

AMST 3020-085/ENGL 3051-085

Seminar in American Studies: Science Fiction in American Culture

Summer Session I—2019

Dr. Aaron A. Toscano Office: Fretwell 280F Office hours: variable, mainly by appt	Classroom: NONE Internet (100% online)* Time: You have deadlines but no class time http://pages.uncc.edu/aaron-toscano/amstsummer2019/
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*Online course delivered through a combination of class website and Canvas. Learn to use Canvas at <http://canvas.uncc.edu/>.

Course Description

No other genre reflects American culture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries more than science fiction. In fact, science fiction is more culturally significant than the Western for contemporary American identity. This class explores science fiction as a product of American values in all its exciting, thought-provoking, and entertaining ways. In order to understand both the texts and the cultural contexts, we will watch films, television shows, and even video game segments. We will also read stories to help us understand how important this popular culture genre is to American identity overall. This is a 100% online Writing Intensive (W) course, so students will write essays and post reflections on Canvas.

Course Objectives and Biases

I have a bias that drives my pedagogy, and I want to make this absolutely clear: **I believe that education for the sake of education is good in and of itself.** I do not make any claim that you will learn practical 9-to-5 job skills, and I hope we engage only in abstract theoretical endeavors. This is a writing intensive (W) course that predominantly assesses your understanding through writing. You will make arguments and comment thoughtfully on the course material. There are no correct answers, but, as a rhetorician, I have a bias that your essays and reflections will be sound, well thought out, and resemble a commitment to logical reasoning. Another huge bias I have is that a university education is not about reinforcing student beliefs; instead, students should consider how their own biased perspectives/experiences have constructed their tastes, convictions, and opinions as they synthesize a new (preferably broader) intellectual appreciation of science fiction in American Culture. 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 is not simply a prediction of the future; instead, this genre critically examines the social, economic, and aesthetic conditions surrounding its creation.

Work Requirements

This class does not simply measure what you read, watch, and regurgitate; instead, I try to evaluate how you negotiate the course material through your writing. The material might not be new to you—films, TV shows, stories, etc.—but this course asks you to rethink your ways of knowing in order to become more culturally aware critics of science fiction and society in general.

The ability to read college-level texts critically is a major requirement. In addition to the books above, you have short readings on Canvas and TV shows and a few films to watch. Although some might claim to be able to "get by" without having read or watched the content assigned, do not assume that you can get a decent Canvas participation grade without having read. In addition to reflections on Canvas based on the course material, students will complete two written essays that will go through the writing process.

Although we do not have face-to-face meetings, I will have prompts for you due nearly every Tuesday and Thursday (by 11:00 pm). We will not have a final exam (unless I think there was not enough reading done), so your final essay will be due on the last day of class, June 24th. It might seem odd to have dates on the calendar portion of this syllabus and the class webpage (<https://pages.uncc.edu/aaron-toscano/amstsummer2019/>), but I've organized the class this way to help keep you on top of what you need to do. You may be able to devote your entire Monday to all the week's material, and that's fine. I have the course separated into days so that it's easier to manage than if I just lumped everything together. Please go to both Canvas and the course webpage—yes, they are two separate entities.

Text and Materials

Required	Asimov, Isaac. <i>I, Robot</i> . {Any Edition} Gibson, William. <i>Burning Chrome</i> . {9780060539825} Short Stories not in the Gibson book on course calendar (online or on Canvas) Willingness To Learn
Recommended	Having seen movies, TV shows, Commercials, Youtube Videos, etc. Having access to Hulu, Netflix, or Amazon Prime (or some venue to get the shows and films we'll watch)

Assignments/Grade Distribution

Assignment	Pts.
Essay #1—Draft	100
Essay #1—Final	100
Essay #2—Draft	100
Essay #2—Final	200
Canvas Reflections (twice a week)	500
Total	1000

All of the above must be completed to receive a passing grade in the course.

Grading Policy

Your final grade is supposed to reflect your entire work for the semester and will be based on the percentages below:

Grading Scale for Graded Assignments and Final Grade:				
A= 90 - 100	B= 80 - 89	C= 70 - 79	D= 60 - 69	F=Below 60

Definition of A, B, C, D, and F Grades

Remember, your final grade is a combination of the five assignments above in the assignment percentage table. An 'A' means your work was excellent—not mediocre, average, or just good. A 'B' means your work was good—not quite excellent but definitely above average and thoughtful. A 'C' means your work was barely adequate enough to satisfy the assignment—showing a lack of effort or thought for the assignment guidelines. A 'D' or 'F' usually means assignments were late, missing, or incomplete—often this work does not demonstrate appropriate college-level work for a 3000-level course.

Late Work

Assignments are due on specific dates listed in the calendar section on this syllabus. All late essay work—drafts and finals—will reduce the assignment by 25% for each class period it is late. Therefore, an assignment worth 100 points that is one class meeting late will not be able to have a grade higher than 75. All Essays will be submitted on Canvas. I will not accept Canvas reflections late. **Expect to have reflections due every Tuesday and Thursday by 11:00 pm.**

Attendance

Class is 100% online, so there's no attendance required. Keep up with the syllabus, class website, and Canvas page.

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 website 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.

You may also receive an 'F' in the course for other academic integrity violations specified on the UNC Charlotte Integrity website. 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, complicity in academic dishonesty, or other violations of academic integrity.

Important Dates and Administrative Information

The syllabus schedule below has important dates marked. Students are responsible for not only knowing course deadlines but also knowing UNC Charlotte deadlines (drop/add, billing, vacation, etc.). Please visit the following link for the registrar's calendar: <https://registrar.uncc.edu/printable-calendar>.

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 do not 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. I will not tolerate any harassment or abuse (emotional or physical) or any instance where others adversely affect students' learning.

Right to Make Changes

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus when necessary to meet learning objectives, to compensate for campus-wide Internet issues, or to make our lives easier.

Schedule for Readings and Assignments

(I expect you to have the course material read or watched before the day assigned. Your Canvas reflections will be based on readings, films, TV shows, and video game sequences.)

WEEK 1	
May 20	Welcome to Class; Get on Canvas Check out our Class Website: https://pages.uncc.edu/aaron-toscano/amstsummer2019/
May 21*	Jefferson, Thomas et. al. "The Declaration of Independence" 4 July 1776. National Archives Online Asimov, Isaac. "Cult of Ignorance" (1980) On Canvas Canvas Post Due by 11:00 pm
May 22	The Wachowskis. <i>The Matrix</i> (1999)—I assume you can find this if you haven't seen it.
May 23	Tiptree, James, Jr. "And I Awoke and Found Me Here on the Cold Hill's Side" (1972) online Russ, Joanna. "When It Changed" (1972) on Canvas You should begin reading Isaac Asimov's <i>I, Robot</i> (1950) Canvas Post Due by 11:00 pm
*May 21 st : Last Day to Add or Drop a Class with no grade by 11:59 PM	
WEEK 2	
May 27	Keep reading Isaac Asimov's <i>I, Robot</i> (1950)
May 28	Have finished Isaac Asimov's <i>I, Robot</i> (1950) Canvas Post Due by 11:00 pm
May 29	Film: Softley, Iain. <i>Hackers</i> (1995)—many places
May 30	Film: Nolan, Christopher. <i>Inception</i> (2010)—many places including HBO Canvas Post Due by 11:00 pm
WEEK 3	
June 3 **DUE**	Essay #1 Draft DUE TV show: <i>Firefly</i> "Jaynestown" (2002)—Hulu, YouTube, Amazon, VUDU, others Season 1, Episode 4
June 4	Gibson, William. Preface by Bruce Sterling in <i>Burning Chrome</i> . pp. xi-xviii Gibson, William. "Johnny Mnemonic" in <i>Burning Chrome</i> . pp. 1-23 Canvas Post Due by 11:00 pm
June 5	Gibson, William. "New Rose Hotel" in <i>Burning Chrome</i> . pp. 109-123
June 6	Gibson, William. "Burning Chrome" in <i>Burning Chrome</i> . pp. 179-204 Canvas Post Due by 11:00 pm
WEEK 4	
June 10* **DUE**	Essay #1 Final DUE TV show: <i>Black Mirror</i> "Fifteen Million Merits" (2011)—Netflix Season 1, Episode 2

June 11	TV Show: <i>The Twilight Zone</i> "Eye of the Beholder" (1960)—Netflix, Hulu, SyFy Channel https://www.cbs.com/shows/the_twilight_zone/ (free 30 day trial) Season 2, Episode 6 Canvas Post Due by 11:00 pm
June 12	Film: Nolan, Christopher. <i>Interstellar</i> (2014)—YouTube, Amazon Prime, Vudu, and Google Play, iTunes Weinbaum, Stanley. "A Martian Odyssey" (Online)
June 13	Asimov, Isaac. <i>Bicentennial Man</i> (1976) on Canvas Canvas Post Due by 11:00 pm
*June 10 th : Last Day to Withdraw from a Course	
WEEK 5	
June 17 **DUE**	Essay #2 Draft DUE TV Show: <i>Star Trek: The Next Generation</i> "The Measure of a Man" (1989)—Netflix, Hulu, CBS Season 2, Episode 9
June 18	<i>Wall-E</i> (2008)—YouTube, Amazon Prime, Vudu, and Google Play Canvas Post Due by 11:00 pm
June 19	<i>Wall-E</i> and technology Mattie, Sean. "WALL .E on the Problem of Technology." <i>Perspectives on Political Science</i> , Winter 2014, Vol.43(1). {On Canvas}
June 20	Music Video: Red Hot Chili Peppers "Californication" (1999) here Video Game: GTA: San Andreas "Area 69" walkthrough (2005) here Canvas Post Due by 11:00 pm —last post
WEEK 6	
June 24 **DUE**	Essay #2 Final Due
FINAL	No Final Exam in this course