to change Test and Exam format (currently on Moodle2) if there are too many technical difficulties or if Academic Integrity concerns convince me to have in-class Tests and Exams.

## Schedule for Readings and Assignments

(Have readings and assignments done before class. Have posts by Midnight on Thursdays.)

August 20	Introduction to the Course
August 22	Introduction on how to think about literature from a cultural studies perspective Vocabulary for discussing literature

August 27*	Asimov, Isaac. "Reason" (1941) [Anthology pp. 160-176] Heinlein, Robert A. "All You Zombies—" (1959) [Anthology pp. 324-336]
August 29	Marinetti, F. T. "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism" ( <a href="#">online</a> ) Marinetti, F. T. "Destruction of Syntax—Imagination without strings—Words-in-Freedom" ( <a href="#">online</a> ) Marinetti, F. T. "War, the World's Only Hygiene" ( <a href="#">excerpt</a> )

\*August 28<sup>th</sup>: Big day for the semester:

- Last day to register. If you're not registered, you will not be allowed to continue in the course.
- 2nd Cancellation for non-payment 11:59 PM.

September 3	Wells, H. G. <i>Time Machine</i> . (1895)
September 5	Wells, H. G. <i>Time Machine</i> . (1895) Wells, H. G. "The Star" (1897) [Anthology pp. 39-49]

September 10	Forster, E. M. "The Machine Stops" (1909) [Anthology pp. 50-78] Lafferty, R. A. "Slow Tuesday Night" (1965) [Anthology pp. 359-366] Ellison, Harlan. "'Repent, Harlequin!' Said the Ticktockman" (1965) [Anthology pp. 367-378]
September 12	<b>Test 1</b>

September 17	Adams, Douglas. <i>The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy</i> . (1979)
September 19	Adams, Douglas. <i>The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy</i> . (1979)

September 24	Leiber, Fritz. "Coming Attraction" (1950) [Anthology pp. 221-233] Bradbury, Ray. "There Will Come Soft Rains" (1950) [Anthology pp. 234-240]
September 26	Clarke, Arthur C. "The Sentinel" (1951) [Anthology pp. 241-249] Tenn, William. "The Liberation of Earth" (1953) [Anthology pp. 266-282]

October 1	Weinbaum, Stanley G. "A Martian Odyssey" (1934) [Anthology pp. 136-159] Kelly, James Patrick. "Think Like a Dinosaur" (1995) [Anthology pp. 698-716]
October 3	<b>Midterm Exam (slightly cumulative)</b>

October 8	<b>Fall Break—No Class</b>
October 10	Tiptree, James, Jr. "And I Awoke and Found Me Here on the Cold Hill's Side" (1972) [Anthology pp. 516-524] Emshwiller, Carol. "Abominable" (1980) [Anthology pp. 537-546]

October 15	LeGuin, Ursula K. <i>The Dispossessed</i> . (1974)
October 17	LeGuin, Ursula K. <i>The Dispossessed</i> . (1974)

October 22	Delany, Samuel R. "Aye, and Gomorrah..." (1967) [Anthology pp. 405-414] Russ, Joanna. "When It Changed" (1972) [Anthology pp. 507-515]
October 24*	Merril, Judith. "That Only a Mother" (1948) [Anthology pp. 211-220] Zoline, Pamela. "The Heat Death of the Universe" (1967) [Anthology pp. 415-429]

\*October 28<sup>th</sup>: Last day to withdraw from a course with a "W" grade (and retain other courses)

October 29	Butler, Octavia. "Speech Sounds" (1983) [Anthology pp. 566-579] Nogha, Misha. "Chippoke Na Gomi" (1989) [Anthology pp. 630-636]
October 31	<b>Test 2—Happy Halloween! Here's your treat...</b>

November 5	Gibson, William. <i>Neuromancer</i> . (1984)
November 7	Gibson, William. <i>Neuromancer</i> . (1984)

November 12	Gibson, William. "Burning Chrome." (1982) [Anthology pp. 547-565] Dick, Philip K. "We Can Remember it for You Wholesale." (1966) [Anthology pp. 385-404]
November 14*	Cadigan, Pat. "Pretty Boy Crossover" (1986) [Anthology 587-597] Gunn, Eileen. "Computer Friendly" (1989) [Anthology 637-653]

\*November 18<sup>th</sup>: Deadline to withdraw from *all* courses with "W" grade.

November 19	Calvino, Italo. <i>Cosmicomics</i> . (1965)
November 21	Calvino, Italo. <i>Cosmicomics</i> . (1965)

November 26	TBA
<b>November 27-30: No Class—Thanksgiving Break</b>	

December 3	Last Day of Class TBA
December 5	<b>Reading Day</b> —No class meetings

December 12	<b>Final Exam (slightly cumulative)—On Moodle during scheduled Exam time: 2:00-4:30</b> <a href="http://registrar.uncc.edu/sites/registrar.uncc.edu/files/media/Fall%202013%20Exam%20Schedule.pdf">http://registrar.uncc.edu/sites/registrar.uncc.edu/files/media/Fall%202013%20Exam%20Schedule.pdf</a>
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Commencement December 14<sup>th</sup>