

FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
COURSE OUTLINE

ENGLISH 603.21-01: Studies in Genre: Cyberpunk
(Fridays, 10:00-12:45 in SS1015)

Winter 2016

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Office hours: F 1-2 and by appointment

Studies in Genre: Cyberpunk

Course Description: Charles Stross infamously remarked that “Cyberpunk is roadkill on the information superhighway of the 1990s.” This class takes Stross’s quip as a provocation to investigate the fate of the Cyberpunk genre with a critical acuity that takes us beyond the nostalgia of retrospective or the certitude of post-mortem dissection. Specifically, we will be exploring the possibility that Cyberpunk never died—that it recursively fed back into science fiction literature as a transformative influence (“It evolved into birds.”—Neal Stephenson), or infiltrated the present and future by massively dispersing itself within and among our techno-cultural networks (“Nothing ‘happened’ [to Cyberpunk], it’s just more evenly distributed now.”—Pat Cadigan). Our class examines the work of first-wave writers such as William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, and Pat Cadigan, paying attention to how characteristic styles, philosophical problems, and socioeconomic preoccupations of the genre persist in the subsequent fiction of a group of authors that includes Nalo Hopkinson, Elizabeth Bear, and Greg Egan, who are not conventionally associated with the Cyberpunks. We will also ask whether the genre is not about predicting the future as much as exploring the emergence of new media forms and our intimacies with them. Accordingly, the class analyzes Cyberpunk cinema, graphic novels, and video games that ask what happens when technology gets underneath our skin and inside our brains.

Texts and readings:

- William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (Ace)
- Bruce Sterling, *Schismatrix Plus* (Ace)
- Masamune Shirow, *Ghost in the Shell* (Kodansha)
- Pat Cadigan, *Synners* (Gateway SF)
- Neal Stephenson, *The Diamond Age* (Spectra)
- Greg Egan, *Diaspora* (Orion)
- Nalo Hopkinson, *Brown Girl in the Ring* (Grand Central)
- Elizabeth Bear, *Hammered* (Spectra)
- Peter Watts, *Blindsight* (Tor)

- All additional texts provided by instructor. The class includes a screening of David Cronenberg’s *ExistenZ* (1999) and a play-through of the video game *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* (2011; 2013), which will be available in the Taylor Family Digital Library

Assignments and Evaluation:

- In-Class Presentation: 25%
- Critical Annotations (2 responses of 600 words at 15% apiece): 30%
- Final Research Paper (4000 words): 45%

In-Class Presentation: The main purpose of this twenty-minute presentation is to prompt exploration of the primary and secondary readings for a particular week. Therefore, while students should present arguments about the various texts, they should also pose discussion questions for debate and further investigation. Although the formal presentation is only twenty minutes long, students are encouraged to consider themselves discussion leaders for the seminar in which they deliver their presentations. Note that the in-class presentations require no written work to be handed in, and the instructor will provide written feedback and a grade one week after the presentation.

Critical Annotations: These short, 600-word assignments provide opportunities to hone potential final paper arguments and begin compiling bibliographies. Students focus on a page or passage that they found particularly difficult or fascinating in a given work. They conduct independent research in order to find a secondary source that helps to clarify or interpret the selected passage. Then, drawing on that source, the student analyses the passage and suggests some further research questions or problems.

Final Research Paper: This 4000-word paper must make use of at least 10 secondary sources—historical, literary-critical, and/or theoretical in nature—in order to further investigate any work from the syllabus. Students propose their own topics based on individual scholarly interests. Note that this essay must include an annotated works cited page and follow MLA formatting and style guidelines.

Additional Class Policies:

- There is no final exam in this course.
- It is necessary to complete all course assignments in order to receive a passing grade.
- To facilitate participation, students should complete the assigned readings before class and bring the relevant texts to seminar. Annotating books and making reading notes are excellent ways to prepare, but certainly not mandatory.
- Assignments should be handed in to the instructor. If it is not possible to do so, assignments can be left in the departmental dropbox in SS 1152.

Grading system:

Grades are calculated according to the 4 point scale used in the *Graduate Calendar*:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/grad/current/gs-g-1.html>

Grade	Grade Point Value	Graduate Description
A+	4.00	Outstanding
A	4.00	Excellent-superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of the subject matter

A-	3.70	Very good performance
B+	3.30	Good performance
B	3.00	Satisfactory performance
B-	2.70	Minimum pass for students in Faculty of Graduate Studies
C+	2.30	All grades below B- are indicative of failure at the graduate level and cannot be counted towards Faculty of Graduate Studies course requirements.
C	2.00	
C-	1.70	
D+	1.30	
D	1.00	
F	0.00	

Please note: A B- is considered a minimum pass for students in the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the four-point system, the course instructor will employ this mark to distinguish superlative work that exceeds expectations in style, correctness, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality.

In the case of Instructors using numerical marks in the grading of term work, the departmental conversion chart applies.

90 + %	A+	4.0
85 – 89 %	A	4.0
80 – 84 %	A–	3.7
77 – 79 %	B+	3.3
74 – 76 %	B	3.0
70 – 73 %	B–	2.7
67 – 69 %	C+	2.3
64 – 66 %	C	2.0
60 – 63 %	C–	1.7
55 – 59 %	D+	1.3
50 – 54 %	D	1.0
0 – 49 %	F	0

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>

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/graduate>. 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>

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: maboyn@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 Department of English's graduate website for courses, departmental deadlines, and other related program information at <http://english.ucalgary.ca/node/245>. Consult the Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar for university and faculty regulations, dates, deadline, fees, and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar is <http://grad.ucalgary.ca>.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact the Graduate Office at 403 220 5484 or visit us in Social Sciences Tower 1148 in the first instance.

For program planning and advice, contact the Graduate Program Administrator at enggrad@ucalgary.ca to make an appointment with Dr. Aruna Srivastava, Graduate Program Director.

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/>

Contact for the Graduate Student Association: <http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/>

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

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.