

Course title (English): Speculative Fiction in a Global Perspective

Course title (Hebrew): סיפורת ספקולטיבית בפרספקטיבה גלובלית

Course number: 132.2.0254 / 132.2.0264.

Course slot (semester/s, weekday/s, hours): Yearly (Semester A+B), Thursdays 14:00-16:00

Lecturer: Ruth Wenske

Lecturer's conference hour and contact details: Mondays 14:00-16:00 (by email appointment, noruthie@gmail.com)

Course description & objectives:

Speculative fiction has become an umbrella term for a range of literary genres that can broadly be defined as non-realist, including science fiction, fantasy, magical realism, slipstream fiction, alternate history, and more. These works deal with scientific and technological advancements; utopian and dystopian futures; time and space travel; life on other planets and alien invasions; indigenous ontologies and beliefs; and in Margaret Atwood's terms, "those imagined other worlds located somewhere apart from our everyday on."

In this course, we will read a broad selection of speculative works to gain an overview of the genres of speculative fiction and the distinctions between them; the development of these genres in different global contexts; their imaginative appeal in the context of historical developments; and how speculative fiction's current popularity speaks to questions of transnational social justice. By reading works from North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa, we will think of speculative fiction as a global phenomenon, for instance by linking the development of Euro-American science fiction to colonialism (think of the trope of alien invasions as imperial conquest!). We will further problematize the distinction between highbrow and lowbrow that often characterizes the branding of speculative fictions as "genre fiction," and ask what in our current moment makes speculative fiction so appealing to many, especially young readers.

Course requirements:

Mandatory attendance (with up to three unexcused absences during the semester).

Participation and writing assignments on Moodle*	20%
Annotated bibliography for blog post	10%
Class presentation (15-20 minutes)	25%
Final assignment: blog post (1,000-2,000 words)	45%

Total 100%

* Every semester, there will be five writing assignments called "transcription notes" on Moodle, which are mandatory but not graded. All the other assignments are in preparation for your final assignment, which is a blog post. At the end of the first semester, you will be required to submit an annotated bibliography, where you choose the topic for your blog post, and suggest four secondary sources (academic articles) for this blog post. During the second semester, you will present the idea for your blog post to the class, and finally write the assignment by the end of the second semester (with a mandatory draft to be handed in two weeks ahead of the semester end).

Topics & bibliography (subject to change)

Fall Semester | First Half of the 20th Century

1. **4 January: Introduction:** Watching Wanuri Kahiu, *Pumzi* short film (2009)

Section one: A historical overview of speculative fiction

2. **11 January:** Isaac Asimov, “Youth” (1952) **ASSIGNMENT** (three out of six each semester)
3. **18 January:** Jorge Louis Borges, “The Lottery in Babylon” (1941)
4. **25 January:** Dilman Dila, “The Leafy Man,” from *A Killing in the Sun* (2014) | **ASSIGNMENT**
5. **1 February:** John Rider, introduction to *Postcolonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (2008) |

Section two: Science fiction

6. **8 February:** Excerpts from *In the Black Fantastic* (2023) + Mark Bould and Sherryl Vint. “There Is No Such Thing as Science Fiction” (2008) | **ASSIGNMENT**
7. **15 February:** Nnedi Okorafor, first chapters of *Who Fears Death* (2010)
8. **22 February:** Nalo Hopkinson, first chapters of *Midnight Robber* (2000) | **ASSIGNMENT**

Section three: Climate change and the real-world traction of speculative fiction

9. **29 February:** Nick Wood, “Just Stories: The Role of Speculative Fiction in Challenging the Growing Climate Apartheid” (2022)
10. **7 March:** Margaret Atwood, opening chapters of “Oryx and Crake” (2003) | **ASSIGNMENT**
11. **14 March:** Noel Cheruto, “We Broke Nairobi” (2021)

15.4 ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Spring Semester

Each class this semester will also include a student’s presentation.

Section One: From science fiction to fantasy

1. **2 May:** Efua Traoré, *Children of the Quicksand* | **ASSIGNMENT**
2. **9 May:** Efua Traoré, *Children of the Quicksand*

Section two: Global science fiction

3. **16 May:** Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, “What Do We Mean When We Say ‘Global Science Fiction?’ Reflections on a New Nexus” (2012)
4. **23 May:** “Readymade Bodhisattva” by Park Seonghwani, in *Readymade Bodhisattva*, edited by Sunyoung Park and Sang Joon Park (2019). | **ASSIGNMENT**
5. **30 May:** T.L. Huchu [Tendai Huchu], *Egoli*, in *Africanfuturism: An Anthology*, edited by Wole Talabi (2020) | **ASSIGNMENT**

Section three: Magical realism

6. **6 June:** Introduction to *A Companion to Magical Realism*, Stephen M. Hart and Wen-Chin Ouyang.
7. **13 June:** Salman Rushdie, Sections from *Midnight’s Children* (1988) | **ASSIGNMENT**
8. **20 June:** Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1968)

Section four: Posthumanism

9. **27 June:** Colin Milburn, “Posthumanism,” from *The Oxford Handbook of Science Fiction*, edited by Rob Latham (2014). **DRAFT OF THE FINAL ASSIGNMENT (BLOG POST) DUE**
10. **4 July:** Ben Okri, first chapters from *The Famished Road* (1991)
11. **11 July:** Akwaeke Emezi, first chapters from *Freshwater* (2018)

11 July: FINAL ASSIGNMENT (BLOG POST) DUE