

ANTHROPOLOGY AND ALIENS
Anthropology 119 – University of Oregon
Spring 2019

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Course Description

This class explores how anthropology and science fiction (or, more broadly, speculative fiction) have been linked together historically as each explores ideas about culture and society. Thematic questions addressed in the class include: What is an alien? What is “the human”? Could science fiction be possible without anthropology? The class investigates this convergence of interest through the analysis of science fiction in print, film, television etc. In addition, using science fiction, we will explore how fundamental concepts in anthropology such as linguistic and cultural relativism, national and cultural identity, class, the ethics of first contact; gender, marriage, and kinship; law, morality; religion; race and embodiment; politics, violence, and war; medicine, healing, and consciousness; and the environment have entered into the ways in which we routinely think about the possibility of extraterrestrial life and the way in which we think about culture on our own planet.

Course Logistics

Course Texts: Please purchase the following books:

- LeGuin, Ursula K. *The Word for World is Forest*. (Any edition.)
- Butler, Octavia. *Dawn*. (Any edition.)

Other readings will be available on Canvas as PDFs.

You will be expected to view selected clips, television programs, and feature films. When possible, links on Canvas will be provided to access this content, but some are available through subscriptions services such as Netflix, Google Play, YouTube, iTunes, Vudu, and Hulu. When a film is not available on Canvas, you will be expected to check it out from a library, watch it through a streaming service you already subscribe to, or rent it from a streaming service. If cost is a barrier to accessing a film, please contact the instructor well in advance of the deadline.

Social Science Requirement: This course satisfies a General Education group requirement in the social sciences. The course is based on joining perspectives from anthropology, history, and speculative fiction to understand core insights of cultural anthropology, discuss themes of exploration, progress, cultural encounters, social organization and stratification, and human enhancement in science fiction and ethnographic narratives, apply an anthropological analysis to a science fiction text, and conceptualize the relationship between social science theory and the processes by which we come to understand the world around us.

Course Format: This online course is asynchronous, meaning that there are no coordinated course audio/video meetings. Instead, course materials, explanations of activities and expectations, and deadlines are available on Canvas and in this syllabus. Success in the course requires internal motivation, personal organization, and individual responsibility to complete course activities on time and in a high-quality manner. In this course you are expected to take an active role in your learning. *Look ahead in the course calendar to anticipate course activities and due dates.* Credit will not be given for work completed after it is due, except for rare exceptions. An example would be a documented medical issue. Be in touch *well before a due date* with any situation regarding the timely completion of course activities—not in the hours just prior, much less after the fact. The instructor and GE are available to answer questions and will be involved with your learning by evaluating your work as the course progresses. But to maximize your learning experience, and to earn a passing grade, you are expected to actively engage the course material and complete activities *before* deadlines.

Communication: The instructor and GE are available to facilitate your learning, provide guidance, and give timely feedback. For general questions about the course, please consult the syllabus and Canvas first. Email us to be in touch for other matters.

- Please put “Anth 119” in the subject line of your email messages.
- Please include the following salutation in your emails: “Dear Jonathan” or “Dear Tobin.” Especially given the fact that you may not have met us in person, this convention for email communication reflects a more respectful tone for our interaction than “Hey” or simply no salutation at all. Feel free to let us, Jonathan and Tobin, know if you have a preferred way to be addressed. Otherwise, we will respond with the name you use for your signoff on any email messages or use your first name.
- During the work week (Monday-Friday), generally expect a response to emails within 48 hours.
- Please check your email and the announcements on Canvas regularly, as they will be used to communicate general course information.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Identify, explain and apply basic concepts in Anthropology
 - Linguistic and cultural relativism
 - Cultural identity and diversity
- Evaluate the history of science fiction in relation to social theory
 - Science fiction before the 19th century
 - Science fiction during and after the industrial revolution, the space age etc.
- Demonstrate the way the science fiction and anthropology have approached and influenced each other
 - Archaeological impacts
 - Cultural anthropological impacts
 - Folkloric impacts

- Identify, explain, and critically analyze the role of science fiction and anthropology in community relations, identity formation, and conflict negotiation for diverse groups of people in the United States and globally.

Course Requirements

❖ **Discussion Thread Participation (Four Posts and eight Responses to classmates' posts) (4 Posts x 3%; 8 Responses x 1% = 20%):**

You get the most out of learning when you make connections between new ideas, past learning, and life experiences. Interactions with classmates help prompt these connections. Discussion posts are an opportunity for you to think through the main ideas in the readings and other course materials, make a meaningful contribution to class discussion, and demonstrate your own understanding of concepts—for which your posts will be evaluated.

Your posts should be between 250 and 350 words, clear, and well organized. There are four total for the course. Each post will be assessed according to 1) clarity, following instructions, and careful organization (1%); 2) providing an insight or interesting angle on an idea (1%); and 3) applying arguments, concepts, or analysis from (and explicitly mentioning) course readings (1%).

Each response post should be between 150 and 250 words. You will make one response to each of two different classmates during Weeks 2, 4, 7, 9—eight total for the course. Each response post will be evaluated for 1) clarity and careful organization (.5%) and 2) adding to a classmate's post in order to reveal an additional insight or complementary idea (.5%). Argument, debate, and confrontation are not the goal. The constraints of this written format make it less than ideal for an exhaustive or extensive back-and-forth. Instead, this is a space to reflect on how a classmate's post made you think differently or discover a new way of looking at something and to add to that idea. (See "Instructor Statement on Acceptable Communication" below.)

❖ **Quizzes (2 quizzes x 10% = 20% total):**

A quiz will be administered during Weeks 3 and 7. Quizzes will consist of 25-30 multiple choice and true/false questions and you will have 45 minutes to complete each Quiz. You are permitted to use course readings and notes while taking Quizzes. You are expected to abide by University Academic Honesty and Integrity Standards and U.S. Copyright Law. Under no circumstances may you copy or distribute any part of the Quizzes or Short Essays. Quizzes and Short Essays are to be your own work. You may not discuss Quiz or Short Essay questions with other students. Violation of these conditions will be considered academic misconduct. Quizzes and Short Essays are designed as a tool to evaluate your knowledge of the content. Quizzes and Short Essays may cover ANY and ALL concepts or information from readings, lectures, videos, or other course content.

❖ **Short Essays (One Mid-term Essay and One Final Essay) (2 x 30% = 60% total):**

Short Essays will be due at the end of Weeks 5 and 10. Short Essays are another opportunity to demonstrate your grasp of the central arguments of readings and to critically analyze their implications.

Your Short Essays should be between 600 and 750 words, clear, and well organized (not a stream of consciousness). You must draw on at least four different authors. You may use more. You will be instructed on how to cite the authors within the text of the Short Essay prompts/questions that you will be given.

Please structure your Short Essay with an introductory paragraph, a body of four or five paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. Your citations should be in the body of your essay. Listing references cited at the end is not necessary. Further instructions for how to cite will be given with the Short Essay prompts/questions.

Your Short Essays will be evaluated for: 1) following directions (5%); 2) carefully and logically organizing your ideas (5%); 3) writing incisively by crafting information-dense sentences and paragraphs and making precise word choices (5%); 4) and providing engaged and insightful analysis wherein you thoughtfully consider and analyze course concepts and themes (15%).

Accommodations

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your participation, please notify me, the instructor, as soon as possible. You are also welcome to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at (541) 346-1155 or uoac@uoregon.edu. If you are not a student with a documented disability through Disability Services, but you would like for me to know about class issues that will impact your ability to learn, I encourage you to contact me so that we can strategize how you can get the most out of this course.

Inclusion Statement

The University of Oregon affirms and actively promotes the right of all individuals to equal opportunity in education and employment. It is the policy of the university to maintain an environment free of harassment and discrimination against any person because of age, race, color, ancestry, national or ethnic origin, religion, gender, disability, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), the use of leave protected by state or federal law, veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, perceived gender, marital or family status, pregnancy-related conditions, or genetic information. Staff members of the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity are available to answer any questions about university policy regarding harassment and discrimination and to assist members of the university community who believe they may have been treated in a manner inconsistent with this university policy. You are welcome to contact the AAEO at 677 East 12th Ave., Suite 452, or 24 hours a day at (541) 346-3123.

Academic Integrity

The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic

misconduct, it is the students' obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism.

Instructor Statement on Acceptable Communication

Acceptable interactions within our digital classroom should promote a supportive, collaborative, and non-threatening environment. This includes on Discussions threads, via email, or through any other communications. Discussion posts are a way to foster the peer-to-peer sharing of ideas and experiences and to democratize learning. Learning is far from a linear process, but instead is chaotic and occurs in fits and starts. We have a lot to learn from each other. This is a constructivist classroom, meaning that the instructor and GE seek to facilitate learning by helping you make connections between your ideas, your experiences, and your values. Community collaboration—primarily through Discussion Posts and Discussion Responses—is key to this process.

Community learning is challenging. We will not always agree. But openness to an anthropological approach, which greatly values the experiences people have in their everyday lives, will certainly provide a way for us to communicate respectfully and to value one another's humanity above all else. The University of Oregon's free speech policy reads, in part: "As a public institution, the University will sustain a higher and more open standard for freedom of inquiry and free speech than may be expected or preferred in private settings... Free inquiry and free speech are the cornerstones of an academic institution committed to the creation and transfer of knowledge." It goes on to say, however, that "It is the responsibility of speakers, listeners and all members of our community to respect others and to promote a culture of mutual inquiry." In other words, we enjoy the freedom to speak, but share the critical obligation to do so in a way that is thoughtful, responsible, and considerate.

The following are some guidelines for our communication (on Discussion threads and elsewhere):

- Be constructive. Share ideas, thoughts, and analyses that are thought provoking, yet sensitive to others. When responding to others, express appreciation of their insights; and add to, complement, and extend their ideas.
- Be considerate. Discussions are for analyzing concepts, not the character of the people who express them. Take responsibility for supporting others' learning and for making them feel heard and accepted.
- Be respectful. A denigrating or dismissive tone and personal attacks will be considered a classroom disruption.

The instructor and GE will monitor Discussion threads. Expect to hear from us if we believe that the community guidelines on acceptable communication are being infringed.

Access UO free speech policy and further information at:

<https://policies.uoregon.edu/policy/by/1/01-administration-and-governance/freedom-inquiry-and-free-speech>

Grading

A+	=97-100%	A	=93-96.9%	A-	=90-92.9%
B+	=87-89.9%	B	=83-86.9%	B-	=80-82.9%
C+	=77-79.9%	C	=73-76.9%	C-	=70-72.9%
D+	=67-69.9%	D	=63-66.9%	D-	=60-62.9%
F=	<59.9%				

Levels of performance:

(A) Outstanding performance relative to course requirements. Demonstrates mastery of course content at the highest level.

(B) Performance that is significantly above course requirements. Demonstrates mastery of course content at a high level.

(C) Performance that meets course requirements in every respect. Demonstrates adequate understanding of course content.

(D) Performance that is at a minimum level to pass but does not fully meet requirements in all aspects; demonstrates a marginal understanding of course content.

(F) Performance that does not meet requirements, for whatever reason. Demonstrates an inadequate understanding of course content.

Contesting a Grade

If you believe that your final grade does not reflect your work in the course, there is a two-step process by which you may contest your grade:

- 1) Arrange a meeting with your instructor to discuss the issue. This does not mean that the grade will change, but it is an opportunity to understand in greater detail the assessments made of your work.
- 2) If you are unsatisfied after meeting with the instructor, you may contact the Anthropology Chair, Frances White. She will request the details of your grievance. She will contact the instructor to set up a meeting between herself and the instructor. She and the instructor will go over the details of your grade, and, if an amendment is deemed justified, make a grade change.

Course Topics, Calendar, Readings, and Activities

Introducing Anthropology and Science Fiction

Week 1: Apr 1-5 – COMPLETE by 1159pm on April 5, 2019

- BEGIN by READING COURSE SYLLABUS
- Watch
 - Week 1 Lecture (Slides 1-17 only)
- Readings
 - Slusser and Rabkin – Aliens, Introduction
 - Stover – Anthropology and Science Fiction
 - Roberts – Science Fiction – Ch 1
 - Lafferty – Polity and Custom
 - Lafferty – Primary Education
- Post
 - Introduce yourself (not required to respond to classmates)
 - Discussion 1 (you will respond to two classmates' posts during Week 2)

Linguistic Anthropology and Science Fiction

Week 2: Apr 6-12 – COMPLETE by 1159pm on Apr 12, 2019

- Watch
 - Week 2 Lecture (Slides 17-33 only)
- Readings
 - Boas – Ch 1, The Aims of Anthropological Research
 - Sapir – Ch 22, The Unconscious Patterning of Behavior in Society
 - Hoijer – The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis
 - Vance – The Moon Moth
- Post
 - Respond to two classmates' Discussion 1

Vance

Week 3: Apr 13-19 – COMPLETE by 1159pm on Apr 19, 2019

- Watch
 - Film – *Soylent Green*
- Readings
 - Vance – Languages of Pao (entire book)
- Post
 - Discussion 2
- Quiz 1

Anthropology, Race, and Class in Science Fiction: I

Week 4: Apr 20-Apr 26 – COMPLETE by 1159pm on Apr 26, 2019

- Watch
 - Week 4 Lecture

- Film – *Outland*
- Readings
 - Roberts – SF and Race
 - Nama – Humans Unite!
- Post
 - Respond to two classmates' Discussion 2

Anthropology, Race, and Class in Science Fiction: II

Week 5: Apr 27-May 3 – COMPLETE by 1159pm on May 3, 2019

- Watch
 - Film – *Enemy Mine*
- Readings
 - Nama – Structured Absence and Token Presence
 - Delany – Racism and Science Fiction
- Mid-Term Essay

The Indigenous Alien and Colonialism: I

Week 6: May 4-May 10 – COMPLETE by 1159pm on May 10, 2019

- Watch
 - Week 6 Lecture
 - Film – *District 9*
- Reading
 - Rieder – Introduction: The Colonial Gaze and the Frame of Science Fiction
 - Attebery – Aboriginality in Science Fiction
 - LeGuin – *The Word for World is Forest* (begin reading)
- Post
 - Discussion 3

The Indigenous Alien and Colonialism: II

Week 7: May 11-May 17 – COMPLETE by 1159pm on May 17, 2019

- Watch
 - Film – *Avatar*
- Readings
 - Adamson – Indigenous Literatures, Multinaturalism, and *Avatar*
 - Rieder – Race and Revenge Fantasies in *Avatar*
 - LeGuin – *The Word for World is Forest* (finish reading)
- Slide Presentation
 - Pirates in Historical Perspective
- Discussion
 - Respond to two classmates' Discussion Post 3
- Quiz 2

Gender, Sexuality, and What is Human: I

Week 8: May 18-May 24 – COMPLETE by 1159pm on May 24, 2019

- Watch
 - Week 8 Lecture
 - Film – *Alien*
- Readings
 - Roberts – SF and Gender
 - Kavanagh – Feminism, Humanism, and Science in *Alien*
 - Butler – *Dawn* (begin reading)
- Discussion
 - Discussion Post 4

Gender, Sexuality, and What is Human: II

Week 9: May 25-May 31 – COMPLETE by 1159pm on May 31, 2019

- Watch
 - Film – *Blade Runner*
- Readings
 - Newton – Feminism and Anxiety in *Alien*
 - Butler – *Dawn* (finish reading)
- Discussion
 - Respond to two classmates' Discussion Post 4

Technology, Human, and Other

Week 10: Jun 1-Jun 7 – COMPLETE by 1159pm on June 7, 2019

- Readings
 - Ryan and Kellner – Technophobia
 - Bruno – Ramble City
- Final Essay