

Modern science fiction

Start date	5 May 2017	End date	7 May 2017
Venue	Madingley Hall Madingley Cambridge		
Tutor	Professor Edward James	Course code	1617NRX059

Director of Programmes Emma Jennings
For further information on this course, please contact Public Programme Coordinator, Clare Kerr
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To book See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biography

Edward James is Emeritus Professor of Medieval History at University College Dublin.

For more than thirty years he has also been pursuing a dual career, or hobby, as a science fiction scholars. Between 1986 and 2001 he edited *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction*, which used to be the UK's only journal of sf criticism. In 1994 he published *Science Fiction in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford University Press), for which the University of California awarded him the Eaton Prize. He has co-edited collections of essays on *Babylon 5* and Terry Pratchett, and co-edited *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* (which won a Hugo Award in 2005) and *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*. He co-wrote *The Short History of Fantasy* for Middlesex University Press, which has been translated into several languages. His most recent book, in Illinois University Press's "Masters of Modern Science Fiction" series, was *Lois McMaster Bujold* (2015). The (US) Science Fiction Research Association gave him their Pilgrim Award, for life-time achievement; in 2015 he received the BSFA Award for Best Non-Fiction for his project called "Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of the Great War". He has taught science fiction at the University of York, at Reading (where he founded the MA in Science Fiction Studies), at Rutgers, and at Anglia Ruskin. Between 2011 and 2016 he was Chair of the Science Fiction Foundation.

Course programme

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	Session 1. The History of Modern Science Fiction: An Overview. Lecture, with a discussion of Clifford D. Simak's "Desertion" (1944).
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 2. Science Fiction in the 1950s. A discussion of Cordwainer Smith's "The Game of Rat and Dragon" (1955), Isaac Asimov's "The Last Question" (1956), and Damon Knight's "Stranger Station" (1956).
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 3. Science Fiction in the 1960s. A discussion of Harlan Ellison's "'Repent, Harlequin!' Said the Ticktockman" (1965), Frederik Pohl's "Day Million" (1966), and Ursula K. Le Guin's "Vaster than Empires and More Slow" (1971).
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Session 4. Science Fiction in the 1970s. A discussion of Joanna Russ's "When It Changed" (1972), James Tiptree Jr.'s "And I Awoke and Found Me Here on the Cold Hill's Side" (1972), and George R.R. Martin's "Sandkings" (1979).
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Session 5. Science Fiction in the 1980s and Beyond 1. A discussion of Bruce Sterling's "Swarm" (1982), Greg Bear's "Blood Music" (1983), and Octavia E. Butler's "Bloodchild" (1984).
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 6. Science Fiction in the 1980s and Beyond 2. A discussion of C.J. Cherryh's "Pots" (1985), Karen Joy Fowler's "The Lake Was Full of Artificial Things" (1985), and Pat Murphy's "Rachel in Love" (1987).
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 7. Science Fiction in the 1980s and Beyond 3. A discussion of Geoffrey Landis's "Vacuum States" (1988), Kim Stanley Robinson's "Before I Wake" (1989), and Ted Chiang's "Story of Your Life" (1998).
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

1. To explore the development of science fiction between c. 1950 and c. 2000.
2. To analyse the short stories under consideration.
3. To understand better what science fiction writers are trying to do.

Content:

Science fiction, which was born out of the writings of Mary Shelley, Jules Verne and H.G. Wells in the nineteenth century, developed into one of the most distinctive genres of the twentieth century. By the end of the century it is now ubiquitous on the large and small screens as well as in popular literature. The focus of this course will be on American science fiction, partly because that was dominant throughout the world in the second half of the twentieth century, but also because that makes the course more focussed. And concentrating on the science fiction short story, which remains very important in the field, will enable us to cover more writers, and to get a clearer idea of the development of science fiction over a period of some fifty years. The stories have been selected from the VanderMeers' book (19 from out of 105) because they are interesting or important stories historically, and in most cases are stories by writers who have been important in the development of the field.

Presentation of the course:

All the stories discussed are to be found in Ann and Jeff VanderMeer, eds., *The Big Book of Science Fiction* (Vintage/Penguin, 2016); this paperback should be bought, and **the stories listed above should be read before the course.**

There will be an introductory lecture on Friday evening: thereafter each session will be introduced by a ten-minute talk about the writers being discussed, and the rest of the session will be taken up with the discussion.

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

1. Place science fiction writers better in their historical and literary context
2. Approach science fiction with a better understanding of its development and history.

Reading and resources list

Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
James, Edward and Farah Mendlesohn, eds.	<i>The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction</i>	Cambridge University Press (Cambridge), 2003
James, Edward.	<i>Science Fiction in the Twentieth Century.</i>	Out of print, but a free PDF can be obtained by addressing an email to the author, at edward.james@ucd.ie , or, if you are a member, by downloading it from academia.edu.
Link, Eric Carl, and Gerry Canavan, eds.,	<i>The Cambridge Companion to American Science Fiction</i>	Cambridge University Press (New York), 2015

Website addresses

One of the best encyclopedias of any literary genre is available free online. It contains full information (some five million words) on authors, themes, movies and so on;

<http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com>

Note Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

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