



ENG 125

Medical Ethics in Science Fiction

First-Year Intensive

Fall 2015

T, F 12-1:15

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 2:30-3:30 and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Medical Ethics in Science Fiction is a small seminar focusing on the ethical, legal, and social implications of medical science as interrogated through science fiction texts. Students will engage in a variety of writing assignments designed to think about not only literary genre (science fiction) but also larger social/ethical issues that have real-world implications. Through Science Fiction literature and film, we will explore questions such as: How does medical science as depicted in science fiction shape how we understand our humanity? Our personhood? And how does this culturally and historically contingent institution shape relationships, individual-to-individual, individual-to-group, and group-to-group? Science fiction has long been concerned with these questions and provides an useful lens through which to interrogate medicine as a discourse and practice, our habituated patterns of thinking about what/who is normal/human, what/who is pathological or non/human, and why.

The seminar will take full advantage of two sets of programming: 1) the Fall Higgins Symposium on Human Being/ Being Human and 2) the Science Fiction Studies Collaborative's special programming (anticipated to be a Visiting Scholar and an artist in Residence, both of whom specialize in questions on Science Fiction and ethics). These will provide communities of learning outside the classroom; classes will also have structured opportunities to be in dialogue with other Science Fiction courses. The course satisfies the university Program in Liberal Studies' Values Perspective as well as the English department's major requirement (B-2 Genre Course).

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

First Year Intensive Seminars are structured to empower you to become acculturated to college academics, life, and expectations as well as to become more responsible for your own learning through regular feedback such as conferences, papers with detailed comments, and peer evaluation. Additionally, the university's core requirement of the Values Perspective, the

English Department's genre requirement, and the overall LEEP intellectual development model offer the following outcomes:

- **The Values Perspective:**

Values Perspective courses examine the moral dimension of human life as reflected in personal behavior, institutional structures and public policy in local and global communities. Courses taught from the values perspective focus not only on the systematic formulation and analysis of moral and ethical claims, but also on how moral decisions affect both the individual and society. This course specifically examines the ethical contours of medical science (and thereby explores the responsibility of medical practitioners) in its power to identify, name, and at times "pathologize" (human) difference. How does medical science shape how we understand our humanity? Our personhood? And how does this culturally and historically contingent institution shape relationships, individual-to-individual, individual-to-group, and group-to-group?

- **English Department/Genre Requirement (B-2):**

100-level genre courses are organized around literary form. In this class, you will learn the literary conventions of science fiction and write a final longer essay (up to 10 pages) that reflects your understanding of the genre.

- **LEEP Outcomes:**

Medical Ethics in Science Fiction engages with the following LEEP educational outcomes:

- 1) **Knowledge of the Natural World and Human Cultures and Societies**—including foundational disciplinary knowledge and the ability to employ different ways of knowing the world in its many dimensions: *specifically, the course explores ways of understanding the world by engaging the "big questions" about the role of medicine in culture, medicine's role in defining humanity, about how medicine often times helps to form our habituated patterns of thinking about human social relations and group hierarchy through a literary lens.*
- 2) **Personal and Social Responsibility**—including ethical reasoning and action, the intercultural understanding and competence to participate in a global society, civic knowledge and engagement locally as well as globally, and the lifelong habits of critical self-reflection and learning: *specifically, we will explore some of the questions about medical ethics that science fiction literature and film raise, namely the ethical, legal, and social implications of medical technology and scientific advancement, its impact on how we are socialized to treat "alien others," and how we may begin to develop our own personal ethics via this critical interrogation.*

Assignments and Evaluation:

Short Essays (50%):

5 (3-4 page) papers (3 original essays, 2 re-writes) will be due at the end of each module/section wherein, using the readings discussed in class, you write an analytical essay engaging *at least two* of the texts from the section. These are due on the Wednesday following the conclusion of

the module. Re-writes are due no later than **10 days** after the original graded paper has been returned.

Discussion Leaders (15%)

Discussion leaders are responsible for developing questions for discussion and highlighting key points for further analysis from **one of the 4 designated special events**. You will present in groups. Relevant supplemental materials (e.g., audio/visual/multimedia aids or supplemental critical materials) may be brought in to help contextualize the discussion. Handouts may be helpful for your fellow classmates to engage with the discussion; you may want to conduct some sort of exercise that engages the class in dialogue about the subject. Your presentation should cover context and pose questions that invite deeper levels of analysis of the material.

Midterm Exam (10%)

There will be one in-class exam at midterm that will require analytical engagement with the concepts with the course as well as test your understanding of science fiction as a genre.

Final Paper (15%): Students will write an 8-10 page research essay (with an argumentative thesis). This essay will address a major theme of your choosing relevant to course readings and discussions. Specifications to be administered at a later date.

Attendance & Participation (10%): All members of the class are expected to arrive prepared to discuss readings. Please note, mere attendance does not constitute active participation. Active participation is a key factor in understanding and learning. In addition to class discussion, participation includes attendance, handing in assignments on time, and arriving to class *before* class begins.

Classroom Policies and Expectations:

Attendance is imperative to your success in this course and to your development as a writer.

You are allowed **3 unexcused** absences; every absence thereafter results in the lowering of your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade. **Excused absences** (supported by a note from your physician or the dean) will not affect your grade.

- **Plagiarism** is the representation of another's work or ideas as your own. It includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism will be reported in accordance with university policy to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.
- **Late assignments** are unacceptable. Graded assignments will be lowered by **one-third of a letter grade** for each day the assignment is late past the due date. Papers late by five days receive an automatic "0."
- **Emailing** correspondence: All written assignments are due in class as hard, paper copies unless otherwise indicated. Should you need to email me regarding anything pertaining to the course, be mindful that email correspondence still conforms to standard rules of etiquette and respect.
- **Cell phones and other technology, including laptops** should be turned off and put away during class unless they have been approved for use through disability services.

- The **Office of Disability Services** offers a variety of services for students with documented disabilities. The office of Disability Services is located at Room 430 of the Goddard Library. They can also be reached via email at disabilityoffice@clarku.edu or 508-798-4368.
- The **Writing Center** is an excellent free resource for Clark Students. Please avail yourself of their individualized, one-on-one appointments to help with development of your writing skills. You can schedule an appointment online at <https://clarku.mywconline.com> or by phone: 508-793-7405.

Engaged Academic Time:

The bulk of your time in this class will be spent reading for understanding of new information and analysis of key concepts crucial to class discussions and paper writing. Written assignments are intended to enable you the opportunity to synthesize your command of the concepts and issues explored during the course. Most of your outside time will be spent reading and simultaneously researching, then writing your paper, and attending special events that represent an engaged academic life in college.

In Class Meetings/Discussions:	(1.25h x 25 days) =	31.25 hours
Required Readings:	(Weekly Readings, novels and essays)	40 hours
Short Essay assignments:	(5 essays x 6 hrs) =	32 hours
Class Presentation	(Research, Preparation of Handouts, etc.)	10 hours
Research/Bibliography and Final		32 hours
Final Paper and Presentation		26 hours
Special Events (Higgins, SFSC)		10 hours
	Total:	181.25 hours

Required Texts:

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
 Octavia Butler, *Fledgling*
 Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*
 Manjula Padmanabhan, "Harvest"
 Nalo Hopkinson, *Brown Girl in the Ring*
 Nancy Kress, *Beggars in Spain*
 Supplemental shorter readings on Moodle

Required Events (you will receive a note requesting permission to miss scheduled conflicts):

- **Thursday, 10/15:** Sleep Dealer film and Director Talk-Back, 7:30p.m., Razzo Auditorium
- **Friday, 11/6:** The Cultural Work of Science Fiction Symposium 3-7p.m., Higgins Lounge

Designated Special Events [For Group Presentations]

- **"Queer Frankenstein,"** George Haggerty. Tuesday, 9/8, 4:00 p.m.
- **"Becoming Human,"** Mary Evelyn Tucker. Thursday, 9/24, 7:00 p.m.
- **"Empathy, Science, and the Pursuit of Peace,"** Emile Bruneau. Tuesday, 10/6, 7:00
- **"The Anatomized Woman,"** Joanna Ebenstein. Tuesday, 11/10, 7 p.m.

Course Schedule

Week 1

8/25 -- Course Introduction: Expectations and Anticipation

8/28 -- Speculations on Medical Ethics: What is Science Fiction? What is Medical Ethics? Why Think About Them Together?

Liu, "The Five Elements of the HeartMind" (Moodle)

College Skills Workshop: Understanding Discourse Communities

Week 2	Who/What is Human?: The Ethics of Science and Creation
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9/8 Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Ethics in Focus: The Scientist as "Creator" and Responsibility to One's "Hideous Progeny"

SPECIAL EVENT: "QUEER FRANKENSTEIN" 4:00 p.m.

9/11 Shelley, *Frankenstein*

College Skills Workshop: Time Management

Week 3

9/15 Butler, *Fledgling*

Ethics in Focus: Genomics, Eugenics, Law and Policy Formation

9/18 Butler, *Fledgling*

College Skills Workshop: "Entering the Conversation" – Linked Events

Week 4	The "Red Market:" Organ Donation and Social Hierarchy
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9/22 Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*

WEDNESDAY 9/23: Ethics of Science and Creation paper DUE.

9/24 (Thursday) SPECIAL EVENT: "BECOMING HUMAN," 7:00 P.M.

9/25 Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*

Ethics in Focus: Cloning

College Skills Workshop: Life outside the classroom: CAVE presentation

Week 5

9/29 Hopkinson, *Brown Girl in the Ring*

Ethics in Focus: Disposable Bodies

10/2 Hopkinson, *Brown Girl in the Ring*

College Skills Workshop: Communication Etiquette

Week 6

10/6 Padmanabhan, "Harvest"

Ethics in Focus: The Developing World and the Red Market

SPECIAL EVENT: "EMPATHY, SCIENCE, AND THE PURSUIT OF PEACE" 7p

10/9 Midterm Exam

Week 7	Medical Ethics and Labor
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10/13 NO CLASS; FALL BREAK

WEDNESDAY 10/14: Organ Donation and Social Hierarchy paper DUE.

Thurs. 10/15 SPECIAL EVENT: A-I-R ALEX RIVERA + SLEEP DEALER SCREENING

10/16 Science Fiction Studies Collaborative Visiting Artist Alex Rivera; Film Screening/
Master Class

Sleep Dealer Discussion

College Skills Workshop: The logic of course selection and registration

Week 8

10/20 *Sleep Dealer* Discussion and Visiting Artist Redux

Workshop: Writing About Film

10/23 Film, *Gattaca*

Week 9

10/27 *Gattaca* (cont.)
Ethics in Focus: Disposable Labor

10/30 Kress, *Beggars in Spain*
College Skills Workshop: Open Forum/Your choice

Week 10

11/3 Kress, *Beggars in Spain*
Ethics in Focus: "Designer Babies" and Pre-Implantation Genetic Selection

11/6 Liu, "The Algorithm of Love"
SPECIAL EVENT: The Cultural Work of Science Fiction Symposium 3-6pm

Week 11	INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH
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11/10 Trethewey, "Knowledge"
SPECIAL EVENT: "THE ANATOMIZED WOMAN" 7 P.M.
College Skills Workshop: "Entering the Conversation: Research"
Refining General Ideas and Developing [Good] Research Questions

WEDNESDAY 11/11: MEDICAL ETHICS AND LABOR PAPER DUE

11/13 LIBRARY/GUIDED RESEARCH DAY

Week 12

11/17 The Research Paper (CONT.) Workshop Topic TBD

11/20 The Research Paper (CONT.) Workshop Topic TBD

Week 13

11/24 Research Day in the Library

11/27 -- NO CLASS; THANKSGIVING

Week 14

12/1 Paper conferences

12/4 Paper conferences (Last day of class)

FINAL PAPERS DUE TUESDAY 12/8 BY 4:00 P.M. IN ENGLISH DEPARTMENT "PAPER CENTRAL."