

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**ENG 245 IC: SCIENCE FICTION—FALL 2015**  
**DR. HAROLD WILLIAM HALBERT**

Parkhouse 304 | 9:35 AM to 11:00 AM TTh



Montgomery County  
Community College

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Office Hours: Office: Parkhouse Hall 441  Office Hours: MWF 7:30 AM to 8:00 AM TH 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM and by appointment	Writing Center Hours: M, W, F 10:30 AM -Noon & Tuesday 11:45 AM to 2:30 PM

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION**

This survey course introduces students to the genre of science fiction and its unique ability to examine cultural issues by placing them outside reality. The speculative nature of the genre allows writers to explore the future, alternate histories, and scientific, moral, and political controversies. Starting with early historical works, the course surveys mainstream science fiction and major literary science fiction works.

**PREREQUISITES:**

Students may take this course after completing the composition requirement of their curriculum.

**COURSE GOALS:**

- To develop the students' sensitivity to literature and language so that they read with insight and enjoyment.
- To increase the students' self-awareness through a development of their critical abilities.
- To develop the students' writing skills and information literacy through writing both traditional literary analyses and research papers. .
- To improve students' reading skills.
- To show how science fiction has influenced and been influenced by mainstream literature.

**COURSE CONTENT**

My courses are designed to deal with adult issues often centering on controversial cultural and historical conflicts. At times, the class readings, lectures, and discussions may question ideas or beliefs that individual students hold dear. In addition, the language used in the course may range from highly technical jargon to the vernacular, including profanity. Students who wish to avoid such a classroom environment should seek another section of the course.

**TEXTBOOK AND REQUIRED MATERIALS:**

- *Science Fiction: Stories and Contexts*. Ed. Heather Masri. Bedford/St. Martin's. # ISBN-10: 031245015X / # ISBN-13: 978-0312450151
- *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood ISBN: 9780385490818
- *Watchmen* by Allan Moore and Dave Gibbons ISBN-10: 093028923
- *1984* by George Orwell (Plume; Centennial edition (May 6, 2003)) ISBN-10: 0452284236
- *Starship Troopers* by Robert A. Heinlein ISBN-10: 0441783589
- *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams ISBN-10: 0345391802
- Post-It Brand book marking tabs
- Access to the MLA Style Guide with the 2009 Update
- Pen and paper for each class

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

English 245 will be one of the most challenging courses of your academic career because it moves quickly, requires a wide range of academic skills, and demands more time than the average course. In addition to an intensive reading load (with reading checks to document your marginalia), each student will write two major papers (a literary interpretation and a research paper), prepare two exam guides, take a mid-term and final exam, develop an annotated bibliography, and use the discussion board extensively to post drafts and comments on readings. A breakdown of the assignments and relative point values is as follows:

Final drafts of papers	200 points
Exams	100 points
Annotated bibliographies	40 points
Two-minute presentation	10 points
Individual drafts of papers	0-20 points, depending on completeness
Required emails and posts	-5 points if not completed
Submitting final drafts to Turnitin.com	Zero on final draft if not done
Reading checks	5 points

Your grade is calculated by adding the total points earned and then dividing them by the total points possible. That average will then be plugged into the college's grading scale.

Transcript/Entry Numerical Grade	Corresponding letter grade	Percent Equivalent
4.0	A	93.6-100%
3.7	A-	89.5-93.5%
3.3	B+	87.5-89.4%
3.0	B	83.5-87.5%
2.7	B-	79.5-83.5%
2.3	C+	79.5- 77.5
0	C	69.5-77.4%
1.3	D	63.5-69.5%
0.0	F	0-63.5%

Be advised that ***you must complete all major papers in order to pass the course.*** Even if your paper is too late to be accepted under the late work policies, it must be completed by the end of the semester. If it is not, then you will automatically fail for the course, regardless of what your point total is.

## TURNING IN MAJOR PAPERS

When the final draft of a major paper is due, you will need to do the following:

- Submit a copy to the dropbox on Blackboard for the paper. ***This file is what will actually be graded, so make sure it is the final version and not a prior draft.***
- Post a copy to the discussion board in the "Final Draft" forum.
- Submit the paper to Turnitin.com and get a receipt. Papers not submitted to Turnitin.com receive zeros. See handout for log-in information.

## MAJOR PAPER REWRITE OPTION

In order to allow students to benefit from the three-step writing process and to turn in the best possible work for evaluation, students will be permitted to revise the first major paper in the course for an entirely new grade provided they meet the following criteria:

- 1) The assignment/essay must have been handed in on time and without plagiarism. Late or plagiarized papers are ineligible for revision.
- 2) Students desiring to complete a revision will meet with the instructor or a professional writing tutor at the Learning Assistance Lab. to discuss strategies for successful rewriting before attempting revision.

Note: The original, graded essay must be turned in with the revision. Just turning in a revision does not guarantee you will receive a higher grade. In the event that the revised draft grade is actually lower than the original assignment, you will receive the higher of the two grades; however, a higher revision grade always replaces the original grade, so if you are prepared to work hard, your grade

will most likely benefit. See the class web page for more information on the major paper rewrite. Please see the class web page's assignments section for more explicit details.

#### **COLLEGE POLICIES:**

All College policies must be followed and are a binding part of this syllabus. The purpose of the Student Code of Conduct is to guide students to understand their responsibilities in regard to appropriate behavior and respect for others in the college community. The policy addresses classroom disruptions and removal from the classroom for behavioral issues. It also provides the standards for ensuring the College provides due process to students through the judicial process. The policy and procedure is found at <http://www.mc3.edu/about-us/policies/125>

#### **PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:**

Plagiarism constitutes a serious breach of academic honesty and will not be tolerated. Unless I deem an act of plagiarism or cheating an honest mistake, I routinely assign students an "F" in the course for any act of academic dishonesty without the option of withdrawing from the course. Especially egregious acts will receive an "FX" with an additional notation of academic misconduct on the student's transcript. Please note that submitting work from another class as original work for this course constitutes academic dishonesty. For a full discussion of the Academic Honesty policies, please see <http://www.mc3.edu/policy/aa/ethics.htm>.

All students in my English courses will submit their papers to TurnItIn.com, a tool that checks your papers against other sources. You will have a chance to see your report and revise it before the final draft is due, should you choose.

#### **SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**

Montgomery County Community College (MCCC) welcomes qualified students with disabilities and endorses the principles of nondiscrimination and reasonable accommodation as described in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). To see if you are eligible for services and reasonable accommodations in this course please review the policy on the Disabilities web site at <http://www.mc3.edu/policy/sa/disable.htm>.

#### **ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

Regular attendance and punctuality are expected. Students may miss four class meetings and remain in the course. The fifth absence will result in either a required withdrawal from the course (before the **November 2, 2015**, deadline) or an automatic F in the course (after the **November 2, 2015**, deadline for withdrawal without a signature). At the start of the semester, each student will receive 12 points of extra credit for attendance. Points lost for tardiness or absences will initially be taken from this pool of points, giving students the flexibility to miss two classes without injury to their grades. Each absence will subtract five points from a student's total points scored for the semester. Each late arrival will subtract two points from the total points scored. A point will be awarded for each class attended. If a student knows he or she will miss a class, that student should alert Dr. Halbert beforehand. Under special circumstances (usually involving a documented medical emergency or a death in the family), you may request permission to remain enrolled in the course if your absences have exceeded four, but such circumstances are rare. Attendance will be taken by sign-in sheet at the start of class: students arriving after the sign-in sheet will be marked tardy. If you arrive late, please wait until the end of class to sign the sheet. Failure to sign the sheet at all constitutes an absence. Students who leave class early must ask for permission prior to the start of class; if you leave without permission before I dismisses the class, you will be marked absent for the whole period. Good manners suggest that if you know you will miss a class meeting, you will contact me and let me know.

#### **CLASS CANCELLATION:**

In the event of inclement weather or other emergency, the MCCC School Closing Code is 320 for day classes and 2320 for evening classes. Announcements will be made on KYW (1060 AM) and other local stations. In the event that I have to cancel a class, I will email the class and post a message on Blackboard (assuming I have power at home to access the Internet).

#### **WITHDRAWAL POLICY, INCOMPLETES, AND AUDITS:**

Students are encouraged to consult with their instructor and/or an academic advisor when initiating a Course Withdrawal. The instructor's permission must be requested and received if requesting a withdrawal after 60% and before 75% of the course is completed. After 75% of the course is completed, students may apply for an Excused Withdrawal due to medical, catastrophic, or other circumstances beyond the student's control. Specific dates of deadlines for this semester can be found at <http://www.mc3.edu/adm-fin-aid/deadlines>

Should you wish to withdraw from the course, the deadline to withdraw without my signature is November 2, 2015. If you do not formally withdraw, you will receive an F for the course even if you stop attending. **After November 2, 2015, I will not sign any**

***withdrawal requests unless you have a documented emergency. If I have not returned the first paper by this date, I will extend the deadline until one week after that paper is returned.***

***The absolute last day to get my signature is November 19, 2015. After that, all requests to withdrawal must be made directly to the Dean of Arts and Humanities.***

Applications for an "Incomplete" will only be entertained in cases of documented medical emergencies, incarceration, or military call-ups. Audits will not be permitted unless you start the course as an audit student and can convince me that you are willing to do all that work for no grade.

## **LATE WORK**

All work is due at the beginning of class on the day listed for the syllabus unless otherwise noted. I hate late work from students: it complicates my ability to grade or simply keep track of your work. More importantly, it devalues the efforts of your classmates who work very hard to meet their deadlines. To discourage late work, I have the following policy:

- Final drafts of papers lose 25 points (out of the possible 200 points) for each 24-hour period they are late. This penalty includes Saturdays and Sundays.
- Other late assignments have a 24-hour period to be submitted. They will be graded, and that grade will be divided by 2 and entered into the grade spreadsheet.

Late work will kill your grade, so don't do it. If you know ahead of time that you will not be able to complete a task, contact me for an extension. I reserve the right to make an exception to the late policy in the case of an extreme (and documentable) emergency, but that almost never happens.

## **TUTORIAL SERVICES:**

Tutorial Services, located on the lower floor of College Hall in Room 180, has computers that students may use. In addition, help from professional tutors on papers for English and other courses is available every day of the week on a walk-in basis. I work there Monday and Tuesday afternoons, but any of the professional tutors should be able to help you. Use of the Tutorial Services is strongly encouraged: I've run centers like this, used centers like this, and I believe they are a valuable resource for both struggling and gifted writers because they provide a pair of professional eyes to review a paper and give writers the kind of feedback we all want.

## **GRADE APPEAL**

In the interest of due process, the College provides an appeal process for a student who believes that a recorded final grade does not accurately reflect his/her academic performance in a course due to issuance of an arbitrary grade, inconsistent grading practice, or mechanical error. The policy and procedure is found at <http://www.mc3.edu/about-us/policies/8581>

## **CLASSROOM POLICIES:**

As adults, students and the instructor should know to do the following in class:

- Be prepared for class with work completed and required materials available.
- Refrain from non-class related conversations once class has started.
- Keep cell phones and pagers in "silent" mode and refrain from answering them or using them to send text messages. Should a student expect an important call (because of family emergencies or issues of similar magnitude), please make the instructor aware of that possibility before class.
- Inform the professor if you will be recording the class.
- Treat each other with mutual respect: while we can challenge each other's ideas in class, personalized attacks or use of inappropriate language directed at another member of the class community is unacceptable.
- Ask for help if you need it.
- Make the most of this course. It will help in the future.

## **FINAL WORD:**

I enjoy teaching literature courses: I believe they can be the most empowering classes a person can take in college because the skills you learn can help you in virtually every part of your life. I took this job to help people discover their potential: as long as you

are willing to do the work, I will do everything in my power to help you not only pass the course, but to be the best intellectual you can be.

## Daily Assignments: English 245 (Fall 2015)

Thursday, September 3, 2015

- First Class

Tuesday, September 8, 2015

- Email contact information to me at hhalbert@gmail.com. See handout on Blackboard for exact information sought and link to template. PLEASE USE THE TEMPLATE FILE.
- Read, sign, and return your contract.
- Read "How to Really Read This Book" (Handout)
- Read and mark the following selections from *Science Fiction: Stories and Contexts* (Hereafter called "Masri"):
  - "A Brief Introduction to Science Fiction and Its History" (1-10)
  - [skim only, no need to mark] "A Selective Guide to Science Fiction Research" (11-16)
  - from *The War of the Worlds*—H.G. Wells (18-32).
  - "A Martian Odyssey" —Stanley G. Weinbaum (32-52)
  - "The Fact of Blackness"—Frantz Fanon (189-193)
- Read and mark Chapters 1-10 of *Starship Troopers*. Pages 1-145

Thursday, September 10, 2015

- Read and mark Chapters 11-12 of *Starship Troopers*. Pages 146-201
- We will begin to watch *Blade Runner* in class.

Tuesday, September 15, 2015

- Finish reading and marking *Starship Troopers*, including Historical Note on last page. Pages 202-264
- We will finish *Blade Runner* in class.

Thursday, September 17, 2015

- Read and mark "Liar!"—Issac Asimov (Marsi 282-295)
- Read and mark "Burning Chrome"—William Gibson (Marsi 371-386)

Tuesday, September 22, 2015

- Read and mark "A Cyborg Manifesto"—Donna J. Haraway (Marsi 455-475). WARNING: This text is going to challenge you and will require multiple nights to complete.

Thursday, September 24, 2015

- Read and mark "Mars Is Heaven!"—Ray Bradbury (Marsi 73-87)
- Read and mark "Bloodchild"—Octavia E. Butler (Marsi 119-133)

Tuesday, September 29, 2015

- Read and mark "Second Variety" by Philip K. Dick (Marsi 296-331)
- Read and mark "The Algorithms for Love" by Ken Liu (Marsi 415-427)

Thursday, October 1, 2015

- Read and mark "The Girl Who Was Plugged In" (Marsi 342-370)

Tuesday, October 6, 2015

- Read and mark "The Nine Billion Names of God" by Arthur C. Clarke (Marsi 915-921)
- Read and mark "'All you Zombies'" by Robert A. Heinlein (Marsi 551-561)
- Read and mark "Bear Discovers Fire" by Terry Bisson (Marsi 1194-1202)
- Exam Quotation Assignment Due. Submit to Blackboard Drop Box.

Thursday, October 8, 2015

- Read and mark "Repent, Harlequin!" Said the Ticktockman"—Harlin Ellison (Marsi 758-768).
- Read and mark "Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government"—Hannah Arendt (Marsi 850-863)

Tuesday, October 13, 2015

- Draft of Paper #1 due. Bring a copy to class and post a copy in the "Paper #1: Draft" forum of the class discussion board.

Thursday, October 15, 2015

- Midterm Exam.

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

- NO CLASS.
- Final draft of Paper #1 due by 9:35 AM in the appropriate Dropbox on the class web site, on Turnitin.com, and on the Discussion Board. See checklist for details.

Thursday, October 22, 2015

- Read and mark Section 1, Chapters 1-8 of *1984*. Pages 1-106
- We will begin watching *Gattaca* in class.

Tuesday, October 27, 2015

- Read and mark Section 2 of *1984*. Pages 107-230.
- We will continue watching *Gattaca* in class.

Thursday, October 29, 2015

- Finish reading and marking *1984*. Pages 231-308. You do not need to read the appendix on "The Principles of Newspeak," but you may do so for five points extra credit.

Tuesday, November 3, 2015

- Read and mark pages 3-115 of *The Handmaid's Tale*. ("I: Night" until "VIII Birthday").
- We will start watching *Planet of the Apes*.

Thursday, November 5, 2015

- Read and mark pages 109-195 of *The Handmaid's Tale* ("VIII Birthday" until "XII: Jezebel's").
- We will continue watching *Planet of the Apes*.

Tuesday, November 10, 2015

- Finish reading and marking pages 199-211 of *The Handmaid's Tale* ("XII: Jezebel's" through the end of the "Historical Note").

Thursday, November 12, 2015

- Read and mark Chapters 1-4 of *Watchmen*. You may find it easier to use large Post-it notes to mark the text.
- Bring *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Tuesday, November 17, 2015

- Finish reading and marking *Watchmen*.
- We will review the research project today.

Thursday, November 19, 2015

- Read and mark "Flowers for Algernon" by Daniel Keyes (Marsi 1110-1132).
- Read and mark "How the World Was Saved" by Stanislaw Lem (Marsi 937-941).
- Start reading *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* over the weekend

Tuesday, November 24, 2015

- Research project prewriting due. Post a copy to the discussion board in the "Research Paper: Prewriting" forum.
- Meet in the library (in College Hall) to do research. Sign in with Dr. H in the lobby of the library.
- You should continue reading *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.
- **Attendance counts double today.**

Thursday, November 26, 2015

- NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Day.

Tuesday, December 1, 2015

- Read and mark all of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

Thursday, December 3, 2015

- NO CLASS.
- Annotated Bibliography Due at 9:35 AM. Post a copy to the "Research Paper: Bibliography" forum and submit a copy to the "Annotated Bibliography" dropbox.

Tuesday, December 8, 2015

- Draft of Paper #2 Due. Post a copy and bring two copies to class.

Thursday, December 10, 2015

- Last Class.
- Read "The Star" by Arthur C. Clarke (see Course Documents)

Tuesday, December 15, 2015

- No Class.
- Final Draft of Paper #2 due. See checklist for details.

Thursday, December 17, 2015:

- Final exam 10:10 AM to 12:10PM.
- Bring Exam Card.