

CES 260
Race and Racism in US Popular Culture
Spring Semester 2018
Monday/Wednesday/Friday: 10:10 AM to 11:00 AM
Todd Hall 220

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Course Description and Objective

CES 260 is a critical examination of the intersection of race and racism in the production of US Popular Culture. Specifically, this class will examine the genre of science fiction and how the genre's construction of the future intersects with the social construction of race. The genre can reinforce racial stereotypes, scientific racism, and racial domination as seen in the work of Edgar Rice Burroughs, H.G. Wells, and H.P. Lovecraft. However, the genre can also be used to critique racial stereotypes, societal injustice, and portray a future that redefines the social construction of race seen in the work of Gene Roddenberry and many more. Through critical exploration and discussion of readings, film screenings, lectures, and class discussion, students will learn to identify and practice analyzing verbally and in writing how the social construction of race impacts the genre of science fiction.

Course Learning Goals

- Identify and define the genre of science fiction while understanding its historical construction and evolution
- Identify and engage with the role of science fiction as a societal mirror to criticize societal inequality and ills while offering potential solutions
- Learn about how science fiction as a genre can be mobilized as a tool of social justice via the representation of people of color
- Recognize and summarize the impact and the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality as portrayed in the genre

Required Texts

There will be four required texts for this class

- Vivian Sobchack, *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film* (1997)
ISBN: 978-0813524924
- Isiah Lavender III, *Race in American Science Fiction* (2011)
ISBN: 978-0253222596
- Adilifu Nama, *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film* (2008)
ISBN: 978-0292717459
- Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* ISBN: 978-0446675505

All four books can be found in the Bookie for 82.65 without tax. However, I strongly recommend acquiring the books online due to the potential savings. I also recommend doing this since we will not be using the books until the end of Week 3. In choosing these books, I tried to find the right balance between price and usage. I will also be supplementing these books with readings through Blackboard **Having access to the books is essential to earning a good grade and actively participating in class.**

Assignments and Evaluation

Your grade will be calculated, using a 1000-point scale consisting of the following: 15% Participation/Attendance, 15% Q and Q's, 20% points of Literature Analysis, 25% points of Mid Term and 25% of Final Paper

Participation and Attendance (150 Points)

To fully participate in the class, you need to come to class prepared by doing the reading, doing the daily Q and Q and participate in class discussion. This does not mean come into class and talk gibberish to get points. I value the quality of the statement over the quantity of the statement. However, I also know that for some people, public speaking can be a terrifying experience. If you are reticent to talk in class and are having problems, make sure to come by during office hours. If you are having difficulties in relation to the class, see me as soon as possible.

Question and Quote (150 Points)

The Question and Quote (Q and Q) is a daily assignment that is due at the beginning of class. The assignment consists of three interlaced parts centered around the reading for that day. The first is an open-ended question that you have about the reading. *Some guidelines for the question: it cannot be a yes/no question, it cannot be easily answered by the reading and it cannot be a rhetorical question.* The second and third part of the assignment is a quote that you found interesting and your comment about said quote. Your comment must tie back to the reading itself. The Q and Q will be double spaced with 12-point Times New Roman font and around one full page. **The Q and Q itself will be a hard copy turned into class daily.** The Q and Q serves two purposes: to provoke class discussion **and to measure attendance.** *If there are multiple readings for a day, choose ONE reading only.*

Literature Analysis (200 Points)

The genre of science fiction has been adapted to every media format known to man ranging from literature to virtual reality. However, the genre got its start in literature and it is in literature that some of the greatest purveyors of science fiction contributed to the genre. For this assignment, you will be analyzing science fiction novels and how their portrayals of race are themselves reflections of the social construction of race at the time of publication.

How then does the portrayal of race in these novels either reinforce or critique societal constructions of race? *This assignment itself is broken into **two** one-hundred point papers with the first one focusing on a specific period (1880-2000) and the second one on Octavia Butler's Parable of the Sower. Each paper will be double spaced with 12-point Times New Roman font with 1 inch margins and 4-5 pages long.* **All assignments will use Chicago style footnotes. The use of MLA will result in a deduction of points.** Use two sources from class and two outside

academic sources for each paper. For the first paper, I will be supplying a list of novels in class and you will be able to choose which one you want. There will be no duplicates.

Mid-Term (Television Analysis) (250 Points)

The mid-term for this class will consist of a close reading of a science fiction television show. Although literature is where science fiction was created, it is in a visual medium where science-fiction reaches its peak as a tool to critique racism and racial domination. Television shows like *Star Trek*, *The Twilight Zone*, *The Outer Limits*, *V* and others used the visual medium to critique racial segregation, discrimination, and domination and in some cases creating a world where racism is a thing of the past.

For this assignment, you will choose in consultation with me during office hours, a science fiction television show to write on. *Depending on the length of the show, you will either choose one 1 hour episodes or two 30 minute episodes and analyze how the metaphor of race is represented in a visual medium. The mid-term will be double spaced with 12-point font Times New Roman font with 1 inch margins and six to seven pages long. You will use three sources from class and three outside academic sources for your analysis.*

Final Paper (Film Analysis) (250 Points)

See attached prompt on back of syllabus for information

Grading Scale:

1000-930 A	869-830 B	769-730 C	669-600 D
929-900 A-	829-800 B-	729-700 C-	599-000 F
899-870 B+	799-770 C+	699-670 D+	

Course Policies

- 1. Attendance:** Attendance is essential for this class as you need to attend to participate and to understand the readings. I will not be taking roll as this is a college class. Everyone will receive **three** (3) free absences for the semester. Students are advised to use these for emergencies such as illness, family obligations, and other personal obligations. *Since attendance and participation are joined at the hip after three absences, I will start docking 20 points from participation per absence. Your attendance score is directly tied to the daily Q and Q.*
- 2. Technology:** All electronic devices must be turned off and stowed away when in class. This means all cellphones, tablets, and MP3 players. By stowed away, I mean gone from your immediate person and put in a backpack, purse or knapsack. **There is no reason for you to have a cell phone out in this class.** If I see that you have a cell phone out, I will first ask you to put away and if I see it again, I will ask you to leave the class. *Laptop computers are okay if you sit in the front row.*
- 3. Discussions and Assignments:** While disagreement and difference in opinion is to be expected. I expect that all discussion in the class will be conducted in a cordial manner. I will not tolerate any bigotry or verbal harassment in the classroom. I reserve the right to

ask you to leave if I interpret either of the two occurring. Q and Q's must be turned in as hard copies at the end of class. **No exceptions.** For the literature analysis, mid-term and final paper, those will be turned in via Blackboard. **I do not accept late assignments under any circumstance.** *For the literature analysis, mid-term and final paper, I will accept drafts for my feedback up until two days before the due date.*

4. **Contact:** Out of the three ways I have listed on this syllabus, office hours is the best way to get in contact with me, followed by e-mail and then phone. If you e-mail me between the hours of 8 AM to 5 PM Monday through Friday, I will try my best to get back to you as soon as possible. However, if you e-mail me after those times, I might take a while. If you have any questions or concerns that cannot fit in an e-mail, please come to office hours. I know that it can be intimidating but I do not bite and I enjoy talking to students.
5. **Disability Accommodations: Students with Disabilities:** Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please either visit or call the Access Center (Washington Building 217; 509-335-3417) to schedule an appointment with an Access Advisor. All accommodations **MUST** be approved through the Access Center.
6. **Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is the cornerstone of higher education. As such, all members of the university community share responsibility for maintaining and promoting the principles of integrity in all activities, including academic integrity and honest scholarship. Academic integrity will be strongly enforced in this course. Students who violate WSU's Academic Integrity Policy (identified in Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 504-26-010(3) and -404) will receive a failing grade for the course, will not have the option to withdraw from the course pending an appeal, and will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration as defined in the Standards of Conduct for Students, WAC 504-26-010(3). If you have any questions about what is and is not allowed in this course, you should ask course instructors before proceeding. If you wish to appeal a faculty member's decision relating to academic integrity, please use the form available at conduct.wsu.edu.”
7. **Campus Safety Information:** Classroom and campus safety are of paramount importance at Washington State University, and are the shared responsibility of the entire campus population. WSU urges students to follow the “Alert, Assess, Act,” protocol for all types of emergencies and the “Run, Hide, Fight” response for an active shooter incident. Remain ALERT (through direct observation or emergency notification), ASSESS your specific situation, and ACT in the most appropriate way to assure your own safety (and the safety of others if you are able). Please sign up for emergency alerts on your account at MyWSU. For more information on this subject, campus safety, and related topics, please view the FBI's Run, Hide, Fight video and visit the WSU safety portal.”
8. **About Grammar and Writing:** You are in college, which means that at this point in your academic career, you must be able to communicate coherently and effectively. In

order to do that, you must be able to demonstrate a certain level of technical ability in your writing. With that in mind, here are a few goofs that will make you lose points in the written work assigned for this class:

- ✓ Calling authors by their first name. Always use their full name or their last name, and **never** their first name alone.
- ✓ Misuse of the following words:
 - affect/effect
 - dominate/dominant
 - for/four
 - its/it's
 - quite/quiet
 - there/they're/their
 - then/than
 - to/too/two
 - weather/whether
 - woman/women
 - your/you're
- ✓ Made up words like irregardless (it's irrespective or regardless) or supposedly (it's supposedly); misspelled words like ethnicities (spelled ethnicities) or priviledge (spelled privilege); and incongruent pairing of words like "should of" (it's should've or should have).
- ✓ Each one of these offenses (or offenses like them) will make you lose 3 points every time they appear in your work.

9. Terminology

- a. Not "colored" people/persons but "people of color"
- b. Not "the white man" but "white men" or "white males"
- c. The use of either terms in your writing or in class discussion will result in a deduction of 3 points.

Tentative Schedule

Come to class prepared by doing the reading for that day. I reserve the right to change the syllabus and I will announce that in advance

Week 1: Science Fiction and Science Fact

M 1/8: Introduction to the class and brief overview of the class

W 1/10: "Introduction: reading science fiction" on Blackboard from *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*

F 1/12: "Science Fiction before the genre" on Blackboard from *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*

Week 2: Pulp Fiction: Science Fiction and the Pulp Magazines

M 1/15: Martin Luther King Jr Day (UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY)

W 1/17: "The magazine era: 1926 to 1960" from *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* and "Extravagant Fiction Today: Cold Fact Tomorrow" from *The Creation of Tomorrow: Fifty Years of Magazine Science Fiction* on Blackboard

F 1/19: "The Darwinist Frontier" and "The Yellow Peril" from *Savage Perils* by Patrick Sharp on Blackboard

Week 3: New Wave to Today: From Literature to Beyond

M 1/22: "New Wave and backwash: 1960-1980" on Blackboard from *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* on Blackboard

W 1/24: "Science fiction from 1980 to the present" on Blackboard from *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* on Blackboard

F 1/26: The Limits of the Genre: Definitions and Themes in *Screening Space*

Week 4: A Future for Whom? Race, Gender and Sexuality in Science Fiction

M 1/29: Racing Science Fiction in *Race in American Science Fiction*

Office Hours for Mid-Term

W 1/31: Structured Absence and Token Presence in *Black Space*

Office Hours for Mid-Term

F 2/2: "Dis-(Orient)ation: Race, Technoscience and *Windup Girl* in *Black and Brown Planets* on Blackboard

Week 5: Wrath of Khan: Eugenics, Sterilization and Contamination in Science Fiction

M 2/5: Bad Blood: Fear of Racial Contamination in *Black Space*

W 2/7: "Alas, All Thinking! The Future of Human Evolution in *The Creation of Tomorrow* on Blackboard

F 2/9: Ailments of Race in *Race in American Science Fiction*

First Textual Analysis Due

Week 6: Wagon Train to the Stars: Race, Racism and Tokenism in *Star Trek*

M 2/12: Space Race Woman: Lieutenant Uhura beyond the Bridge in *Speculative Blackness* on Blackboard

W 2/14: "Popular Imagination and Identity Politics: Reading the Future in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* on Blackboard

F 2/16: The Golden Ghetto and the Glittering Parentheses: The Once and Future Benjamin Sisko in *Speculative Blackness* on Blackboard

Film Screening: *Far Beyond the Stars*

Week 7: It's Full of Stars: The Look of Science Fiction

M 2/19: Presidents Day (UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY)

W 2/21: Images of Wonder (64 to 100) in *Screening Space*

F 2/23: Images of Wonder (100 to 146) in *Screening Space*

Week 8: 20,000 Metaphors Under the Sea: Racial Allegories in Science Fiction

M 2/26: Meta-slavery in *Race in American Science Fiction*

W 2/28: Conquering New Frontiers: Burroughs, London, and the Race Wars of the Future from *Savage Perils* on Blackboard

F 3/2: White Narratives, Black Allegories in *Black Space* and “By the Waters of Babylon, Our Barbarous Descendants in *The Creation of Tomorrow* on Blackboard

Mid-Term Paper Due

Week 9: Zonbi to Zombie: Erasure of Race in Science Fiction Horror

M 3/5: “Slaves, Cannibals, and Infected Hyper-Whites: The Race and Religion of Zombies,” on Blackboard

W 3/7: “From Cannibal to Zombie and Back Again,” on Blackboard

Film Screening: *Night of the Living Dead*

F 3/9: “The Importance of Neglected Intersections: Race and Gender in Contemporary Zombie Texts and Theories” on Blackboard

Film Screening: *Night of the Living Dead* (Continued)

Week 10: **SPRING BREAK NO CLASS**

Week 11: It’s the End of the World and I Feel Fine: Race and the Post-Apocalyptic Genre

M 3/19: “Survival and Self Help: Civil Defense, White Suburbia, and the Rise of the Nuclear Frontier” in *Savage Perils* and “Surviving Armageddon: Beyond the Imagination of Disaster” on Blackboard

One Page Abstract Due for Final Paper

W 3/21: “The Color of Ground Zero: Civil Defense, Segregation, and Savagery on the Nuclear Frontier”

F 3/23: “Beyond Mad Max III: Rice, Empire and Heroism on Post-Apocalyptic Terrain.” On Blackboard

Week 12: Hey Now What’s That Sound? Sound and Science Fiction

M 3/26: The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo (146-171)

W 3/28: The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo (172- 197)

F 3/30: The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo (198- 223)

Second Textual Analysis Due

Week 13: You Got your Western in My Science Fiction: Construction of Subgenres

M 4/2: “Never Final Frontiers” and “Beyond Alaska” from *Frontiers Past and Future* on Blackboard

W 4/4: “The End of History” and “Beginnings and Endings” from *Future West* on Blackboard

F 4/6: “Information Everywhere” and “On the Urban Edge” from *Frontiers Past and Future* on Blackboard

Week 14: More Than Human: Replicants, Androids and Human Enhancement

M 4/9: Ethnoscapes in *Race in American Science Fiction*

W 4/11: “White and “Black” versus Yellow: Metaphor and *Blade Runner’s* Racial Politics” on Blackboard

F 4/13: Technologically Derived Ethnicities in *Race in American Science Fiction* and “Biology” in *Plagues, Apocalypses and Bug Eyed Monsters* on Blackboard

Week 15: The Beginning of the End is the Beginning: The Future and End of Science Fiction

M 4/16: Science Fictioning Race in *Race in American Science Fiction*

W 4/18: Subverting the Genre: The Mothership Connection” in *Black Space*

F 4/20: *Screening Space* (272-305)

Week 16: Dead Week/Writing Week

M 4/23 NO CLASS

W 4/25 NO CLASS

F 4/27 NO CLASS

Final Paper for CES 260
Due May 4th at 10 AM on Blackboard

The genre of science fiction has infected every media format ranging from literature to virtual reality. However, no media format has embraced the spectacle of science fiction like cinema. Starting with *A Trip to the Moon*, science fiction cinema has created spectacle after spectacle as new universes, species, and technologies create a feeling of wonder in the audience. However, these new universes and worlds are created with the same unconscious biases that serve as the foundation for racial segregation, discrimination and domination.

Throughout the semester, we have touched upon the relationship between race and racism and the genre of science fiction. This paper will serve as your own analysis and investigation into science fiction cinema and into topics that you personally find interesting and that we have discussed in class. On March 19th, I want you to come into class with a one page typed out abstract of your proposed topic along with a preliminary biography. I will return these the next class session with my feedback.

- The paper will be 8 to 10 pages long, 12 pt. Times New Roman font with 1 inch margins along with Chicago Style footnotes
- For your analysis, choose one science fiction film to center your analysis. (More than one film can be approved via instructor's discretion)
- Use three sources from class along with four outside academic sources to ground your analysis
 - Wikipedia, blogposts, random websites, newspapers, lectures from class etc. are not acceptable sources
 - If you have any question on what constitutes an outside academic source, contact me via office hours or e-mail
- This paper will serve as the culmination of this class; therefore, I expect a well written analysis with a strong thesis statement, perfect citations and little to no grammatical or spelling errors.
- Other than these guidelines, the paper topic is up to you to find and research. I personally cannot wait to see what you research and write and may the fourth be with you.