



FACULTY OF ARTS
Department Of English

COURSE OUTLINE

ENGL 517.38: SPECULATIVE FICTION AND PHILOSOPHY
Spring 2023
(TR / 13:00-15:45 / SS1015 / in-person)

Instructor	Dr. Anthony Camara
Email:	anthony.camara@ucalgary.ca
Web Page:	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours:	R 15:45-16:45

Course Description:

In the fields of critical theory and philosophy, the past decade saw a profusion of interest in speculative modes of thought. This new turn in theory reached its crescendo with the movement known as “Speculative Realism,” which has since dissipated as a coherent school in philosophy but left an indelible mark on contemporary thought that extends into literary criticism, especially work on popular genres such as horror and science fiction. The objective of this class is to familiarize students with these resurgent speculative philosophies and to interrogate how they inform, and are informed by, contemporary popular genre literature. While these objectives require that students engage with the key thinkers of Speculative Realism (Quentin Meillassoux on cosmic ancestry; Graham Harman on objects; Iain H. Grant on nature; and Ray Brassier on extinction), the class will trace the speculative impulse more widely through the return to metaphysics and ontology seen in Feminist New Materialisms (Jane Bennett on vibrant materiality; Karen Barad on quantum ontology; Rosi Braidotti’s “nomadic” thought, etc.). Of particular importance to the course will be comprehending the utility of these speculative theories in understanding speculative fictions, but also the recognition that such theories, by virtue of their speculative natures, are also fundamentally fictions themselves that turn on the creative dynamics of literature, hence the prevalence of hybrid theory-fictions amongst the work of Speculative Realists and associated thinkers (for instance, Reza Negarestani’s *Cyclonopedia* and Kristen Alvanson’s *XYZT*). Upon completion of this course, students will not only be able to deploy current speculative philosophy as a literary-critical tool but also understand how literature affords a crucial creative impetus to the construction of disciplinary philosophies in the continental tradition.

Course learning outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Apply a representative selection of speculative philosophical texts to literary works;
2. Understand the role literary aesthetics play in speculative philosophies;

3. Use a combination of speculative-theoretical and literary texts to write a research paper;
4. Understand BIPOC authors' contributions to, and critiques of, spec. fiction and philosophy;
5. Engage in academic conversations about literature and philosophy with peers.

Texts and readings:

- *Nnedi Okorafor, *The Binti Trilogy* (Daw)
- *Greg Egan, *Diaspora* (Skyhorse/Nightshade)
- *Stephen Graham Jones, *The Only Good Indians* (Simon & Schuster)
- *Sloane Leong, *Prism Stalker* (vol. 1) (Image)
- *Additional secondary critical readings to be posted on D2L

Learning technology requirements:

Students should have access to a laptop computer and/or smartphone. There is a D2L site for this course which contains required readings and other relevant class resources and materials (see d2l.ucalgary.ca).

Assessments and Evaluation:

- In-Class Presentation: 30%
- Critical Annotations (2 responses of 500 words at 15% apiece): 30%
- Final Research Paper (3000 words): 40%

***In-Class Presentation:** The main purpose of this twenty-minute presentation is to prompt exploration of the primary and secondary readings for a particular week. Therefore, while students should present arguments about the various texts, they should also pose discussion questions for debate and further investigation. Although the formal presentation is only twenty minutes long, students are encouraged to consider themselves discussion leaders for the seminar in which they deliver their presentations. Note that the in-class presentations require no written work to be handed in, and the instructor will provide written feedback and a grade one week after the presentation.

***Critical Annotations:** These short, 500-word assignments provide opportunities to hone potential final paper arguments and begin compiling bibliographies. Students focus on a page or passage that they found particularly difficult or fascinating in a given work. They conduct independent research in order to find a secondary source that helps to clarify or interpret the selected passage. Then, drawing on that source, the student analyses the passage and suggests some further research questions or problems for the seminar to address.

***Final Research Paper:** This 3000-word paper must make use of at least 6 secondary sources—historical, literary-critical, and/or theoretical in nature—in order to further investigate any work from the syllabus. Students propose their own topics based on individual scholarly interests. Note that this essay must include a works cited page and follow MLA formatting and style guidelines.

Additional Class Policies:

- It is necessary to complete all course assignments to receive a passing grade.
- Make-up assignments, excused absences, and extensions will only be issued by the instructor in the event of extenuating circumstances.
- If the course is to be worthwhile, students must come to seminar prepared to engage with the texts, their fellow classmates, and the instructor. Therefore, students should complete all assigned readings before these sessions and have all the relevant texts at hand. To prepare for seminar, students are advised to read actively at home by annotating their texts and making a list of questions and compelling ideas as they progress through the course readings; then, they can then draw from these lists during the sessions.
- Assignments will be submitted to the instructor via D2L Dropbox by the end of the day that they are due. The late penalty for assignments is 10% per day, which includes weekends and holidays. Note that late assignments will receive little, if any, feedback. Assignments more than five days late will not be accepted.
- If any extenuating circumstances arise which prevent a student from attending a session or turning in an assignment, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor as soon as possible so that proper arrangements can be made in the way of a make-up activity or assignment.
- Students should retain a copy of all assignments in case a technical glitch occurs while uploading.
- There is no registrar-scheduled final exam in this class.
- There are no extra-credit assignments.

Attendance and participation expectations:

As this is an intensive seminar course that relies on engaged student involvement, attendance and active participation is totally essential and expected. Although there is no participation grade *per se*, all assignments and discussions fundamentally depend on students' fulsome participation. Consequently, please come to seminar having read the assigned works on the syllabus and ready to participate. Likewise, be prepared to meaningfully interact with your peers during every seminar discussion.

Conduct:

Students, employees, and academic staff are expected to demonstrate behaviour in class that promotes and maintains a positive and productive learning environment. As members of the University community, students, employees, and academic staff are expected to demonstrate conduct that is consistent with the University of Calgary Calendar, the Code of Conduct and Non-Academic Misconduct policy and procedures, which can be found at:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Policy on use of electronic devices:

The use of laptop and mobile devices in class is acceptable when used in a manner appropriate to the course and classroom activities. Please refrain from accessing websites and resources that may be distracting to you or for other learners during class time. Students are responsible for being aware of the University's [Internet and email use policy](#).

Grading System:

Grading uses numerical percentages correlated to the following letter grades, as per the English department's standardized percentage conversion scale:

90 + %	A+	4.0	67 – 69 %	C+	2.3
85 – 89 %	A	4.0	64 – 66 %	C	2.0
80 – 84 %	A–	3.7	60 – 63 %	C–	1.7
77 – 79 %	B+	3.3	55 – 59 %	D+	1.3
74 – 76 %	B	3.0	50 – 54 %	D	1.0
70 – 73 %	B–	2.7	0 – 49 %	F	0

- Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the four-point system, the course instructor will employ this mark to distinguish superlative work that far exceeds expectations in style, correctness, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality.
- The interpretation of the undergraduate university grading system can be found at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/f-1-1.html>
 - Or, for graduate courses: please refer to the Graduate Grading System at the following link: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/grad/current/gs-h-1.html>
- There is no D- grade.
- Students must reach the minimum percentage threshold for the grade range to receive that letter grade (e.g., to receive an A- a student will have surpassed the minimum threshold of 80.00% in the course). That said, the instructor retains the right to round up a grade according to student performance.
- The instructor never rounds grades down.

Academic Integrity:

This course, like all courses at the University of Calgary, holds students to high standards of honest and responsible scholarship. Please consult the [Academic Integrity website](#) for a detailed description of university policies, which will be enforced in this course. Cases of suspected academic misconduct will be referred to the Associate Dean of Arts for a ruling.

Plagiarism is a type of academic misconduct. Plagiarism occurs when a student presents the ideas, expression of ideas, or work of another person as their own. Another equally serious form of plagiarism occurs when a student submits something they have written themselves for credit in two or more courses without first securing written permission from all those course instructors. Consequences for plagiarism include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense.

Deferral of term work and final examinations:

Should you require an extension for completion of term papers or assignments beyond the deadline of five days after the end of lectures, an [Application of Deferment of Term Work](#) must be completed. It is the student's responsibility to initiate this process with the instructor. The University also has regulations governing the [deferral of final examinations](#).

Grade appeals:

To pursue a Reassessment of Graded Term Work or a Reappraisal of an Academic Assessment, Consult the [University Calendar](#) and request advice from the English Department at engl@ucalgary.ca. Please note that mere dissatisfaction with a grade is not sufficient grounds for an appeal.

[English Department Website:](#)

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English.

Scribe and Muse Club for English Students:

The [Scribe and Muse Reading and Writing Club](#) fosters and champions reading and writing through community service, leadership, and engagement. Our email address is smecuofc@gmail.com.

Writing support:

[The Student Success Centre](#) offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students.

[Academic regulations and schedules](#)

Student Academic Accommodations:

The Student Accessibility Services website is available [here](#). University accommodation policies can be found at the following links:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6-1.html>

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6.html>

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6-2.html>

Program Advising and Student Information Resources is done through the Faculty of Arts Students' Centre. Office location: SS102; phone: 403-220-3580; email: ascarts@ucalgary.ca
Website: <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate>

Instructor's Intellectual Property

Course materials created by instructors, including presentations, posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams, remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may not be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the course at the same time may be allowed under fair dealing.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

Student information will be collected in accordance with usual classroom practice. Students' assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty and teaching assistants. Private information related to the individual student is treated with the utmost regard by the faculty at the University of Calgary.

Research Ethics [delete section if not applicable]

- If a student is interested in undertaking an assignment that will involve collecting information from members of the public, they should speak with the course instructor and consult the CFREB Ethics (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/researchers/ethics-compliance/cfreb>) before beginning the assignment.
- If students are going to be used as research subjects or expected to conduct research (such as interviews), a statement about this expectation must be included. Please note that if you plan to have students conduct research for class, you must get ethics approval for the course.

Sexual violence policy:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Sexual-and-Gender-Based-Violence-Policy.pdf>

Other important information:

- [Wellness and Mental Health Resources](#)
- [Student Success](#)
- [Student Ombuds Office](#)
- [Student Union \(SU\) Information](#)
- [Graduate Students' Association \(GSA\) Information](#)
- [Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points](#)
- [Safewalk](#)

Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI):

Please participate in [USRI Surveys](#) toward the end of the course. The feedback they provide helps us evaluate teaching, enhance student learning, and guide students as they select courses.