

Course name: ENGL 279

Course title: Science Fiction and Dystopic Literature

Units: 3

Course Description:

This course is designed to increase students' knowledge of the literary genre known as Science Fiction. Emphasis will be on the study of literature--novels and short fiction--that depicts our future world, visionary scientific endeavor, and conflicts between humans, aliens, and sentient technology. Students will study the history, exciting contemporary trends, and the relevant contemporary issues in Science Fiction, including dystopia vs. utopia, artificial intelligence, current theory concerning technology, cloning and physical science, human psychology in a futuristic environment, and the rise of Cyberpunk and new Alternate Reality literature within the genre.

Prerequisites:

Completion of ENGL 101

Course Objectives:

1. Analyze the role of literature as a means of reflecting and shaping thought and behavior.
2. Recognize and employ literary terminology and the language of literary criticism.
3. Identify, interpret, and compare and contrast specific leitmotifs and character types of the Science Fiction genre.
4. Practice critical reading and writing skills.
5. Conduct research and synthesize material from outside the given text in developing a written or oral project.
6. Recognize the attributes that make literary works universal and timeless, as well as unique to certain genres.
7. Demonstrate the ability to discuss literature using relevant support from the text.
8. Evaluate a literary work objectively, being able to understand and analyze critical responses to the works read.

Course Content:

- I. In discussing the roots of many essential elements of Science Fiction, the instructor will guide students in:
 - A. Distinguishing the important archetypes of Science Fiction.

B. Evaluating the relevance of foundational texts and concepts to contemporary Science Fiction.

II. In presenting the motifs of alien contact and space exploration, the instructor will:

A. Allow students to apply knowledge of archetypes and foundational concepts in their analysis of written and visual texts.

B. Help students recognize the diversity in the genre.

C. Help students recognize the interconnectedness of Science Fiction with other genres.

III. In illustrating the core concepts of dystopic and utopic Science Fiction, the instructor will:

A. Expand students' lexicon of critical terminology

B. Assist students in considering the ramifications of potential social systems and technological realities.

IV. In examining the roots of such current popular Science Fiction sub-genres as Cyberpunk, Alternate Reality, and Techno-Sci-fi, the instructor will:

A. Guide the students through the conceptual evolution of the genre.

B. Allow students to examine and debate the impact of cloning, artificial intelligence, advanced technology, alternate realities, and Postmodernism.

V. In expanding the student's knowledge of current Cyberpunk fiction and film, and/or other contemporary sub-genres of Science Fiction literature and film, the instructor will:

A. Provide students further evaluative tools and perspectives on a rapidly changing and increasingly diverse genre.

B. Encourage students to embrace complexity in the genre in terms of aesthetics, critical theory, and technology.

Methods of Instruction:

Lectures

Modeling of academic critical analyses

Facilitating class and/or group discussions

Presenting audio and visual materials

Out-of-Class Assignments:

Weekly readings will include selections from assigned literature and may be supplemented by readings exploring the context, impact, or relevance of selected works.

Students will be required to write at least 6,500 words throughout all composing tasks, some of which will include practice of research skills. These assignments may include reading responses, journals, critical essays, and analytical research papers using proper MLA documentation and format.

Preparation for in-class presentations and participation in group work.

Students will develop stronger critical reading and writing skills; they will analyze representative texts of Science Fiction, including examples of Dystopic Literature, while recognizing the genre's history, diversity, and conceptual evolution; they will synthesize ideas through composing essays and formulate rigorous arguments on the social relevance and aesthetic qualities of selected works.

Reading: 3 hours per week for assigned texts

Writing: 3 hours per week for essays, short response papers, and/or journal entries 1-2 hours per week for research or preparation for in-class work

Methods of Evaluation:

As the students do writing assignments and participate in class discussions, group work and class presentations, the instructor will be looking for:

Students' ability to analyze, compare and contrast, and evaluate works from Science Fiction and Dystopic Literature. (Objectives 1-8)

Students' ability to use appropriate literary terms and critical terminology. (Objectives 1, 2, 4, 5, 6)

Students' ability to work through issues of race, class, and/or gender where appropriate to enhance the meaning of the text. (Objectives 1, 3, 6)

Students' ability to discuss and write about works in an intellectual, social, and cultural context. (Objectives 1, 2, 5, 6)

Students' ability to enter into a dialogue with other critics about a literary work. (Objectives 1-8)

Students' ability to appropriately document a research project. (Objectives 1-8)

Examples of Appropriate Texts or Other Required Reading:

All texts below are considered classics.

Brave New World. Aldous Huxley. Harper. 1998.

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? Philip K. Dick. Vintage. 1998.
Dune. Frank Herbert. Ace. 1995.

The Handmaid's Tale. Margaret Atwood. Anchor. 1998.

Neuromancer. William Gibson. Ace. 2000.

We. Yevgeny Zamyatin. Penguin. 1993