



School of English, Journalism  
& European Languages

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## Unit Outline

HEA430

Alien Encounters

Semester 2, 2006

<http://www.utas.edu.au/english/honours>

<b>Convenor:</b>	Dr Elle Leane Hobart Campus; Humanities Building Room: HUM569 Phone: 6226 2894 Email: <a href="mailto:elizabeth.lean@utas.edu.au">elizabeth.lean@utas.edu.au</a>
<b>Consultation Hours:</b>	Thursdays, 12-1pm and 2-3pm
<b>Unit Description:</b>	Students examine the ways in which science fiction texts from the late 19th century to the present construct the relationship between humanity and its 'others', including extraterrestrials, robots, monsters, human/machine or human/animal hybrids, as well as inanimate natural phenomena. Particular attention is paid to encounters which disturb existing definitions of the human and/or explore the possibilities of a post-human perspective, as well as those which highlight the arbitrariness of the categories used to class human bodies and behaviour (such as race, gender or sexuality). Students have the opportunity to study seminal science fiction short stories, books and films from a variety of sub-genres, such as the scientific romance, magazine or 'pulp' sf, feminist and ecological utopian fiction, and cyberpunk.
<b>Unit Aims and Objectives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• read and analyse some prominent science fiction texts belonging to a variety of sub-genres and historical periods;</li><li>• engage with critical and theoretical debates about science fiction and its sub-genres;</li><li>• investigate the ways in which science fiction novels, short stories and films have used the alien encounter as a way of exploring humanity's relationship with its 'others';</li><li>• become familiar with the range of theoretical perspectives which have been brought to bear on science fiction texts;</li><li>• develop the ability to articulate ideas about science fiction texts and concepts by delivering in-class presentations and contributing to seminars; and</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop familiarity with the process of scholarly research in English studies.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning Outcomes:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the development of scholarly writing, researching and analytical skills;</li> <li>familiarity with a range of theoretical and critical perspectives that have been brought to bear on the set texts; and</li> <li>the ability to present informed discussion of the ways the set texts relate to each other and the genres, periods, cultures which produced them.</li> </ul>
<b>Required Reading:</b>	<p>Required texts in order of study:</p> <p>HEA430 Unit Reader  R. L. Stevenson, <i>The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i>  H. G. Wells, <i>The Island of Dr Moreau</i>  <i>Invasion of the Body Snatchers</i> (dir. Don Siegel)  Stanislaw Lem, <i>Solaris</i>  Ursula Le Guin, <i>The Left Hand of Darkness</i>  <i>Alien</i> (dir. Ridley Scott)  William Gibson, <i>Neuromancer</i>  Octavia Butler, <i>Dawn</i></p> <p>All books and the Reader will be available from the Co-op Bookshop (other editions of the books are acceptable). The two films will be screened at a mutually agreed time. Copies of the Reader, books and films will be accessible from the Morris Miller Library.</p> <p>To meet the requirements of this course adequately, you are expected to read the material set for each week. This is identified in the seminar schedule below, and will usually consist of one primary text and one or more critical/theoretical articles. The readings have been selected to assist you in developing your understanding of topics covered in seminars. To ensure productive seminars, try to become fully familiar with the essential readings for each week's topic before your seminar. There are lists of optional further readings near the beginning of the Reader, which you may want to draw on when preparing your presentations and essays. Be aware, however, that these lists represent only a sample of critical material available.</p>
<b>When and Where Taught:</b>	Thursdays, 9-12, Rm SOCSCI309
<b>Assessment:</b>	<p>Essay: 100% (5000 words due 13 October, 4.30pm)</p> <p>NB You will also be required to deliver class presentations; these are compulsory but will not be assessed (i.e. you must complete them in order to satisfy the requirements for this course but they will not contribute to your overall mark).</p>

## LECTURE/SEMINAR SCHEDULE

Week beginning	Text/Topic	Readings/ Resources	Further information
17 July	Introduction – sf and the alien	Freedman; Malmgren; Parrinder; Rose	Housekeeping, introduction and (time permitting) screening of <i>Invasion of the Body Snatchers</i>
24 July	<i>The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i>	Lawler; Showalter	
31 July	<i>Island of Dr Moreau</i>	Gold; Hurley	
7 Aug.	<i>Invasion of the Body Snatchers</i>	Badmington; Samuels	DVD available from Morris Miller; DVD of 1978 Kaufman remake available in Art School, from Morris Miller after fourth week, and from Blockbuster Video; DVD of 1993 Ferrara remake available from Morris Miller
14 Aug.	<i>Solaris</i>	Jameson; Tighe	Video/DVD of 2002 Soderbergh film adaptation available at most video stores; DVD of 1971 Tarkovsky adaptation will be made available in the Morris Miller during the course of the semester (talk to me for details)
21 Aug.	<i>The Left Hand of Darkness</i>	Cranny-Francis; Grant-Britton; Fayad	
28 Aug.	<i>Alien</i>	Creed; Kavanagh	Screening time TBA; video held in Morris Miller and readily available at video stores
4 Sept.	Semester Break		
11 Sept.	<i>Neuromancer</i>	Bukatman; Fair	Students discuss nominated essay topics with me
18 Sept.	<i>Dawn</i>	Jacobs; Haraway Wolmark	Students outline nominated essay topics to the class

# ASSIGNMENTS

## Seminar Presentations

During the course of the semester you will be asked to prepare material to present to the class in two separate seminars.

### 1. Analysis of secondary material

For this task, you need to choose one of the set secondary readings for a particular week, read it carefully and present an analysis of it to the class (5-10 mins), addressing the following questions:

- What is the basic argument put forward in the article?
- How convincing do you find this argument?
- Does the article take an easily identifiable theoretical approach? How would you describe it?
- What are the article's strengths? What are its weaknesses?

In the first seminar, you can nominate the week in which you would like to present your analysis (although it may not be possible to accommodate everyone's first choice).

### 2. Analysis of primary text

For this task, you should give a presentation of 20-30 minutes' duration, considering an assigned text from the unit in relation to one or more of the following broad areas:

Human/animal boundaries and ambiguities (e.g. anxieties about degeneration, atavism, the primitive)

Sexuality and/or gender and otherness (e.g. homosexuality as otherness, ambiguous sexualities and gender roles)

The invisible alien (e.g. otherness 'disguised' as sameness, the hidden other, the double)

Reading alien encounters in historical context (e.g. Darwinism/degeneration in the late 19thC; Cold War paranoia in the mid-20thC)

Race, otherness and the alien (e.g. miscegenation; colonialism)

Alien bodies (e.g. the abject alien, the cyborg)

Alienation and the sf reader (e.g. the 'estranged' reader; sf reading strategies)

Encountering the posthuman (e.g. the cyborg, human/animal/machine boundaries, artificial intelligence and its relationship with the human)

Alien spaces (e.g. landscape/environment as other)

You may choose to address another topic if you wish, but you should consult me first.

In the first seminar, you can negotiate the week in which you would like to present your analysis (and hence the text on which you will focus). You can read out a written paper if you choose (this would need to be about 3000-3500 words long), or you may wish to use a more relaxed or interactive format; if you choose to do the latter, you will need to discuss with me in advance what you have in mind. Feel free to prepare notes, questions and reference lists for the class. I will provide short written feedback on the presentation, but it will not be assessed.

### 5000-word Essay (due Oct. 13, 4.30pm)

You may then choose to develop your presentation into your long essay (5000 words) (although you are also free to choose another text and begin your essay from 'scratch'), narrowing down one of the above areas to a more specific topic. This topic should be discussed with me in (or before) the penultimate seminar, and outlined briefly to the class in the last seminar (see below for a list of example topics devised by previous students). You are encouraged to make links between primary texts if appropriate (e.g. you might give your presentation on *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, but write your essay on *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The Island of Dr Moreau*); however, an essay focused on only one primary text is also acceptable. You are encouraged to include brief discussion of texts beyond those studied. If you are interested in devoting significant space in your essay to a relevant text that is not one of the primary texts (e.g. the adaptations of *Solaris*, one of the later *Alien* films, or one of Wells's other scientific romances), make sure you alert me in advance.

Both your presentation and your essay should show evidence of thorough research – that is, you must draw on critical and/or theoretical secondary material.

Previous topics (as examples only):

“Jekyll, Hyde and the ‘Alien’ Body in Victorian Space”

“Posthumanism and its ‘Other’: AI and Cyborg Difference in William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* and Oshii Mamoru’s *Ghost in the Shell*.”

“Political Paranoia and Shifting Locations in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956 and 1978)”

“Lilith and Her Brood: Myth and Miscegenation in Octavia E. Butler’s *Dawn*”

“Degeneration and the Atavistic Self in Stevenson and Wells”

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Submission of Assignments

Students are required to submit a signed cover sheet with every assignment. This includes a declaration that all material submitted is their own work except where there is clear acknowledgement or reference to the work of others and that they have read the University statement on Academic Misconduct (Plagiarism) on the University website at [www.utas.edu.au/plagiarism](http://www.utas.edu.au/plagiarism) or in the Student Information Handbook. Assignment cover sheets are available from the School office. All written assignments must be submitted in hard-copy (not by email or other electronic means) and placed in the essay box at the School office on or before 4.30pm on the due date. Students are required to keep copies of all submitted assignments. Assignments will be returned within three weeks of the due date; once assignments have been returned no further late assignments will be accepted.

### Late Assignments

All submission dates are regarded as exam dates in the honours year. In exceptional circumstances students may apply for an extension for the submission of their work, but you must contact the Honours coordinator *before* the relevant due date.

### Difficulties with your Studies

If you are experiencing difficulties with your studies or assignments, have personal or life planning issues, disability or illness which may affect your course of study, you should raise these with your lecturer and/or one of the following Student Services staff as soon as possible:

- Learning Skills Adviser
- Student Counsellor
- Careers Adviser
- Disability Adviser

### University Statement on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

"**Plagiarism** is a form of cheating. It is taking and using someone else's thoughts, writings or inventions and representing them as your own; for example, using an author's words without putting them in quotation marks and citing the source, using an author's ideas without proper acknowledgment and citation, copying another student's work.

If you have any doubts about how to refer to the work of others in your assignments, please consult your lecturer or tutor for relevant referencing guidelines, and the academic integrity resources on the web at

<http://www.utas.edu.au/tl/supporting/academicintegrity/index.html>.

The intentional copying of someone else's work as one's own is a serious offence punishable by penalties that may range from a fine or deduction/cancellation of marks and, in the most serious of cases, to exclusion from a unit, a course or the University. Details of penalties that can be imposed are available in the Ordinance of Student Discipline – Part 3 Academic Misconduct, see

<http://www.utas.edu.au/universitycouncil/legislation/> "

**The University and any persons authorised by the University may submit your assessable works to a plagiarism checking service, to obtain a report on possible instances of plagiarism. Assessable works may also be included in a reference database. It is a condition of this arrangement that the original author's permission is required before a work within the database can be viewed.**

### Assignment Presentation

The English discipline uses MLA Style, which is characterized by in-text referencing and a list of works cited. See the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 6th ed. Ed. Joseph Gibaldi (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2003).

### Honours Marking Scale

The following distribution of marks and grades is applied in assessing your work:

- First Class (HF)—80-100%
- Second Class upper division (HU)—70-79%
- Second Class lower division (HL)—60-69%
- Third Class (HT)—50-59%
- Fail (HN)—0-49%

All marks are subject to moderation.

### Assessment Criteria

The following criteria apply to assessment of the essay:

- Effectiveness of introduction
- Relevance and coherence of argument
- Effectiveness of conclusion
- Scope of textual referencing
- Use of critics
- Attention to expression, spelling, proof-reading and MLA style.