

Syllabus: Critical Thinking in Science Fiction

Course Description

This one-semester course introduces students to one of the most popular genres of fiction: sci-fi. Students will come to understand the origin and development of the genre, as well as the fundamental features of its various subgenres. This course will explore the notion of sci-fi both as a bellwether and as an allegory—using other worlds and future scenarios as analogies for our own. Various story selections, three full novels, and several films comprise the material on which discussions will be founded.

Required Purchase

Additionally, students are required to purchase their own copy of the following novel: *Never Let Me Go*, by Kazuo Ishiguro. Though you may use any unabridged version of the novel, the edition used in class carries the following ISBN: 978-1400078776. Please purchase your copy **within the first two weeks** of the semester, so that you are prepared.

Major Readings

- *Fahrenheit 451* Ray Bradbury
- *The Handmaid's Tale* Margaret Atwood
- *Never Let Me Go* Kazuo Ishiguro

Estimated Coursework

- 100 points Classwork
- 100 points Quizzes
- 100 points Exams

- 300 total points

- Final Exam = 1/7th of Overall Grade

Grading Scale

- 100 – 90 A
- 89 – 80 B
- 79 – 70 C
- 69 – 60 D
- 59 – 0 F

Expectations

Good students arrive on time, stay in class, keep their heads up, keep their phones away, complete their work on time, and advocate for themselves. Please make me aware of any necessary accommodations—academically, physically, financially, etc.

General Policies

- No phones
- Check the class website daily—**especially when absent**
- Lost or misplaced assignments should be printed from the website
- Quizzes and exams should be made up after school or during a study period
- If an assignment is due and you are at school for *any* portion of the day, you are expected to turn it in promptly
- If an assignment is due via Schoology and a tech issue occurs, let me know immediately and send a screenshot of the issue
- **Plagiarism of any sort will result in a zero** and loss of any extra credit opportunities
- It is the student's responsibility to meet all deadlines and complete missed work: **late work will earn no more than 50%**
 - Further policies for absences, tardiness, and make-up work can be found in the student handbook
- Field trips, athletic events, suspensions, and prearranged absences are *not* excuses for late work
 - Work must be turned in *immediately* upon return or *before* your absence (subject to teacher's discretion)
- Extra credit will be given *only* to those students with **no late, missing, incomplete, or plagiarized** work
- When all else fails: **use your common sense**

Tentative Schedule: *Critical Thinking in Science Fiction*

Week	Unit and Genres	Authors and Primary Works	Classwork and Assessments
1	Introduction: What Is Sci-Fi?	Website, Syllabus, and Class Policies	Quiz: Class Policies
2	Origins: Scientific Revolution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mad Scientist 	1818: <i>Frankenstein</i> (Shelley)	Classwork: Decoder Ring
3	Foundations: Industrial Revolution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space Adventure • Alien Invasion • Man and Machine 	1902: <i>A Trip to the Moon</i> (Verne/Méliès) 1938: <i>War of the Worlds</i> (Wells/Welles) 1927: <i>Metropolis</i> (Lang)	Exam: Origins and Foundations
4-6	Golden Age: Technical Revolution	1953: <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> (Bradbury)	Guided Reading Pop Quizzes Classwork: Decoder Ring Exam: <i>Fahrenheit 451</i>
7	Contemporary: Film <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space Epic 	1968: <i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i> (Clarke/Kubrick)	Classwork: Two Peas in a Pod
8	Contemporary: Film <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space Western 	1977: <i>Star Wars</i> (Lucas)	Classwork: Two Peas in a Pod
9	Contemporary: Film <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sci-Fi Noir 	1982: <i>Blade Runner</i> (Dick/Scott)	Classwork: Two Peas in a Pod
10-12	Contemporary: Speculative Sci-Fi	1985: <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> (Atwood)	Guided Reading Pop Quizzes Classwork: Decoder Ring Exam: <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>
Spring Break			
13-15	Contemporary: Bildungsroman	2005: <i>Never Let Me Go</i> (Ishiguro)	Guided Reading Pop Quizzes Classwork: Decoder Ring Exam: <i>Never Let Me Go</i>
16	Contemporary: Film <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyberpunk 	1999: <i>The Matrix</i> (Wachowskis)	Classwork: Two Peas in a Pod
17	Contemporary: Film <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biopunk 	1997: <i>Gattaca</i> (Niccol)	Classwork: Two Peas in a Pod
18	Contemporary: Film <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard Sci-Fi 	2015: <i>The Martian</i> (Weir/Scott)	
Final Exams			