

<p>Prof. S.A. Smith</p> <p>Office: TUR 4324</p> <p>Office Hours: R 2:00-4:00 and by appointment</p>	<p>LIT 4930</p> <p>Sec. 0792</p>	 <p>Blending Boundaries, Breaking Barriers an SF Creative Writing Workshop</p>	<p>M 6-8 (12:50-3:50 p.m.) TUR 2350</p>
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“We especially need imagination in science. It is not all mathematics, nor all logic, but it is somewhat beauty and poetry,” the great America astronomer Maria Mitchell wrote in her diary in 1871.

From that inaugural work of body-modification, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, fictions that engage deeply with science have often sought to extend, explore, confuse or break the confines of the human body and/or soul, in order to more fully understand what it means to be human. Whether contemplating technological interventions, such as the inventions we call robots, androids or cyborgs, or genetic ones, in which human genomes are scrambled, infected or recoded, or psychological ones, in which human perception plays a significant role, SF has repeatedly sought to challenge the limits of both known science and accepted norms regarding human embodiment. In this writing workshop we shall revisit some older fictions that take on the task of re-imagining the human body, while we perform some fictional thought-experiments of our own. We will workshop those experiments, read and critique our own works, and strive to create fictions about our future(s).

Required Readings: First, a word about these texts: given that most students now use Kindles and such, I’ve given up trying to get us all “on the same page” even if I still think this is the most effective way of reading in a classroom. That said, in most cases I’ve provided a link to a version of the text, if it is available online; or I will provide a PDF version.

Crowley, John. “Snow.” (I will also send out a PDF) <http://www.lightspeedmagazine.com/fiction/snow/>

Le Guin, Ursula K. *Steering the Craft: A 21st-Century Guide to Sailing the Sea of Story*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2015 (available on Amazon)

_____. “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” (1973) (I will also send out a PDF)

http://www.mccc.edu/pdf/eng102/Week%209/Text_LeGuin%20Ursula_Ones%20Who%20Walk%20Away%20From%20Omelas.pdf

Murphy, Pat. “His Vegetable Wife” (1986)—this I will send out as a PDF.

Requirements: We shall be doing short in-class writing exercises, a mid-term assignment and a final short story or novel chapter. Final grades will be assigned according to the following numerical breakdown: Attendance/class participation 40% (this includes all the in-class writing(s)); mid-term: 30% and final paper: 30% . Why is class participation weighted so heavily? Because...

1. **Class participation:** ...this is a writing workshop and we will be actively engaged in each other's writing, and therefore it is also small, so this class should belong to you--this means active, responsible engagement during all class periods. I expect you to teach this class as much, if not more, than I do. You will agree to work in the class, with due respect to the class and your classmates. I know this is difficult for some of us. I ask for a good faith effort. Class participation includes:

a. Attendance. This should probably go without saying but you will agree to be in class, promptly, at the opening of the class period with the reading assignment. If you are 15 minutes late, you will be marked late; twenty, you are absent. You have one (1) day of grace to be absent—after that your grade will suffer. Only severe illness or injury will be allowed as exceptions. In such cases, phone me at home or in the office.

b. Preparation. You will agree to have PREPARED whatever the day's assignment is. Just showing up does not constitute good class participation, especially in a writing workshop. Please, no cell phone use in class, unless we all need to Google something ASAP, or you want to listen to music on headphones during in-class writing periods.

2. **Mid-Term:** For your mid-term (6-10 pages), I want you to write a SF love story. When I say 'love story' I don't mean sentimental, I don't mean pornography, and I don't mean silly. I mean a story, about science and human bonds. I mean a real love story, about what love really means, and I will tell you flat out when I respond to it whether I consider the piece you turn in a 'real' love story or not.

3. **In-class writing** (and work-shopping): We are going to do written 'thought-experiments', share these and critique them. Some of these will be done in class, some of these will be written at home and discussed in class, and all of them will count towards your class-participation.

4. **Final Paper:** For your final, you must turn in either a short story or a first chapter of a piece of SF you have either been working on during the semester, or a brand-new piece.

And now for the obligatory UF stuff

Academic Honesty Policy: UF students are bound by the Honor Pledge that states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: 'On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.'" The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor of this class.

Plagiarism: I regret having to remind you that plagiarism is a serious offense. All students are required to abide by the Academic Honesty Guidelines, which have been accepted by the University. The academic community of students and faculty at the University of Florida strives to develop, sustain and protect an environment of honesty, trust and respect. Students are expected to pursue knowledge with integrity. Exhibiting honesty in academic

pursuits and reporting violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines will encourage others to act with integrity. Violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and a student being subject to the sanctions in paragraph XIV of the Student Conduct Code. The conduct set forth hereinafter constitutes a violation of the Academic Honesty Guidelines (University of Florida Rule 6C1_4.017). For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and collusion, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.php>

Civility: Please turn off cell-phones during class time; if you need to leave the classroom during class, please be sure to and leave with discretion. You will be marked absent if you are gone more than 10 minutes; unless you have an official disability that requires laptop use in the class, please do not use laptops during class; if you need sleep, please stay home and sleep; please do not be rude, either to me, or to your fellow students. It is the policy of The University of Florida to provide an educational and working environment for its students, faculty and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. In accordance with federal and state law, the University prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment. Sex discrimination and sexual harassment will not be tolerated, and individuals who engage in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action. The University encourages students, faculty, staff and visitors to promptly report sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about the University of Florida policies regarding harassment, see the University of Florida Student Conduct Code at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/conductcode.php> and policies regarding harassment at <http://wwwhr.ufl.edu/eo/sexharassment.html>

The Disability Resource Center: The Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. Staff at the Disability Resource Center will assist any student who registers as having a disability. Official documentation of a disability is required to determine eligibility for appropriate classroom accommodations. The professional employees at the Disability Resource Program serve as full-time advocates for students with disabilities ensuring students have physical and programmatic access to all college programs. For more information about Student Disability Services, see: <http://www.ufl.edu/disability/>

Online Course Evaluation: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <http://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Final Grade Appeals: If you want to appeal the final grade you receive for this course, you should contact Professor John Cech, Associate Chair and Undergraduate Coordinator of the English Department. You will submit your course materials for evaluation by a committee assembled by Professor Cech. The committee may decide to raise, lower, or leave unchanged your final grade for the course. Its decision is final.

Grading Scale A = 94-100; A- = 90-93; B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 80-83; C+ = 77-79; C = 74-76; C- = 70-73;

D+ = 67-69; D = 64-66; D- = 60-63; E = 0-59

UF Grading Policies for Assigning Grade Points

<http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Schedule of Classes

The following schedule of readings is a working plan. If it becomes necessary to alter the schedule for whatever reason, I will try to give ample warning.

Week 1— A Writer Must Also Read

M Jan 7: Introduction—syllabus, policies, etc. a poem, “The Mushroom Hunters” (see end of syllabus), and a short, in-class discussion about the thorniest question of all: what is SF?

Week 2

M Jan 14: Discussion of “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” (1973) and thought-experiment #1.

Week 3

M Jan 21: Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday—**no class**

Week 4

M Jan 28: Discussion of John Crowley’s “Snow” (1985) and thought-experiment #2.

Week 5

M Feb 4: Discussion of Pat Murphy’s “His Vegetable Wife” (1986) and thought-experiment #3

Week 6: A Writer Must Practice, Practice, Practice, like for the Olympics

M Feb 11: “Steering the Craft” Chapter one—read it, do the exercises and bring them to class to read and discuss.

Week 7

M Feb 18: “Steering the Craft” Chapter four—read it, do the exercises and bring them to class to read and discuss.

Week 8—Mid-term

M Feb 25: Midterms are due in class, and thought experiment #4 in class writing.

Week 9

After spring break, we shall start work-shopping our writing during the last five weeks of class; in order to make sure each of us has a chance to be work-shopped, over the break start trying to choose a mss. you want critiqued. It must be five pages only; it can be the beginning of a short-story, novel, a scene, a scenario, or even an earlier exercise you’d like to expand or hone. I recommend you use this as part of your final paper, as well. We shall start work-shopping Monday, March 25, and we will be going in reverse alphabetical order, to try to be fair.

M March 4-Fri March 8: Spring Break

Week 10

M March 11: “Steering The Craft” Chapter 5, read it, do the exercise and bring to class to read/discuss

Week 11

M March 18: "Steering The Craft" Chapter 6, read it, do the exercises and we will discuss in class.

Week 12 ...and of course, writers must write!

M March 25: Workshop

Week 13

M April 1: Workshop

Week 14

M April 8: Workshop

Week 15

M April 15: Workshop

Week 16

M April 22: Last day of classes—final paper due

THE MUSHROOM HUNTERS

By Neil Gaiman

Science, as you know, my little one, is the study
of the nature and behaviour of the universe.
It's based on observation, on experiment, and measurement,
and the formulation of laws to describe the facts revealed.

In the old times, they say, the men came already fitted with brains
designed to follow flesh-beasts at a run,
to hurdle blindly into the unknown,
and then to find their way back home when lost
with a slain antelope to carry between them.
Or, on bad hunting days, nothing.

The women, who did not need to run down prey,
had brains that spotted landmarks and made paths between them
left at the thorn bush and across the scree
and look down in the bole of the half-fallen tree,
because sometimes there are mushrooms.

Before the flint club, or flint butcher's tools,
The first tool of all was a sling for the baby
to keep our hands free
and something to put the berries and the mushrooms in,
the roots and the good leaves, the seeds and the crawlers.
Then a flint pestle to smash, to crush, to grind or break.

And sometimes men chased the beasts
into the deep woods,
and never came back.

Some mushrooms will kill you,
while some will show you gods
and some will feed the hunger in our bellies. Identify.
Others will kill us if we eat them raw,
and kill us again if we cook them once,
but if we boil them up in spring water, and pour the water away,
and then boil them once more, and pour the water away,
only then can we eat them safely. Observe.

Observe childbirth, measure the swell of bellies and the shape of breasts,
and through experience discover how to bring babies safely into the world.

Observe everything.

And the mushroom hunters walk the ways they walk
and watch the world, and see what they observe.
And some of them would thrive and lick their lips,

While others clutched their stomachs and expired.
So laws are made and handed down on what is safe. Formulate.

The tools we make to build our lives:
our clothes, our food, our path home...
all these things we base on observation,
on experiment, on measurement, on truth.

And science, you remember, is the study
of the nature and behaviour of the universe,
based on observation, experiment, and measurement,
and the formulation of laws to describe these facts.

The race continues. An early scientist
drew beasts upon the walls of caves
to show her children, now all fat on mushrooms
and on berries, what would be safe to hunt.

The men go running on after beasts.

The scientists walk more slowly, over to the brow of the hill
and down to the water's edge and past the place where the red clay runs.
They are carrying their babies in the slings they made,
freeing their hands to pick the mushrooms.