

Lakehead University
Department of Women's Studies

WOME 3310 – Science Fiction, Gender, & Social Change
Fall 2019, ATAC 5041, M/W 11:30 – 1:00

Dr. Jenny Roth (jroth@lakeheadu.ca)
807-766-7116

Drop-in time: Wednesdays 1:30-2:30 pm,
or by appointment if you can't make that time
RB-2014

Course Description: In this course you will study short stories, films, and a novel to learn how feminist science fiction provides visions for gender equality that resist the racist, heteronormative, classist, ableist, ageist, etc. hegemony that shapes peoples' lives. You will consider what science fiction does in relation to social systems, and learn about feminist history, as well as present-day struggles through the lens of science fiction themes. You will hone your ability to do feminist analysis of the cultural texts we will engage with in the course. By the end of the course, you will show that you are able to interpret and analyze science fiction (feminist and otherwise, in the case of the film *Aliens*) within the matrix of feminist analysis and that you understand and can discuss the role that science fiction plays in challenging or reproducing gender-linked hierarchies and oppressions. You will also be able to show how feminist science fiction challenges the traditional tropes that define particular bodies (those of women, mothers, racialized peoples, feminized, transgender, and more) as alien, not human, and potentially dangerous.

Learner Outcomes specific to this course

In this course you will:

- Develop your ability to orally express a position with supporting evidence;
- Develop your scholarly writing, including improving your evidence-based approach to argumentation;
- Improve your feminist critical analysis skills in relation to science fiction cultural texts
- Develop arguments and observations based in feminist theory and methods, of science fiction and its role in society
- Understand how storytelling is activism, and is part of the social movement that challenges oppressive gendered power structures.

My Availability: I am always available during my drop-in time on a first-come, first-served basis. I am also available by appointment if you can't make that time. I check my work email during work hours: 8:30 – 4:30, Monday to Friday. I do not check my work email after 4:30, on weekends, or during statutory holidays.

Important Content Note: We will be reading and watching science fiction stories and films. These can contain assault (sexual and other), death, attacks, blood, oppressive and abusive settings and plotlines, and more. If you will be seriously emotionally or psychologically affected (i.e. triggered) by reading or watching the required materials for the course, please consider taking another course. All of the readings and films are mandatory.

Required Course Materials: All the materials listed weekly are required. Be sure to visit D2L before starting the readings each week to help you prepare.

Both of the required books are available at the University's Bookstores.

Larbalestier, Justine (ed.). *Daughters of Earth: Feminist Science Fiction in the Twentieth Century*. Wesleyan University Press, 2006.

Erdrich, Louise. *Future Home of the Living God*. Harper, 2017.

Weekly Topics and Materials

Wk. 1, Sept. 4 – Introduction

I. Early-Mid 20th Century

Wk. 2, Sept 9, 11 – Men, Women, Heterosexism, and Gender Binary

Leslie Stone, "The Conquest of Gola", 1931. 36-49

Lisa Tuttle, "Wives," 1967. 190-198.

II. The Personal is Political: Mid-C20

Wk. 3, Sept. 16, 18 – Gender in the Military-Technological Complex

Alice Eleanor Jones, "Created He Them," 1955. 67-75

Kate Wilhelm, "No Light in the Window," 1963. 97-106.

III. The New Movement: Mid-Late-C20

Wk. 4, Sept. 23, 25 - Challenging Binaries

James Tiptree Jr., "And I Awoke and Found Me Here on the Cold Hill Side," 1972. 160-167.

Gwyneth Jones, "Balinese Dancer," 1997. 305-325.

Wks. 5 & 6, Sept 30, Oct. 2, 7, 9: Aliens and Monstrous Mothers

Aliens. Dir. James Cameron. Perf. Sigourney Weaver, Michael Biehn, Carrie Henn. Twentieth Century Fox, 1986.

Wk 7, Oct 14, 16 - Reading Week, no classes Start Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God* so that you have it read, with notes taken, well before our classes

on it. Before you start reading, review the guiding questions I've suggested for you, posted on D2L in the section on the novel.

IV. Post-human/ist Possibilities: Late-C20 into C21

Wk. 8 Oct. 21, 23: Simian Orientalism Challenges the Binaries

Karen Joy Fowler, "What I Didn't See," 2002. 340-355.

Wk. 9 Oct 28, 30: Ecofeminism and Science Fiction

Pat Murphy, "Rachel in Love," 1987. 217-243.

Wk. 10 Nov 4, 6: Hope & Rebirth

Octavia Butler, "The Evening and the Morning and the Night," 1987. 265-286.

Wk. 11 Nov 11, 13 & Wk 12 Nov 18, 20: Indigenous Feminist Sci Fi

Erdrich, Louise. *Future Home of the Living God*

V. Looking Back in Celebration – A Retrospective

Wk 13 Nov 25, 27

Fiend Without a Face. Dir. Arthur Crabtree. Perf. Marshall Thompson, Terry Kilburn, Kynaston Reeves. Producers Associates, Amalgamated Productions, 1958.

Evaluation

Weekly Discussion participation	20	Weekly
Boldly Going ... to explore gender in science fiction	20	As the sign-up sheet. Your written copy submitted to D2L by 4 pm on your presentation day. No exceptions without University-approved documentation.
Short Assignment: Paper or Story	25	Due: October 9, 2019, uploaded to D2L before the start of class. No exceptions without University-approved documentation.

Take Home Final	35	Due: December 13, by 4:30 pm, uploaded to D2L. No exceptions without University-approved documentation.
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Comments on Extensions/Lateness, Plagiarism, and Other Details:

Due dates and late penalties

You have all the assignment instructions and due dates from the first day of class, so there will be no extensions, except as directed by Student Accessibility Services via a formal email notice to me.

If assignments are late, your grade will be reduced by 5 marks including Saturdays and Sundays. This also includes handing in late on the due day. For example, if you hand in your short assignment after the *start of class* on the due date, you will have 5 late marks deducted as though it is a day late. Any work more than 7 days late will not be accepted without appropriate documentation.

Plan your term now, so that you won't find yourself struggling to meet deadlines at the last minute.

Academic Misconduct and Disciplinary Procedures

A breach of Academic Integrity is a serious offence. The principle of Academic Integrity, particularly of doing one's own work, documenting properly (including use of quotation marks, appropriate paraphrasing and referencing/citation), collaborating appropriately, and avoiding misrepresentation, is a core principle in university study. Students should view the Student Code of Conduct – Academic Integrity – for a full description of academic offences (pp. 7-9), procedures when Academic Integrity breaches are suspected and sanctions for breaches of Academic Integrity.

AND

“The Code of Student Conduct – Non-Academic”.

Both are available at: <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/policies/student-related/code-of-student-behaviour-and-disciplinary-procedures/node/1046>

Please ask me any questions in relation to plagiarism, if you're unsure.

Remember to cite *all* information and ideas that you get from the readings, the films, and the discussions, including paraphrased information (summarized ideas and concepts).

Assignment Logistics: word limits and formatting

I will stop marking assignments when I reach their word limit. Edit carefully.

Use one of the following citation styles. Online examples are available, so I expect to see no errors in the formatting and application of in-text citations, or your Works Cited / References page:

MLA: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

APA: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Weekly Discussion Participation 20%

Discussion can take place in class or online at the course website. Each week’s online discussion will be open after class on Monday, and available until 4:30 pm on Wednesday. If you engage in online discussion, bear in mind that I expect good quality, professional conduct from everyone, that is sensitive to and engages with the weekly issues and materials. I reserve the right to require students to engage in in-class discussion only, at any time during the term. If this happens, you will be notified by an announcement posted on D2L, as well as an email from me sent to your LU email account.

It is your responsibility to be aware of appropriate classroom behaviour as set out in the University’s Student Code of Conduct and to follow it.

Marking rubric – Weekly Discussion Participation

You can miss one class without documentation and not be penalized. Otherwise, I will require University-approved documentation.

You will be evaluated on the following criteria:

Top students	You initiate discussion and show that you have understood (or are working to understand) and can apply the ideas presented in the week’s required materials and brief lecture in a professional and courteous way that respects your peers and supports ideas-sharing. This means coming to class thoroughly familiar with the assigned reading(s), being prepared to actively watch the films (taking notes throughout based on the discussion questions and in relation to the ideas presented in the reading[s]), and being prepared to identify topics of interest in the reading in relation to the film in a clearly evidenced way (you show that
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	<p>you know the reading well by backing up what you're saying with a direct quotation or page number reference).</p> <p>This does not mean monopolizing a discussion or shutting others down, or taking up too much space by talking for its own sake rather than engaging in the week's themes and materials. You work to allow everyone a chance to share their observations and ideas. You clearly connect anecdotal evidence to the week's materials and topics.</p>
Mid-range Students	<p>You participate on a regular basis, though less frequently than a "Top student." Mid-range students' participation may indicate that they are not well-prepared for class, or have not given thought to the assigned materials, because you do not support the point you make with clear reference to evidence from the materials / lecture.</p>
Non-participants	<p>Participation is impossible if you do not attend class, or if you do not share your ideas.</p>

For those interested in process: Top students receive 2 marks per week; Mid-range students receive 1 or 1.5, and non-participants, 0. Those marks are then averaged over the term to produce your final grade.

Boldly Going ... to explore gender in science fiction 20%

Sign-up sheet

A brief 1.5 page (5 minute) presentation, in which you share something you found interesting about the text with the class

Written copy is due on the day you give your talk

Times New Roman OR Arial, 12 pt font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins (5% will be deducted if yours is formatted differently)

Science fiction explores real-world problems by presenting them in different contexts and settings.

Identify a gender / sexuality-related real-world 'problem' the author / filmmaker addresses that interests you. Using a feminist analysis, share with your chosen topic with the class, and what you found interesting about how the author / filmmaker presented the topic. Make direct reference to your chosen text's theme, setting, characters, and / or other details.

Marking Rubric for 'Boldly going'

10% = In-class presentation (see immediately following)

10% = Presentation write-up (see “Marking Rubric for all Written Work”)

A (80-100%): Excellent to Near Perfection. You clearly identify a gender- or sexuality-linked ‘real world’ problem that the author / filmmaker addresses. You obviously use feminist analysis. What you found interesting about how the author / filmmaker presented your topic of choice is clear. You use direct evidence from the reading / film to make your point.

B (70-79%): Good to Very Good. You clearly identify a gender- or sexuality-linked ‘real world’ problem that the author / filmmaker addresses. You obviously use feminist analysis, but you might struggle to take account of structural oppressions, or systems, or institutions, or gender ideology. What you found interesting about how the author / filmmaker presented your topic of choice is clear. You use evidence from the reading / film to make your point, but less directly than an A-student (you make references to the required materials, but not direct references to page numbers, scenes, quotations, or other clear sources).

C (60-69%): Good to Fair. You do not clearly identify a gender- or sexuality-linked ‘real world’ problem that the author / filmmaker addresses. Your presentation illustrates that you are still working to fully understand feminist analysis beyond men/women. What you found interesting about how the author / filmmaker presented your topic of choice is clear. You refer to general concepts from the course, but you do not support your ideas with direct evidence from the materials (page numbers identifying where your concepts come from / direct quotations / scene details).

D (50-59%): Poor. You do not clearly identify a gender- or sexuality-linked ‘real world’ problem that the author / filmmaker addresses. Your presentation seems only passingly familiar with feminist analysis. What you found interesting about how the author / filmmaker presented your topic of choice is not clear. You make scant reference to general concepts from the course, and you do not support your ideas with direct evidence from the materials.

E (40-49%): Failure Grade. Near-total misunderstanding. The student has very little grasp of the materials or subject. The presentation is disorganized, obscure, and difficult to follow.

F (0-39%): Failure Grade. Total misunderstanding. The student seems to have no grasp of the materials or subject. The presentation is disorganized, obscure, and difficult to follow.

Short Paper OR Short Story (25%)

Due October 9th, uploaded to D2L before the start of class

Option #1

Short traditional scholarly paper

4-5 pages; 1000-1250 words

Times New Roman OR Arial, 12 pt font, double spaced, one-inch margins (5% will be deducted if yours is formatted differently)

“What good is science fiction’s thinking about the present, the future, and the past? What good is its tendency to warn or to consider alternative ways of thinking and doing? What good is its examination of the possible effects of science and technology, or social organization and political direction?” -Octavia Butler

With support from two (2) of the required course materials (readings / film) so far, illustrate the “good” science fiction serves in relation to exploring gender issues, focusing on a theme of your choice. I will expect to see one (1) academic source used to substantiate your argument. You may not use material you shared with the class in the “Boldly Going” assignment.

Option #2

Write your own science fiction story

4-5 pages; 1000-1250 words

Times New Roman OR Arial, 12 pt font, double spaced, one inch margins (5% will be deducted if yours is formatted differently)

Write a feminist science fiction short story. Engage with whichever current gender-based social issues you wish, so long as you do so from a feminist perspective in the science fiction genre. Along with your story, include a one-page, scholarly, explanation of how your story falls within the themes of the course. I will expect to see one (1) academic source referenced in your explanation. The explanation page is included in the word count.

Final Take-Home Paper (35%)

Due December 13, uploaded to D2L by 4:30 pm

6-8 pages, 1500-2000 words

Times New Roman OR Arial, 12 pt font, double spaced, one-inch margins (deductions as above).

Many authors illustrate how the intersection of race, gender, class, sexuality, age, and other matrices of oppression negatively affects peoples’ lives.

Using Erdrich’s novel and three (3) other required course materials from the second half of the course (reading week onward), illustrate how the authors / film-maker reveal the effects of intersectional oppression, and how their science

fiction vision challenges existing oppressive structures, offering us a new way forward.

Use five (5) scholarly sources to substantiate your argument.

Use materials different from your previous assignments.

Marking rubric for all written work

A+ (90-100%): Near-Perfection. The work follows what the instructions ask, and clearly develops a near-irrefutable argument concisely and convincingly. Ideas are linked and flow from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph. The argument or story, if that option is chosen, leads clearly and inexorably to its conclusion, is stimulating to read and shows analytical and connective abilities well in excess of expectations for the level. There are no errors in scholarly documentation or formatting, and the work is virtually free of errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation. Secondary sources never stand in for student's own thoughts and are used intelligently to evidence the argument.

A-, A (80-89%): Excellent. The work follows what the instructions ask, and thoughtfully develops an interesting thesis, or story, if that option is selected; secondary source material is used intelligently, and not as a substitute for the student's own thinking in scholarly work. The student is in command of the topic and shows some originality and enthusiasm in discussing it. The work is well organized, convincingly argued, or presented if the short story is chosen, and clearly expressed – a pleasure to read. It is mainly free of errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation, and uses the conventions of scholarly documentation correctly.

B-, B, B+ (70-79%): Very Good to Good. The work follows what the instructions ask, and is a competent, accurate treatment of its topic. It is well written and has a clear thesis, or storyline, if that option is chosen. Writing at the bottom of this range may not have fully digested the materials, and may lean uncritically on secondary sources. The organization is good and the sentences are all comprehensible. There are few errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation. The work follows standard conventions of scholarly documentation.

C-, C, C+ (60-69%): Good to Fair. The work follows what the instructions ask, but the thesis is unclear, or trivial, or undeveloped; the short story, if that option is chosen, is difficult to follow, under-developed, or not clearly connected to course themes and content. Much of the work is summary or paraphrase, with only occasional analytical comment. There may be inaccuracies; writing at the bottom of this range may rely exclusively on secondary sources instead of the students' own thoughts. The writing is

disjointed; some sentences may be convoluted and incomprehensible. There may be mistakes in grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as carelessness about scholarly documentation.

D-, D, D+ (50-59%): Poor. The work has serious inaccuracies and inconsistencies. The student has some grasp of the topic, but not much. Where sources are cited, they tend to be misused or misinterpreted. The student may express opinions, but does not support them with evidence or argument from the course materials in support of their position. The writing lacks coherence, is unclear, and has many errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as carelessness about scholarly documentation.

E (40-49%): Failure Grade. Near-total misunderstanding. The student has very little grasp of the materials or subject. The essay is disorganized, obscure, full of grammatical errors and is unscholarly.

F (0-39%): Failure Grade. Total misunderstanding. The student seems to have no grasp of the materials or subject. The essay is disorganized, obscure, is full of grammatical errors and is unscholarly. Any cases of plagiarism will be submitted to the Dean with my request that a mark of zero be assigned.

Campus support resources

Aboriginal Cultural and Support Services

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/sas>

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-services/tb/aboriginal-services>

Student Accessibility Services

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/sas>

Student Health and Wellness

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-health-and-counselling-centre>

Office of Human Rights and Equity

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/human-rights-and-equity>

Writing Centre: Access via MySuccess.lakehead.ca, and make an appointment with a writing coach.

Writing Help for ESL students: [TIME TBA] in the ELC (ground floor of Paterson library). No appointment is required.