



LIT 4930 SFCW/class #15881/section #05G2/M 6-8 (12:50-3:50) in AND 0032
Fall 2021

Professor Stephanie A. Smith

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

ssmith@ufl.edu

www.stephanieasmith.net

<https://go.authorsguild.org/members/6009>

Breaking Boundaries: a SFCW workshop

"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.

Butler, Octavia. "Bloodchild" (1985)

http://www.baen.com/Chapters/9781625791191/9781625791191_1.htm

Crowley, John. "Snow." <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 send out a PDF)

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

Requirements: We shall be doing short writing exercises, a mid-term assignment, workshopping 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 in-class work); mid-term: 30% and final paper: 30% .

1. **Class participation:** a writing workshop should be actively engaged in writing, so therefore it is a small class, 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: 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 heavily on student engagement and interaction, you are required, at a minimum, to participate in class activities. Caveat: if the modality of the course delivery is changed for whatever reason, please come to the Zoom remote class. Use of your camera is strongly recommended.

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.

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 workshopping): We are going to do written 'thought-experiments' 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 or F you have either been working on during the semester, or a brand-new piece.

Bonus Materials:

[Writers of the Future Contest](#)

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/eoo/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: UF has designated this course F2F, except for those students who request a remote access option. If the instructor becomes ill and/or is quarantined by UF, class will either be remote or canceled.

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

A Writer Must Read

M Aug. 23: Introduction: syllabus, policies, overview of class, grading system and two poems, “The Mushroom Hunters,” and “Werewomen.”
HMW: Read the Introduction to *Steering the Craft*.

Week 2

M Aug. 30: Covid, SF, narrative prose, and our class.
HMW: Thought Experiment #1 (posted on Canvas) due by W. midnight.
Read “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”

Week 3

M Sept. 6: Labor Day: Holiday

Week 4

M Sept. 13: Discussion of “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” (1973) and of Thought-Experiment #1.
HMW: Read “Snow” and Thought Experiment #2 (on Canvas) due W. midnight.

Week 5

M Sept. 20: Discussion of John Crowley’s “Snow” (1985) and thought-experiment #2.
HMW: Thought Experiment #3 (on Canvas) due by W midnight. Read “Bloodchild.”

Week 6:

M Sept. 27: Discussion Octavia Butler’s “Bloodchild” (1985) and thought-experiment #3
HMW: Read Chapter One of *Steering the Craft* and do the two exercises.
Due by R midnight.

Week 7

A Writer Must Practice, Practice, Practice, like for the Olympics

M Oct. 4: *Steering the Craft* Chapter one and exercises
HMW: Read Chapter five of *Steering the Craft* and do the exercise, due R midnight.
Read the appendix of *Steering the Craft* and the hand-out.

Week 8

“Mid-term”

M Oct. 11: Workshopping, a discussion, and a dry run.

During this week, try to choose a mss. you want critiqued. It must be five to seven pages long and 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.

Midterms are due by midnight tonight on Canvas.

Week 9

M Oct. 18: A discussion and exercise and a dry run.
HMW Read Chapter 2 of *Steering the Craft*
And the first set of 3-4 workshopping mss.

Week 10 *...learning to give and take constructive criticism*

M Oct. 25: Workshopping (4 people per session)

Week 11

M Nov. 1: Workshopping

Week 12

M Nov. 8: Workshopping

Week 13

M Nov. 15: Workshopping

Week 14

M Nov. 22: If we are done workshopping, a day off! If not, finish workshopping.

Week 15

M Nov. 29: Day Off

Week 16

M Dec. 6: Last Day of class, 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.