

INDS 597: STRANGE GRACE – SCIENCE FICTION LITERATURE AND THEOLOGY

Everett Hamner

July 25 – 29, 1:15 – 4:15 pm

1 or 2 graduate credit hours; or 1 audit hour

COURSE DESCRIPTION

One of science fiction's most famous definitions is "the literature of cognitive estrangement," but it might also be called the literature of spiritual estrangement. Why should Christians want to journey through narratives that make the ordinary strange and the strange ordinary? Here's a start: because living faith requires openness to doubt. Because historically, perspectives challenging the moment's orthodoxy have been critical in helping the Church recover Jesus' unique vision of being human. And because this tradition regularly arranges fascinating collisions between key scientific discoveries and the wisest insights of theology, often yielding fertile new ground for both disciplines. Featuring a wide buffet of representative short stories and novels, introducing students to postsecular theory, and giving 2-credit students opportunities to submit literary criticism and creative writing, this course is an opportunity to find spiritual riches in some of the least expected places.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon the successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Reflect on the often counterintuitive means by which science fiction bears on theologies of faith, knowledge, justice, and grace, often by engaging race, gender, and other aspects of identity commonly categorized as "secular."
2. Recognize and thoughtfully discuss key cultural and theological debates at work in major periods and subgenres of science fiction literature, from "early/proto-SF" to "the pulps," "the Golden Age," "the New Wave," "cyberpunk," and "slipstream."
3. Understand and assess postsecular theory, a relatively recent challenge to both militant secularism and religious fundamentalism that wrestles honestly with the enduring impacts of theology on literature, culture, and their interpretation.

COURSE OUTLINE

Day 1 Early SF's Epic Allegories and the Problem of Dualism

Day 2 The Pulps, the Golden Age, and the Question of Epistemology

Day 3 The New Wave (of Love and Lamentations)

Day 4 Cyberpunk and the Spectacle of Faith

Day 5 Slipstream and Postsecular Possibilities

REQUIRED TEXTS

Evans, Arthur B., et al., eds. *The Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan, 2010. ISBN: 0819569550. \$62.95

All texts listed on the reading schedule but not included in the Wesleyan anthology will be available via PDF or on reserve in the Regent Library in advance of the course. Consult the full syllabus on Moodle for complete bibliography.

All prices subject to change without notice. The Regent College Bookstore offers a 20% discount on regularly priced books (some exceptions may apply).

Please Note: The Course Information Sheet is meant to assist in selecting courses.

The official syllabus should be consulted for more detailed information. Full syllabus with drop deadlines, policies, and course assignment details, is available on Moodle: moodle.regent-college.edu/login

