

Course Description

This elective course is designed as an intensive survey of science fiction and fantasy and intends to make students acquainted with the qualities of the SF&F genre and its subgenres. The course is divided into two sections: The first will cover the SF genre and the second will focus on Fantasy. Nevertheless, this division is vague as material that fit both genres will be covered at the same time. The course includes prose and visual materials, i.e. novels, short stories and films of the genre. During class discussions and lectures, prominent figures and representatives of the genre, major works, primary influences, themes, motifs and subjects in the genre will be dealt with. The course intends to develop the student's critical understanding of the works of the genre and thus

will also touch upon subjects like utopia/dystopia, feminist SF&F, Marxist criticism of SF&F etc. As long as time permits, a brief survey of the Turkish SF&F will also be covered. The students are expected to read and watch all assigned material before and during the classes. There will be film screenings outside class hours as well.

Evaluation

This is a portfolio-based course. Each student is expected to complete a personal portfolio at the end of the semester and present to the instructor. The portfolio is to be composed of the analysis of one novel, three short stories and three films selected from the SF&F genre. The portfolio will be graded over 100. There will also be a midterm over 100 too. However, the instructor reserves the right to give pop quizzes if he sees necessary.

Apart for the assigned readings, each student will choose AT LEAST one novel, three short stories and three films from the list given. The grade A1 is reserved for students who do more than this criterion. If a student wants to choose (or add) extra material, it is necessary that the course instructor's approval is obtained.

Required Reading: *Left Hand of Darkness* or *The Dispossessed* by Ursula Le Guin

Week 1 – Feb. 18

Introduction. Theoretical background. SF&F Definitions. Read [SF-Defs.pdf](http://tinyurl.com/cstjtn) (<http://tinyurl.com/cstjtn>)

Hard vs. Social SF. General themes. History,

Read [SF Pack 1](http://tinyurl.com/czgp23) and [SF Pack 1a](http://tinyurl.com/czgp23) (<http://tinyurl.com/czgp23>) and (<http://tinyurl.com/dezwo7>)

Stories, Read [SF Pack 1b](http://tinyurl.com/b4acbs) (<http://tinyurl.com/b4acbs>)

“They're Made Out of Meat” by Terry Bisson, “The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas” by Ursula Le Guin and “Harrison Bergeron” by Kurt Vonnegut and you can *optionally* watch the film online at <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-175006468841636088> (256 mb)

SF Genres and Themes**Hard SF vs. Soft SF**

Utopia/Dystopia/Anti-Utopia
Apocalypse/post-Apocalypse
Cyberpunk
Alternative Histories
Superhumans
Space Westerns
New Wave

The Others (Aliens, ETs, Robots, Cyborgs, etc.)
Time Travel
Steampunk
Military and Conquest
Space Operas
Feminist SF
Turkish SF

1st Theme Utopia/Dystopia/Anti-Utopia

If you want to build a ship, don't herd people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea. - Antoine de Saint-Exupery



Definitions.

"A utopia is the fictional representation of an ideal polity. It is political in nature, narrative in form, literary only in part." (Bammer, 1991:13)

A dystopia is defined as an inverted utopia, *"An imaginary place or condition in which everything is as bad as possible"* the Oxford English Dictionary

A dystopia does not pretend to be utopian, while an anti-utopia appears to be utopian or was intended to be so, but a fatal flaw or other factor has destroyed or twisted the intended utopian world or concept.

Works

Utopias

Plato's *Republic*

Sir Thomas Moore *Utopia* (Complete text <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/thomasmore-utopia.html>)

Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis*

Samuel Butler, *Erewhon*

Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*

B.F. Skinner, *Walden Two*

Ursula Le Guin, *Left Hand of Darkness*, *The Dispossessed*

Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia*

Dystopias

Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*

George Orwell *1984*

Ray Bradbury *Fahrenheit 451*

Anthony Burgess, *Clockwork Orange*

Anthony Burgess, *1985*

Margaret Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*

Also

Jonathan Swift *Gulliver's Travels*

H.G. Wells *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933) and optionally watch Korda's film *Things to Come* (1936) online at <http://video.google.com/googleplayer.swf?docId=-4145112066780676003&hl=en&> (227 mb)

Joanna Russ, *The Female Man* (1975)

Ursula Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*

Films:

"It should not be surprising that women's utopias differ from men's. Not freedom, but escape from freedom seems to be the message of many male utopias. For men, utopia has often involved imposing control over the individual who is seen as a threat to the group. For women, on the contrary, utopia is a way of arriving at freedom...() For men, utopia is the ideal state; for most women, utopia is statelessness and the overcoming of hierarchy and the traditional splits between human beings and nature, subject and other, man and woman, parent and child."
(Rohrlich, 1984: xii-xiii)

Metropolis, *Logan's Run*, *Gattaca*, *George Orwell's 1984*, *Clockwork Orange*, *THX1138*, *Aeon Flux*, *Code 46*, *Equilibrium*, *District 13* (Fr.), *Children of Men*, *Battle Royale* (Jap.), *Minority Report*, *Sleeper*, *Running Man*, *Soylent Green*, *V for Vendetta*, *Dark City*

Week 2 – Feb. 25

2nd Theme: “The Others”

Artificial Beings

Read *Frankenstein* (<http://tinyurl.com/ccikqi>)

Literary Sources of *Frankenstein* (<http://tinyurl.com/cpoc2r>)

Terms: Homunculus, Golem, Tulpa, Robot, Android, Cyborg, Clone, Mutant, Aliens, E.T.



Laws of Robotics:

0. A robot may not harm humanity, or, by inaction, allow humanity to come to harm
1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm
2. A robot must obey orders given to it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law

Works:

Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*, H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot*, Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electronic Sheep?*, Theodore Sturgeon's *More than Human*, Stanislaw Lem's *His Master's Voice*

Films: *Alien Trilogy*, *Blade Runner*, *The Terminator*, *A.I.*, *I, Robot*, *Dr. Who* and *Daleks*,

Week 3 – Mar. 4

Film: *Blade Runner*

Week 4 – Mar. 11

“Science fiction plucks from within us our deepest fears and hopes, then shows them to us in rough disguise: the monster and the rocket.”

W. H. Auden

Analysis and Discussion: *Blade Runner*, *Alien* and *Starship Troopers*: Gender Issues in SF

Read: “Representations Of The Body In *Alien*” (<http://tinyurl.com/d6du7y>), *Terminal City* (<http://tinyurl.com/cliq5j>) and The “Birth” of a Monster (<http://tinyurl.com/d4rxwq>)

Week 5 – Mar. 18

Apocalypse and Post-Apocalypse

“I do not know with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones”

Albert Einstein

We accept the lure of annihilation, only to discover that it is a temporary condition, a gateway to renewal and rebirth. This is perhaps the most



pervasive theme in all the world's religious myth and ritual. It may also be the most pervasive theme in the symbolism of nuclear weapons.

Ira Chernus, *Dr. Strangegod*

Armageddon, disaster, Atomic bomb, Environmental catastrophe, “The End is Near”, Millennialism/Chiliasm, Eschatology

Read: “Post-Apocalyptic Fiction: Holocaust as Metaphor” (<http://tinyurl.com/djux93>), “Surviving Armageddon” (<http://tinyurl.com/crb7cy>)

Works:

H.G. Wells’ *The War of the Worlds*, Philip Wylie’s *When Worlds Collide*, Jack Finney’s *The Body Snatchers*, J.G. Ballard’s *The Drowned World*, Danny Boyle’s *28 Days Later*, Roland Emmerich’s *The Day After Tomorrow*, Walter M. Miller, Jr.’s *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, Margaret Atwood’s *Orx and Crake*

Films:

Max Max Trilogy, *Waterworld*, *Godzilla*, *Children of Men*, *Twelve Monkeys*, *Beowulf*, *City of Ember*, *Invasion of Body Snatchers*, *I am Legend*, *The Planet of the Apes*, *Strange Days*

Week 6 – Mar. 25

Analysis and Discussion: Religion in SF

Read: D. Scott Cost newspaper pieces

Week 7 – Apr. 1

Time Travel

“Science fiction is, in essence, a time travel genre. Events either open in the altered past, the transformed present, or the possible future, transporting the reader or viewer to another age, place, dimension or world.”
—Sean Redmond,

Works:

Mark Twain’s *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, H.G. Wells’ *The Time Machine*, Ray Bradbury’s *A Sound of Thunder*, Robert Heinlein’s *All You Zombies*, Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse Five*

Films:

Robert Zemeckis’ *Back to the Future*, Harold Ramis’ *Groundhog Day*, Terry Gilliam’s *Twelve Monkeys*

Week 8 – Apr. 8

Cyberpunk

Read: *Cyborg Futures* (<http://www.pimley.net/documents/cyborgfutures.pdf>)

Short Story: Bruce Bethke “Cyberpunk”, William Gibson “Burning Chrome”, Philip K. Dick “Do Androids Dream of Electronic Sheep?”

Films: Pre-Cyberpunk (pre-1980): *A Clockwork Orange*, *Colossus: The Forbin Project*, *THX 1138*, *Cyborg 2087*

Cyberpunk (1980-1990): *Akira*, *Appleseed*, *Blade Runner*, *Brazil*, *Liquid Sky*, *Robocop*, *The Terminator*, *Tron*, *Videodrome*, *War Games*