

**TAMALPAIS UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Larkspur, California**

**Course of Study**

**SCIENCE FICTION**  
Contemporary Strand

**I. INTRODUCTION: COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Science fiction, as a genre, is fundamentally about human fear, hopes and dreams, particularly as these influence, or are influenced, by technology.

This course will allow students to explore science fiction by examining the works of a wide variety of authors. The teacher of this course should also seek ways to integrate into the course, and examine with students, current scientific ideas and concepts, as well as relevant technologies and ideas of the past, as these provide the context for much science fiction. A focus on the sub-genre of “hard” science fiction provides ample opportunities for instructional integration with science and applied technology instruction, as well as, opportunities for visiting or inviting guest lecturers from the surrounding scientific and technological communities.

Students will examine what it means, or has meant, to be human during various technological ages, what impact technology has on humanity and what impact art/literature has on scientific discovery and technological innovation. In addition, students will evaluate the literature and art examined in this course for its scientific credulity and its literary merit.

A. Science Fiction addresses the following district student learning outcomes:

- #1. communicate articulately, effectively, and persuasively when speaking and writing;
- #2. read and analyze material in a variety of disciplines;
- #3. use technology as a tool to access information, analyze and solve, and communicate ideas;
- #10. analyze and propose solutions to contemporary issues using a variety of perspectives;
- #11. interpret, experience, create, and/or perform artistic work.

Science Fiction will contribute to the attainment of the following Tam 21<sup>st</sup> Century Goals:

- acquire, manage and use knowledge and skills;
  - think critically and creatively;
  - develop respect and understanding for the diversity of our community;
  - understand individual and cultural differences;
  - take responsibility for self and community.
- B. Science Fiction provides an opportunity to study in depth literature and themes that have been touched upon in previous course work at the freshman and sophomore levels, in classes both in and outside of the English Department. Examples of themes which are introduced in other courses which can be further examined in Science Fiction include: what it means to be human, a continuation of a standard literary theme; the impact of technology on people, a follow-up to a possible Core or social studies unit examining the impact of the industrial revolution; the impact of various technologies on the environment and upon human thinking, sometimes examined in science courses.
- C. Science Fiction is designed to help students achieve the following academic goals:
1. to become familiar with the wide range of literature in the field.
  2. to examine and study various periods in science fiction, identifying major writers within these periods;
  3. to recognize that while science fiction can be imaginative, whimsical or sinister, it is not merely escapist literature, but also a literature that concerns itself with serious problems of the future of humanity and the environment;
  4. to compare authors in their choice of subject matter, their purposes, themes, styles and attitudes;
  5. to develop an appreciation of style and tone within a genre;
  6. to practice those skills in reading and writing which will allow the student to acquire ideas and communicate them in standard written English;
  7. to read literature that will be challenging and will provide material for both oral and written discourse;

8. to examine both historically relevant and contemporary literature which is linked within a genre, understanding the requirements of genre classification;
9. to examine pieces of contemporary science fiction which may be used as models for writing and/or providing material for discussion and analysis; to write both logically and imaginatively about science fiction.
10. to enable the student to bridge the gap between the scientific and humanistic world.
11. to develop the tools necessary to read a work of science fiction critically.
12. to learn the differences between judging a piece of literature by subjective standards and by external standards;
13. to develop an understanding of central scientific concerns of the genre, such as the depiction of time and space, the conflict between the individual and the state, the implications of developments in artificial intelligence, the internet, genetics, the needs of a growing population faced with dwindling resources.

## **II. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

### **A. Writing:**

1. use the stages in the writing process, especially responding, revising, and editing (R/LAF W W/S 1.0; 1.9);
2. apply basic grammar and appropriate vocabulary in the context of their writing (R/LAF W W/O 1.0);
3. write well-developed essays using the thesis statement effectively to focus the essay, and practice patterns of organization, such as chronology, classification, and steps in a process, with appropriate transitional techniques, language and form to suit purpose and audience (R/LAF W W/S 1.3);
4. draw generalizations from recorded observation and experience—e.g., from stories, poems, journal entries, autobiographical and biographical pieces, descriptions and accounts—and support them with convincing evidence and examples (R/LAF W W/A 2.2);

5. use deduction and induction, understand logical fallacies, know what constitutes evidence and authority, while distinguishing between primary and secondary sources (R/LAF W W/A 2.2);
6. develop an interpretation that uses convincing textual evidence for support and explain the interpretation rationally to convince the reader of its soundness (R/LAF W W/A 2.2 a - e);
7. examine ideas and information from a variety of sources and draw conclusions about the point and purpose of that information and to evaluate the conclusions and determine whether or not they are sound (R/LAF W W/A 2.4 d);
8. analyze information from various sources through systematic notetaking, integrate material from outside sources into their own work, and acknowledge those sources (R/LAF W W/S 1.6).

B. Literature/Reading:

1. understand and use the language of literary criticism, such as setting, characterization, foreshadowing, symbolism, and metaphor; consult sources to enrich understanding; recognize the relationship of specific incidents to theme; understand an author's method of narration, i.e., who tells the story and how far the narrator is from the action; be aware of and understand shifts in point of view (R/LAF R L/RA 3.0 S/F 3.1; N/A 3.2, 3.3, 3.4);
2. put ideas in one's own words through such devices as paraphrase, precis, modeling, unscrambling sample passages, reading and interpreting maps, charts, and graphs; recognize that rereading enhances the reader's understanding and appreciation;
3. determine the author's point of view and distinguish his or her bias from established fact (R/LAF R C/A 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5);
4. recognize the importance of reading beyond the assigned works and use outside sources of reference; refine the use of research techniques;
5. develop a greater understanding of the contributions of ethnic groups by studying their traditions, their cultural stance, their similarities and differences (R/LAF R L/RA 3.5 b).

C. Speaking and Listening:

When speaking, students will:

1. function effectively in class discussion by answering and asking questions coherently and by clarifying responses with clear explanations; conceive and develop ideas that are soundly reasoned and well supported;
2. become more proficient in the various roles in editing and response writing groups; learn new roles: for example, panel chair, panel member, large group discussion leader, recorder, resource person;
3. learn argumentation techniques that allow both sides of a question to surface; learn skills in logic and reasoning to support arguments on conflicting sides of a question (R/LAF L/S O/D 1.5, 1.6);
4. give careful attention to preplanning a speech; develop a regard for the audience with respect to gaining attention, sustaining interest, making efficient use of time; learn skills in organizing for various modes of presentation: analysis, persuasion, explanation, interpretation, direction, and comparison (R/LAF L/S O/D 1.7 A/E 1.13);
5. practice oral interpretation of literature, using the techniques of emphasis, expression, dramatic pause, inflection; practice parts in dramas, attempting realistic character identity, fluency in reading dialogue, and appropriate tone and mood (R/LAF L/S S/A 2.3 a—e; 2.5).

When listening, students will:

1. develop techniques that promote supportive, polite concern for the speaker, and learn the skills necessary to offer tactful, constructive criticism;
2. identify main and subordinate ideas presented in lectures and discussions, and evaluate them for sound reasoning and convincing support; take into account the nuances, the subtle shades of meaning (R/LAF L/S A/E 1.11—1.14).

D. Student Assessment:

Students will be assessed through a variety of indicators including homework, group work, oral presentations, visuals related to the reading, quizzes on the literature, essays and other writing assignments, peer response groups, discussion participation, and performance on projects.

Essay and project assignments might ask students to:

1. explore what it means to be human, supporting main ideas with specific examples from the works examined in class and with specific examples from the scientific and technological worlds:

2. examine the interrelationship of social, technological and artistic achievement during a given time period;
3. seek the origin of a fear expressed in a particular work or line of work;
4. compare the promise and concerns of a particular technology as depicted in literature;
5. trace a theme such as work being eased by robotics or humanity being lost to mechanization through several works;
6. compare the way various authors treat similar subjects;
7. explain how a genre evolves through a series of representative works.

Students will be expected to take an essay examination that requires them to apply the thinking and writing skills they have developed in order to synthesize and analyze material from three to four major works covered during the semester. Students will be expected to support their main ideas with specific examples from the works under discussion.

See the Science Fiction Resource Binder for sample assessments

E. Course Assessment:

Science Fiction will be assessed through formal and informal surveys of the students. Course and unit goals will be reviewed by teacher on a regular basis.

### **III. METHODS AND MATERIALS**

A. Methods

Students will complete a variety of interrelated writing assignments adapted from the James Moffet writing sequence. More than one paper may be required for each assignment. In addition to four process papers per semester, minor papers will be assigned regularly.

Eight different writing types have been identified as the focus for the upper division writing program: observation, reflection, controversial issue, interpretation, evaluation, report of information, autobiography, and speculation.

B. Literature

Every teacher of Science Fiction will teach a selection of the following titles to guarantee consistency throughout the district. Each student will read at least four major works per semester, with required reading including a variety of short stories, poems, novels, and nonfiction.

## Core Selections

Anderson, P.	<i>Corridors of Time</i>
Asimov, Isaac	<i>Fantastic Voyage</i>
Asimov, Isaac	<i>Foundation</i> and other works
Balmer and Wylie	<i>When Worlds Collide</i>
Bester, Alfred	<i>Dark Side of the Earth</i>
Bester, Alfred	<i>Starburst</i>
Bova, Ben	<i>Kinsman</i>
Bova, Ben	<i>Millennium</i>
Bradbury, Ray	<i>Fahrenheit 451</i>
Bradbury, Ray	<i>The Golden Apples of the Sun</i>
Bradbury, Ray	<i>The Illustrated Man</i>
Bradbury, Ray	<i>The Martian Chronicles</i> and <i>Other Stories</i>
Calkins, Dick and Phil Noland	<i>The Collected Works of Buck Rodgers in the Twentieth Century</i>
Capek, Karl	<i>R.U.R</i>
Capek, Karl	<i>War with the Newts</i>
Cerf, Bennet, ed.	<i>Vintage Anthology of Science Fiction</i>
Chrisopher, John	<i>No Blade of Grass</i>
Clarke, Arthur	<i>Childhood's End</i>
Clarke, Arthur	<i>Imperial Earth</i>
Clarke, Arthur	<i>Rendezvous with Rama</i> and others
Clarke and Kubrick	<i>2001</i>
Dick, Philip	<i>Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?</i>
	The Selected Stories of Philip K. Dick
Damon and Knight, eds.	<i>Beyond Tomorrow</i>
Doctorow, Cory	<i>Little Brother</i>
Doyle, Sir Arthur	<i>The Lost World</i>
Farell, Gage, et al., eds.	<i>Science Fiction/Fact</i>
Heinlein, Robert	<i>Stranger in a Strange Land</i>
Heinlein, Robert	<i>Tunnel in the Sky</i> and others
Herbert, Frank	<i>Dune</i> and others
LeGuin, Ursula	<i>The Lathe of Heaven</i>
LeGuin, Ursula	<i>The Left Hand of Darkness</i>
Lewis, C.S.	<i>Out of the Silent Planet</i>
Lewis, C.S.	<i>Perelandra</i>
Lewis, C.S.	<i>The Great Divorce</i>
Miller, Walkter	<i>A Canticle for Leibowitz</i>
Niven, L., and J. Pournelle	<i>Oath of Fealty</i>
Panshin, Alexei,	<i>Rite of Passage</i>
Pohl, F., ed.	<i>Nightmare Age</i>

Pohl and Kornblunt	<i>The Space Merchants</i>
Phol and Kornblunt	<i>Wolfbane</i>
Read, John	<i>The Green Child</i>
Robinson, F. and T. Scortia	<i>Prometheus</i>
Robinson, Kim	<i>The Wild Shore</i>
Shute, Nevile	<i>On the Beach</i>
Stephensen, Neal	<i>Snowcrash</i>
Stewart, George	<i>Earth Abides</i>
Vonnegut, Kurt	<i>Sirens of Titan</i>
Vonnegut, Kurt	<i>Player Piano</i>
Wells. H.G.	<i>The Invisible Man</i>
Wells. H.G.	<i>The Time Machine</i>
Wells, H.G.	<i>The War of the Worlds</i>
Williamson	<i>Humanoids</i>
Wyndham, John	<i>Day of the Triffids</i>
Wyndham, John	<i>Out of the Depths</i>
Wydhham, John	<i>The Midwich Cuckoos</i>

### **Films**

*Planet of the Apes*  
*2001*  
*Automatna*  
*Time is . . .*  
*Fahrenheit 451*  
*The Time Machine*  
*Fantastic Voyage*  
*The War of the Worlds*  
*When Worlds Collide*  
*Journey to the Center of the Earth*  
*The Lost World*  
*The Forbin Project*  
*Alien*  
*E.T.*  
*V.*  
*Time After Time*  
*Time Bandits*  
*Star Wars*  
*The Empire Strikes Back*  
*Close Encounters*  
*Prototype*  
*The Lathe of Heaven*  
*Return of the Jedi*

Recommendations: The viewing of one full-length science fiction film per semester

#### **IV. GENERAL INFORMATION**

Science Fiction is a 5 credit course open to juniors, seniors and second semester sophomores.

- A. Prerequisites. There are no course prerequisites
- B. Requirements Met.

This course may be used in partial fulfillment of the English graduation requirement. Science Fiction is a Contemporary Strand Course.

This course is accepted toward the "b" or "g" requirement for US admissions. It is also accepted for the CSU English requirement.

Revised 1-27-06  
Updated 10-30-08  
Updated 7-16-09