

# COLI 120, Section 02

## Speculative Fiction of the Global North & South

### Binghamton University, Fall Semester 2023

Instructor: Kiel M. Gregory

Office: [REDACTED] & virtual

Office Hours: Wednesday 10:00 am-12:00 pm and by appointment

Email: kiel.gregory@binghamton.edu

Classroom: [REDACTED]

Class Time: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 12:00 pm-1:00 pm

#### Course Description

This course introduces students to a wide range of speculative fiction from both the American and European literary center as well as the Eastern and Middle Eastern periphery. Many reading and film selections address the role technology plays in our current and near-future lives; other selections pose philosophical issues central to the human experience, such as selfhood and identity, temporality, love, gender, ethical dilemmas, knowledge, consciousness, the mind-body problem, and the problem of other minds. Readings are paired in such a way so as to encourage participants to compare adjacent texts to see how differing authors and cultures address similar concepts. The broad objective of this course is for participants to learn how to read effectively, to gain a familiarity with both widely acclaimed media as well as other highly accomplished yet more obscure works, to compare those works to see what each text accomplishes and how it does so, and to think critically and analytically when approaching difficult-to-answer philosophical questions.

#### Student Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- (i) demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of literary studies;
- (ii) demonstrate knowledge of how two or more distinctive world regions have influenced and interacted with one another and how such interactions have been informed by their respective cultures or civilizations; and
- (iii) recognize and analyze nuance and complexity of meaning through critical reflections on text, visual images, sound and soundscapes, or artifacts.

#### Required Texts

##### Novels & Novellas:

Amal El-Mohtar & Max Gladstone. *This is How You Lose the Time War* (New York: Saga, 2019)

Han Kang. *The Vegetarian*. Translated by Deborah Smith. (New York: Hogarth, 2015)

Kazuo Ishiguro. *Never Let Me Go* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005)

##### Short Stories (selections posted to Brightspace):

Ted Chiang. Selections from *Exhalation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019)

---. "The Great Silence" (2016)  
Helen De Cruz, "The Cave of Adventure" (2021)  
Harlan Ellison, "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream" (1967)  
Sarah Gailey, "STET" (2018)  
William Gibson, "Burning Chrome" (1982)  
Robert A. Heinlein, "All You Zombies" (1959)  
Usman T. Malik, "The Vaporization Enthalpy of a Peculiar Pakistani Family" (2015)  
Frederik Pohl, "Day Million" (1966)  
Peter Watts, "Hotshot" (2009)  
---. "The Island" (2014)  
---. "Giants" (2014)  
Caroline A. Yoachim, "Welcome to the Medical Clinic at the Interplanetary Relay Station | Hours Since the Last Patient Death: 0" (2016)  
E. Lily Yu, "In the Forests of Memory" (2018)

#### **Film & Cinema:**

*Akira*, Directed by Katsuhiro Otomo (1988)  
*Memento*, Directed by Christopher Nolan (2001)  
*Predestination*, Directed by Michael Spierig & Peter Spierig (2014)  
*Love, Death + Robots* (selections)

#### **Theory & Philosophy:**

We may occasionally read selections from authors producing scholarship in various fields of philosophy and literary criticism. These texts may be reviewed during a class session or assigned in addition to literary readings (novels/short stories/film/etc.). Some of these texts may prove challenging to read or understand; the goal in exploring these texts is to provide students with an analytical framework which, when applied to a given literary text, should help tease out deeper meaning or encourage students to think about texts, or some aspect thereof, in more intellectually satisfying ways.

#### **Required Assessments**

Attendance and Participation	20%
Reading Assessments	30%
Midterm	20%
Major Project Proposal	10%
Major Project	20%

#### **Attendance & Participation**

Attendance is critical for our class discussion, for your participation grade in this course, and for your success in your studies generally. All students have one "freebee" absence; absences beyond the first will require a 250-word response to the day's assigned readings in order to get participation credit for the day. Responses are due before the start of the following class session. Please only email me if there is an exigent circumstance which requires you to miss multiple class sessions or if you need my assistance in any way.

### Academic Rigor and Credit Hours

This course is a 4-credit course, which means that in addition to the scheduled lectures/discussions, students are expected to do at least 9.5 hours of course-related work each week during the semester. This includes things such as: completing assigned readings, participating in lab sessions, studying for tests and examinations, preparing written assignments, completing internship or clinical placement requirements, and other tasks that must be completed to earn credit in the course.

### Reading Assessments

There will be 10 in-class reading assessments. These assessments will test your ability to recall content from the assigned reading material. You must be present (i.e., in class) to complete these assessments. In at least some cases, you will be informed in advance that there will be an assessment on a given reading. This, however, might not always be the case. Students must complete a minimum of eight reading assessments to pass the course. No “make ups” permitted.

### Midterm

This assignment will involve composing a short, hand-written essay in which you are tasked with incorporating at least two assigned texts prior to the midpoint of the course. Fret not! You are free to write on whatever you feel is valuable to you as a developing scholar, so long as you include commentary on at least two assigned texts. Outside material, such as readings from another course, may be included in your discussion if you so choose. No formal citation is necessary, but referencing sourced material in some way is always required (as is expected of all scholars in any setting).

### Major Project

The major project tasks you with contributing to (or intervening in) a particular discourse community by presenting an original idea you have had on a concept addressed in class, creating your own piece of short fiction, venturing into a new media format, or some other project that exemplifies a critical and comparative understanding of at least two readings assigned in the course. Projects may take a wide range of forms and may adopt (or resist!) the conventions of any number of formats. The following are some options available to you:

- A research paper. This is the most formal option and requires full citation and footnotes (if applicable). **4-5 pages**; must conform to established conventions of the citation style you choose (either the Chicago Manual of Style or Modern Language Association (MLA) format); must include at least two sources, one of which must be an academic source assigned in class or retrieved from a book or a scholarly research database.
- Oral presentation. Typically written in a slightly less formal tone, this project will be aimed at engaging an academic audience. **15 minutes, presented during a class session.**
- Your own short story. Tell me a fresh, unique story in **500-1500 words**. Shorter or longer stories are acceptable, but I must be truly moved by a story of less than 500 words, and I must be truly invested in a story of more than 1500 words.
- A new media or non-traditional media project. Projects that engage with course content in new media formats (e.g., podcasts, videos, hypertext, webpage(s)) or non-traditional formats (sculpture, robotics, musical composition, etc.) are also welcome.

If you choose any of the latter three formats, please be sure to connect with me well ahead of the midterm so we can plan accordingly. If you have other ideas for a major project, please feel free to discuss them with me.

### Course Policies

- (1) I reserve the right to **amend the syllabus** and/or reading schedule during the semester. Any changes will be announced at least one week in advance.
- (2) In order to pass the course, at least eight of the 10 reading assessments must be completed in addition to the midterm, major project proposal, and major project.
- (3) **Extensions** must be requested prior to the due date of the assignment in question. No extensions or make-ups for the reading assessments will be considered.
- (4) While I recognize the significance and import of **technology in the classroom**, I reserve the right to have laptops, cellphones, and other electronic devices stowed during class time.
- (5) Per the Binghamton University Bulletin, I reserve the right to deny a student the privilege of taking the final examination or of receiving credit for the course, or may prescribe other academic penalties, if the student misses more than 25 percent of the total class sessions. Excessive tardiness (defined as arriving 10 or more minutes after start time) may count as absence.
- (6) The use of generative AI tools or apps to prepare for or complete assignments is strictly prohibited in this course.

### Academic Integrity

It is contrary to the spirit of intellectual inquiry to submit another's statements or ideas as one's own work. Proper acknowledgement of another's ideas, whether by direct quotation or paraphrase, is expected. In particular, if any written or electronic source is consulted and material is used from that source, directly or indirectly, the source must be identified by author, title, and page number, or by website and date accessed. Any doubts about what constitutes "use" should be addressed to the instructor. Students are free to use Chicago Manual of Style or MLA citation formats.

### Content Warnings

Like many literature and culture courses which explore the depth and development of human existence, some of the material in this course contains troubling and disturbing content. I have not provided specific content warnings on the syllabus because it is virtually impossible to anticipate what material each student may find triggering as each individual reader will have varying responses to each token content. If you are, in any way, struggling to engage with certain material, please communicate this to me and we will develop an alternative way for you to engage with course themes.

### Diversity Statement

Binghamton University is committed to diversity and rigorous inquiry which arises from multiple, sometimes conflicting, perspectives. I believe we have the highest-quality discussions when we recognize and respect diversity in all its forms. I thus expect to maintain a productive learning environment based on mutual respect, free thought, inclusion, and non-discrimination. Any suggestions for promoting an environment rich with academic freedom will be welcomed.

### **Accessibility Statement**

Binghamton University is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs. If you have a disability (or think you may have a disability) and need accommodation to participate fully in this course, please contact the instructor and [ssd@binghamton.edu](mailto:ssd@binghamton.edu) (Services for Students with Disabilities) so we can ensure that your accommodations are formally registered with the University.

### **Resources**

The following offices at the University offer student support services. If you need assistance navigating any university resource, please let me know.

- [Office of the Dean of Students](#)
- [University Counseling Center](#)
- [Services for Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Office of the Ombudsman](#)
- [The Q Center](#)
- [Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)
- [VARCC](#)