

Instructor: Kevin Gallin (he/his)
Course: English 90S-01
Classroom: Social Sciences 109
Class Hours: WF 10:05-11:20
Office Hours: M 3:00-4:00, W 11:30-1:00,
or by appointment – 303D Allen
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Not-So-Ancient Aliens

Course Codes: ALP, CZ, CCI, EI, W

This course explores the overlapping definitions of the word “alien” in contemporary fiction and film. For much of its history, the word referred exclusively to citizens of a foreign nation; only relatively recently has it come to primarily signify, at least in pop culture, beings from beyond our world. With xenophobia and racism becoming more and more explicit in our politics at the same time our fiction becomes increasingly “speculative,” never has the word meant so many different, charged things to so many different people.

Throughout the semester, we will disentangle and reentangle these definitions, alternating between texts that are easily recognizable as science fiction and other works that are concerned primarily with the experience of movement, displacement, globalization and otherness. This recombination will help us trace the limits of our imagination when it comes to encountering those different from us, and provide ways of expanding our definition of “alien” – and, therefore, of “human.”

Course Goals:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Develop and defend personal definitions of both “science fiction” and “literature of globalization,” including historical context from the 20th and 21st century.
- Analyze rhetorical and thematic connections between science fiction and discussions of globalization in literary and film texts, as well as in political journalism and opinion writing.
- Evaluate the relative strengths and limitations of imagining globalization through science fiction.
- Develop, draft, and revise written argumentation, developing skills in both providing and incorporating effective peer feedback
- Independently research, archive, and analyze political themes of science fiction & globalization in outside media.
- Present this research to a class, focusing on the ability to promote discussion with peers.

Required Course Texts and Media

Butler, Octavia, “Bloodchild” (1984)	LeGuin, Ursula K., <i>The Word for World is Forest</i> (1972)
Chiang, Ted, “The Story of Your Life” (1998)	Smith, Ali, <i>Autumn</i> (2016)
Cole, Teju, <i>Open City</i> (2011)	Wells, H.G. <i>The War of the Worlds</i> (1898)
Hamid, Mohsin, <i>Exit West</i> (2017)	<i>Men in Black</i> (1997)
Henriquez, Cristina, <i>The Book of Unknown Americans</i> (2014)	<i>District 9</i> (2009)
	<i>Arrival</i> (2016)
Kalfus, Ken. <i>Equilateral</i> (2013)	<i>Black Mirror</i> , “Men Against Fire” (2016)

Assignments and Evaluation

Ongoing	Participation, in-class work – 10%
~Weekly	Semester Blog Assignments – 10%
2/27	Short Analysis Paper 1 (3-5 pgs) – 15%
3/20	Short Analysis Paper 2 (3-5 pgs) – 20 %
4/10	Informal Final Project Proposal – 5% (due in class)
4/17	Ongoing Media Portfolio (5-10 sources, annotated) + Presentation – 15%
4/28	Final Paper (6-8 pgs) / Creative Project with Cover Letter – 25%

Participation, in-class work

Discussion and communication with your peers is a crucial element of the course. You are therefore expected to come to class having done the readings, taken notes, and ready to participate. Being prepared for class and acting professionally in the classroom are both components of being present in class. Throughout the semester we will do informal in-class assignments that will figure into this portion of your overall grade.

Semester Blog Assignment

As a class, we will be using Sakai to create a class blog. Throughout the semester, you will be expected to post a brief response (250-500 words, or roughly one page, double spaced¹) to the week's readings and discussions. **Responses are due on Sakai by 11:59 pm the day before class** in order to facilitate class discussion. I will generally post a prompt for the first few weeks, but by about halfway through the semester, you should feel prepared and comfortable with an open-ended response to that week's texts. These short blog posts will be graded for completion; they are mostly a chance for you to informally play around with ideas, grapple with our course texts, and explore questions pertinent to our class while also crafting an academic/online persona. You can miss **3 posts** without penalty; extra credit will be given for students who complete all eight.

****For all of the other assignments, you will be provided with clear instructions and rubrics for assessment at the time they are assigned. ****

Course Policies and Day-to-Day Protocols

Absences and Class Conduct

This course only works as a collaborative one, where we all learn from each other. As such, I commit to coming to class daily, on time and prepared, and I expect the same of you. That said, I also understand that life happens. You are allowed three absences with no penalty and no questions asked. You are responsible for all of the material that was discussed and covered on days you miss. After you have missed three classes, each successive unexcused absence will lower your overall grade (on the fourth absence, an A will become a A-, with the fifth a B+, and so on). On the sixth absence, you will automatically fail the course.

In the case of an ongoing personal issue or an extended illness, please meet me during my office hours or contact me via email as soon as possible so we can formally come to an arrangement, along with your Academic Dean, on how best to ensure your academic success. Feel free to send STINFs, but they will count toward this maximum allotment.

¹ All page-counts refer to double-spaced, 12-point standard font, with one-inch margins, headers and footers.

Communication

Outside of class time, I will contact you via Duke email. I will generally try to respond to emails quickly, but don't expect emails or replies from me late at night or over the weekend. It is your responsibility to routinely check your email and the course's Sakai page to stay informed about the course. Beyond email, I highly encourage you to come to my office hours or set an appointment to meet with me when you have questions about assignments or the course in general. **Upload all assignments, unless otherwise noted, to Sakai by 11:59 pm on the date assigned, except blog posts, which are due the day before.**

Academic (Dis)honesty

It is expected that all students comply with the institutional policies present within Duke University. Part of this policy is the referral of students who violate the intellectual and academic integrity of this institution to the Office of Student Conduct (OSC). Plagiarism, or the intentional use of another person's work without giving appropriate credit, is a serious academic offense that will not be taken lightly. Other forms of academic dishonesty include: a.) cheating on a paper or project; b.) **failing to cite sources properly**; c.) downloading an essay from the internet; d.) paying/soliciting another person to write your essays; e.) turning in an assignment that was used for credit in another course; and f.) other similar cases that breach the Duke Community Standard. If it is determined that you committed any of the academic offenses listed above, you will fail the assignment and be reported to the appropriate academic authorities. If the act of academic dishonesty is serious, or if multiple acts are committed consecutively, you will not only be reported to the university, you might also face consequences such as an automatic failure in the course, and suspension or possible expulsion from the university. For more information on academic honesty, please visit the web address for the Duke Community Standard, especially the section on Academic Dishonesty:

<https://registrar.duke.edu/university-bulletins/duke-community-standard>

Respect and Open-mindedness

We will be discussing controversial and politically charged topics throughout the semester. I will do my part to build a classroom that approaches every topic in class with the high level of maturity, empathy, sensibility, rationality, and open-mindedness that is expected from a member of the Duke community, and I expect every student in our class to be a part of that. Part of tackling such important topics is learning to interrogate our automatic responses and why we think the way we think, but intentionally negative and damaging attitudes and judgments during the discussion of sensitive topics such as race, socioeconomic class, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, national origin, documentation status, age, disability, and political views will not be tolerated. If you are unable to approach controversial/charged topics, discussions, and language-use in a sensible and open-minded fashion that recognizes the value of your peers, then you are advised to un-enroll from the course.

Thompson Writing Studio

We will be workshopping many of your assignments in class, but you are also highly encouraged to visit the Thompson Writing Studio at least once during the semester to help with the course's written assignments.

Consultants work with writers during all stages of the writing process from understanding an assignment, to developing a thesis, to organizing a paper, to revising an advanced draft, to editing the final product. The tutors do not write or edit your papers for you. Rather, they help you develop effective and long-term rhetorical strategies for your written work. To learn more about the Thompson Writing Studio and schedule your session(s), see: <https://twp.duke.edu/twp-writing-studio>.

Accommodations

If you are a student with a disability, it's important you get the services you deserve. If you would like to request accommodations for this course, please register with Duke's Student Disability Access Office (<https://access.duke.edu/students/>). I can also help you navigate this process if you're unfamiliar with it, and you, I, and the SDAO will make any necessary arrangements together.

Course Schedule and Outline

** This schedule is subject to change and it may be amended during the semester. If and when changes do occur, they will be announced in class and shared online**

Aliens before “Aliens,” SciFi before SciFi,

	<u>Topics</u>	<u>What’s Due for Class</u>
W 1/15	H.G. Wells, <i>War of the Worlds</i> (41-134)	
F 1/17	<i>War of the Worlds</i> (135-191)	Blog Post #1
	Intro to Portfolio Assignment	
W 1/22	Ken Kalfus, <i>Equilateral</i> (1-108)	
F 1/24	<i>Equilateral</i> (109-207)	Blog Post #2
	Introduction to Strong Thesis Statements	

Alienation: SciFi and the US Southern Border

W 1/29	<i>Men in Black</i>	
F 1/31	Cristina Henríquez, <i>The Book of Unknown Americans</i> , (1-150)	Blog Post #3
W 2/5	<i>The Book of Unknown Americans</i> , (151-304)	
F 2/7	<i>The Book of Unknown Americans</i> / <i>Men in Black</i> revisited	Paper #1 Thesis Statements (in class)
	Thesis statement workshop	

“Foreign” Language Requirement

W 2/12	<i>Arrival</i>	Blog Post #4
F 2/14	<i>Arrival</i> , “Story of Your Life”	Short Paper #1 Draft (for in-class workshop)
	In-class workshop	

<u>M 2/17</u>		Short Paper #1 due on Sakai by 11:59 PM
W 2/19	LeGuin, Ursula K., <i>The Word for World is Forest</i> (1-100)	
F 2/21	<i>The Word for World is Forest</i> (101-192)	Blog Post #5

Alienation Pt II: Strangers in a Strange Land

W 2/26	<i>District 9</i>	
F 2/28	Teju Cole, <i>Open City</i> (1-129)	Blog Post #6
W 3/4	<i>Open City</i> (130-259)	
F 3/6	In-class workshop / Mid-Semester Check-in	Short Paper #2 Outline/Draft (for in class workshop)

Spring Break – No class

W 3/18	<i>Black Mirror</i> , “Men Against Fire”	Blog Post #7
F 3/20	No class	Short Paper #2 due by 11:59 pm on Sakai
W 3/25	Ali Smith, <i>Autumn</i> (1-143)	
F 3/27	<i>Autumn</i> (144-260)	Blog Post #8

World-Building

W 4/1	Butler, Octavia, “Bloodchild”	
F 4/3	No class – schedule End-of-Semester prep meeting with me (either during office hours or by appointment)	Bring a suggestion for an outside text to our meeting.
M 4/6		Rewrites Due 11:59 pm to Sakai
W 4/8	Mohsin Hamid, <i>Exit West</i> (1-118)	
F 4/10	<i>Exit West</i> (119-226)	Informal Final Proposal Due in class

Outer Space

W 4/15	Class Pick	
F 4/17	Portfolio Presentations	Final Ongoing Portfolio due to Sakai before class
W 4/22	Final Paper / Creative Project workshop Class Wrap-Up	Draft of Final Paper / Project (for in class workshop)

Tu 4/28 Final Paper / Project due to Sakai² by 11:59 pm

Questions / Notes:

² Or whatever is appropriate, given the format of a final creative project.