



Professor Stephanie A. Smith

ENG 4936/Honors Seminar: Women in/of SF/class #12783/sec. #1275

W 6-8 (12:50-3:50) in Mat. 0004

Office: TUR 4324/Office Hours: F2F and/or Zoom, R: 1:00-3:00 and by appointment.

While many critics will say that Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is the first SF novel by a woman, others will beg to differ, citing Margaret Cavendish's 17th c. utopian novel, *The Blazing World*, but the fact of the matter is that women have been engaged in speculative types of fiction since the novel was invented as a literary form. However, in the United States during the 1930s through the mid-1960s, women were not associated with the genre, despite the fact that they were writing in it, all throughout these decades. But male authors dominated the marketplace, and often either discounted, ignored or claimed that their female colleagues were non-existent—until the 1960s, second-wave feminism, when women writers began to reclaim a territory they'd been occupying all along. This Honors Seminar will examine both women authors of the genre, and at representations of femininity in classic SF.

Required Reading: 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 version.

Atwood, Margaret. "Homelanding." (1989)

Butler, Octavia. ["Bloodchild."](#) (1984); *Kindred* (1979)

Fowler, Karen Joy. ["Standing Room Only."](#) (1997)

Le Guin, Ursula K. "First Contact with the Gorgonids" (1992); *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and *The Lathe of Heaven* (1971)

L'Engle, Madeline. *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962)

Moore, C.L. ["No Woman Born."](#) (1944).

Murphy, Pat. "His Vegetable Wife." (1986)

Okorafor, Nnedi. *Binti* (2005)

Russ, Joanna. *The Female Man*. (1975)

Smith, Stephanie A. "Blue Heart" (1982)

Tiptree, Jr. James (Alice Sheldon) ["The Women Men Don't See."](#) (1973)

Class participation: an Honors Seminar should be participatory; it is a small class, designed to resemble a graduate seminar, so it should belong to you--this means active, responsible engagement. You will agree to work in the class, with due respect to the class and your classmates. Class participation includes:

a. Attendance: you should attend class. The participation portion of your grade for this class will be calculated on the basis of your attendance and your participation in class activities. Since the pedagogical approach of this course depends on student engagement

and interaction, you should be prepared to speak. *A caveat:* if we end up working in part or in whole online for whatever reason you should try to attend those sessions of this class that are virtual sessions. You are required, at a minimum, to participate in class activities through the audio function of Zoom. Your video presence is strongly invited.

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 an Honors Seminar

Mid-Term: Before the midterm, we shall have read eight SF short stories by women writers, some of these stories featuring women as protagonists. For your midterm, you need to choose three of these stories (any three) and write a critical examination of how the author is critiquing, revising, examining and/or representing gender. Your paper must make an argument for which of the three stories you've chosen presents the reader with the most challenging view of gender, as compared to the other two, and why. You may use outside resources, and I strongly encourage you to consider the historical moment of all three stories in making your argument (6-10 pages).

Final Paper: Both *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Female Man* were considered ground-breaking SF novels about gender in their time; today, both still have relevant observations about how gender shapes, confines and defines identity, even if both are also in some ways a product of their historical moment of the late 20th century. Using *Kindred* and *Binti* as more contemporary works of SF, make an argument about how and where both of the earlier works could have gone farther in their critiques of the *status quo*, citing scenes or passages from these two later novels as your evidence. You are welcome to use outside sources, and once again, I strongly encourage you to consider the historical moment out of which each of these pieces arose. **OR** if you dare, and really want to do so, I will discuss a creative option for you. As a published author myself, I know the lure of writing fiction instead of criticism (and sometimes *vice-versa*) so speak with me, if you are interested (10-15 pages)

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/>

Course Delivery:

In-Class Recording: Students are now allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited.

Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course.

A class lecture does **not** include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor and Conduct Code.

Online Course Evaluation: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>

Final Grade Appeals: If you want to appeal the final grade you receive for this course, you should contact Professor Kenneth Kidd, Associate Chair and Undergraduate Coordinator of the English Department. You will submit your course materials for evaluation by a committee assembled by Professor Kidd. 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 The Short Story

Aug. 25—Introductions. From *Frankenstein* to *Frankenstein's Daughter*. Some in-class reading.

HMW: read “No Woman Born” and “Blue Heart”

Week 2

Sept. 1—Discussion of “No Woman Born” and “Blue Heart”

HMW: read “The Women Men Don’t See,” “His Vegetable Wife” and “First Contact of the Gorgonids.”

Week 3

Sept. 8—Discussion of “The Women Men Don’t See,” “His Veg. Wife,” and “First Contact.”

HMW: read “Homelanding” and “Bloodchild”

Week 4

Sept. 15—Discussion of “Homelanding,” and “Bloodchild”

HMW: read “Standing Room Only,” and begin *The Left Hand*

Week 5 The Novel: Women as Authors

Sept. 22—Discussion of “Standing Room Only” and begin *The Left Hand of Darkness*

HMW: finish *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

Week 6

Sept. 29—Discussion *Left Hand*

HMW: read *The Lathe of Heaven*

Week 7

Oct. 6—Discussion *The Lathe of Heaven* (and some film clips)

HMW: Work on the mid-term

Week 8 Mid-Term

Oct. 13—Week off. Finish your mid-term, due Friday Oct. 15. by midnight, and read *The Female Man*

Week 9

Oct. 20—Discussion *The Female Man*

HMW: read *Kindred*

Week 10 Women as SF characters

Oct. 27—Discussion *Kindred*

HMW: read *A Wrinkle in Time*

Week 11

Nov. 3—Discussion *Wrinkle*

HMW: work on your final paper

Week 12

Nov. 10—Week off. Work on your final!

HMW: read *Binti*

Week 13

Nov. 17—Discuss *Binti*

Week 14

Nov. 24—Thanksgiving: week off

Week 15

Dec. 1—Wrap Up

Week 16

Dec. 8—Last Day of School, finals 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.

Werewomen
By Ursula K. Le Guin

I want to go moonwalking
on it or under it I don't care
I just want to go moonwalking
alone.

Women in their sixties
don't go to the moon,
women in the cities
don't go out alone.

But I want O listen what I want
is to be not afraid.
Listen what I need is freedom.

Women in their sixties
think about dying,
women in the cities
think about dying,
all kinds of women
think about lying,
think about lying alone.

But listen there's a moon out there
and I don't want sex and I don't want death
and I don't want what you think I want
only to be a free woman.

What is that, a free woman,
a young free woman,
an old free woman?

Asking for the moon.

Women in their sixties
have no moon.

Women in the cities
howl at the moon.

All kinds of women
talk about walking alone.

When the moon is full
listen how they howl.
listen how they howl together.