

**FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
COURSE OUTLINE**

English 393 L01 (T/R 12:30-13:45 in SS109)
SCIENCE FICTION

(Winter 2016)

Instructor: Christian Bök

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Hours: Wed (11:00 AM – 1:00 PM)

Course Description

This course introduces students to the genre of science fiction, providing students with an array of basic tools for interpreting works from this genre. The readings for this course focus on the concept of “alienness,” examining this concept in detail by paying recurrent attention to various remakes of the same tale, told over and over again—in this case, the novella *Who Goes There?* by John W. Campbell (whose story provides the inspiration for the movie *The Thing* by John Carpenter). The course discusses the varied shapes that this story has taken over the course of more than eighty years in both novels and movies. The story itself seems to suggest that, for science fiction, the most destructive, existential threat to humanity resides in a void, where we might encounter both the unearthly “otherness” and the monstrous “thingness” of the utterly inhuman. The course goes on to suggest that, just as the baleful monster in such a story can undergo radical, protean changes, adapting to any threat that might otherwise exterminate it, so also does the story itself seem to resemble the “alienness” of such a creature, at least in its ability to mutate and to evolve over time (since the story has survived in our culture by transmuting itself to suit the changing appetite of disparate audiences). The motif of “extraterrestrials in Antarctica,” constitutes a rich myth about our own experience of cosmic horror—and the course strives to excavate this experience in all its varied facets of strangeness. The course is divided into three units: first, a discussion of the alien in the “Radium Age” of science fiction; second, a discussion of the alien in the “Atomic Age” of science fiction; and third, a discussion of the alien in the “Bionic Age” of science fiction. The course tracks the evolution of our ideas about the sublimity of this “thing” (pointing to the questions that it raises about our place in the universe).

Required Readings (Textual)

At the Mountains of Madness (Novella by H. P. Lovecraft)
At the Mountains of Madness (Graphic Novel by I. N. J. Culbard)
Who Goes There? (Novella by John W. Campbell)
The Thing from Another World (Film by Christian Nyby)
The Thing (Film by John Carpenter)
The Thing (Film by Matthijs van Heijningen Jr.)
The Thing – A Phenomenology of Horror (Dylan Trigg)

[Please note that all these books and films feature horrific, visceral effects, meant to terrorize audiences.]

Required Readings (Online)

At the Mountains of Madness (Music by Allicorn)
<http://allicorn.bandcamp.com/album/at-the-mountains-of-madness>

A Colder War (Novella by Charles Stross)
<http://www.infinityplus.co.uk/stories/colderwar.htm>

The Things (Short Story by Peter Watts)
http://clarkesworldmagazine.com/watts_01_10/
http://clarkesworldmagazine.com/audio_01_10/

The Thing – Northman Nightmare (Graphic Novel by Steve Niles)
<https://digital.darkhorse.com/profile/1399.the-thing-full-book/>

Driving This Road Until Death Sets You Free (Video by Zombie Zombie)
<http://vimeo.com/26625333>

Other Resources:

The Elements of Style by William Strunk and E. B. White

Glossary of Literary Terms
http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms.html

Any handbook that contains the MLA style for documenting citations in essays:
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Course Assignments

Initial Report (500 wds)	10%
Interim Essay (750 wds)	20%
Midterm Test	20%
Endterm Test	10%
Final Essay (1250 wds)	30%
Participation	10%

There is no Registrar-scheduled exam in this course.

Note: All assignments must be completed and submitted in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

Initial Report: Students are required to generate a brief report about *At the Mountains of Madness* in order to get a diagnostic assessment about the quality of their writing in advance of other assignments. The instructor is going to provide a topic for this brief report in advance of the date for its submission.

Interim Essay: Students are required to write a short essay about the novella *Who Goes There?* in order to refine the skills for writing the final essay about the cosmic themes addressed in the story of *The Thing*. The instructor is going to provide topics for this short essay in advance of the date for its submission.

Midterm Test: Students are expected to write a short test in class, evaluating their retention of material learned in the first half of the course. The test consists of short answers to questions about discussed ideas.

Final Essay: Students are expected to write a final essay (worth 20% of the final grade)—an essay that provides a comparative examination of two movies about *The Thing*, applying concepts learned over the term. The instructor is going to provide topics for this final essay in advance of the date for its submission.

Participation: 10% of your final grade takes into account the quality of your constructive contribution to the class through your preparation, your attendance, and your discussion, over the course of the term.

Endterm Exam: Students are expected to write a short test in class, evaluating their retention of material learned in the final half of the course. The test consists of short answers to questions about discussed ideas.

Note: Please make every effort to submit any assignments and manuscripts directly to the instructor. If you cannot do so, please take your assignment to SS-1152, where the work can be dated and then filed in the mailbox of the instructor. Staff in the office cannot return assignments to students under any circumstances.

SCHEDULE FOR CLASSES

Jan 12: Orientation

Jan 14: Lecture (Introduction to Science Fiction)

Jan 19: Lecture (Introduction to the Alien Other)

Jan 21: Lecture: *At the Mountains of Madness* (H. P. Lovecraft)

Jan 26: Lecture: *At the Mountains of Madness* (H. P. Lovecraft)

Jan 28: Lecture: *At the Mountains of Madness* (I. N. J. Culbard)
At the Mountains of Madness (Allicorn)

[Initial Report: Due in Class]

Feb 02: Lecture: *A Colder War* (Charles Stross)

Feb 04: Lecture: *Who Goes There?* (John W. Campbell)
[Marked Reports Returned]

Feb 09: Lecture: *Who Goes There?* (John W. Campbell)
Midterm Test Preparation

Feb 11: **MIDTERM TEST (SET IN-CLASS)**

Feb 16: **READING WEEK: (NO LECTURE)**

Feb 18: **READING WEEK: (NO LECTURE)**

Feb 23: **Screen:** *The Thing from Another World* (1951)
[Marked Tests Returned]

Feb 25: Lecture: *The Thing from Another World* (1951)

Mar 01: Lecture: *The Thing from Another World* (1951)

Mar 03: **Screen:** *The Thing* (1982)
[Interim Essay: Due in Class]

Mar 08: Lecture: *The Thing* (1982)

Mar 10: **RESEARCH DAY (ABSENT)**

Mar 15: Lecture: *The Thing* (1982)
[Marked Essays Returned]

Mar 17: **RESEARCH DAY (ABSENT)**

Mar 22: Lecture: *The Thing – A Phenomenology of Horror* (Dylan Trigg)
Preface (Before Life)

Chapter 1 (From Beyond)
Chapter 4 (The Flesh of the Thing)
Conclusion (The Thing)

Mar 24: Lecture: *The Things* (Peter Watts)
Driving This Road Until Death Sets You Free (Zombie Zombie)

Mar 29: **Screen:** *The Thing* (2011)

Mar 31: Lecture: *The Thing* (2011)

Apr 05: Lecture: *The Thing* (2011)

Apr 07: Lecture: *The Thing – Northman Nightmare* (Steve Niles)
Endterm Test Preparation

Apr 12: **ENDTERM TEST (SET IN-CLASS)**
[Final Essay: Due in Class]

Policies for Grading

Grading System: For each assignment, students can expect to receive a grade that includes a letter, plus a numerical conversion, expressed according to the following guideline of percentages: A+ (90-100%, Outstanding); A (85-89%, Excellent); A- (80-84%); B+ (77-79%, Very Good); B (74-76%, Good); B- (70-73%); C+ (67-69%, Average); C (64-66%, Satisfactory); C- (60-63%); D+ (55-59%); D (50-54%, Minimal Pass); F (0-49%, Fail).

Late Assignments: The schedule for this course depends heavily upon students delivering their work on the specified, assigned dates. All students must submit their assignments by deadline to avoid any penalties for tardiness, unless arrangements have been made in advance with the instructor to accommodate crises. Any late assignments are penalized with the loss of one third of a letter grade for each business day late— (for example, a paper that might have otherwise received a ‘B’ must receive the mark of ‘B-’ if the paper is submitted one day late). No papers can be accepted five business days after the due date. No extensions can be granted on assignments, except in cases of officially documented sickness or hardship.

Plagiarism: Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Please refer to the following information and make sure you are familiar with the statement below on plagiarism.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

Scribe and Muse Club for English Students: The Scribe and Muse Reading and Writing Club (SMRWC) fosters and champions reading and writing through community service, leadership, and engagement. We strive to enhance the academic and social experience of undergraduate students by promoting academic excellence and interaction between students, faculty, and the community, through social, cultural, and academic events <http://english.ucalgary.ca/scribe-and-muse-english-club>. Our email address is smecuofc@gmail.com.

English Department Website: For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English, please go to our website at <http://english.ucalgary.ca>. Please note that the course outlines posted on the English Department website constitute the official course outline for purposes of appeals. Students should verify any hard copies against this posted version. For courses which employ numerical grades, the official departmental percentage to letter grade conversion scale is also posted on the department website.

Writing support: The Student Success Centre offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students. <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Guidelines on e-mail Etiquette:

<http://www.enough.utoronto.ca/computeruse/eetiquette.htm>

Library and Research Support: Melanie Boyd, Librarian for English, offers research support to students, including strategies for finding articles, books, and other library materials. Contact: maboymd@ucalgary.ca
Find The English Pages research guide here: <http://libguides.ucalgary.ca/english>

Follow the Department of English on Facebook & Twitter:



Academic regulations and schedules: Consult the Calendar for course information, university and faculty regulations, dates, deadlines and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the University Calendar is <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/index.htm>

Grade appeals: Consult the following University Calendar link and request advice from the English Department office, SS 1152. Please note that “mere dissatisfaction with a decision is not sufficient grounds for the appeal of a grade or other academic decision.”
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

Deferral of term work and final examinations: Should you require an extension for completion of term papers or assignments beyond the deadline of five days after the end of lectures, an Application of Deferment of Term Work form must be completed. The University also has regulations governing the deferral of final examinations. See Calendar: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>.

Student Accommodations: Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf.

Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>;

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/>

“Safewalk” Program: Campus Security will escort individuals day or night: call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot pay booths.
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk/>

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources: Have a question, but not sure where to start? The new Arts Students’ Centre (ASC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS102, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at ascarts@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.

For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre (formerly the Undergraduate programs Office) at (403) 220-5881 or visit them in their new space on the 3rd Floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

Contact for Students Union Representatives for the Faculty of Arts:

arts1@su.ucalgary.ca, arts2@su.ucalgary.ca, arts3@su.ucalgary.ca, arts4@su.ucalgary.ca

Contact for Students Ombudsman's Office: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI): "At the University of Calgary, feedback provided by students through the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) survey provides valuable information to help with evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching, and selecting courses (www.ucalgary.ca/usri). Your responses make a difference - please participate in USRI Surveys."

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence. Please read the following information carefully. The penalty routinely recommended by the English Department for documented plagiarism is failure of the course in which the offence occurred; academic probation is also routinely applied at the Faculty level. Suspension or expulsion can result from severe or repeated plagiarism.

The University Calendar states:

1. Plagiarism - Essentially plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:

- (a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),
- (b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,
- (c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,
- (d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted.

Plagiarism occurs when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, or when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. Citing your sources in a bibliography is not enough, because a bibliography does not establish which parts of a student's work are taken from other sources. MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose. Advice on adequate documentation can be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/>
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT

According to the University Calendar, (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/j.html>) "The University of Calgary community has undertaken to be guided by the following statements of purpose and values: to promote free inquiry and debate, to act as a community of scholars, ..., to respect, appreciate, and encourage diversity, [and] to display care and concern for community". The Department of English, like the university as a whole, is committed to a "positive and productive learning and working environment." This environment is characterized by appreciation and encouragement of diversity and respect for the dignity of all persons: students, support staff, and faculty. The department will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, such as threatening gestures, threatening or abusive verbal or written communication (including e-mails), or any conduct that "seriously disrupts the lawful education and related activities of students and/or university staff". Any cases of such misconduct should be reported immediately to the department Head, who, depending on the nature and severity of the incident, may then take further appropriate action.