**IDS1200 Discover What Matters**

Section 34 - Fall 2019 – MWF 10:40 a.m.-11:45 p.m.

Dr. Barclay

Speculative Fiction and Film

Office: Eckhart 412

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Drop-in Office Hours: Mon/Wed 1:30-2:30, Tues. 1:00-2:30, Thurs. 8:30-9:30 and 1:30-2:30. Thursday afternoon hours, I will hold in a classroom (TBA), and as many students as would like can come at once for group or individual review of the week’s materials, group work on projects, small reading groups, or upcoming assignments. I am also available by appointment outside of these drop-in hours.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

“Discover what matters. And build your life around it.” Such is the essential purpose of an Aurora University education. This thematic seminar course will engage students in a process of discovery and reflection by grappling with enduring questions about what matters in their individual lives and the world around them. Students will read and discuss core texts, develop effective communication and critical thinking skills, and meet one-on-one with faculty members to receive guidance and feedback. The course is designed to help launch a student’s journey through a successful and meaningful college experience.

**TOPIC DESCRIPTION**

This course will explore speculative fiction and film -- science fiction, fantasy, horror, and magical realism -- as reflective of scientific and cultural issues. Questions we will address in this course include the following:

* How are speculative genres (science fiction, horror, magical realism, fantasy) defined and delineated? Why does that matter, and what texts blur boundaries?
* How do speculative texts reflect scientific and cultural issues in a particular moment and place?
* How do we treat monsters/others in such texts? What do our monsters tell us?
* What hopes are entwined in speculative fiction texts?
* What does speculative fiction tell us about what matters to us?

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

*The Age of Miracles* by Karen Thompson Walker

*The Dog Stars* by Peter Heller

*The Mere Wife* by Maria Dahvana Headley

Various short readings and films

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

Below are brief descriptions of each course assignment. Be sure to consult the assignment-specific handout for each assignment’s requirements.

**Journals**

As a way to encourage further critical thinking and reflection and prepare for longer essays, you will keep a class journal in which you will respond to specific prompts weekly. One entry is due each week, and you should choose one of the prompts on Moodle to respond to. While there isn’t a strict length requirement, you should write at least two solid paragraphs (half page to a page in length). If you have more to say on the topic, consider using the topic for a Response Essay and/or for the Midterm or Final Essay.

**Response Essays**

These 1-2-page essays should be a full three paragraphs (paragraphs are at least five sentences long with topic sentences) and uploaded to Moodle in the proper slot. These essays should include all of the following elements:

1. An answer to one of the following questions:
   1. What was most interesting about the assigned reading/viewing for today? Why?
   2. What connections do you see between today’s reading/viewing and other texts from the course (or outside the course, for that matter) or conversations we have had earlier in the semester?
   3. What was most difficult or challenging for you in today’s reading/viewing? This might not just refer to things that are intellectually difficult but also to things that are emotionally difficult.
2. A properly introduced, formatted, and cited quote from the text that you found interesting or significant and would like to talk about and commentary on this quote or a question about the quote.
3. A discussion question to ask the class and how you would answer this question, with textual proof (all parts need to be present in order to receive credit for this portion).

**Midterm and Final Drafts and Essays**

These are formal argumentative essays that will require citation of the readings and/or other materials from class using MLA style and format. These will build off of ideas and work from the Reading Paragraphs and Response Essays. The formal assignments will be posted on Moodle, we will meet one-on-one as you draft these essays, and you will present your ideas and drafts to your peers orally and in writing.

**Reading Quizzes**

At several points in the class, you will complete short quizzes over assigned readings, lectures, and lessons. These are designed to ensure that you are prepared for class and also to serve as a starting point for class discussions on the reading.

**Final Project and Presentation**

For this assignment, you will work all semester on a creative project to present to the class for your final exam. You will situate it in the speculative genre (specifically texts in this class) and explain why you made the thematic and genre decisions you did. Everyone in your group will be part of the formal presentation, and you will work on stages throughout the semester. The important thing is to think about genre distinctions and how the project fits with what you have learned this semester. Think about what story you want to tell, how you want to tell it, and why it matters. A more detailed assignment can be found on Moodle.

Tentative Schedule

Instructor may change schedule with notice.

All assignments are due by class time unless otherwise noted.

Week 1: What is speculative fiction and film? How do we define speculative genres?

Aug 26 Syllabus, Moodle, MLA; Lecture on Speculative Fiction and Film

Aug 28 Read “Ponies” (Moodle); Lecture on Spec Fiction and Film and Critical Reading

Aug 30 Read *The Age of Miracles*, Ch. 1-4; Mini-lesson on Discussion; **Journal Due**

Week 2: How does science fiction’s *what if* make us question our lives?

Sept 2 Labor Day; University Closed

Sept 4 Read *The Age of Miracles*, Ch. 5-10; **Quiz**

Sept 6 Read *The Age of Miracles*, Ch. 11-17; Mini-lesson on writing critically; In-class writing; **Journal Due**

Week 3: How does the spec genre reflect relationship/ identity hopes? Fears? Why do we like fear?

Sept 9 Read *The Age of Miracles*, Ch. 18-24; Mini-lesson on writing with clarity; **Quiz**

Sept 11 Read *The Age of Miracles*, Ch. 25-29; Mini-lesson on analyzing film; **Response Essay Due**

Sept 13 Read *The Age of Miracles*, Ch. 30-end; In-class Final Project discussion and work; **Group Names Due in class**; **Journal Due**

Week 4:

Sept 16 Conferences; Watch *Get Out* (available on Amazon Prime)

Sept 18 Conferences; Read *The Dog Stars*, Ch. I

Sept 20 Conferences; Read *The Dog Stars*, Ch. II-VI; **Journal Due**

Week 5: How does place impact speculative fiction? How does gender impact speculative fiction?

Sept 23 Read *The Dog Stars*, Book Two Ch. I; Mini-lesson on structure; In-class writing

Sept 25 Read *The Dog Stars*, Book Two Ch. II-III;Mini-lesson on informal presentations

Sept 27 Read *The Dog Stars*, Book Two Ch. IV; **Quiz**

Week 6: Is character development different in speculative fiction and film than in other genres?

Sept 30 Read *The Dog Stars*, Book Three Ch. I; **Final Project Plan Due to present to class (hard copy to me)**

Oct 2 Read *The Dog Stars*, Ch. II-end

Oct 4 In-class work; **Response Essay Due**

Week 7: How does nationality impact speculative fiction and film?

Oct 7 Watch *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* before class (available on Amazon Prime); In- class writing; **Quiz**

Oct 9 **Midterm Essay Drafts and Informal Presentations**

Oct 11 Midterm Essay Revisions and Final Project work; **Journal Due**

Week 8:

Oct 14 **Midterm Essays Due**; In-class reading/viewing TBD

Oct 16 In-class reading/viewing TBD; In-class writing

Oct 18 Fall Break; University Closed

Week 9: How does it matter who tells the stories in speculative fiction and film?

Oct 21 Read Ken Liu’s “The Algorithms for Love” (Moodle); **Quiz**

Oct 23 Read Octavia Butler (Moodle); Watch Kenyan short film [*Pumzi*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IlR7l_B86Fc) in class; In-class writing

Oct 25 View Short of the Week Choices; In-class writing; **Journal Due**

Week 10: How does POV and empathy matter in speculative fiction and film?

Oct 28 View Short of the Week Choices; In-class writing

Oct 30 Watch *Creature from the Black Lagoon* before class (available on Amazon Prime); Lecture on Creature Features and 50s Film; **Response Essay Due**

Nov 1 Read *The Mere Wife* Ch. 1-3*;* In-class writing; **Journal Due; Final Project Update Due**

Week 11: How do we make monsters and others in speculative fiction and film?

Nov 4 Read *The Mere Wife* Ch. 4-8; Library Information Session

Nov 6 Read *The Mere Wife* Ch. 9-12

Nov 8 Read *The Mere Wife* Ch. 13-16; Away at Conference; No class meeting; Work on Film and Presentation; **Journal Due**

Week 12: What stories do we tell in speculative fiction and film?

Nov 11 Read *The Mere Wife* Ch. 17-21; In-class writing

Nov 13 Read *The Mere Wife* Ch. 22-26; In-class writing

Nov 15 Read *The Mere Wife* Ch. 27-33; **Response Essay Due**

Week 13

Nov 18 Read *The Mere Wife* Ch. 34-end; In-class writing

Nov 20 **Final Essay Drafts and Informal Presentations**

Nov 22 Mini-lesson on formal presentations; Final Essay Revisions and Film Work

Week 14

Nov 25 **Final Essays Due**; Film Work

Nov 27 Thanksgiving Holiday; University Closed

Nov 29 Thanksgiving Holiday; University Closed

Week 15

Dec 2 Conferences

Dec 4 Conferences

Dec 6 Conferences

Week 16

**Dec 9 Final Exam Monday 11:15 a.m.-2:00 p.m.; Final Project Presentations; Revisions of Midterm or Final Essay Due**