Instructor
Dr. Christopher Leslie
cleslie@poly.edu, (718) 260-3130
Dibner Building LC 131
Office hours: 3 to 5:50 pm Thursdays, or by appointment

Prerequisite
Students must have completed HuSS 1023W (or the equivalent) before taking this course.

Course Description
This summer, I would like to consider how science fiction functions as a realm for the social construction of science and technology. In what ways has science fiction been used to field test new technologies, investigate the ramifications of new scientific theories, or imagine the impact of different social structures on technical and scientific development? In order to do so, we shall consider the genre of science fiction as evidence of changes in technological and scientific culture in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Thus, we shall read representative fiction from the second industrial revolution, the age of big science, the Cold War, the age of venture capital, and the advent of new media, considering how well authors are able to establish an alternative public sphere to debate the issues facing a technological society.

Objectives
This semester you will learn about:

- Debates concerning new scientific and technical information in the 20th century
- Transformations of scientific and technical culture as well as mass media
- Fundamental techniques of science fiction and recognize authors of the genre
- The genre’s presentation of the interaction among science, technology, and society
- Important issues in Science and Technology Studies, such as social constructivism
- Advanced techniques in writing with attention to style and revision
- Documenting your work product by organizing successive drafts

Structure
Most class time is devoted to lectures about course topics and discussion of the reading material. This course is designated as writing intensive, which means that there will be a number of informal writing assignments, some class time will be devoted to writing instruction, revision of your writing based on comments from the instructor and your classmates is required, and writing will count for a significant portion of your grade. Please note: due to the condensed schedule, each class meeting is the equivalent of more than a week during the regular semester. This impacts pacing, assignments, and attendance.

Readings
The required texts for the course are:


In addition to the required books, there will be journal articles that you can download from library databases and PDFs that you will find on Blackboard. Please let me know in advance of class if you have any trouble locating a required reading.
Grading

Class components are weighted as follows:

- Quizzes and exercises 20%
- Final exam 20%
- Three papers 30%
  (10% each)
- Portfolio 30%

Letter grade equivalents are:

A: 90-100 (90-91 = A-)
B: 80-89 (88-89 = B+, 80-81 = B-)
C: 70-79 (78-79 = C+, 70-71 = C-)
D: 60-69 (68-69 = D+)
F: <60

Requirements

Attendance: On-time attendance for the entire class period is mandatory; students who earn an absence score higher than 4 automatically fail. Please note that, due to the accelerated summer schedule, each class meeting is like two class meetings during the regular semester. The portion of class before the break and the portion after the break are counted separately for the purposes of attendance. Each time you are absent for one of these, you add one to your absence score, so that missing two days of class will cause you to fail the course. Missing fewer than twenty minutes of one of the halves counts as one-third of an absence (arriving late, departing early, leaving the room). Missing more than twenty minutes counts as an absence. Doctor’s notes are not necessary.

Attentiveness: Please pay attention during class and avoid behaviors that distract others. Do not eat, drink, or sleep during class. You should not use electronic devices, such as cell phones or laptops, at all. Do not hold side conversations; if someone tries to talk to you during class, tell him or her to speak to you after class. Do not bring visitors without advance permission.

Examination: There is a final exam during our last regular class meeting. It consists of short answer and essay questions. It is cumulative and closed-book.

Exercises: In-class writing and preparatory exercises for the papers and to explore writing lessons are required. Overall, they do not count for a significant portion of the grade so that you may feel free to explore new ideas.

Honesty: Please be advised that I take the University policy about academic dishonesty seriously and will punish cheating or plagiarism (passing off other people’s ideas as your own) by awarding a grade of “F” for the course and referring cases to Student Affairs for further action.

Papers: You will write three papers (1,500 words or 5 about pages each) for this class; all must be uploaded to Blackboard and scanned by SafeAssign before the deadline. Outside research is not required for these papers, but if you consult other sources, you must document them in MLA or Chicago author-date style. No late papers will be accepted.

Preparation: According to New York State guidelines, a student should spend at least two hours to prepare for each hour in class. Thus, for this course, you can expect to spend at least thirteen hours per week outside of class getting ready for class. Please plan accordingly so that you can read thoroughly, write carefully, and reflect thoughtfully.

Quizzes: There will be unannounced quizzes on the reading assignments and course lessons. You may consult your own handwritten notes, but not books or printouts, for these quizzes. If you miss a quiz due to lateness or absence, you shall receive a zero.

Writing Portfolio: Your portfolio includes two revised essays, revised quizzes, a writing checklist, a resume, and a cover letter. I shall hand back your essays with comments for revision, and that will guide you for the finished copy. The writing checklist is a description of errors you make in writing with “bad” and “corrected” examples. I shall make a presentation about resumes and cover letters toward the middle of the semester. There are two portfolio checks during the summer.
How to Do Well

1. **Be on time.** At the start of class, you will notice that I provide a preview of what is coming up and also answer questions. If you regularly miss these first minutes, you will start to feel the uncomfortable sensation that you do not know what is going on. Keep in mind that trains, subways and busses usually take much longer than they “should,” so plan accordingly. Being late once is okay; it happens to everyone. If you are always late, then you are doing something wrong.

2. **Ask questions.** Please raise your hand at the beginning of class or during a presentation. It does little good to whisper to the person next to you; instead, feel free to ask me for clarification. Also, use office hours or write an e-mail message for additional information.

3. **Take notes,** even if I am not writing on the board. Taking notes helps you stay focused on the material we are studying. Note taking also serves another purpose: it helps you to get used to writing about the course materials in your own words. Since the evaluation in this course is written, taking notes is valuable practice (and good exercise for your writing muscles!). There is no need to write down everything I say, but make sure you take down interesting ideas and connections to the course themes. Go over your notes after class to fill in the gaps.

4. **Read actively.** Prepare by reading the assignment for the day carefully before class. Mark key phrases and passages that have to do with the ideas in the course. Take notes like you are preparing a laboratory notebook – write down what you think is important, with examples, and prepare questions you want to ask.

5. **Work proactively.** Start an assignment when it is assigned, not when the deadline is looming. It sometimes takes a little bit of time wondering about an assignment before you make progress, and there are often times that you need guidance. If you wait until the last moment to get started, you cannot negotiate these hurdles adequately.

6. **Prepare for emergencies.** Things often go wrong during the semester; there are always computer problems and unfortunately there are family emergencies as well. It is important to plan for the unexpected by making backup copies and to be ready to hand in a paper or assignment well in advance of the deadline in case there is an unexpected calamity that will prevent you from using the last days before a deadline.

Bibliography

I shall refer to these standard reference books during the semester. Since you may find them useful, I have placed them on reserve in the Bern Dibner Library where possible.


Tentative Assignment Schedule

Monday, June 3  
**Early Science Fiction**
- Weinbaum, “A Martian Odyssey”
- Campbell, “Forgetfulness”
- Campbell, “Wouldst Write, Wee One?”
- del Rey, “Helen O’Loy”

Thursday, June 6  
**Social Science Fiction**
- Sturgeon, “Microcosmic God”
- Asimov, “Nightfall”
- Asimov, “Social Science Fiction”

*Note: Friday, June 7, is the last day for program adjustments in the X session. If you drop before this deadline, no notation will appear on your transcript. No one may add the course after this date.*

Monday, June 10  
**The Golden Age**
- Padgett, “Mimsy Were the Borogoves”
- Brackett, “The Halfling”
- Simak, “Huddling Place”
- Brown, “Arena”

Writing assignment: workshop paper 1

Thursday, June 13  
**Big Science**
- Leinster, “First Contact”
- Smith, “Scanners Live in Vain!”
- Kornbluth, “The Little Black Bag”
- Matheson, “Born of Man and Woman”

Writing assignment: paper 1 due

Monday, June 17  
**The Cold War**
- Blish, “Surface Tension”
- Bixby, “It’s a Good Life”
- Godwin, “The Cold Equations”
- Bester, “Fondly Fahrenheit”
Thursday, June 20  Military-Industrial Complex
Knight, “The Country of the Kind”
Keyes, “Flowers for Algernon”
Zelazny, “A Rose for Ecclesiastes”
Schiffer, “Cultural Imperatives and Product Development: The Case of the Shirt-Pocket Radio”
Writing assignment: portfolio check 1

Monday, June 24  The New Wave
Vance, “The Last Castle”
Moorcock, “My Experiences in the Third World War”
Dick, “We Can Remember It for You Wholesale”
Alvin M. Weinberg, “Impact of Large-Scale Science on the United States”
Writing assignment: workshop paper 2

Thursday, June 27  Counterculture
Russ, “Nobody’s Home”
Vinge, “Phoenix in the Ashes”
Correy, “Industrial Accident”
Writing assignment: paper 2 due

Note: Thursday, June 27 is the withdrawal deadline for the X session. If you withdraw before this date, you will see a “W” on your transcript. Otherwise, you will see a grade A to F at the end of the course.

Monday, July 1  After the New Wave
Card, “Ender’s Game” (1977 story)
Gibson, “Burning Chrome”
Wilson, Alif the Unseen, chapters 1–3

Friday, July 5  Web 2.0 and Social Media
Wilson, chapters 4–7
Writing assignment: portfolio check 2 (with resume and cover letter)

Monday, July 8  Dystopia in the Popular Imagination
Wilson, chapters 8–12

Thursday, July 11  Conclusions
Wilson, chapters 13–end
Workshop Paper 3 and discussion (1 hour 15 minutes)
Final Exam (2 hours)

Friday, July 12  Upload paper 3 by 4 pm.