**Honors 292- Science Fiction and Social Criticism**

**Who is teaching me?**
My name is Dr. Joseph Brown. I’m originally from Georgia. I am a nerd, a sports fanatic, a husband, and a father. I care a lot about your learning, and what you have to say. I think listening and kindness are the two most important characteristics of a good class.

Here’s how you can contact me outside of class:
- Office: TILT 147
- Tel. 970.491.2898
- Email: joe.brown@colostate.edu

**What will I learn?**
In 1978, literary scholar Darko Suvin described science fiction as the literature of “cognitive estrangement.” It was, he argued, the tension between the known reality of the reader’s world (cognition) and the imagined alternative world of the text (estrangement) that gave Science Fiction a privileged role in encouraging the kind of critical thought about one’s own society and
circumstances that could disrupt the blinding nature of ideology. This seminar will explore the rich tradition of the science fiction short story by authors such as Isaac Asimov, Ursula K. LeGuin, Samuel R. Delany, Joanna Russ, Ray Bradbury, Octavia Butler, and Frank Herbert alongside select critical essays. Finally, the course’s ultimate goal is to investigate the ways that our attempts to know the imagined future affect our ways of knowing our present world.

After completing this course, a successful student will be able to:

1. Analyze how the arts and humanities enhance and express ways of knowing.
2. Apply and integrate ways of knowing in the arts and humanities to contemporary issues and topics.
3. Creatively engage and integrate the arts and humanities to express one's own understanding and experience.
4. Explore and appreciate how knowledge is produced, constructed, expressed, and contested among different disciplines in the sciences and humanities.
5. Reflect on the limits of knowing, how knowledge changes, and the social, historical, political, and cultural influences that shape ways of knowing as expressed in the arts and humanities.
6. Articulate the value and purpose of ways of knowing in and through the arts and humanities.
7. Describe issues of ownership, identity, and power as they relate to the processes of knowledge production in and across the arts and humanities.
8. Critically assess interdisciplinary connections and interdependent overlaps between ways of knowing in the arts and humanities and the natural and social sciences.

What will I need?

2. E-Reserve Course Packet (selected readings and essays).
5. A classic composition notebook. You can usually find these for a few dollars at the store.
6. There will be some supplementary materials that I will share on Canvas. They will appear in the reading schedule or will be announced in class well ahead of time.

How do I earn my grade?
The requirements that will be used to evaluate student learning are:

1. Discussion question assignments (10% of grade). Weekly one-page writing assignment on readings (10 total).
2. Two writing projects (35% of grade). Writing assignments (5-10 pages each) can be in the form of a traditional academic essay, personal essay, creative nonfiction, fiction,
poetry, or art/design project with narrative.
3. Formal speech/presentation (20% of grade). A 7-minute extemporaneous presentation to the class related to content. More on this later!
4. Analytical research writing project (10-20 pages; 25% of grade).
5. Participation (10% of grade).

GRADING

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion question assignments (10)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing projects (2)</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final research paper (1)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal speech (1)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Grade distribution (plus/minus grades may be used):

- 90-100% A
- 80-89% B
- 70-79% C
- 60-69% D
- <60% F

Note: Grades will be published in Canvas.

What are some tips for success in Honors 292?

- Have a good attitude, a sense of humor, and a teachable spirit.
- Accept that some of the reading will be hard, weird, or just not your thing. Do it anyway. Anyone can learn about the things they already love, but it takes a devoted learner to learn new, strange things.
- Participate. Seriously. Not only is it good for you and your peers, I really do want to hear what you think.
- Look up words or ideas you don’t know.
- Get to know your professor! Unlike wild coyotes, professors know things, like to share those things, and won’t eat you.
• Form a study group, make friends with classmates, exchange contact info, etc. You don’t have to be best buds and protect Hawkins from a demigorgon, but at least talk about the reading outside of class.
• Interact with the reading WHILE YOU READ. Write questions, comments, or profanity in the margin. Make it an active experience, not just something you do to pass the time at jury duty.
• Be proactive. If you know you’re going to miss class, be late on an assignment, or study with a Jedi master on a distant, water-covered planet, email or call me and let me know what’s going on with you. I can’t promise an extension in every case, but we might be able work something out if you contact me beforehand.

What is expected of me in this course? (ie. Course Policies)

Academic Integrity:
So, academic integrity is kind of my thing. What does that mean? Well, in addition to being your professor, I’m the Director of the Academic Integrity Program, and it’s my job to guide the university’s efforts in promoting academic integrity and in managing academic misconduct.

What will this mean for our class? You’re definitely going to get more information about the issue than an average class, which is good! It obviously means that our course will adhere to the CSU Academic Integrity Policy as found on the Student Responsibilities page of the CSU General Catalog and in the Student Conduct Code.

We’ll talk about the rules later, but just know for right now that, at a minimum, violations will result in a grading penalty (which can range from deducting points on an assignment all the way to failure of the course) and reporting the incident to the Student Resolution Center.

“I have not given, received, or used any unauthorized assistance.”

CSU thinks integrity is really important. They approved the Honor Pledge above and made integrity one of the CSU principles of community. Here’s what they said there:

“We are accountable for our actions and will act ethically and honestly in all our interactions.”

Attendance:
Attendance is required and will be taken at each class period. However, attendance is not incentivized. Here's what that means: I will not reward you for coming to class, nor will I penalize you for ditching. Why? Because research tells us that this doesn't encourage you to learn, it only encourages you to attend. Almost always, that means that students merely motivated by an attendance policy come to class unprepared and unmotivated to learn. I want you to come to class because you want to, because you're ready to learn, and because you chose to continue your education. You're here to make something of yourself and my class is part of that process. Skip class and you won't just fail the class, you'll fail yourself in all the ways listed above. However, for purposes of financial aid policy compliance, an attendance record will be kept for the course.

- Quick note: Please DON'T present me with a doctor's excuse, a note from your mother, or a receipt for your auto repair.

**Freewriting:**
You will need to purchase a standard composition book for our in-class writing activities. You are required to bring it to class every day so that you may complete any in-class writing activities I assign. These will not be graded on a day-to-day basis, but are part of your essay writing process. I might ask you to submit this for review periodically.

**Electronic Devices:**
One of the areas we will explore is how science fiction anticipated the rise of personal devices (smart-phones, watches, etc) and how it investigates their broad-ranging social, behavioral, and developmental effects. I’m curious to see how it affects how you interact with those. My device policy in class is pretty simple. I want a distraction-free environment for you. I prefer that those devices stay in your pocket or your bag while you’re in class. If I see that you’re overly distracted on a particular day, I might ask you to leave and rejoin us when you can give the class your full attention.

We all have obligations that require us, from time to time, to drop what we are doing and answer our phones (kids in daycare, a sick loved one, etc). In those situations, I merely ask that you quietly excuse yourself, leave the classroom, and answer your phone out of earshot of our class so that daily learning can continue uninterrupted. This, by the way, is what will be expected of you in the workplace.

You MAY leave our classroom for a bathroom break, personal emergency, or any other good reason without asking me. Asking me is actually more disruptive. I will simply assume that, as an adult, you have something that needs to be taken care of and when you are able, you will rejoin the class.

**MLA Format:**
All work submitted must be in MLA format. See this website for more info.

**Late Work:**
All work is to be submitted on the appointed date. **Assignments will be marked down one letter grade for each day they are late.** Any work not handed in after two calendar days will receive an automatic zero.

**Vericite:**
All papers and discussion posts will be submitted electronically to Vericite. This service is a tool to help you identify potential documentation errors and inadvertent plagiarism.

**Special Accommodations Statement:**
Any student who requires special accommodations should see me as soon as possible to make proper arrangements.

**Honors Competencies and Skills for Honors Students (“PICC” feedback)**
The CSU University Honors Program has prioritized four general competencies skills that should be addressed in each honors course. These skills include (1) Professionalism, interpersonal skills, and emotional intelligence; (2) Interdisciplinary learning integrated with global and/or cultural viewpoints; (3) Critical thinking; and (4) Creativity and problem solving. This is a two-stage process. First students complete a self-evaluation of these skills at the beginning of the semester. At the end of the semester instructors will provide feedback for each student, based on assignments and activities. The feedback is part of the University Honors Program; it is for advising purposes only and is confidential. It is not part of a student’s grades or academic record. A standardized rubric is used to provide feedback for growth in these areas and to measure the Honors Programs progress in helping students to develop these skills through their academic career. The feedback categories and activities/assignments used to measure progress in HONR 292 are listed below and noted in the assignment descriptions.

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<th>Skill Category (PICC)</th>
<th>Relevant Course Activities &amp; Assignments</th>
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<td><em>1. Professionalism, interpersonal skills, &amp; emotional intelligence:</em> Acts ethically &amp; positively to foster a supportive instructional or work environment. Has the emotional intelligence (ability to perceive, evaluate, &amp; manage emotions) &amp; interpersonal skills to work effectively with others.</td>
<td>· Class participation &amp; conduct</td>
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<td>· Discussion question assignments</td>
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<td>· Formal speech</td>
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2. **Interdisciplinary learning integrated with global &/or cultural viewpoints:** Integrates diverse knowledge, perspectives, &/or skills into arguments &/or strategies; is aware of and can clearly incorporate global &/or cultural perspectives to an argument or issue.

- Class discussions
- Discussion question assignments
- Writing projects
- Final research paper
- Formal speech

3. **Critical thinking:** Student advances a position with specific theses or hypotheses & can conceptualize ideas or lines of thought. Conclusions and related outcomes acknowledge complexities of an issue (implications and consequences) and recognize differing points of view. Formulates & develops claims with sufficient support, including reasoning, evidence, & persuasive appeals, & proper attribution where necessary. Uses written and oral communication effectively in persuasive arguments.

- Class discussions
- Discussion question assignments
- Writing projects
- Final research paper
- Formal speech

4. **Creativity & problem solving:** Creatively applies discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based knowledge to discover and design a variety of forms often using a problem-solving strategy.

- Class discussions
- Discussion question assignments
- Writing projects
- Final research paper
- Formal speech
Reading Schedule

Weeks 1 through 5 – The Nature and Values of Knowing

Week 1: What is Knowing?
Required:
Wallace Stevens, “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird”
Isaac Asimov, “Visit to the World’s Fair of 2014”

Extension:
Gerry Callahan, “Chimera”
Thomas Nagel, “What is it Like to be a Bat?”

Week 2: How Do We Know and What Are the Challenges of Knowing?
Required:
Words that Change the World – Radiolab Presentation (http://www.radiolab.org/story/91728-words-that-change-the-world/)

Extension:

Week 3: What Do We Know and How Is It Expressed?
Required:
Imre Lakatos, “Science and Pseudoscience”
Karl Popper, “Science: Conjectures and Refutations”

Extension:
Emily Martin, “The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles”;
Emily Martin, “Visions of the Immune System” from Flexible Bodies;
Susan Sontag, Illness as Metaphor excerpt;

Week 4: Who Owns Ways of Knowing?
Required:
Michael Foucault, “Two Lectures” from Power/Knowledge
Extension:
Eli Clare, *Exile and Stones* excerpt.
Ta-Nehisi Coates, “Letter to My Son”

**Week 5: What are the Purposes of Knowing?**
**Required:**
Richard Feynman, “The Value of Science”
Ray Bradbury, “The Flying Machine”

**Extension:**
Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, Chapter II

**Weeks 6 through 12 – Integration of Knowing (Case Studies)**

**Week 6: Technology and the Individual**
Greg Bear "Blood Music" (Course Reserves)
William Gibson "Burning Chrome" 547
Eileen Gunn, “Computer Friendly” 637

Article: William Gibson "Google's Earth" ([LINK](#))
Article: Nicholas Carr, "Is Google Making us Stupid?" ([LINK](#))

**Week 7:**
Isaac Asimov "Robbie" (Course Reserves)
Pat Cadigan, "Pretty Boy Crossover" 587
Philip K. Dick, “We Can Remember It for You Wholesale” 385

Article: Stephen Marche, "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?" ([LINK](#))
Article: Jean M. Twenge, “Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?” ([LINK](#))
Optional Article: Lulu Miller, "Nothing Focuses the Mind Like the Ultimate Deadline: Death" ([LINK](#))

**Week 8: Power and Politics**
Kurt Vonnegut "Harrison Bergeron" (Course Reserves)
Harlan Ellison "Repent, Harlequin! Said the Ticktockman" 367
AE Van Vogt "The Weapons Shop" (Course Reserves)
Bruce Sterling "We See Things Differently" 611
Week 9: Gender and Sexuality
Joanna Russ "When it Changed" 507
James Tiptree Jr. "And I Awoke and Found Me Here on the Cold Hill's Side" 516
Samuel Delany. “Aye, and Gomorrah.” 405
Ray Bradbury, "The Jar" (Course Reserves)
Fred Pohl "The Fiend" (Course Reserves)

Week 10: Evolution and Environment
Frank Herbert "Seed Stock" 477
Charles Ross, "Rogue Farm" 727
Clifford D. Simak, "Desertion" 177

Article: Michael Crichton, "Patenting Life" (Link and here).
Optional: Check out this short animation of “Rogue Farm” (Link)

Week 11: Apocalypse, Utopia, and Dystopia
Ursula K. LeGuin "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" (Course Reserves)
Michael Bishop, “The Quickening” (Course Reserves)
Octavia Butler "Speech Sounds" (566)
Excerpt from Keith Booker, Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War: American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964. (Course Reserves)

Week 12: Alien Encounters/ Posthuman Futures
Arthur C. Clarke "The Sentinel" 241
Octavia Butler, "Blood Child" (Course Reserves)
Harlan Ellison, "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream" (Course Reserves)

Week 13: FILM: 2001: A Space Odyssey
Article: Carl Freedman, Kubrick’s 2001 and the Possibility of Science-Fiction Cinema. (Course Reserves)
Article: Fredric Jameson, “Progress vs. Utopia; Or, Can We Imagine the Future?” (Link)

Week 14 & Week 15: Student Presentations

Week 16: Research Writing Projects