

# DAN TRIPP ONLINE

My Teaching: English 175

Department of English, West Virginia University

## "Final, and Not So Final, Frontiers" English 175, Science Fiction & Fantasy

Instructor: Daniel Tripp  
English 175, Spring 2001  
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### Overview:

Often maligned as mere "pulp" fiction, the diverse and nebulous genre of Science Fiction and Fantasy has recently begun to gain critical attention, especially now that older visions of "Tomorrow-land" have finally begun to resemble our "Today." This class will treat Science Fiction and Fantasy as an ungainly literary genre which allows us to project our hopes and fears onto alien, and not so alien, cultures and worlds, often for the purpose of exploring and exposing anxieties and attitudes about our past, present, and future. Since this is an introductory class, we will, of course, survey a large sampling of texts and cover a number of important questions related to the genre, such as:

- What is Science Fiction? What is Fantasy? What are the differences between them?
- What is a sword and sorcery tale? What is a space opera?
- What do terms like "The Golden Age," "The New Wave," & "Cyberpunk" mean?

We will also, however, be dealing with some of the more compelling themes raised by the intelligent and imaginative texts which make up the Science Fiction and Fantasy canon. Through close readings, classroom discussion, exams, and quizzes, we will engage such questions as:

- How do science and technology affect ourselves and our world?
- What does it mean to be human?
- What do we see when we look at our culture and ourselves from alternative, even, alien perspectives?
- What can we learn about our culture from its dreams of space exploration, its nightmares about technology, its visions of alien invasions, etc?

### Required Texts:

Atwood, Margaret. [The Handmaid's Tale](#).  
Bradbury, Ray. [The Martian Chronicles](#).  
Burroughs, Edgar Rice. [A Princess of Mars](#).  
Butler, Octavia. [Dawn](#).  
Dick, Philip K. [Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep](#).  
Gibson, William. [Neuromancer](#).  
Moorcock, Michael. [Elric of Melniboné](#).  
Tolkien, J.R.R. [The Hobbit](#).

We will also be reading a number of other authors--Asimov, Heinlein, Le Guin, Russ, etc--whose work I'll supply in the form of handouts.

### Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. If a situation arises which will cause excessive absences, you might want to consider dropping the class and taking it again at a later date.

#### **Late Work:**

I do not accept late work. Your work is due in class on the given day. If I do not have your assignment when I leave class, you will not receive credit for it. Moreover, if you miss a pop-quiz, you will not be allowed to make it up. If an emergency arises, you must contact me ahead of time to be granted an extension. I reserve the right, however, to deny extensions.

#### **Participation:**

The quality of this class rests largely on your participation. I ask that you come to class prepared; completing all reading assignments will help you to participate actively in class discussions. If you have any problems with an assignment, I'll be glad to answer your questions either during my office hours or by email.

#### **Writing Assignments:**

Each writing component is designed to help you engage the materials of the course and to promote critical thinking, reading, and writing. You will be expected to write a mid-term exam and a 7-10 page research paper, and you will be given twelve pop-quizzes, ten of which will count toward your final grade.

#### **Grading:**

Mid-Term Exam 20%  
Research Paper (including prospectus, etc) 40%  
Ten out of Twelve pop-quizzes ( @ 3 pts each) 30%  
Participation 10%  
100 pts

Final grades will be awarded according to the following measures:

A+ (97-100) A (93-96.99) A- (90-92.99)  
B+ (87-89.99) B (83-86.99) B- (80-82.99)  
C+ (77-79.99) C (73-76.99) C- (70-72.99)  
D+ (67-69.99) D (63-66.99) D- (60-62.99)  
F (below 60)

I encourage you to keep a record of your grades as the semester progresses.

#### **Honor Code:**

Please familiarize yourself with the University's policies on academic dishonesty. Plagiarism and any other form of cheating will be punished, at the instructor's discretion, with either an unforgivable F or a failing grade for the course. If you have any questions or concerns about proper citation, please consult me in advance. Retain notes, copies of resource materials, drafts, and any other relevant materials for writing assignments. You may be required to submit these on request.

It is assumed that you are familiar with standard written English, and that all written work will illustrate college-level proficiency with respect to writing mechanics--grammar, punctuation, syntax, and so on. If you have trouble with these issues, consult a grammar handbook (Diana Hacker's [A Pocket Style Manual](#), for example), a grammar website (check out some of the sites listed on my course resource page), or the WVU Writing Center (in Stansbury Hall).

#### **Learning Environment:**

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I support that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. WVU does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, or national origin. Any suggestions concerning ways to further a positive and open environment in this class will be welcomed.

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