



Science Fiction

Module Convenors: Dr Caroline Edwards & Dr Joe Brooker

Module Level: BA Level 6 (optional module)

Time: Wednesdays 6-7.20pm, 2014-15

Module description

This module introduces students to some of the key concepts and methodological approaches used in the contemporary study of science fiction (SF). SF is understood inclusively, as a capacious genre overlapping at times with fantasy, utopian/dystopian literature, Gothic, satire, speculative fiction, and the alternate mappings of literary history offered by modernism or postmodernism. Focusing on its development throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, we will consider the ways in which SF has evolved: in particular in the novel and the short story, but also at times invoking other forms such as drama and film. We will be drawing on a range of critical approaches through which to explore some of the defining interests of SF literature and to reflect upon its critical reception in secondary literature.

Module aims and objectives

- To develop understanding of debates about genre. What is 'genre fiction'? What distinctions or hierarchies are established between 'literary' and 'genre' texts? How have our understandings of SF as a genre changed over the last century?
- To become familiar with recurring tropes such as robots, space exploration, genetic engineering, dystopian futures and (post-) apocalyptic worlds.
- To explore ways that Science Fiction has acted as a social commentary on contemporary society.
- To gain an understanding of how Science Fiction has explored ideas including parallel worlds, alternate histories and different models of time and reality.
- To gain knowledge of diverse critical approaches to SF, including those from Marxism, structuralism, gender studies, postcolonial theory, cultural history, adaptation studies, ecocriticism and utopianism / dystopianism.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Identify and discuss the key literary texts, generic forms and thematic issues in modern SF

- Offer close textual analysis, paying attention to use of language, form, narrative structure and ideology
- Evaluate the conception and use of 'genre' within literary studies
- Reflect upon some of the key theoretical frameworks through which SF texts are studied in secondary literature
- Demonstrate an awareness of the development of scholarly studies in SF and the range of methodological approaches to SF texts
- Research, develop and present ideas effectively in written form
- Articulate orally an informed understanding of the relationship between SF texts and their social, cultural and political contexts
- Analyse and assess the work of a range of writers

Please note: there are some long texts on this course. Please be aware of this when planning your time and read as many texts as possible before the course begins, and ensure all texts are read before the relevant seminars.

Primary Texts

Unless otherwise stated, it is your responsibility to acquire copies of the following set texts. Whilst the library will stock all of these, copies are limited and purchasing your own texts is advisable.

Several of the shorter texts studied on this course appear in the *Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction* (2010), which students must purchase. All short stories available in the Wesleyan anthology are marked below with *.**

Jules Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870)

H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (1898)

E. M. Forster, *The Machine Stops* (1909)***

John W. Campbell, 'The Last Evolution' (1932) [available on Moodle]

Karel Čapek, *Rossum's Universal Robots* (1920)

Joanna Russ, *The Female Man* (1975)

Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985)

Brian Aldiss, *Non-Stop* (1958)

Samuel R. Delany, 'Aye, and Gomorrah...' (1967)***

Clare Winger Harris, 'The Fate of the Poseidonia' (1927) [available on Moodle]

Judith Merrill, 'That Only a Mother' (1948)***

Judith Merrill, 'Stormy Weather' (1954) [available on Moodle]

Frederik Pohl, 'The Tunnel Under the World' (1953) [available on Moodle]

--- 'Day Million' (1966)***

Robert Sheckley, 'Specialist' (1953)***

Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (1953)

Philip K. Dick, 'The Minority Report' (1956)

--- 'We Can Remember It For You Wholesale' (1966)***

Philip K. Dick, *Ubik* (1969)

J.G. Ballard, 'The Cage of Sand' (1962)***

--- 'The Voices of Time' (1962) [available on Moodle]

Pamela Zoline, 'The Heat Death of the Universe' (1967)***

William Gibson, 'The Gernsback Continuum' (1981) [available on Moodle]
--- *Neuromancer* (1983)
Pat Cadigan, 'Pretty Boy Credo' (1986)***
Mary Rosenblum, *Chimera* (1993)
Octavia Butler, 'Speech Sounds' (1983)***
--- *Dawn* (1987)
Jonathan Lethem, *Gun, with Occasional Music* (1994)

Seminar Schedule

AUTUMN TERM 2014

Week 1

Introduction: Defining SF & Genre Debates [JB & CE]

Darko Suvin, 'Estrangement and Cognition' in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale UP, 1979), pp. 3-15 [available on Moodle]
Carl Freedman, 'Definitions: Science Fiction' in *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), pp. 13-23 [available on Moodle]

Week 2

Origins I: Voyages Extraordinaires [CE]

Jules Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870)

Week 3

Origins II: The Scientific Romance [CE]

H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (1898)

Week 4

Technological Anxieties I: The Cybernetic Imagination [CE]

E. M. Forster, 'The Machine Stops' (1909)***
John W. Campbell, 'The Last Evolution' (1932) [available on Moodle]

Week 5

Technological Anxieties II: Robot Rebellions [CE]

Karel Čapek, *Rossum's Universal Robots* (1920)

Week 6

Reading Week – no class

Week 7

Galactic Encounters I: The Space Opera [CE]

Brian Aldiss, *Non-Stop* (1958)

Week 8

Galactic Encounters II: Queering Sexuality in Space [CE]

Samuel R. Delany, 'Aye, and Gomorrah...' (1967)***

Week 9

Critical Utopias: Feminism, Ecology and the New Left [CE]

Joanna Russ, *The Female Man* (1975)

Week 10

Critical Dystopias: The Shadow of Thatcher and Reagan [CE]

Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985)

Week 11

Reflections on Science Fiction Scholarship [JB & CE]

Fredric Jameson, 'Progress Versus Utopia; or, Can We Imagine the Future?'
Science Fiction Studies, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1982) [available on *Science Fiction Studies* website: <http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/27/jameson.html>]

Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto' [available here:
<http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Haraway-CyborgManifesto-1.pdf>]

SPRING TERM 2015

Week 1

Women Writers and the SF Short Story [JB]

Clare Winger Harris, 'The Fate of the Poseidonia' (1927) [available on Moodle]

Judith Merrill, 'That Only a Mother' (1948)***

Judith Merrill, 'Stormy Weather' (1954) [available on Moodle]

Week 2

Golden Age Satire & Social Criticism: 1 [JB]

Frederik Pohl, 'The Tunnel Under the World' (1953) [available on Moodle]

--- 'Day Million' (1966)***

Robert Sheckley, 'Specialist' (1953)***

Week 3

Golden Age Satire & Social Criticism: 2 [JB]

Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (1953)

Week 4

Philip K. Dick & the Paranoid Imagination: 1 [JB]

Philip K. Dick, 'The Minority Report' (1956)

--- 'We Can Remember It For You Wholesale' (1966)***

Week 5

Philip K. Dick & the Paranoid Imagination: 2 [JB]

Philip K. Dick, *Ubik* (1969)

Reading week – no class

Week 7

The New Wave [JB]

J.G. Ballard, 'The Cage of Sand' (1962)***

--- 'The Voices of Time' (1962) [available on Moodle]
Pamela Zoline, 'The Heat Death of the Universe' (1967)***

Week 8

Cyberpunk: 1 [JB]

William Gibson, 'The Gernsback Continuum' (1981) [available on Moodle]

--- *Neuromancer* (1983)

Week 9

Cyberpunk: 2 [JB]

Pat Cadigan, 'Pretty Boy Credo' (1986)***

Mary Rosenblum, *Chimera* (1993)

Week 10

Octavia Butler & the Politics of Embodiment [JB]

Octavia Butler, 'Speech Sounds' (1983)***

--- *Dawn* (1987)

Week 11

Genre Blend [JB]

Jonathan Lethem, *Gun, with Occasional Music* (1994)

SUMMER TERM 2015

Week 1

Guest Panel Discussion

Featuring invited speakers with expertise in science fiction.

Week 2

Drop-in Tutorials on Essay Planning [JB & CE]

Assessment

Assignment	Description	Weighting	Deadline
Coursework	1,500 Words	10%	Wednesday 19 th November 2014
Assessed Essay	2,500 Words	45%	Weds 18 th February 2015
Assessed Essay	2,500 words	45%	Wednesday 13 th May 2015

Please see the separate handouts (posted on Moodle) for details about coursework and assessed essays.

Secondary reading

We have digitized two introductory pieces on the genre of science fiction that offer a clear and engaging starting point for secondary research on this topic (see the set readings for Week 1 of the Autumn Term); these texts can be found on Moodle – do have a look!

- Atterbery, Brian. *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2002)
- Atwood, Margaret. *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination* (London: Virago, 2011)
- Baccolini, Raffaella and Tom Moylan (eds). *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination* (London: Routledge, 2003)
- Booker, M. Keith and Anne-Marie Thomas (eds). *The Science Fiction Handbook* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009)
- Bould, Mark and China Miéville (eds). *Red Planets: Marxism and Science Fiction* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Wesleyan UP, 2009)
- Bould, Mark, Andrew M. Butler, Adam Roberts and Sherryl Vint (eds). *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2009)
- Bould, Mark, Andrew M. Butler, Adam Roberts and Sherryl Vint. *Fifty Key Figures in Science Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2009)
- Burns, Tony. *Political Theory, Science Fiction and Utopian Literature: Ursula K. Le Guin and The Dispossessed* (Plymouth: Lexington, 2008)
- Busch, Justin E. A. *The Utopian Vision of H. G. Wells* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2009)
- David, Laurence and Peter Stillman (eds). *The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin's The Dispossessed* (Oxford: Lexington, 2005)
- Donawerth, Jane L. and Carol A. Kolmerten (eds). *Utopian and Science Fiction by Women: Worlds of Difference* (New York: Syracuse UP, 1994)
- Donawerth, Jane L. *Frankenstein's Daughters: Women Writing Science Fiction* (New York: Syracuse UP, 1996)
- Elhefnawy, Nadar. *After the New Wave: Science Fiction Since 1980* (Place: Createspace, 2011)
- Filmer, Kath. *Scepticism and Hope in Twentieth Century Fantasy Literature* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1992)
- Freedman, Carl. *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Wesleyan UP, 2000)
- Gunn, James E., Marleen S. Barr and Matthew Candelaria (eds). *Reading Science Fiction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)
- Hassler, Donald M. and Clyde Wilcox (eds). *Political Science Fiction* (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1997)
- Hoagland, Ericka and Reema Sarwal (eds). *Science Fiction, Imperialism and the Third World: Essays on Postcolonial Literature and Film* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2010)
- James, Edward and Farah Mendlesohn (eds). *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003)
- Jameson, Fredric. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005)
- Kerslake, Patricia. *Science Fiction and Empire* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2007)

- Ketterer, David. *New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction, and American Literature* (Bishops Stortford, Cambridge: Anchor Press, 1974)
- Langer, Jessica. *Postcolonialism and Science Fiction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)
- Larbalestier, Justine (ed). *Daughters of the Earth: Feminist Science Fiction in the Twentieth Century* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan UP, 2006)
- Larbalestier, Justine. *The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan UP, 2002)
- Lavender, Isiah III. *Race in American Science Fiction* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana UP, 2011)
- Lethem, Jonathan, *The Ecstasy of Influence* (New York: Doubleday, 2011)
- Luckhurst, Roger. *Science Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005)
- Malmgren, Carl D. *Worlds Apart: Narratology of Science Fiction* (Indianapolis: John Wiley & Sons, 1991)
- McCaffery, Larry (ed). *Storming the Reality Studio: A Casebook of Cyberpunk and Postmodern Science Fiction* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 2002)
- McCracken, Scott. *Pulp: Reading Popular Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1998)
- Monleón, José B. *A Specter is Haunting Europe: A Sociohistorical Approach to the Fantastic* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1990)
- Moorcock, Michael. *Wizardry and Wild Romance: A Study of Epic Fantasy* (Austin, Texas: MonkeyBrain, 2004)
- Moylan, Tom. *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (New York: Methuen, 1986)
- Moylan, Tom. *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000)
- Murphy, Graham J. and Sherryl Vint (eds). *Beyond Cyberpunk: New Critical Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2010)
- Parrinder, Patrick. *Learning from Other Worlds: Estrangement, Cognition, and the Politics of Science Fiction and Utopia* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 2001)
- Parrinder, Patrick. *Shadows of the Future: H. G. Wells, Science Fiction and Prophecy* (New York: Syracuse UP, 1995)
- Parrinder, Patrick. *The Anatomy of Utopia: Narration, Estrangement and Ambiguity in More, Wells, Huxley and Clarke* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2010)
- Pearson, Wendy Gay, Veronica Hollinger and Joan Gordon (eds). *Queer Universes: Sexualities in Science Fiction* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2008)
- Pordzik, Ralph (ed). *Futurescapes: Space in Utopian and Science Fiction Discourses* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009)
- Pordzik, Ralph. *The Quest for Postcolonial Utopia: A Comparative Introduction to the Utopian Novel in the New English Literatures* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001)
- Prucher, Jeff (ed). *Brave New Words: The Oxford Dictionary of Science Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007)
- Rankin, Sandra K. *China Miéville and the Misbegot: Monsters, Magic, and Marxism* (Proquest UMI Dissertation Publishing, 2011)
- Reid, Robin Anne. *Women in Science Fiction and Fantasy: Overviews, Vols. 1 and 2* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 2009)

- Roberts, Adam. *Science Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2006)
- Sawyer, Andy and David Seed (eds). *Speaking Science Fiction: Dialogues and Interpretations* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2000)
- Sayer, Karen and John Moore (eds). *Science Fiction: Critical Frontiers* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000)
- Scholes, Robert. *Structural Fabulation: An Essay on the Fiction of the Future* (Notre Dame, Indiana: U of Notre Dame P, 1975)
- Seed, David. *A Companion to Science Fiction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005)
- Seed, David. *Science Fiction: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011)
- Suvin, Darko. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale UP, 1979)
- Suvin, Darko. *Positions and Presuppositions in Science Fiction* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State UP, 1988)
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1975)
- VanderMeer, Ann and Jeff VanderMeer (eds). *The New Weird* (San Francisco, California: Tachyon Publications, 2008)
- Vint, Sherryl. *Animal Alterity: Science Fiction and the Question of the Animal* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2010)
- Vint, Sherryl. *Bodies of Tomorrow: Technology, Subjectivity, Science Fiction* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007)
- Wasson, Sara and Emily Alder (eds). *Gothic Science Fiction, 1980-2010* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2011)
- Wolfe, Gary K. *Evaporating Genres: Essays on Fantastic Literature* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan UP, 2011)

Journals:

Both of the following journals are available via Birkbeck's e-Journals portal on the library homepage.

Science Fiction Studies
Extrapolation