**FORE 6397-1**
**Selected Topics in Foresight – Science Fiction as Foresight**
**Summer 2020**
**Course Time:** Monday 5:30-8:30pm CST
**Course meeting link:** https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9728985315   *Note: this will change to Microsoft Teams starting  with Week 2, per UH IT policy*
**Instructor:** Tim Morgan
**Email**: tnmorgan@gmail.com
**Phone & SMS:** +1 972-898-5315
**Appointments (online):** By request
**Prerequisites:** Graduate standing, or instructor approval

## Overview

Science Fiction as Foresight exposes students to techniques to draw out useful strategic insights about future change from works of contemporary science fiction. It goes beyond mere analysis of stories to looking at how Science Fiction can both evoke new insights about plausible future change via speculative narratives and representative vision. These insights can come from a range of different science fiction works including novels, short stories, movies, tv, music, and works of art.

Students will also learn to understand how to evoke and communicate future change by leveraging Science Fiction narratives and images. The class's focus will be on students as practitioners using SF-based analysis tools and source materials to deepen their practical understanding of a changing world. They will learn how visions of the future in works of Science Fiction both shape and are shaped by change today.

The class relies heavily on students sharing their views and analysis with each other both in class and in online topic discussions. The guiding rubric for the class is that "Foresight is a Team Sport". The class is designed such that both experienced Foresight students and non-Foresight students will be able to gain substantive insights about the future via discussions of their views and analysis with their fellow students.

## Objectives

The course objective is for students to demonstrate a grasp of using Science Fiction as a pragmatic means of assessing, understanding, eliciting, and communicating strategic insights about current and future change.

**Readings/Texts**

Text & article readings are provided in Canvas each week. On Week 1, each student will also select on a contemporary SF novel for analysis, review, and presentation to the class.

**Required Text**
- •        "Science Fiction – The Evolutionary Mythology of the Future: Prometheus to the Martians" – Thomas J. Lombardo ( [https://www.amazon.com/Science-Fiction-Evolutionary-Mythology-Prometheus-ebook/dp/B07J5TJBKP](https://www.amazon.com/Science-Fiction-Evolutionary-Mythology-Prometheus-ebook/dp/B07J5TJBKP)  )

**Suggested Texts for further study (useful, but not required for class)**
- •        "In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination" – Margaret Atwood
- •        "Hieroglyph: Stories and Visions for a Better Future" – edited by Ed Finn & Kathryn Cramer
- •        "Science Fiction Prototyping – Designing the Future with Science Fiction" – Brian David Johnson

**Required Novel Selection**

Each student will select a recent Science Fiction novel in Week 1 and give a 10-minute presentation on it in class on Week 6. The presentation will cover futures insights derived from the novel as described in the Week 1 Blackboard assignment. Novels must be approved by instructor in Week 1. Those unable to present in person on Week 6 may submit a recorded presentation by start of the Week 6 class.

Criteria for the Novel Selection:
- • Published no earlier than 2010 CE
- • Preferably is set somewhere between 5-50 years from now (2025-2070). If your novel is set more than 50 years from now, student will need to address relevance and utility in exploring shorter term (5-50 years) futures in their week 6 presentation.
- • Is a work classified as Science Fiction, not Fantasy (the "no fairies or magic" rule applies). *Note that this rule is tricky. Some works of Science Fiction look like or are listed as Fantasy. Examples: McCaffrey's DRAGONRIDERS OF PERN series, Zelazny's CHRONICLES OF AMBER series,  Brook's WORLD WAR Z, Stross's MERCHANT PRINCES series.*
- • Is full novel length: at least 70,000 words
- • The following are resources for helping identify a qualifying work. NOTE – these are just a starting point. The selected novel need not be on any of these lists to qualify:
  - ○ [https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/75182.Science_Fiction_2010_2019](https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/75182.Science_Fiction_2010_2019)
  - ○ [https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/142768.Adult_Sci_Fi_Fantasy_Releases_of_2020](https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/142768.Adult_Sci_Fi_Fantasy_Releases_of_2020)
  - ○ [https://locusmag.com/category/reviews/books/](https://locusmag.com/category/reviews/books/)

- Note: If your desired novel does not quite meet the criteria and you still think it would be a good foresight presentation candidate, contact the instructor to discuss an exception

**Approach**

The foundation of the course is built around two documents—this syllabus and the schedule. They can be found in Canvas on the <Syllabus> and <Home> pages. Your first step is to study these documents, ask any questions you wish, and then get into the introductory activities. Students are advised to review the schedule each week, since it will be updated each week as the course progresses.

Class activities

We start most classes with a short overview of the readings and current assignments. The instructor usually will have  a short PPT to cover specific aspects of that week's. Sometimes we will watch a video. We will then review & discuss the readings, with students encouraged to discuss their insights and ask questions.

Online activities

There will typically be two discussion forum questions each week. You get two points for posting on time -- one point after that. These points add up – do not miss this (easy) opportunity to boost your grade.

Book presentation

As mentioned above in "Required Novel Selection", each of you are asked to select a different book to read. In Week 6, we will devote a class to give each of you time to give a ten-minute presentation on your book.  Those unable to attend that session may submit a pre-recorded video presentation prior to the start of the class.

**Topical Schedule** (Details for each week will be listed in Canvas)

Week 1: Class Intro & Presentation: SF Eras - The Future as Mirror of a Changing Present
Week 2: STEEP-ed in SF - Using Foresight tools to find futures insights in SF stories
Week 3: SF Ethnography & Experiential Futures
Week 4: Beyond Western SF - Global Visions
Week 5: Now to Then - Transitions to SF Futures
Week 6: Fringe Futures - SF in Art, Music, & Culture

Week 7: Class Overview & Wrap-up

**Grading**

The breakdown:
Assignments:          75%
Discussion postings:    25%

Re-submission

Students may revise and re-submit any assignment one time – at any point in the semester before July 13th at 5pm. If you're not happy with your grade or would like to improve your submission, you can respond to the feedback that comes with the grade, and re-submit one time….provided you clearly indicate changes in different color font and explain as needed.  Also make sure you inform the instructor via a Canvas message that you have resubmitted to Blackboard.

Lateness

For assignments, any submission more than one week late is reduced by a letter grade (10 points). That is the only penalty, so even a very late assignment should absolutely be turned in – in other words, there is no good reason to not turn in every assignment.

For discussion forum posts, on-time posts judged to be of sufficient quality, get two points. Any post more than one week late, earns one points. As with assignments, you can submit any point in semester and still receive the one point. The goal, of course, is to keep up as we go.

**Interaction**

The course is conducted online. Grading and assignments are housed on the Blackboard website (www.uh.edu/blackboard).  Daily interaction (except for assignments) will be conducted on Canvas: https://canvas.instructure.com/.  Students should visit canvas to see the weekly checklist of topics, readings, posts, and what the assignments are. The only reason to visit Blackboard is to submit assignments and see how they are graded (this is done for security reasons). To be clear, the course is primarily on Canvas, except for assignments.

Classes are held on Monday evenings via the University of Houston's Microsoft Teams software. Due to technical difficulties,  we will use Zoom for Week 1: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9728985315

**Other policies**

**Academic honesty policy** All UH students are responsible for knowing the standards of academic honesty. Please refer to the UH catalog. Plagiarism, using research without citations or using a created production (such as other people's words) without quotations or citations, will result in a grade penalty or failure of the course. Internet sources must be credited according to the sites recommended citation guideline if available. If no citation guideline is provided by the web source, then the date, URL site owner, and author must be included with the web material used.

**Disabilities**: If you have a disability and need a special accommodation consult first with the Coordinator of Health Disabilities Services, Bayou 1402, telephone 283-2627, and then discuss the accommodation with me.

**Incompletes**: A grade of "I" is given only in cases of documented emergency or special circumstances late in the semester, provided that the student has been making satisfactory progress. An Incomplete Grade Contract must be completed.

**Withdrawals**: Last day to drop a course or withdraw with a 'W' is **June 22, 2020**.