



Afrofutures: African Science Fiction

ENGL 02393 English Seminar I

Spring 2019

Tuesday/Thursday 12:30–1:45, Bunce 332

Dr. Dustin Crowley

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Office Hours: T/R 2:00-3:30 and by appointment

Required Texts:

- *Science Fiction*, Adam Roberts
- *They Say, I Say* 4th Edition, Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein
- *A Killing in the Sun*, Dilman Dila
- *Lagoon*, Nnedi Okorafor
- *Rosewater*, Tade Thompson
- *After the Flare*, Deji Bryce Olukotun

Course Description: On the heels of *Black Panther's* phenomenal box office and critical success, it seems interest in African science fiction is surging. But what does science fiction from Africa look like, especially given long stereotypes about their lack of development and technology? How do African diasporic authors engage with a genre that has often excluded their places and cultures? This course looks at how these writers use and change the genre to imagine the Africa's possible futures, and subsequently argue for a different, more central place in our own global reality.

Seminar I also introduces students to research skills and longer writing projects. Students will find and engage with scholarly sources to produce their own researched critical essay on the literature.

Course Objectives:

- Develop skills in analyzing generic conventions (in this case, of science fiction) and understanding how they impact literary form and representation
- Develop a nuanced understanding of various and sometimes conflicting issues, stances, and values as represented in African science fiction
- Demonstrate capacity to draw from the field of postcolonialism to interpret and make arguments about how African science fiction engages and challenges the genre
- Practice and improve critical research methods, including finding, evaluating, and incorporating secondary scholarly sources in the analysis of literary texts
- Generate and develop research questions and projects with faculty assistance
- Demonstrate ability to develop cogent, coherent, sustained critical argument of substantial length (15-20 pages)
- Participate at an advanced level in class discussion, including leading discussion, finding sources to add to class materials, and helping to define the specific direction of further inquiry

Course requirements:

- Daily reading responses, 20%
- Research scavenger hunt, 5%
- Scholarly article assessment, 10%
- Research proposal, 5%
- Annotated bibliography, 5%
- Thesis/outline, 5%
- Rough draft and conference, 5%
- Final draft, 30%
- Final presentation, 5%
- Participation, 10%

Essays will be submitted through Blackboard

Grading Scale:

A = 93-100 (4.0)	A- = 90-92 (3.7)	
B+ = 87-89 (3.3)	B = 83-86 (3.0)	B- = 80-82 (2.7)
C+ = 77-79 (2.3)	C = 73-76 (2.0)	C- = 70-72 (1.7)
D+ = 67-69 (1.3)	D = 63-66 (1.0)	D- = 60-62 (0.7)
F=59 and below		

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism consists of “copying or imitating the language, ideas and thoughts of another author and passing off the same as one’s original work” (*American College Dictionary*). It is academic dishonesty and violates the integrity of the academic process. According to Rowan University policy, students committing any act of academic dishonesty may fail the assignment and/or fail the course, at the faculty member’s discretion. All violations of Academic Integrity **must**

be reported to the Provost's office using the RAIV process. Serious cases will be brought to a hearing. In order to avoid plagiarism, students should provide appropriate documentation whenever quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing, or otherwise using the language or ideas of others. Multiple submission (handing in a paper written for one class to another class) is also a form of academic dishonesty and will be treated accordingly. Visit <http://www.rowan.edu/english> for more in-depth information on this topic; for University policy and procedures, visit the following website: <http://www.rowan.edu/provost/policies/AcademicIntegrity.htm>

If you have any doubts about whether you have used someone else's work appropriately or not in your own writing, please see me **before** you submit your work.

English Department Attendance Policy: After a student has accumulated more than two weeks of absences (i.e., four 75-minute classes, two evening classes of 2 1/2 hours each, or three 2-hour summer classes), a faculty member in the English Department will evaluate whether a student's semester grade should be lowered and will have the right to advise the student to withdraw from the course or, alternatively, to fail the student for excessive absences.

Due dates: Due dates for all assignments are firm. Your grade will be lowered one grade level (+/-) for each day late. If you miss a scheduled exam, please be aware that the instructor can only offer a make-up in the case of official University activities, documented illness, death of a family member or loved one, and inclement weather. You must provide timely notice and verification of the situation.

Course schedule:

**Note: Schedule and supplemental readings are subject to change, pending class needs. Any revised or additional materials will be posted to Blackboard.*

T Jan. 22: Introduction to the course

R Jan. 24: Read excerpts from *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (on Blackboard)

T Jan. 29: *Science Fiction*, chapters 1 and 2

R Jan. 31: *Science Fiction*, chapters 3–6

T Feb. 5: Read "Introduction: African Science Fiction," "Utopian and Dystopian Visions of Afrofuturism," watch Nnedi Okorafor TED talk (on Blackboard)

R Feb. 7: *A Killing in the Sun*: "Leafy Man," "The Healer," "Itanda Bridge," "A Killing in the Sun"

T Feb. 12: *A Killing in the Sun*: "The Doctor's Truck," "Lights on Water," "A Wife and a Slave"

R Feb. 14: *A Killing in the Sun*: "The Yellow People," "Okello's Honeymoon," "A Bloodline of Blades"; read "If Colonialism Was the Apocalypse" (on Blackboard)

T Feb. 19: *Lagoon*, Prologue–chapter 14

R Feb. 21: *Lagoon*, chapter 15–29

T Feb. 26: *Lagoon*, chapter 30–43

R Feb. 28: *Lagoon*, chapter 44–end;

T Mar. 5: *They Say/I Say*, Part 1; finding and engaging secondary sources for contemporary literature

R Mar. 7: Read “Intimate Objects” (on Blackboard)

Research Scavenger Hunt due on Blackboard by midnight on Sunday, March 10

T Mar. 12: *Rosewater*, chapter 1–6

R Mar. 14: *Rosewater*, chapter 7–13

Article Assessment due on Blackboard by midnight on Sunday, March 24

T Mar. 19 – R Mar. 21: NO CLASS (Spring Break)

T Mar. 26: *Rosewater*, chapter 14–19

R Mar. 28: *Rosewater*, chapter 20–25

T Apr. 2: *Rosewater*, Interlude–end

R Apr. 4: *They Say/I Say*, Part 2; developing critical questions and responses, incorporating sources

Research proposal due on Blackboard by midnight on Sunday, Apr. 7

T Apr. 9: *After the Flare*, chapter 1–8

R Apr. 11: *After the Flare*, chapter 9–16

Annotated Bibliography due on Blackboard by midnight on Sunday, Apr. 14

T Apr. 16: *After the Flare*, chapter 17–23

R Apr. 18: *After the Flare*, chapter 24–end

T Apr. 23: *They Say/I Say*, Part 3 and “On Closer Examination”; putting together a long research paper

Thesis/outline due in class

R Apr. 25: Watch *Black Panther*; read “Africa is a Country Called Wakanda” (on Blackboard)

T Apr. 30: NO CLASS: Individual conferences (rough draft due)

R May 2: NO CLASS: Individual conferences (rough draft due)

Final Exam Thursday, May 9 12:30–2:30

You will give a short presentation about your final paper during our final exam time

Final essay due on Blackboard by midnight on Wednesday, May 8

Academic Accommodations: Your academic success is important. If you have a documented disability that may have an impact upon your work in this class, please contact me. Students must provide documentation of their disability to the Academic Success Center in order to receive official University services and accommodations. The Academic Success Center can be reached at 856-256-4234. The Center is located on the 3rd floor of Savitz Hall. The staff is available to answer questions regarding accommodations or assist you in your pursuit of accommodations. We look forward to working with you to meet your learning goals.

Student Professionalism:

The English Department is committed to assuring that every class meeting contributes to equitable learning and scholarly inquiry for all. To that end, the Department asks all students to help create a positive classroom environment by adhering to the following guidelines of professional behavior:

- Arrive to class on time.
- Stay for the entire class; do not come and go.
- Be attentive, involved, and respectful to everyone.
- Focus on class material, rather than other coursework.
- Consider others' interpretations with an open mind.
- Contribute to discussions without interrupting others.
- Use language appropriate to a classroom setting
- Snack discreetly (if unavoidable), and do not leave trash behind.
- Avoid signaling when class time is over (i.e., packing bags, donning sunglasses).

Outside the classroom, students should:

- Use appropriate format, tone, and diction in emails.
- Keep appointments (or reschedule beforehand).
- Contact faculty before missing a class or exam.

Electronics Policy: Students are not allowed to have cell phones, tablets, or laptops out during class time, unless specifically permitted by the instructor.

Student Handbook: Students should review the University policy page:

<https://confluence.rowan.edu/display/POLICY/Home>

Student Learning Outcomes: This course fulfills the following English Department SLOs:

1. Think and write critically about literature, building arguments that are supported with textual evidence;
2. Work with the formal elements of literature (plot, setting, style, figurative language, symbols, etc.);
3. Read carefully, distinguishing between what a text states directly and what it implies;
4. Perform accurate and insightful close readings of literary texts;
5. Understand how issues of nation, culture, and social status help shape literary texts;

6. Realize how schools of literary theory can offer new perspectives from which to read literary and non-literary texts;
 7. Find, evaluate, and incorporate critical sources to expand their understanding of a literary text;
 8. Participate in class: speaking cogently as well as listening carefully and responding to others' ideas;
 9. Demonstrate an understanding of correct spoken and written English;
 10. Understand and demonstrate academic integrity.
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IMPORTANT POLICIES AND DATES

See Registrar's website <http://www.rowan.edu/registrar> for more complete information.

Withdrawals: If you decide not to take this course, you may drop it using Banner during the first few days of the term, in which case the course will not be recorded on your transcript.

After the Drop/Add period, follow the procedure and timeline – as well as locate the relevant form – for Withdrawal at <http://www.rowan.edu/provost/registrar/forms.html>. If you plan to withdraw, do so as soon as possible. If you stop attending class without officially withdrawing, you will fail the course. Also remember that you can take a course only twice. Withdrawal after the Drop/Add period constitutes one course attempt.

Withdrawal: Requires a signature from your professor; a W will be recorded on your transcript.

Late Withdrawal: Requires a signature from your professor and the Department Chairperson, Dr. Joe Coulombe. Your last date of attendance will be recorded, and you will receive either a WP (withdrawal passing) or a WF (withdrawal failing).

Hardship Withdrawal: Requires signatures from your professor, the Department Chairperson, Dr. Joe Coulombe, and the Assistant Dean of the College, Stephen Fleming. **Note:** the Dean will only approve a withdrawal for hardship circumstances beyond your control (academic failure will not warrant a withdrawal at this point).

REPEATING A COURSE

In the event that a student must or voluntarily chooses to repeat a course, the grade received for the repeated course will constitute the final grade for cumulative GPA purposes—whether the grade is higher or lower than the grade received in the original course. The original grade, although not counted in the cumulative GPA, remains on the student's transcript. **By University policy, the same course may not be taken more than twice, including withdrawals.**

INCOMPLETES

Incompletes are given only in the event of a last-minute emergency that keeps a student from finishing a final paper or final examination. It is the student's responsibility to arrange an incomplete with the faculty member before final grades are submitted. If you fail to turn in a final paper or final examination but haven't talked with your professor, he or she will have the right to fail you; you will not automatically be given an incomplete. **The Incomplete will convert to an F if it is not extended or resolved.** It is the student's responsibility to keep track of his or her Incompletes.

INCLEMENT WEATHER CLOSING

The University will remain open and classes will be held during inclement weather whenever possible. It is your decision, based on your assessment of the situation, whether or not to attend class. If you do not attend, please make arrangements with your professor as to how the missed work will be completed.

Rowan will notify the University community of a closing through the following ways:

- Rowan Mass Notification System (register)
- Rowan homepage (www.rowan.edu)
- Email
- Rowan Radio 89.7 WGLS-FM
- Dial 856-256-INFO (856.256.4636), press "1"
- Social Media

<http://www.rowan.edu/emergency/weather/weather.cfm>