Anthropology and Aliens

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Office Hours: Wednesday 2-4pm

GTF: Annie Caruso

Location: 350 Clinical Services
Time: MW 10:00-11:20

Readings: Books will be available at the Duckstore. All other readings will be available online through Canvas. Textbooks will also be placed on reserve at the library.

Kuhn, Annette: Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema
LeGuin, Ursula K. The Word for World is Forest.
Butler, Octavia. Dawn.

Films: Students will be expected to view films outside of class. Films available from the UO Library will be made available on reserve. Others are widely available online or will be made available from the instructor’s collection and put on reserve as well. There will be selected clips and shorter television episodes or portions thereof shown in class as part of lecture.

Course Description

This class explores how anthropology and science fiction (or, more broadly, Speculative Fiction) have been linked together historically as each explores ideas about culture and society. Thematic questions addressed in the class include: what is an alien? What is "the human"? Could SF be possible without anthropology? The class investigates this convergence of interest through the analysis of SF in print, film, television etc. In addition, using science fiction, we will explore how fundamental concepts in anthropology such as linguistic and cultural relativism, national and cultural identity, class, the ethics of first contact; gender, marriage, and kinship; law, morality; religion; race and embodiment; politics,
violence, and war; medicine, healing, and consciousness; and the environment have entered into the ways in which we routinely think about the possibility of extraterrestrial life and the way in which we think about culture on our own planet.

**Social Science Requirement**

This course satisfies a General Education group requirement in the social sciences. The course is based on joining perspectives from anthropology, history, and speculative fiction to understand core insights of cultural anthropology, discuss themes of exploration, progress, cultural encounters, social organization and stratification, and human enhancement in science fiction and ethnographic narratives, apply an anthropological analysis to a science fiction text, and conceptualize the relationship between social science theory and the processes by which we come to understand the world around us.

**Expected Learning Outcomes**

1. Identify, explain and apply basic concepts in Anthropology:
   a. Linguistic and Cultural Relativism
   b. Cultural Identity and Diversity

2. Evaluate the history of Science Fiction in relation to Social Theory
   a. Science Fiction before the 19th Century
   b. Science Fiction during and after the Industrial Revolution, the Space Age etc.

3. Demonstrate the way the two disciplines have approached and influenced each other:
   a. Archaeological impacts
   b. Cultural anthropological impacts
   c. Folkloric impacts

4. Identify, explain, and critically analyze the role of Science Fiction and Anthropology in community constitution and relations, identity formation, and conflict negotiation for diverse groups of people in the United States and globally.

**Classroom Standards:**

There are some basic standards that students are expected to follow. These are intended to help create a comfortable environment for all students as free of distractions as possible.

1. Arrive on time and leave at the end of class! On a rare occasion, you might need to arrive late or leave early. You must inform the instructor or GTFs if you plan on leaving early. If so, sit in the back of the room near an aisle.
2. Don't have conversations with your neighbors!

3. If you bring a laptop, you MUST sit in the center aisle within the first six rows of the lecture hall. Your laptop MUST ONLY be used to take notes. No email, computer games, Facebook, YouTube, etc. Turn off cell phones and take the headphones out of your ears. GTFs may check to see that all computers are being used appropriately. Cell phones may be confiscated until the end of the class as well.

4. Though this is primarily a Lecture class, there will be times when students have the opportunity to speak, ask questions, give opinions, etc. It is important to be respectful to all and to listen openly to others’ comments.

Students who do not follow the standards may be asked to leave the lecture.

Policy on Late Work and Incompletes: No late exam essays will be accepted or make-up exams given, except under the following circumstances: Students inform the instructor in advance that they are ill (a doctor’s note is required) or that a documentable emergency has come up. In NO case will an essay be accepted beyond 3 days of when it was due. If a make-up exam is given, it will occur no later than 3 days after it was originally scheduled.

Students with Documented Disabilities: I respect the special needs of students with documented disabilities. It is important to be in touch with me early in the quarter. Accommodations will gladly be made!

Academic Honesty: Students at the UO are expected to act with academic honesty. It is the official policy of the University of Oregon that all acts of alleged academic dishonesty by students be reported to the Director of Student Conduct and Community Standards in the Office of Student Life. The two most prevalent forms of academic dishonesty are cheating and plagiarism.

---Cheating: The UO defines cheating as "an act of deception by which a student misrepresents or misleadingly demonstrates that he or she has mastered information on an academic exercise that he or she has not mastered, including the giving or receiving of unauthorized help in an academic exercise.

Examples include, but are not limited to: 1. copying from another student's test paper, computer program, project, product, or performance; 2. collaborating without authority or allowing another student to copy one's work in a test situation; 3. using the course textbook or other material not authorized for use during a test; 4. using unauthorized materials during a test; for example, notes, formula lists, cues on a computer, photographs, symbolic representations, and notes written on clothing; 5. resubmitting substantially the same work that was produced for another assignment without the knowledge and permission of the instructor; 6. taking a test for someone else or permitting someone else to take a test for you."

---Plagiarism: The UO states that, "Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's product, words, ideas, or data as one's own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes. Expectations may vary slightly among disciplines. By placing one's name on work submitted for credit, the student certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgements. On written assignments, if verbatim statements are included, the statements must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from regular text as indented extracts. A student will avoid being charged with plagiarism if there is an acknowledgement of indebtedness. Indebtedness must be acknowledged whenever: 1. one quotes another person's actual words or replicates all or part of another's product; 2. one uses another person's ideas, opinions, work, data, or theories, even if they are
completely paraphrased in one's own words; 3. one borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative materials--unless the information is common knowledge."

**Grades:**
Grades will be determined through performance on the following assignments/projects. Please take note of the guidelines for achieving a certain grade as outlined in the department of Anthropology’s guidelines:

A+: Quality of student’s performance significantly exceeds all requirements and expectations required for an A grade. Very few, if any, students receive this grade in a given course.

A: Quality of performance is outstanding relative to that required to meet course requirements; demonstrates mastery of course content at the highest level.

B: Quality of performance is significantly above that required to meet course requirements; demonstrates mastery of course content at a high level.

C: Quality of performance meets the course requirements in every respect; demonstrates adequate understanding of course content.

D: Quality of performance is at the minimal level necessary to pass the course, but does not fully meet the course requirements; demonstrates a marginal understanding of course content.

F: Quality of performance in the course is unacceptable and does not meet the course requirements; demonstrates an inadequate understanding of course content.

**Grades by Percentage:**
- A+ = 98-100%
- A = 94-97%
- A- = 90-93%
- B+ = 87-89%
- B = 83-86%
- B- = 80-82%
- C+ = 77-79%
- C = 73-76%
- C- = 70-72%
- D+ = 67-69%
- D = 63-66%
- D- = 60-62%
- F = Below 60%

**Description of Workload:**
Students are expected to attend two lectures a week plus a discussion section. Outside of classroom attendance, students should expect to do approximately 3 hours of reading per week. The term research project which will result in a 7 page paper will comprise research, reading and writing totaling about 30 hours over the course of the term. In addition, there will be two exams, a midterm and a final. To perform well on these exams we expect students should invest around 10 hours of time in studying. Finally students will be asked to view films outside of class to prepare for lectures and discussions. The total time
required viewing all of these films and/or television episodes will be approximately 10 hours. Other film and television clips will be shown in class.

**Graded Assignments with Percentages:**

**Attendance:** Attendance at all lectures and discussion sections is mandatory. *(10%)*

**Reading Quizzes:** There will be five reading quizzes administered in discussion sections. *(20%)*

**Mid Term Exam:** Administered in Class *(25%)*

**Analytical Writing Project:** *(5-7 pages)*: Students will be required to select a scene from a SF film or television show or a piece of short fiction that exemplifies an element of anthropological social theory that we have discussed in class and demonstrate in detail the way anthropology and science fiction work together or develop thematically. *(20%)* This paper will be graded out of one hundred points *(100)* and will be broken down as follows:
- Hypothesis: 20 pts.
- Bibliography and Research Materials Cited: 10 pts.
- Grammar and Writing: 20 pts.
- Organization and Clarity: 30 pts.
- Conclusion: 20 pts.

**Final Exam:** *(25%)*

**Weekly Readings & Due Dates**

**Week 1: Introductions and Definitions**

**Monday:** Introduction, Syllabus, No Readings

**Wednesday:**

**Week 2: Anthropology, Science Fiction and the Culture Concept.**

**Monday:** Basic Concepts in Anthropology: Cultural Relativism & Cultural Patterning

**Wednesday:**

SF Reading: Jack Vance: The Moon Moth.(online)

**Week 3: Anthropology, Race and Science Fiction**

Monday:

Wednesday:

SF Reading: Octavia Butler: Dawn.

**Week 4: Anthropology, Science Fiction and Class**

Monday:

Wednesday:
SF: Film: *Soylent Green (1973)*
Or *Outland (1981)*

**Week 5: The Indigenous Alien**

Monday:


SF Reading: Ursula K. LeGuin: The Word for World is Forest.
SF Film: *Avatar (2009)*.
Wednesday: **Mid Term Exam in Class**

**Week 6: Anthropology, Science Fiction, Gender & Sexuality or What’s Up With the Green Alien Women Motif?**

Monday:

Wednesday:
SF Film: *Alien* (1979: Ridley Scott Dir.)

**Week 7: Alien Anthropologists, and Alien Relativism: They Do Things Differently Here...**
(This week is entirely fiction and film)

Monday:
Lafferty, RA: Primary Education of the Camiroi & Polity and Custom of the Camiroi (approximately 65 pages)
Vance, Jack: The Languages of Pao. (Approximately 85 pages). (Both online)

Wednesday:
No Readings: **Analytical Writing Project Due**

**Week 8: Anthropology, Science Fiction & Colonialism: First Contact and Beyond**

Monday:


**Week 9: Anthropology and Technology: Science Fiction and What is Human.**

Monday:

Wednesday:
SF Film (*Blade Runner*)

**Week 10: Anthropology, Immigration and What is an Alien anyway?**

**Monday:**

**Wednesday:**
SF Film: *District 9*

**Final Exam: Date & Time TBD**