English 3950FA: Speculative Fiction  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:30-10am  
Ryan Building 3024

In this course, we will learn about the conventions of speculative fiction and identify ways in which individual texts work within, or expand, or contest, the genre. We will assess the rhetorical, ideological and aesthetic strategies of the texts, focusing on the ways in which speculation about the future, or about other worlds and alien beings, or about the nature of time, helps us to ask questions about, and understand, the world in which we live.

Instructor:
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Required Texts:
Novels (available through the Alumni Bookstore)  

Television Episodes (available through iTunes)  

Recommended Articles (available online)  
Note: These articles are for the Secondary Sources Essay. They are not required for class.  
[http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14725840902808868#.UiCsd7zlV-0](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14725840902808868#.UiCsd7zlV-0)

[http://ehis.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=5b96115e-05e1-4a5f-9bad-d8b2167de948%40sessionmgr110&hid=105](http://ehis.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=5b96115e-05e1-4a5f-9bad-d8b2167de948%40sessionmgr110&hid=105)


[http://search.proquest.com/docview/205374221?accountid=11956](http://search.proquest.com/docview/205374221?accountid=11956)


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**Method of Evaluation:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close Reading Essay</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>600-900 words</td>
<td>September 26, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Sources Essay</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>600-900 words</td>
<td>October 22, 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major Paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>1500-2500 words</td>
<td>November 19, 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
<td>During Exam period</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>up to 3% bonus</td>
<td></td>
<td>Throughout Course</td>
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All assignments will be marked in accordance with the English Department Marking Standards: [https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/english/marketing-standards](https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/english/marketing-standards).

Note particularly the explanation of academic misconduct:

“Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words and/or ideas. Not acknowledging your debt to the ideas of a secondary source, failing to use quotation marks when you are quoting directly, buying essays from essay banks, copying another student's work, or working together on an individual assignment, all constitute plagiarism. Resubmitting material you've submitted to another course is also academic dishonesty. All plagiarized work (in whole or in part) and other forms of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean, who is responsible for judging academic misconduct and imposing penalties. The minimum penalty for academic misconduct
Policies for Course Assignments:

- All assignments are individual assignments and cannot be completed collaboratively.
- Assignments are due by 4:30pm on the dates indicated. If you do not hand in your paper in class, have it date stamped by security and submit it either to the English department office (RB3029), or the instructor’s office (RB3041).
- If you require an extension, you must ask for one BEFORE the due date.
- Unless you ask for (and receive) an extension, late essays will be penalized by 2% per day (to a maximum of 20%), and will not be accepted after 4:30pm on December 2nd, 2013.
- The final exam must be written on the date scheduled, so do not make travel plans for the exam period until the exam schedule is posted.
- Exceptions to these policies are allowed only with a doctor’s note or other appropriate documentation.

Close Reading Essay (15%):
Length: 600-900 words (not counting Works Cited)
Due Date: September 26, 2013

Provide a close reading of one of the microstories in *The Martian Chronicles*. Do not pick a story more than three pages long. Explain how the literary devices in the text contribute to the story, and how the story itself contributes to *The Martian Chronicles* as a whole. Your essay should have a clearly articulated thesis.

While you are not required to use secondary sources for this assignment, be sure to acknowledge any sources you do consult.

Secondary Sources Essay (15%)
Length: 600-900 words (not counting Works Cited)
Due Date: October 22, 2013

Take one of the articles listed on the first page of the course outline (and linked to on the course website). Provide a brief overview of the argument in that paper (no more than one paragraph—you might find it helpful to make this your introduction). Your paper will assess the critical piece
and your thesis should provide an overall assessment of the argument. Do you agree with its thesis and premises? Why or why not? How does the essay affect your own ideas about one of the texts on the course? Can you develop the ideas of the piece further, or apply its conclusions in novel ways?

**Major Paper:**
Length: 1500-2500 words (not counting Works Cited)
Due Date: November 19, 2013

Write a detailed, well-developed essay on ONE of the following topics. Keep the following in mind as you develop your ideas and write your essay:
- Narrow down the topic so that you are proving a precise, analytic, and interesting thesis.
- You must use at least three secondary sources to substantiate your argument, and/or to situate it within an appropriate context. At least two of these must be scholarly books or journal articles (online scholarly resources count).
- Don’t be afraid to ask for help at any stage of writing.

1. Compare and contrast the representations of first contact in “The Devil in the Dark” and *The Martian Chronicles*.
2. Space travel as postcolonial escape in “June 2003: Way in the Middle of the Air” and/or *Midnight Robber*.
3. Connections and disconnections of time in “August 2002: Night Meeting” and “Blink.”
4. Spock and the Horta in “The Devil in the Dark.”
5. Climate as culture in *The Left Hand of Darkness*.
6. Compare and contrast the cross-cultural friendships in *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Midnight Robber*.
7. Parody in “Jose Chung’s From Outer Space.”
8. The Nanny Web in *Midnight Robber*.
9. The Weeping Angels in “Blink.”
10. The representation of medical science in *Feed*.
11. Write your own speculative fiction story (maximum 3000 words for the story portion; shorter is fine). Include a 1000 word analysis situating your story within the genre and explaining how its speculative elements contribute to its themes.
12. A topic of your own choosing. You must get approval for the topic before you begin.

**Participation:**
Class participation is a necessary and important part of university courses, in which we all learn by exchanging ideas and information. Participation bonus marks will be awarded for exceptional contributions to the discussion, which can include asking questions, answering questions, making suggestions, providing information, and friendly debates. While disagreement over ideas is
encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. Make sure you leave room for your classmates to participate too.

**Final Exam:**
There will be a three-hour final exam in the exam period. The exam will consist writing two comparative essays (you will have a choice of five questions). The final exam must be written at the scheduled time. Do not make arrangements to leave campus for the year until the exam schedule is posted and you know when your exams will be.

**Class Schedule:**
You should have the readings complete for the first day that the text will be discussed in class.

- September 10: Introduction
- September 12: Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles*. If you do not have time to read the whole novel for this class, make sure you read “Ylla,” “The Earth Men,” and “The Third Expedition.”
- September 17: Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles*
- September 19: Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles*
- September 24: Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles*
- September 26: *Star Trek: TOS*, “The Devil in the Dark”; **Close Reading Essay Due**
- October 1: *Star Trek: TOS*, “The Devil in the Dark”
- October 3: Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*. We will also be discussing Le Guin’s “Introduction.”
- October 8: Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*
- October 10: Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*
- October 15: Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*
- October 17: *The X Files*, “Jose Chung’s From Outer Space”
- October 22: *The X Files*, “Jose Chung’s From Outer Space”; **Secondary Sources Assignment Due**
- October 24: Nalo Hopkinson, *Midnight Robber*
- October 29: Nalo Hopkinson, *Midnight Robber*
- October 31: Nalo Hopkinson, *Midnight Robber*

**Monday November 4:** Last day to drop fall term classes without academic penalty.
- November 5: Nalo Hopkinson, *Midnight Robber*
- November 7: *Doctor Who*, “Blink”
- November 12: *Doctor Who*, “Blink”
- November 14: Mira Grant, *Feed*
- November 19: Mira Grant, *Feed*; **Major Paper Due**
- November 21: Mira Grant, *Feed*
- November 26: Mira Grant, *Feed*
- November 28: Catch-up, Review, and Wrap-Up