

This is a sample syllabus only. (Do not purchase the textbook until you confirm with the instructor.)

English 337-981 • Syllabus Spring 2010 • Borough of Manhattan Community College • ONLINE

Professor Joe Bisz

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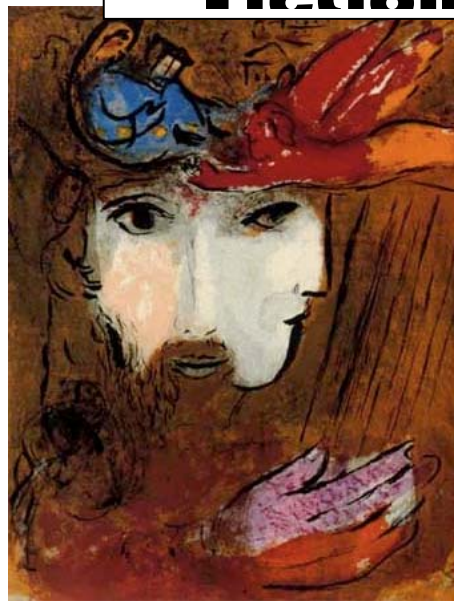
Office Location: N-708 (within N-720)

Office Hours: to be announced...

**Science**



**Fiction**



### Required Novels

Woman on the Edge of Time.

by Marge Piercy (1976)

Stranger in a Strange Land.

by Robert Heinlein (1960)

In addition, many short stories, critical essays, and films will be available on the course site for your required reading, as well as links to radio interviews, websites, songs, videos, etc.

### Description

What does it mean to be human? We'll examine subjects such as the social construction of women, including a running theme in sci-fi of women as robots or dolls. We'll examine traditional tropes like planetary disaster, aliens, and what these images in sci-fi suggest about our human needs and fears. Finally, we'll be studying the concept of people integrating with machines, both in the real world and in the sci-fi world, and we'll talk more figuratively about how we program ourselves with different values, prejudices, or logical thinking. A Cyborg is a being who is partly machine and partly human, and in our class it represents the subject matter itself: how real world, human issues become mixed into the made-up "fiction" that is science fiction. As metaphorical scientists, you will explore the weird corridors of this course, draw connections to real life, and figure out what this Cyborg you're studying can teach you about the world we live in—and yourself.

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## **Outcomes**

You will learn to...

1. **IDENTIFY** the features that constitute sci-fi.

Once identified, you will be better able to...

2. **APPLY** our sci-fi class concepts to real life, human concerns.

Perceiving the root social issues behind sci-fi themes will enable you to...

3. **EXPERIMENT** with the techniques and concerns of major sci-fi authors in your own creative writing and other imaginative assignments.

Such problems will hopefully remind you of your own life, and let you...

4. **DRAW** from personal experience.

But please remain open-minded enough to...

5. **EXPLAIN and EVALUATE** perspectives that exist outside of personal experience.

Understanding what planet another human being hails from will help you...

6. **CRITICIZE and SYMPATHIZE** with arguments of authors and student peers.

Now that you have a keen understanding of the subject, you can...

7. **SYNTHESIZE** the readings and class discussion in order to write and revise your own thesis-driven explorations of the material.

## **Assessment**

1. Identification will be met by reading responses and Week 14's assignment.
2. Application will be met by reading responses and Paper 1.
3. Experimentation will be met by creative writing and other informal assignments.
4. Drawing from experience will be done in your reading and student responses.
5. Explanations and evaluations will be done primarily in those same responses.
6. Criticism and sympathy will be delivered in your reading, student responses, and Paper 1.
7. Synthesizing will be done in your Week 5 post, Paper 1, and your final paper.

## **General Education Outcomes**

Below are the college's general education goals that students who successfully complete this course can expect to have achieved:

- **Communication Skills:** Students will be able to write, read, listen and speak critically and effectively. (Assessed through responses and thesis papers)
- **Arts & Humanities:** Students will be able to develop knowledge and understanding of the arts and literature through critiques of works of art, music, theatre or literature. (Assessed through responses and thesis papers)
- **Values:** Students will be able to make informed choices based on an understanding of personal values, human diversity, multicultural awareness and social responsibility. (Assessed through responses and thesis papers, particularly student responses)

## **Format**

This is a distance-learning course to be offered entirely over the internet. Students are required to have frequent internet access (at least three times a week), but since you can always post an assignment early, you will have some flexibility in choosing what days you go online.

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We will spend most of our time reading the class novels and short stories but we'll also be reading many critical essays on topics related to the novel readings and looking at other media like news reports and films. Writing-wise, you will be responsible for posting one "reading response" paper and two "student response" papers each week. Also, there will be two thesis papers (the second is a final exam) of 3-5 pages each. You may revise the first Paper if you like; your new grade gets averaged with your old. If you do not hand in both of your thesis papers, you will receive an automatic grade of "F". This will total at least 20 pages of formal writing.

### **Attendance**

Since this is a distance-learning class, I simply expect you to post your assignments on time. Visiting the class site to post your reading responses and student responses is required by BMCC policy as a way of showing your attendance and participation in an online class. *If you ever miss two complete weeks of posts for any reason (including sickness or accident), you will receive an automatic grade of "F" (or you can withdraw).*

You must complete all readings and responses by the date they are due. Late responses (reading responses or student responses) lose one letter grade. After a week (e.g., on the eighth day after a response is due), you can no longer post that response, and no credit will be given for it. (Exception: Paper #1 can be posted up to two weeks late, and it loses one letter grade each week.) If you don't do the work on time, it is *very easy* to fall behind!

### **Grading**

40% Participation (as reflected by the timeliness and quality of the required Reading Response and Student Response posts and Scientific Journal Blog)  
60% Thesis Papers (including Exam)

There are no weekly grades for discussion board posts. Instead, every few weeks I will send you a personal email to your BMCC account telling you how you did and giving you an overall grade for the past few weeks of discussion board posts.

### **If You Need Help:**

You can see me! But you should also use these excellent services:

#### The Writing Center

Room S500. 212-220-1384. The Center will help you with your writing and in studying for the CUNY Proficiency Exam, including topics such as understanding the assignment, generating ideas and drafts, citing sources, and helping you to find your grammar mistakes. I encourage you to visit the center to better your chances of success!

#### The Learning Resource Center

Room S500. 212-220-1376. Offers small-group tutoring, study, note-taking, and test-taking skills, instructional videos, computer training, etc.

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### **BMCC Policy on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity Statement**

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's ideas, words, or artistic, scientific, or technical work as one's own creation. Using the idea or work of another is permissible only when the original author is identified. Paraphrasing and summarizing, as well as direct quotations, require citations to the original source. Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. Lack of dishonest intent does not necessarily absolve a student of responsibility for plagiarism.

Students who are unsure how and when to provide documentation are advised to consult with their instructors. The library has guides designed to help students to appropriately identify a cited work. The full policy can be found on BMCC's website, [www.bmcc.cuny.edu](http://www.bmcc.cuny.edu). For further information on integrity and behavior, please consult the college bulletin (also available online).

### **BMCC College Disability Statement**

Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations or academic adjustments for this course must contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities, N768. BMCC is committed to providing equal access to all programs and curricula to all students. The office will supply you, if appropriate, with an academic accommodation letter for you to show to your professors.