

## LCC 4100D: Senior Seminar on Science Fiction and Environmentalism

Prof. Lisa Yaszek  
Office/Phone: 306 Skiles/404.894.1022

Email: [lisa.yaszek@lcc.gatech.edu](mailto:lisa.yaszek@lcc.gatech.edu)  
Office Hours: TR 12:30-1:30 & by appt.

### Course Overview

This class will explore the strange and sometimes estranging relations of science, technology, and culture as they are expressed in both science fiction and environmental writing. In the first unit of this class we will review the parallel histories of science fiction and environmental writing by reading key texts in both these fields. In the second unit we will apply what we've learned to a case study of Kim Stanley Robinson's near-future SF ecothriller, *Forty Signs of Rain*, culminating in a one-day Q&A with Robinson himself. In the final unit of this class, we will develop an online research portal for other students, scholars, and science fiction fans interested in science fiction and environmentalism.

### Required Text at Engineers' Bookstore

- Robinson, Kim Stanley. *Forty Signs of Rain*. New York: Spectra, 2004.

### Required Texts in Your Reading Packet and in the Georgia Tech Electronic Library Reserves

As your reading schedule notes, we will read a number of environmental essays and short stories this semester. I will give you all the environmental essays in a reading packet during the first week of class. This reading packet will also include all your writing assignments for the semester. To receive participation credit on days when we are discussing these texts, you must bring your reading packet with you to class.

I have posted all of our short stories to the Georgia Tech Electronic Library (GTEL) Reserves. To receive full participation credit on days when we are discussing these texts, you must download copies of the materials in question and bring them with you to class. To get to GTEL reserved readings, go to <<http://www.library.gatech.edu>>, click the "Course Reserves" tab, and then enter your GT Account ID and password. The rest is self-explanatory.

### Supplemental Materials on T-Square <<http://tsquare.gatech.edu/>>

T-Square is an asynchronous online course tool that Georgia Tech professors and students use to supplement the real-time classroom. I will post all class syllabi and writing assignments on T-Square. Eventually, *you* will post materials for our research portal there as well (as pdf and possibly html files). I will also put a fun-and-games folder on our class page with some cool links to relevant topics. Please feel free to post your own links there as well. To get to T-Square, go to the URL listed above. Click the login button in the upper right-hand corner. The rest is self-explanatory.

**Assignments and Grading:** In the first half of this class, you will write four brief (2-3 page) reader response paper. In the second half, you will chose a topic in science fiction and environmentalism that interests you, and then generate 10 pages of text on this topic for our online research portal. You will generate this text through a combination of independent research and in-class writing workshops. Instructions for all assignments will be given at appropriate times in the semester. You will have ample opportunity to discuss all assignments with me and with your peers before they are due; thus, **ALL GRADES FOR THIS COURSE ARE FINAL**—I will not listen to any arguments that your grade should be improved after the fact. Please note that failure to complete any major component of the course will result in failure of the course as a whole; if you are having difficulties meeting class requirements, please talk to me immediately—again, I will not listen to arguments after the fact. The following are the percentages for each assignment:

- Participation 20%
- Reading Response Papers 40%
- Online Research Portal Project 40% (20% draft writing; 20% final product)

**Participation:** Learning in this class is based on class lectures and discussions. This means that it is in your best interest to come to class on time on a regular basis. I will not take attendance in this class, but I also will not give you lecture notes if you miss a day of class, nor will I re-deliver lectures to you during my office hours. If you miss a class for any reason, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed *before* the next class meeting. You are also responsible for getting copies of any handouts that were given out in your absence.

In short, your participation grade is based on being a good citizen in class. This includes

- Doing all readings and assignments
- Bringing all readings and assignments to class when we are scheduled to discuss them
- Actively participating in class discussions (as both a speaker and a listener)
- Actively participating in all small group activities (workshops, etc.)
- Attending the Kim Stanley Robinson lecture from 4-6 pm on Thursday, March 6.

Your participation grade will be negatively affected by any forms of behavior that disrupt the classroom experience, including:

- Failure to do the readings or attend the Robinson lecture.
- Failure to be courteous to others when talking in class or posting to T-Square
- Disrupting class in nonverbal ways (e.g.: habitual tardiness, doing homework, playing with your cell phone, surfing the Internet, or sleeping during class)

Please note that I don't expect us to experience chronic participation problems but that if they do arise, I also reserve to the right to institute pop quizzes and similarly annoying tasks.

**Students with Disabilities** should self-report to the Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students (ADAPTS) at:  
 220 Student Services Building  
 Atlanta, GA 30332-0285  
 404.894.2564 (voice)/404.894.1664 (voice/TDD)  
[www.adapts.gatech.edu/guidebook.html](http://www.adapts.gatech.edu/guidebook.html)

**Scholastic Dishonesty and Academic Misconduct:** All of the writing you submit for this course must be your own. If I suspect you of plagiarizing all or part of a project, (passing off someone else's writing as your own), I will submit your name and the particular project to the Dean of Students, who will then take the appropriate disciplinary action. The Georgia Tech honor code (at [www.honor.gatech.edu/honorcode/honorcode.html](http://www.honor.gatech.edu/honorcode/honorcode.html)) defines academic misconduct as:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or verbal information in the preparation of any assignment included in an academic course;
- Unauthorized collaboration with a student in the commission of academic requirements;
- False claims of performance or work that has been submitted by the claimant;
- Alteration or insertion of any academic grade so as to obtain unearned academic credit;
- Deliberate falsification of a written or verbal statement of fact to a member of the faculty so as to obtain unearned academic credit;
- Forgery, alteration, or misuse of any document relating to the academic status of a student.

**Miscellaneous:** Ultimately this is *your* class, so if you have any suggestions for readings, films, or activities that you think might supplement our studies—or if you have any ideas about how to better organize our existing time and activities—please feel free to share them with me. Every semester I try to shape the course schedule in accordance with the needs of that particular class, so I really do value your input.

**LCC 4100D Senior Seminar: Science Fiction and Environmentalism**  
**Class Schedule Spring 2008**

- T 1/08
- Class introduction and overview.
  - What is science fiction? What is environmentalism?
- Th 1/10
- Discuss Terry Bisson, "Bears Discover Fire" and Paulo Bacigalupi, "The Calorie Man" (electronic reserve).
  - Reading Response Assignment discussed in class today (reading packet).

**Unit 1: A Brief History of Environmentalism and Science Fiction**

- T 1/15
- Lecture on early environmentalism and classic SF (1880s-1960).
  - Discuss John Muir, "The National Parks and Forest Reservations" and Alan Leopold, "The Land Ethic" (reading packet).
- Th 1/17
- **Reading Response Paper 1 due at the beginning of class.**
  - Discuss Robert Barr, "The Doom of London"; Clare Winger Harris, "The Fate of the Poseidonia"; and John Campbell, "Forgetfulness" (electronic reserve).
- T 1/22
- Lecture on modern environmentalism and modern SF (1960-present).
  - Discuss Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (excerpts) and Gro Harlem Brundtland, *Our Common Future* (excerpts) (reading packet).
- Th 1/24
- **Reading Response Paper 2 due at the beginning of class.**
  - Discuss Robert Silverberg, "House of Bones"; Vonda MacIntyre, "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand"; Neal Stephenson, *The Diamond Age* (excerpt); and Carol Emshwiller, "Sanctuary" (electronic reserve).
- T 1/29
- In-class screening: Douglas Trumbull, *Silent Running*
- Th 1/31
- In-class screening: Douglas Trumbull, *Silent Running*
- T 2/5
- Discuss KSR, "Imaging Abrupt Climate Change" (electronic reserve).
  - Research portal project assignment discussed in class today (reading packet).
- Th 2/7
- In-class activity TBA
- T 2/12
- **Reading Response Paper 3 due at the beginning of class.**
  - Discuss KSR, *Forty Signs of Rain* (Chapters 1-5) in terms of SF history.
- Th 2/14
- Discuss KSR, *Forty Signs of Rain* (Chapters 1-5) in terms of SF history.
- T 2/19
- In-class screening: Davis Guggenheim, *An Inconvenient Truth*.
- Th 2/21
- In-class screening: Davis Guggenheim, *An Inconvenient Truth*.
  -
- T 2/26
- **Reading Response Paper 4 due at the beginning of class.**
  - Discuss KSR, *Forty Signs of Rain* (Chapters 6-10) and environmentalism.
- Th 2/28
- Discuss KSR, *Forty Signs of Rain* (Chapters 6-10) and environmentalism.
- T 3/04
- In-class activity TBA
  - Prepare for KSR visit
- Th 3/06
- Discuss SF and environmentalism with Kim Stanley Robinson.
  - KSR lecture 4 pm, Clary Theater, Student Success Center (reception after).

- T 3/11 • In-class workshop on SF studies research methods.
- Th 3/13 • In-class research day.
- 
- T 3/18 • No class: Spring Break!
- Th 3/20 • No class: Spring Break!
- 
- T 3/25 • No class: meetings with professor/independent work day.
- Th 3/27 • **First draft of research portal project introduction page due at the beginning of class today.**
- Workshop project introductions.
- T 4/01 • **First draft of research portal project recommended reading page due at the beginning of class today.**
- Workshop bibliographies.
- Th 4/03 • Continue workshopping bibliographies.
- 
- T 4/08 • In class screening TBA (class pick).
- Th 4/10 • In class screening TBA (class pick).
- T 4/15 • **First draft of research portal project annotated bibliography page due at the beginning of class today.**
- Workshop annotated bibliographies.
- Th 4/17 • Continue workshopping annotated bibliographies.
- T 4/22 • **Revised research portal project introduction pages due at the beginning of class today.**
- Workshop revised introductions.
- Th 4/24 • Class wrap-up: come to class ready to discuss three things you learned about SF and environmentalism this semester.
- Th 5/01 • **All final projects due to professor by email at 2:30 pm today.**