

IMAGINING FUTURES

ANTH 1016 – Fall 2019

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Instructor: **Willi Lempert**
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Classroom: Kanbar Hall 109
Class Time: Monday and Wednesday 6:30 – 7:55
Office Hours: Wednesday 3-5 in Adams 309

“You cannot have a future you do not first imagine.” - Gregory Benford

“The future isn’t what it used to be.” - Yogi Berra

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This first-year seminar course explores how, why, and for whom we imagine the future. It focuses on the future by contrasting alternative and marginalized futurist thought with dominant Western imaginaries, focusing most specifically on Indigenous science fiction and off-Earth exploration/settlement. We will engage with speculative writing and media, including Indigenous, Afro, Feminist, and Queer futurisms. We will also read popular and scholarly literature about futures, and the writing of cultural anthropologists to develop skills in analyzing visual and written texts and to reflect on “the future” as created by our individual and collective hopes, fears, and expectations. Over the semester we will draw upon selected film clips and media in order to better understand and relate the course material to our own frames of knowledge.

The First-Year Seminar Program is designed to help introduce you to what it means to undertake serious intellectual work at the college level. The seminars provide small class settings where students can develop college-level skills of critical thinking in reading and writing. Throughout the semester, we will emphasize the writing process in particular, focusing on drafting and revision.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS:

- Dillon, Grace. *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction*
- Messeri, Lisa. *Placing Outer Space: An Earthly Ethnography of Other Worlds*
- Other reading assignments and materials will be provided on Blackboard.

GRADING

Your grade for the course will be determined according to the following scale:

Paper 1: Indigenous Futurisms	15%
Paper 2: Alternative Futurisms	20%
Paper 3: Final Paper	30%
Writing Portfolio	20%
Participation (including leading class)	15%

A (93-100); A- (90-93)
B+ (87-90), B (83-87), B- (80-83)
C+ (77-80), C (73-77), C- (70-73)
D+ (67-70), D (63-67), D- (60-63)
F (below 60)

“**A**” level work reflects excellence in all areas. An “A” suggests that work is not only thought provoking and structurally polished, but that assignments are completed with a high level of stylistic and critical sophistication. “A” level work presents the reader with fresh and independent thinking, logical organization, and excellent control over mechanics and style.

“**B**” level work is very good, exploring difficult questions in a way that is creative, critical and thought provoking. “B” level work is critically and organizationally sound, is stylistically competent, and contains few errors.

“**C**” level work indicates that assignments are completed adequately, meeting minimum requirements. This grade indicates that the work is functional at a college level and that all aspects of the assignment have been addressed. However, the work may be hindered by a lack of sufficient critical inquiry, organizational clarity, and control over mechanics and style.

“**D**” level work is substandard at the college-level. It is usually completed in haste and reflects little thought or attention to detail. A “D” indicates that major portions of the assignment are completed poorly.

“**F**” level work is incomplete or inadequate. An “F” will also be given if plagiarism has occurred.

E-MAIL

In addition to handing out assignments in class, I will send out assignments, updates, and readings by e-mail or on Blackboard. Please check your e-mail account frequently. I do not always read/respond to e-mails during the weekends, or after work hours, so it is best to contact me from M-F between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM.

ATTENDANCE

If you miss more than three classes (unexcused), your grade will be reduced by one grade level for each additional day missed. If you are absent this much, you have missed a significant amount of the course material and it will be difficult for you to achieve the goals of this course. For example, if you have a B+ and miss five days, you will end up with a B- for the course. If you are absent, you are responsible for contacting a classmate for the information and assignments you missed.

If you foresee any attendance conflicts because of religious observance, please notify me during the first two weeks of the semester so that you and I can make suitable schedule accommodations. Religious observance will not be considered an absence so long as I know about it at the beginning of the semester. Any time you are absent, you are still responsible for any work due for that day.

DAILY QUESTIONS

Please come to class each day with one carefully constructed question based on the readings to hand to me at the start of class. This can be on a scrap of paper or printed out. The question should relate to what you found either most interesting or most confusing about one or more readings. You will receive full credit if you put in a good faith effort and cite a particular part of the reading in your question and in your citation in this format (NAME YEAR:PAGE). These will also be used to count your attendance, so make sure to write your name very legibly at the top.

WRITING PORTFOLIO

All short writing assignments will be part of your writing portfolio. For all of these assignments, you will receive full credit for fulfilling the assignment in good faith. You will lose points only if you have not completed the assignment as described. These are meant as “low stakes” writings in which you do not worry about grades, just practicing. These include daily questions.

PAPERS

We will be focused at least as much on the process of writing as the final product. Thus, we will draw on a variety of drafting processes, including peer-review in addition to my draft feedback. Every final paper will be turned in along with a writer’s note cover page in which you will reflect on the writing process. The first two papers will be 5-6 pages and due on Friday by 5pm printed in my office basket and through Blackboard. The final will be 8-10 pages and due through Blackboard.

LATE PAPERS

You will have three single-day extensions that you can use for any paper throughout the semester. To use them, simply email me this intention and I will then adjust this in my records. You do not have to let me know beforehand, but you need to email me when you use these for them to count. I highly recommend that you save at least one or two for the final paper.

Beyond these three single-day extensions, you will lose one full letter grade for each day the paper is late in the spirit of fairness and equity. Computer problems are not an acceptable excuse for a late paper. With the variety of resources on campus, you should have ample opportunity to complete your papers on time. Back up your work daily! In a pinch, email yourself.

REVISING ASSIGNMENTS

You may submit revised assignments for an improved grade. You will receive the average of the grades from the original and revised assignment. See me for more details.

OFFICE HOURS

During the first few weeks of class, you will be required to come and visit me during office hours. I encourage you to continue to do so throughout the semester.

PARTICIPATION

Participation includes (but is not limited to) providing quality written and oral feedback during peer reviews and workshops, asking intelligent and relevant questions during discussions and following presentations, and acting in the manner of a colleague (such as participating fully in all class exercises). This aspect of your grade reflects your mental attendance. In other words, those who are actively engaged in the course will succeed in this area.

LEADING DISCUSSION

For one day in the course you will be responsible for opening our discussion. This is not a summary, but rather, a consideration of the issues you think are most essential to help us engage at a deeper level. This should last only 10 minutes and there will be a strict limit of 15 minutes so that we have time in class to cover everything we need to. I highly encourage you to draw on an activity that you have found to be particularly useful in engaging course materials in the past. Take risks and draw on the activities you have found most useful and inspiring in your experience, including debates, drawing, acting, and anything that has fellow students stand up and/or move around. You will receive full credit if you put in a good faith effort and follow the time constraints.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

In general, I encourage challenging and critical interactions both with me and with your peers, with common courtesy and respect for others. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. I will honor and support your preference of name and gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

CELL PHONE AND LAPTOP POLICY

Cell phones are very distracting and their use is not permitted in this course. Violation of this policy will result in a lower grade for the course. You may bring laptops only on very few and specified days, when we are doing peer-review. Therefore, be prepared to handwrite your notes. Any use of social media or other inappropriate computer usage will result in the loss of participation points.

YOUR CONCERNS

Please consult with me should you have any question or concern about any aspect of our class together. I want you to have the most beneficial experience possible this semester. Please be assured that I always respect students for the courtesy of communicating with me directly.

****This document is subject to change. You will be notified of any updates and these will be reflected in updated syllabi on Blackboard.**

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1	Introductions
09/04	Overview Syllabus
Week 2	Definitions and Futurist Manifestos
09/09	Bell, What Do We Mean By Futures Studies? Russell, An Introduction to the Overton Window of Political Possibilities
09/11	O'Sullivan, The Great Nation of Futurity King Jr., I Have a Dream Marinetti, The Futurist Manifesto Saint-Point, The Manifesto of Futurist Women
Week 3	Indigenous Futurisms
09/16	Rieder, What is SF? Some Thoughts on Genre Dillon (Introduction, Custer on the Slipstream, Flight, Refugees)
09/18	Dillon (Midnight Robber, Distances, When the World is All on Fire, Star Waka)
Week 4	Native Sci-fi Film
09/23	Lempert, Navajos on Mars: Native Sci-fi Film Futures (blog post) Medak-Saltzman, Coming to You from the Indigenous Future: Native Women, Speculative Film Shorts, and the Art of the Possible
09/25	Lewis, TED Talk on "The Future Imaginary" (watch) Young, "Pity the Indians of Outer Space:" Native American Views of the Space Program
Week 5	Astronesians and Afronauts
09/30	Aotearoa futurism: Space Maori, Astronesians, and South Pacific Futurists Kuwada, We Live in the Future, Come Join us Aoteroa Futurism Podcast (listen to parts one and two)
10/02	Serpell, The Zambian 'Afronaut' Who Wanted to Join the Space Race ** Paper 1 Draft due in Class **
Week 6	Afrofuturisms
10/07	Yaszek, Afrofuturism, Science Fiction, and the History of the Future Womack, Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture (excerpt) La Ferla, Afrofuturism: The Next Generation
10/09	Butler, Bloodchild
10/11	** Paper 1 Final due by 5pm on Friday **

Week 7	Feminist Futurisms
10/14	NO CLASS - FALL BREAK
10/16	Haraway, A Cyborg Manifesto Re, Futurism and Feminism
Week 8	Feminist Sci-fi
10/21	Le Guin, The Wind's Twelve Quarters (selections) Scher, How Ursula Le Guin's Writing Was Shaped by Anthropology
10/23	Le Guin, The Wind's Twelve Quarters (selections) Walsh, I Am a Woman Writer; I Am a Western Writer: An Interview with Ursula Le Guin
Week 9	Queering Futurisms
10/28	Yekani et al., Introducing Queer Futures Goltz, It Gets Better: Queer Futures, Critical Frustrations, and Radical Potentials
10/30	Robertson, Gendering Humanoid Robots: Robo-Sexism in Japan
Week 10	Reimagining Outer Space
11/04	Valentine, Exit Strategy: Profit, Cosmology, and the Future of Humans in Space Oman-Reagan, Unmanning Space Language Mandelbaum, Decolonizing Mars: Are We Thinking About Space Exploration All Wrong?
11/06	Library Research Tutorial and Peer-Review (meet with laptops in the Library)
11/08	** Paper 2 Final Due by 5pm on Friday **
Week 11	Placing Outer Space
11/11	Start Messeri (through page 69)
11/13	Continue Messeri (70-110)
Week 12	Placing Outer Space cont'
11/18	GUEST SKYPE: Lisa Messeri Finish Messeri (111-196)
11/20	NO CLASS
Week 13	The Singularity
11/25	Kurzweil, The Singularity Is Near (selections)
11/27	THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 14 Artificial Intelligence and Cryptocurrency

- 12/02 Tegmark, Life 3.0 (Chapter 3)
 Universal Basic Income Pros and Cons (watch)
- 12/04 Ceraldi, Can Cryptocurrency Revolutionize the Rituals of Money?
 Zimmer, Bitcoin and Potosi Silver: Historical Perspectives on Cryptocurrency
 Popper, A Cryptocurrency Millionaire Wants to Build a Utopia in Nevada
 Bowles, Making a Crypto Utopia in Puerto Rico

Week 15 Virtual Reality

- 12/09 Biidaaban and Future Dreaming VR (watch in the previous week)
 Whittaker, The Centre
 Jackson, Interview
- 12/11 Peer-Review (with laptops)
 Mead, Our Open-Ended Future

**** Final Paper Due on Wednesday the 18th through Blackboard ****