

**FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**English 393 L01 (Fall 2013)
SCIENCE FICTION**

Instructor: Christian Bök

Phone: 403-220-8166

Office: SS-1140

Email: cbok@ucalgary.ca

Hours: Tue (13:00-15:00), Wed (16:00-18:00)

Course Description

This course introduces students to the genre of science fiction, providing students with an array of basic tools for interpreting works from this genre. The readings for this course focus on the concept of “alierness,” examining this concept in detail by paying recurrent attention to various remakes of the same tale, told over and over again—in this case, the novella *Who Goes There?* by John W. Campbell (whose story provides the inspiration for the movie *The Thing* by John Carpenter). The course discusses the varied shapes that this story has taken over the course of more than eighty years in both novels and movies. The story itself seems to suggest that, for science fiction, the most destructive, existential threat to humanity resides in a void, where we might encounter both the unearthly “otherness” and the monstrous “thingness” of the utterly inhuman. The course goes on to suggest that, just as the baleful monster in such a story can undergo radical, protean changes, adapting to any threat that might otherwise exterminate it, so also does the story itself seem to resemble the “alierness” of such a creature, at least in its ability to mutate and to evolve over time (since the story has survived in our culture by transmuting itself to suit the changing appetite of disparate audiences). The motif of “extraterrestrials in Antarctica,” constitutes a rich myth about our own experience of cosmic horror—and the course strives to excavate this experience in all its varied facets of strangeness. The course is divided into three units: first, a discussion of the alien in the “Radium Age” of science fiction; second, a discussion of the alien in the “Atomic Age” of science fiction; and third, a discussion of the alien in the “Bionic Age” of science fiction. The course tracks the evolution of our ideas about the sublimity of this “thing” (pointing to the questions that it raises about our place in the universe).

Required Readings (Textual)

At the Mountains of Madness (Novella by H. P. Lovecraft)

At the Mountains of Madness (Graphic Novel by I. N. J. Culbard)

Who Goes There? (Novella by John W. Campbell)

The Thing from Another World (Film by Christian Nyby)

The Thing (Film by John Carpenter)

The Thing (Film by Matthijs van Heijningen Jr.)

[Please note that all these books and films feature horrific, visceral effects, meant to terrorize audiences.]

Required Readings (Online)

At the Mountains of Madness (Music by Allicorn)

<http://allicorn.bandcamp.com/album/at-the-mountains-of-madness>

A Colder War (Novella by Charles Stross)

<http://www.infinityplus.co.uk/stories/colderwar.htm>

The Things (Short Story by Peter Watts)

http://clarkesworldmagazine.com/watts_01_10/

The Thing – Northman Nightmare (Graphic Novel by Steve Niles)
<https://digital.darkhorse.com/profile/1399.the-thing-full-book/>

Driving This Road Until Death Sets You Free (Video by Zombie Zombie)
<http://vimeo.com/26625333>

Other Resources:

The Elements of Style by William Strunk and E. B. White

Glossary of Literary Terms
http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms.html

Any handbook that contains the MLA style for documenting citations in essays:
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Course Assignments

Initial Report (500 wds)	10%
Interim Essay (500 wds)	10%
Group Lecture	15% (Graded by Students)
Group Report (750 wds)	15% (Graded by Instructor)
Final Essay (1000 wds)	20%
Final Exam	20%
Participation	10%

Note: All assignments must be completed and submitted in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

Initial Report: Students are required to generate a brief report about *At the Mountains of Madness* in order to get a diagnostic assessment about the quality of their writing in advance of other assignments. The instructor is going to provide a topic for this brief report in advance of the date for its submission.

Interim Essay: Students are required to write a short essay about either *A Colder War* or *Who Goes There?* in order to refine skills for writing the final essay about the cosmic themes addressed in *The Thing*. The instructor is going to provide topics for this short essay in advance of the date for its submission.

Group Presentation: Students are required to form 12 equal teams of 4-5 participants (depending upon enrollment in the class), with each team being collectively responsible for delivering one presentation to the rest of the class. Since the topic of this class concerns a science-fiction story about a multicellular superorganism (whose parts are all independent and intelligent, but are nevertheless cooperative, in their will to survive), this assignment is designed to foster integrated behaviours of collaboration among the units of a group; hence, every member of a team must demonstrate their contribution to the presentation, with tasks delegated equitably among the members. Each presentation must be an audiovisual, pedagogical experience, in which the group teaches the class through the rehearsed delivery of detailed research.

Each presentation (worth 15% of the final grade) must take approximately 20 minutes to present and must prompt subsequent discussion by highlighting one of the key issues in the texts under study during the preceding two weeks of lectures. Each presentation must incorporate research from an external resource, and students may want to distribute photocopies of any pertinent, reference materials to the class for consultation. Each group has discretion to conduct this lesson as they see fit, but for the purposes of assessment, members may want to consider how they might like themselves to be taught, if given the chance to be students in their own seminars. All groups may wish to coordinate their collective endeavours during the week of their own presentations in order to avoid any redundancy in topics and themes.

All presentations are graded by each classmate in secret (according to a rubric supplied by the instructor). The grade for this work reflects the quality of both the insights and the analyses, delivered in the

presentation: i.e. their topical relevance, their logical coherence, and their rhetorical eloquence. The group presenting does not participate in this process of marking for their own presentation. The instructor discards the two greatest marks and the two smallest marks, awarded by the class, after which the instructor averages the remainder, giving this result to each member of the group: i.e. the group gets marked as a whole, and every member receives the same mark. The group must also submit a single report (approx. 4-5 pages), summarizing their research for subsequent evaluation at the end of the lesson. The instructor alone marks this assignment (worth 15%), awarding every member of the group the same mark for this effort.

Final Essay: Students are expected to write a final essay (worth 20% of the final grade)—an essay that provides a comparative examination of two movies about *The Thing*, applying concepts learned over the term. The instructor is going to provide topics for this final essay in advance of the date for its submission.

Participation: 10% of your final grade takes into account the quality of your constructive contribution to the class through your preparation, your attendance, and your discussion, over the course of the term.

Endterm Exam: The last exam for this course is to be scheduled by the Registrar between Dec. 9-19, 2013 (and students must make themselves available for the entire period of this scheduling, in order to write the test). The exam focuses primarily on the material studied in the later weeks of the course.

Note: Please make every effort to submit any assignments and manuscripts directly to the instructor. If you cannot do so, please take your assignment to SS-1152, where the work can be dated and then filed in the mailbox of the instructor. Staff in the office cannot return assignments to students under any circumstances.

SCHEDULE FOR CLASSES

Sep 10: Orientation

Sep 12: Lecture (Introduction to Science Fiction)

Sep 17: Lecture (Introduction to the Alien Other)

Sep 19: Lecture: *At the Mountains of Madness* (H. P. Lovecraft)

Sep 24: Lecture: *At the Mountains of Madness* (H. P. Lovecraft)

Sep 26: Lecture: *At the Mountains of Madness* (I. N. J. Culbard)
At the Mountains of Madness (Allicorn)

[Initial Report: Due in Class]

Oct 01: Group Presentations

01:

02:

Oct 03: Group Presentations

[Marked Reports Returned]

03:

04:

Oct 08: Lecture: *A Colder War* (Charles Stross)

Oct 10: Lecture: *Who Goes There?* (John W. Campbell)

Oct 15: **Screen:** *The Thing from Another World* (1951)

Oct 17: Lecture: *The Thing from Another World* (1951)

Oct 22: Group Presentations

05:

06:

Oct 24: Group Presentations

07:

08:

Oct 29: RESEARCH DAY (ABSENT)

Oct 31: **Screen: *The Thing* (1982)**

[Interim Essay: Due in Class]

Nov 05: Lecture: *The Thing* (1982)

Nov 07: Lecture: *The Thing* (1982)

[Marked Essays Returned]

Nov 12: READING BREAK (NO CLASS)

Nov 14: Lecture: *The Things* (Peter Watts)

Driving This Road Until Death Sets You Free (Zombie Zombie)

Nov 19: Group Presentations

09:

10:

Nov 21: Group Presentations

11:

12:

Nov 26: **Screen: *The Thing* (2011)**

Nov 28: Lecture: *The Thing* (2011)

Dec 03: Lecture: *The Thing* (2011)

Dec 05: Lecture: *The Thing – Northman Nightmare* (Steve Niles)

Exam Preparation

[Final Essay: Due in Class]

Policies for Grading

Grading System: For each assignment, students can expect to receive a grade that includes a letter, plus a numerical conversion, expressed according to the following guideline of percentages: A+ (90-100%, Outstanding); A (85-89%, Excellent); A- (80-84%); B+ (77-79%, Very Good); B (74-76%, Good); B- (70-73%); C+ (67-69%, Average); C (64-66%, Satisfactory); C- (60-63%); D+ (55-59%); D (50-54%, Minimal Pass); F (0-49%, Fail).

Late Assignments: The schedule for this course depends heavily upon students delivering their work on the specified, assigned dates. All students must submit their assignments by deadline to avoid any penalties for tardiness, unless arrangements have been made in advance with the instructor to accommodate crises.

Any late assignments are penalized with the loss of one third of a letter grade for each business day late—(for example, a paper that might have otherwise received a ‘B’ must receive the mark of ‘B-’ if the paper is

submitted one day late). No papers can be accepted five business days after the due date. No extensions can be granted on assignments, except in cases of officially documented sickness or hardship.

Plagiarism:

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Please refer to the following information and make sure you are familiar with the statement below on plagiarism.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

Scribe and Muse Club for English Students:

The Scribe and Muse Reading and Writing Club (SMRWC) fosters and champions reading and writing through community service, leadership, and engagement. We strive to enhance the academic and social experience of undergraduate students by promoting academic excellence and interaction between students, faculty, and the community, through social, cultural, and academic events. <http://english.ucalgary.ca/content/scribe-and-muse-reading-and-writing-club>
Our email address is smrwc@ucalgary.ca.

English Department Website:

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English, please go to our website at <http://english.ucalgary.ca>. Please note that the course outlines posted on the English Department website constitute the official course outline for purposes of appeals. Students should verify any hard copies against this posted version. For courses which employ numerical grades, the official departmental percentage to letter grade conversion scale is also posted on the department website.

Writing support:

The Student Success Centre offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Follow the Department of English on Facebook & Twitter:



Academic regulations and schedules:

Consult the Calendar for course information, university and faculty regulations, dates, deadlines and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the University Calendar is

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/index.htm>

Guidelines on e-mail Etiquette:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/it/help/articles/email/etiquette>

Grade appeals:

Consult the following University Calendar link and request advice from the English Department office, SS 1152. Please note that "mere dissatisfaction with a decision is not sufficient grounds for the appeal of a grade or other academic decision."

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

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 form must be completed. The University also has regulations governing the deferral of final examinations. See Calendar:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>.

Academic Accommodation:

It is the students' responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodations and have not registered with Student Accessibility Services, please contact them at 403-220-6019. Students who have not registered with Student Accessibility Services are not eligible for formal academic accommodations. More information about academic accommodations can be found at www.ucalgary.ca/access.

Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>;

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/>

“Safewalk” Program:

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night: call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot pay booths.
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk/>

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources:

Have a question, but not sure where to start? The new Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (PIC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS110, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at artsads@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.

For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre (formerly the Undergraduate programs Office) at (403) 220-5881 or visit them in their new space on the 3rd Floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

Contact for Students Union Representatives for the Faculty of Arts:

arts1@su.ucalgary.ca, arts2@su.ucalgary.ca, arts3@su.ucalgary.ca, arts4@su.ucalgary.ca

Contact for Students Ombudsman’s Office: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence. Please read the following information carefully. The penalty routinely recommended by the English Department for documented plagiarism is failure of the course in which the offence occurred; academic probation is also routinely applied at the Faculty level. Suspension or expulsion can result from severe or repeated plagiarism.

The University Calendar states:

1. Plagiarism - Essentially plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:

- (a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),
- (b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,
- (c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,
- (d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted.

Plagiarism occurs when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, or when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. Citing your sources in a bibliography is not enough, because a bibliography does not establish which parts of a student's work are taken from other sources. MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose. Advice on adequate documentation can be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/>

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

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT

According to the University Calendar, (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/j.html>)

“The University of Calgary community has undertaken to be guided by the following statements of purpose and values: to promote free inquiry and debate, to act as a community of scholars, ..., to respect, appreciate, and encourage diversity, [and] to display care and concern for community”. The Department of English, like the university as a whole, is committed to a “positive and productive learning and working environment.” This environment is characterized by appreciation and encouragement of diversity and respect for the dignity of all persons: students, support staff, and faculty. The department will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, such as threatening gestures, threatening or abusive verbal or written communication (including e-mails), or any conduct that “seriously disrupts the lawful education and related activities of students and/or university staff”. Any cases of such misconduct should be reported immediately to the department Head, who, depending on the nature and severity of the incident, may then take further appropriate action.