**ENGL 5330 Representations of Race in Contemporary Science Fiction**

Spring 2015

Dr. Ingram

T 2-4:50

**Office Hours**: T 12-2pm or by appointment

**Email:** pingram@uta.edu

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Part of the success and appeal of Gene Rodenberry’s *Star Trek* was its ability, in the era of Civil Rights unrest, to neutralize the fear of racial difference by foregrounding that difference. Science fiction as a genre has not always lived up to the potential of Rodenberry’s vision, often resorting to tokenism and caricature. The kiss between Lieutenant Uhura and Captain Kirk in the 1968 episode “Plato’s Stepchildren” is believed to be one of the first, if not the first, consensual “interracial kiss” on television and provides an interesting benchmark by which to view interracial intimacy as well as interracial relations, more generally, in current science fiction productions.

Studying a variety of film and television productions, this course will explore representations of race in contemporary science fiction cinema and television. We will consider whether science fiction as a genre offers the promise of a future without racism or whether it travels in well-traveled stereotypes of difference. In our analysis of more recent TV and film, including *Almost Human* and *Extant*, *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* and *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, we will explore the connections between current anxieties around bioengineering and android/cyborg life and race relations in the twenty-first century.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

* Understand the ways science fiction film and television engage with and contest ideologies of race.
* Develop a capacity for critical thinking. You will be equipped with the tools to perform critical analysis of popular culture and history.
* Appreciate the role that film and TV play in the construction of cultural norms, the maintenance of cultural hegemonies, and the production and contestation of ideologies of the center.

R**equired** **Reading:** All reading will be made available in pdf format on blackboard.

**Recommended:**

Corrigan, Timothy. *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*. Seventh Edition. Pearson

Longman, 2009.

**Your Grade:** This course requires active and consistent participation from all members of the class. The breakdown of your final grade is as follows.

* Screening Responses **30%**

## Presentation& paper **30%**

* Final Paper **40%**

**SCREENING RESPONSE**

The screening response is like a reader response paper, but it examines elements that are specific to film. You should follow the guidelines in chapters 1, 2 & 3 of *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* (Corrigan).

Primarily you are undertaking a preliminary analysis of the film, which can include an examination of the **narrative elements** (story, characters, point of view, etc), the **elements of composition** (shot, costumes, editing, etc.), and the **ideological elements** (the politics or vision of the movie; how it represents its characters, etc. see Corrigan p. 92). **Remember that whatever your focus, you want to tie your observations back to the larger question of how race is being articulated or represented through these elements.** You will not be able to cover all of these areas in each response, so pick the elements that are most interesting to you. Be sure to vary your focus on subsequent responses. In other words don’t write about the same topic (narrative or composition, etc.) every time.

* This is a formal piece of writing. It is **NOT a journal or diary entry.** **Do not** just explain why you do or don’t like the film.
* You are required to complete one of these for every film watched outside of class, except the film you present on.
* **These should be typed in Times New Roman 10 or 12pt. font, single-spaced and one page.**
* They should be uploaded to blackboard before 2:00pm on the day they are due.
* **No** **late papers, except in the case of documented illness, will be accepted.**

**PRESENTATION**

One of the key components of this course is examining the cultural work undertaken by science fiction films and television; specifically how they utilize representations of race to comment upon or critique prevailing ideologies. You should examine the methods and choices your film or episode makes in relation to representations of race and think about the influence that the film might have had or seeks to have on public discourse or perceptions about race.

**Grading Scale:**A= 90-100 D= 60-69B= 80-89 F= 59 and below

C= 70-79

**Papers**

**Presentation Paper**

PLEASE NOTE: You must hand in a written paper after your presentation. It should represent the content of the presentation, but will be a formal piece of writing, NOT bullet points. Do NOT read your paper during the presentation. You may refer to it, of course, but don’t read it word for word, please.

**PLAGIARISM**

In both oral and written communication, the following guidelines for avoiding plagiarism must be followed:

1. Any words quoted directly from a source must be in quotation marks (for a written assignment and referenced for an oral presentation) and cited.
2. Any paraphrasing or rephrasing of the words and/or ideas of a source must be cited.
3. Any ideas or examples derived from a source that are not in the public domain or of a general knowledge must be cited.
4. **All papers and presentations must be the student’s own work.**

Students who are confused about what constitutes plagiarism should meet with me.

Academic Honesty is expected of all students. Cheating and plagiarism are violations of academic honesty. Any student caught violating the academic honesty code will be failed for the entire semester and the matter will be reported, with documentation, to the Office of Student Conduct for further disciplinary action.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** Students who need accommodations are asked to arrange a meeting during office hours the first weekof classes, or earlier if accommodations are needed immediately. Bring a copy of all relevant paperwork to the meeting. If you do not have a notification for accommodations but need accommodations, make an appointment with the Office for Students with Disabilities, 102 University Hall, 2-3364.

**Student Support Services**:UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to resources@uta.edu, or view the information at [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).

**Electronic Communication:** UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as lecture, seminar, or laboratory shall be directed to complete a Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.