

**STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
CANTON, NEW YORK**



MASTER SYLLABUS

ENGL 218 SCIENCE FICTION WORKSHOP

CIP Code: 230101

**Created by: Phil LaMarche, September 2011
Updated by: Phil LaMarche, December 2019**

**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LIBERAL ARTS
DEPARTMENT of ENGLISH and HUMANITIES
December 2019**

- A. **TITLE:** Science Fiction Workshop
- B. **COURSE NUMBER:** ENGL 218
- C. **CREDIT HOURS:**
 3 Credit Hours
 3 Lecture Hours: 3 per week

 Course Length: 15 weeks
- D. **WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE:** Yes
- E. **GER CATEGORY:** GER 7 & 8
- F. **SEMESTER(S) OFFERED:** Fall and Spring
- G. **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Students explore the form by reading a wide range of science fiction stories that represent the standard indications of literary quality (i.e. characterization, plot, setting, point of view, style, theme, etc.). After a survey of the form, students write science fiction stories of their own that incorporate the various literary qualities inherent in the genre and constructively respond to peers' writing in a workshop format.

I

- H. **PRE-REQUISITES/CO-REQUISITES:**
 a. Pre-requisite(s): ENGL 101
 b. Co-requisite(s): None
 c. Pre- or co-requisite(s): None
- I. **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

<u>Course Student Learning Outcome [SLO]</u>	<u>PSLO</u>	<u>GER</u>	<u>ISLO</u>
a. argue for specific interpretations of course materials	1.	GER 7	2. Critical Thinking [IA]
b. understand and display ability to apply terms common to the humanities		GER 7	1. Communication
c create their own examples of science fiction stories and evaluate the writing of their peers.		GER 8	1. Communication

KEY	Institutional Student Learning Outcomes [ISLO 1 – 5]
ISLO #	ISLO & Subsets
1	Communication Skills Oral [O], Written [W]
2	Critical Thinking <i>Critical Analysis [CA] , Inquiry & Analysis [IA] , Problem Solving [PS]</i>
3	Foundational Skills <i>Information Management [IM], Quantitative Lit./Reasoning [QTR]</i>
4	Social Responsibility <i>Ethical Reasoning [ER], Global Learning [GL], Intercultural Knowledge [IK], Teamwork [T]</i>
5	Industry, Professional, Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

J. **APPLIED LEARNING COMPONENT:** Yes _____ No X _____

K. **TEXTS:**

Texts may vary but should be similar to the following in range:

Card, Orson Scott. *How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy*. New York: Writers Digest Books, 2001.

Card, Orson Scott. *Masterpieces, The Best Science Fiction Writing of the 20th Century*. New York: Ace Trade Publishers, 2004. Dozois, Gardner, Lee, Tina, Schmidt, Stanley, Strock, Ian Randal, Williams, Sheila. *Writing Science Fiction and Fantasy*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1993.

Readings and handouts will be made available on Angel.

LL. **REFERENCES:**

Dozois, Gardner. *The Best of the Best: 20 Years of the Year's Best Science Fiction*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2005.

How To Write Science Fiction -- <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-Science-Fiction>

Longyear, Barry. *Science Fiction Writer's Workshop-I: An Introduction to Fiction Mechanics*. New York: !Universe, 2002.

Schithers, George H., Schweitzer. *On Writing Science Fiction: The Editors Strike Back*. New York: Bargo Press, 1981.

Writing Science Fiction and Fantasy -- <http://www.writesf.com/>

M. **EQUIPMENT:**

Technology enhanced classroom

N. **GRADING METHOD:** A-F

O. **SUGGESTED MEASUREMENT CRITERIA/METHODS:**

- Written critical responses to peer and published work
- Creative written exercises

- Stories
- Participation in discussion board topics

P. DETAILED COURSE OUTLINE:

Topics

I. Exploring and Understanding the Form

- A. Discussion of 'genre' and the striation of the literary spectrum imposed by the market
- B. "Sci-Fi" vs. "Speculative Fiction"
 - 1. Robert A. Heinlein's essay, "On the Writing of Speculative Fiction"
- C. Expectations of a sci-fi audience
 - 1. Orson Scott Card: "What SF Writers Write is SF"
- D. Differentiating between sci-fi and fantasy

II. Literary Devices: Storytelling 101

A. Narrative Structure

- 1. Freytag's Pyramid
- 2. The three act structure
 - a. Discussion of the inciting incident and the climax and the centrality of conflict in traditional storytelling
- 3. Joseph Campbell and his theory on The Hero's Journey
 - a. Discussion of the manifestation of The Hero's Journey in Lucas' Star Wars
- 4. Isaac Asimov: "Plotting"
- 5. Orson Scott Card: "Story Construction"

B. Character Development

- 1. Flat vs. Round/ Static vs. Dynamic
- 2. Cliche vs. Complexity
- 3. Dialogue and the power of the human voice
 - a. Isaac Asimov: "Dialogue"
- 4. James Patrick Kelley: "You and Your Characters"
- 5. Paul Anderson: "The Creation of Imaginary Beings"

C. Setting

- 1. Effective use of imagery and the knack for the 'right' detail
 - a. The 'expected' vs. the 'fresh take'
- 2. Orson Scott Card: "World Creation"
- 3. Paul Anderson: "The Creation of Imaginary Worlds: The World Builder's Handbook and Pocket Companion"
- 4. John Barnes: "How to Build a Future"
- 5. Norman Spinrad: "Building a Starfaring Age"

D. Language

- 1. Discussion of the necessity for revision and proofreading
- 2. Perspective
 - a. P.O.V. and the use of 1st, 2nd 3rd person narration
- 3. The construction of voice
 - a. Word Choice: slang, invented jargon, profanity and their place
 - b. Diction: cadence and the creative use of punctuation in the production of rhythm
 - c. Orson Scott Card: "Writing Well"
- 4. Exposition vs. Action
 - a. Scene writing in Stanley Schmidt's "Seeing Your Way to Better Stories"
 - b. Wallace Stegner: "On Teaching and Writing Fiction"

III. Workshop

- A. Discussion of the necessity of professionalism and constructive feedback
- B. 3-5 students will submit stories weekly that engage with the concepts listed above. Since the assessment of creative work is highly subjective, student stories will be graded upon their timely submission, the level to which they are polished, and their ability to assimilate the concepts discussed in the course.
- C. Students will be required to respond to weekly stories with 250-350 words of constructive feedback, pointing out at least two successful elements of the story and identifying at least two other facets that could use further development.
- D. Revision: each student will be required to revise their story based upon the feedback of the professor and their peers and resubmit the work at the end of the semester. The student's ability to engage with the feedback and make significant changes and improvements will form the basis for grading on the assignment.

Q. **LABORATORY OUTLINE:** N/A