

ENC 1145, Sect. 3337

Writing about Narrative Theory through Science Fiction Typography

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On Narrative — “*We know that a text does not consist of a line of words, releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but is a space of many dimensions, in which are wedded and contested various kinds of writing, no one of which is original the text is a tissue of citations, resulting from thousands sources of culture.*”

—Roland Barthes

On SF— *Science Fiction is an open system. This system is not, cannot be, merely the writer’s society; essentially, it exist in his mind. These open systems, through narrative structure, context, and format, allow for the materiality of other narrative potentialities and failures.*

—Ursula K. Le Guin

On Typography— “*When a literary work interrogates the inscription technology that produces it, it mobilizes reflective loops between its imaginative world and the and the material apparatus embodying that creation as a physical presence*”

—N. Katherine Hayles

Course Description

Despite its reputation for futurity, science fiction is a reflection of a culture’s interest in its current state, and in particular how it is shaped by technologies of the present and the very near future. Science fiction is also a material practice: the stuff its texts are made of— images, pages, words, letters – shape how we interpret it and how it influences our response to it.

This course will explore how writers, filmmakers, editors and “thinkers” in the genre use visual-textual elements (epigraphs, symbols, shaped text, and images) to address, re-imagine, “play-with”, and/ or complicate and disrupt how we read and interpret a narrative form. We will look at tropes and themes of modern SF to understand how its typographic presentation may exemplify the machinery of language at work in our historical present while accepting “that a text is more than the sum of its parts”. It is my

hope that we acknowledge that the structure of any narrative form derives its meaning from its function and position relative to other materialized elements—typography (ies). These themes will be approached through multiple media forms: fiction, film, non-fiction, and digital text/hypertext. Due to the exploratory nature of this course and the topic, we will approach our readings in a non-linear fashion which will explore non-traditional ways of reading and readership. However, it is important to note that our survey will begin and end with the hypertext fiction because this will establish a framework for how we will be thinking about other readings.

The bulk of this course will focus on reading, class discussion, and writing. Reading the assigned texts and participation are, as such, required to succeed in this course. Through close reading, discussion, and writing, the course will encourage students to understand reading and writing as acts that engage in an interactive process—an ongoing dialogue between reader and writer. Writing assignments will focus on student's research and writing skills as well as attending to issues of grammar, mechanics, and style. You will also be expected to spend considerable time working on essays, critical response blogs, and a short research project (to be presented to the class). These assignments will meet the 6,000-word writing requirement set by the university.

Course Goals

This course is designed to provide an introduction to narrative theory and typography as a medium for developmental analytical writing. As such, the primary goals for this course are as follows:

- To understand the relationship between narration and readership, specifically in relationship to Science Fiction and the elements that comprise this genre.
- To understand how our culture's past and present interest in technology(ies) have influenced and shaped (pun intended) language.
- To develop critical thinking skills for writing about literature, especially with regards to making and supporting arguments using textual analysis and secondary sources.
- To develop research skills specific to literary analysis (historical context, theoretical and analytical models, cultural studies, etc.).

These goals will be facilitated by two analytical essays, in class writing assignments, reading responses (via the blog), and a research project.

Required Texts

Required Texts (available at the UF Bookstore):

- *The Stars My Destination* by Alfred Bester
- "I Have No Mouth & I Must Scream" by Harlan Ellison
- *Foundation* by Isaac Asimov
- *Feed* by M.T. Anderson
- *Incarceron* by Catherin Fisher
- *Sapphique* by Catherin Fisher
- *Writing Machines* by N. Katherine Hayles

(Additional texts will be marked on the schedule and made available online. All assigned texts are required reading for this course. You must print them out and bring them to class.)

Course Policies

Attendance

This course is heavily oriented towards discussion and lecture. As a fall course, we have a limited amount of time for a lot of material. Therefore, attendance is crucial. Unexcused absences exceeding **six periods** may result in a failing grade for the course. Because this is a double period course, missing class on a double period constitutes a two period absence.

It is also expected that you will arrive on time for class. If you are five minutes late, you are absent. This is non-negotiable. Arriving late for class disrupts the learning process.

Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor prior to the date that will be missed (at least a week before). Other absence-related issues should be discussed with your professor in advance.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are absent, it is still your responsibility to make yourself aware of all due dates. You are still responsible for turning assignments in on time. In class assignments and so on cannot be made up.

Participation

Participation is a crucial part of your success in this class. You will be expected to work in small groups, participate in group discussions, and complete various other activities. Writing workshops require that you provide constructive feedback about your peers' writing. In general, you are expected to contribute constructively to each class session.

Preparation

It is required that you complete and bring all readings to class; electronic texts are acceptable where available, but it is strongly recommended that you use a device which allows you to take notes. You must also be prepared to discuss the readings in class. If you cannot complete the readings, then do not take this course. You should take notes and you should read every text closely. It is okay if you are confused; you are encouraged to ask questions, no matter how simple.

Papers and drafts are due at the beginning of class on the day listed on the syllabus (unless specified otherwise). Late papers will not be accepted (they will receive an automatic zero). Failure of technology is not an excuse.

Note: I reserve the right to institute quizzes in my class if it becomes apparent that students are not doing the work. These will individually be worth a large percentage of your grade and will be extremely difficult. They will not be announced.

Classroom Behavior

Please keep in mind that UF students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Likewise, some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and present controversial opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly, absence, from the class. You may criticize an idea in this course (indeed, you are encouraged to debate interpretations), as literary analysis is often about subjective interpretation, but you must remain civil and respectful.

Additionally, use of cell phones and other electronic devices for any purpose other than contributing to the class will not be tolerated. You may use laptops and you may do brief searches on the Internet to look for something we are discussing in class, but you may not text, take phone calls, hold separate discussions with your neighbors, surf the Internet, check your email, or any other activity which is not related to the course. Doing so is disruptive and may result in dismissal from the class, which will be counted as an absence.

Paper Format

Your papers must conform to basic MLA format. This means your paper must meet the basic formatting guidelines:

- Double-spaced
- 12 point Times New Roman
- 1 inch margins
- MLA style headers w/ page numbers
- MLA-style citations (in-text and end-text)
- Your name and other relevant heading information

If you are not familiar with MLA format, find a copy of the *MLA Handbook* in the library or use [Purdue's OWL website](#). Final drafts should be polished and presented in a professional manner.

All papers must be submitted in paper and electronic form. All papers submitted online must be in .doc (MS Word) or .rtf (Rich Text Format) and must be submitted via Sakai. Please do not send .docx files; while I do have the conversion pack for older version of MS Word, .doc and .rtf are less buggy and quicker for my computer. **Staple** hard copies.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the [Student Honor Code](#). The Honor Code prohibits and defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism. A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to):

- a.) Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.

b.) Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student. (University of Florida, Student Honor Code, 15 Aug. 2007
<<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honorcode.php>>)

Important Tip: You should never copy and paste something from the Internet without also providing the exact location from which it came.

This class has a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism. If you plagiarize, you will fail the assignment; you may also fail the class and be reported to the University. It is better to cite something incorrectly than to not cite at all.

Paper Maintenance Responsibilities

Students are responsible for maintaining duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course and retaining all returned, graded work until the semester is over. Should the need arise for a resubmission of papers or a review of graded papers, it is the student's responsibility to have and to make available this material. *Do not throw away papers.*

General Education Requirement

Composition

This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities. For more information, see:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/advisinggened.html>

Writing Requirement (formerly Gordon Rule)

This course can satisfy the UF requirement for Writing. For more information, see:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/advisinggordon.html>

University Policies

Disability Services

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom.

It is your responsibility to contact the school administration regarding any disability you may have, and to inform me so we can make any necessary arrangements.

For more information, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Academic Honesty

All students are required to abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Harassment

UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentconductcode.php#s4041>

Assignment Descriptions

Participation (200 pts)

Participation includes speaking in class, group activities, peer review, attendance, and all assignments assigned for the course.

Response Blog (5 responses minimum; 1,000 words; 100 pts total)

You will write a minimum of five responses in blog format during this course. These must be related to topics or readings for the course. You are free to choose when you want to write these responses. To stimulate critical thinking skills and to engage with the material practice of using an apparatus to enhance or disrupt communication, I would like your blogs to be centered on other classmates' blogs. Of course, to do this accurately, one of you will have to start the topic of discussion. Remember that your responses, while insightful, should remain appropriate and respectful toward others.

Midterm Essay (1,500 words; 200 pts)

For this paper, you will select a short story, clip from a film/ Tv show episode, or a passage from a novel and write about that particular media's play with typographical elements to complicate and/or bridge narrative form and content.

Short Research Project (750 words; 150 pts)

Throughout the semester, a group of students will present a 5-10 minute presentation on a subject chosen from one of the assigned readings in the course. I will allow you the freedom to choose the topic you would like to write about pertaining to narrative structure, reading and/or the text's use of topographical elements. These research projects will serve two purposes: 1) to provide avenues for your academic exploration, which may guide you while working on your final paper; and 2) to supplement the course by expanding on the materials already assigned. The research project may take the form of a semi-creative work, such as a website, video, etc., but must be, at its heart, explorative and analytical in form. Each presentation will be graded on preparation and usefulness. A 750-word write-up will also be required.

Note: You should begin with a text and then choose an avenue for discussion. You are encouraged to pick a text and apply your research to it as part of an extended, research-driven literary analysis for your final paper.

Final Paper Proposal (250 words; 50 pts)

You will be required to submit a 250-word description of your intended argument. The proposal must include your central argument, the context in which your project is placed, and a brief reference to the materials you intend to use to make your argument.

Final Paper (2,500 words; 300 pts)

This final paper will include an extensive analysis of any text we have read this semester. You are required to research your topic and chosen text and use at least three *academic* sources in your analysis. You are encouraged to make your final paper an extension of your research project.

Grading Scale

A	930-1000
A-	900-929
B+	870-899
B	840-869
B-	800-839
C+	770-799
C	740-769
C-	700-739
D+	670-699
D	630-669
D-	600-629
E	0-599

Points Breakdown

Assignments	Word Count	Points	Percentage
Participation	N/A	200	20%
Responses	1,000 (total)	100	10%
Midterm Essay	1,500	200	20%
Research Project	750	150	15%
Paper Proposal	250	50	5%
Final Paper	2,500	300	30%

Grade Meanings

The following is a basic rubric which will be used to grade your papers:

- A An A paper is well-argued, well-supported, well-organized, and demonstrates thorough engagement with the text and its relation to the themes and/or concepts discussed in the course (if relevant). Papers at this level contain strong prose and are generally free of typos and mechanical errors.
- B A B paper falls noticeably short in **one** of the above areas, but still demonstrates a thorough engagement with the text and its relation to the themes and/or concepts discussed in the course (if relevant). Work in this range needs minor revision, but is otherwise stylistically and mechanically sound, with few errors.
- C A C paper falls noticeably short in **two or more** of the areas listed above. Work in this range needs significant revision in terms of its content and organization and may contain several spelling and/or mechanical errors. A C paper, however, shows potential.
- D A D paper is generally disorganized, poorly-argued, lacking in support, and simplistic in terms of its argument. Work in this range is in need of significant rewriting and contains numerous spelling and/or mechanical errors that disrupt reading.
- E An E paper falls short in **almost all** of the areas listed above OR may be incomplete/late/missing. Work in this range is full of spelling and mechanical errors, unclear, and usually close to unreadable. An E paper may also fail to follow the guidelines set up by your instructor.

Please note that the above rubric is not exact.

Note: students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant in the Department of English.

Tentative Course Schedule

NOTE: This schedule is subject to change with advance notification.
WM= Writing Machines

Unit One (The SF Text and its Material Existence) Week 1 – Narration and The Hypertext

TH 8/22 Introductions
Introduce ways of thinking about Narration/ Reading
Philip Zimmerman’s “High Tension”—view in class
Writing Exercise: **What is Narrative Theory?**

Week 2 – Media Ecology and the SF Text

T 8/27 WM-Chapter 1 and 3: Media and Materiality& Entering the
Electronic Environment
Darko Suvin, “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre”
Group Exercise look through Analog (Sci-Fi Magazine) and write
about the use of different textual forms to enhance readability

TH 8/29 Presentation # 1
Asimov (1-61)

Week 3 –Epigraphs: Clever databases

T 9/3 Asimov (62-164)
WM-Preface
“How to do things with mottoes: recipes from the Romantic era”—
Rainer Grutman—think about Barthes’ “Death of An author”
Writing Assignment

TH 9/5 Asimov (165-236)

Week 4 –The Archive and its Material Existence

T 9/10 WM-Chapter 7: Embodiments of Material Metaphors
Presentation #2
Bester (1-165)

TH 9/11 Bester (166-232)

Unit 2 (Machines, Language, Image Text)

Week 5 – The Machine

T 9/17 Ellison’s “I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream”
WM-Chapter 2: Material Metaphors, Technotexts, and Media-
Specific Analysis
Experiment in ways of reading—Assign student’s certain epigraphs
To Map in *Incarceron* and *Sapphique*

MLA Formatting exercise
Clips of Metropolis

TH 9/19 Watch E.M Foster's (The Machine Stops)
Assign (Essay #1)

Week 6– The Machine and Language

T 9/24 WM-Chapter 5: Experiencing Artist books
Presentation # 3
Fisher's *Incarceron* (1-108)

TH 9/27 Fisher's *Incarceron* (109-170)
In Class Writing Assignment

Week 7 – The Machine and Language part 2

T 10/1 Fisher's *Incarceron* (171-277)

TH 10/3 Fisher's *Incarceron* (281-340)

Week 8 – The Machine's Voice and Image text

T 10/8 Fisher's *Incarceron* (341-442)
Research 2nd half of class

TH 10/10 Introductions, Conclusions, and Thesis statements

Week 9 – The Human→Machine

T 10/15 Presentation # 4
Descartes—Assigned section on the Human(machine)
Fisher's *Sapphique* (1-126)

TH 10/17 Fisher's *Sapphique* (127-205)
Due (Essay #1)

Week 10-The Machine→Human

T 10/22 Badmington "Theorizing Post-Humanism"
Fisher's *Sapphique* (206-326)

TH 10/24 Fisher's *Sapphique* (327- 406)
Assign Final Essay

Week 11 – The Machine→ Human continued

T 10/29 Fisher's *Sapphique* (407-462)
Trip to the Library (meet with Librarian):

More on MLA Format/ Research. Using the Library database and searching through the archives.
TH 10/31 Trip to Library

Unit 3 Cyborgs, Cyberspace, Layered Narratives
Week 12 – Cybotic-Narrative

T 11/5 WM- Chapter 6: *A Humument* as Technotext: Layered
Typographies
Presentation # 5
Anderson's *Feed* (1-150)

TH 11/7 Anderson's *Feed* (151-196)

Week 13 – Cyborgspace

T 11/12 Anderson's *Feed* (196-300)
Work on papers

TH 11/14 Work on papers in class

Week 14 – *House of Leaves*: Remediation and Hypertext Narratives

T 11/19 WM: Chapter 8: Inhabiting *House of Leaves*
Look at and discuss segments from *House of Leaves* (Given
Thursday)
“The Dionaea House”

TH 11/21 Student Conferences—By appointment

Week 15 – Conferences

T 11/26 Student Conferences—By appointment

TH 11/28 Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 16 –The End

T 12/ 3 Due (Final Paper) Sakia by 11:55 pm

TH 12/5 Reading day

Week 17– Exam Week