

Spring 2021

## LIT 386-104: Science Fiction

Nancy Steffen-Fluhr

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## LIT 386-104/HM4 SCIENCE FICTION Spring, 2021

**INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Nancy Steffen-Fluhr**

Associate Professor, Humanities (Science, Technology & Society Division)  
Director, Murray Center for Women in Technology

**OFFICE:** Online only during spring 2021  
**OFFICE HOURS:** Wednesdays, 5 to 6 pm & by appointment  
WebEx Office: <http://njit.webex.com/meet/steffen>  
**PHONE:** Cell: 201-919-4018 Landline: 973-208-9015  
**EMAIL:** [steffen@njit.edu](mailto:steffen@njit.edu)  
**COURSE CANVAS:** <https://njit.instructure.com/courses/17261>

**CLASS MEETINGS:** Tuesdays, 6-8:45 pm via WebEx  
**WEBEX LINK:** <https://njit.webex.com/njit/j.php?MTID=m6e138cb0e38abca4cd0b1948cf55872c>  
**WEBEX PASSWORD:** 4Vd5B2W9eWs

### NUTS & BOLTS

**COURSE DELIVERY MODE:** This is an online course. It will be primarily synchronous: that is, we will meet “live” via WebEx once a week at a regular time (6-8:45 pm). Some of our class interaction will also take place asynchronously, however, within NJIT’s CANVAS learning management system--[canvas.njit.edu](https://canvas.njit.edu)—and I will hold live (online) office hours, in my personal WebEx room. (See above.) Some of the assignments require that you work on project/ have a discussion with a subset of your fellow students, and your group may decide to do this synchronously via Zoom, WebEx, or a chat room. You will also be asked to record a very short selfie-style video each week on an assigned topic and share your video with the class via an app called Flipgrid. (See “APPS” below for more detail.) [For more info on online courses sat NJIT, See For more information, see [FAQs for Online Courses at NJIT.](#)]

**TOOLS:**

- **REQUIRED:** A computer, webcam, mic, and a reliable internet connection (preferably hard-wired)
- **RECOMMENDED:** In addition to your main computer, you will probably want to have a smartphone or tablet, with a reliable internet connection, that you can use to make Flipgrid videos. (If you don’t have a smartphone, you can make Flipgrid videos from your desktop/laptop, as long as you have a webcam and mic.)

**APPS:**

- **CANVAS MOBILE APP:** You can access Canvas directly from your desktop/laptop by going to [canvas.njit.edu](https://canvas.njit.edu) and logging in with your UCID. If you want to access Canvas from your smartphone or tablet, however, you will first have to download an app. Here’s how: Go to the App Store on your iOS device or the Play Store on your Android device. Once you have downloaded the app, open it, tap Find my school, and then type in New Jersey Institute of Technology. When the full name appears in the search list, tap the name. The name of the university should appear in the search list. If it does not, then enter the following URL: [njit.instructure.com](https://njit.instructure.com).
- **FLIPGRID MOBILE APP:** In addition to the spontaneous discussions we will have each week in our live class session and breakout rooms, part of your weekly homework will involve responding to a special question by making a short, selfie-style video using a simple but powerful app called Flipgrid. The app is already embedded in our LIT 386 Canvas, so you don’t need an individual Flipgrid account; however, if you are going to use a smartphone or tablet to record your videos, you will need to download the mobile version of the app. It comes in both IOS and Android flavors. **Here are instructions:**

<https://blog.flipgrid.com/gettingstarted>

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** “*Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at: <http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>. Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at [dos@njit.edu](mailto:dos@njit.edu)”*

## LIT 386-104 SCIENCE FICTION Spring 2021

**PROCTORING OF QUIZZES AND EXAMS:** All quizzes and exams are closed book, closed notes, no aids. **You are required to use Respondus for the online quizzes and exams. (See below.)**

### **Using Respondus LockDown and a Webcam for Online Exams:**

Respondus LockDown Browser is a locked browser for taking exams in Canvas. It prevents you from printing, copying, going to another URL, or accessing other applications during a test. If a Canvas quiz requires that LockDown Browser be used, you will not be able to take the assessment or quiz with a standard web browser.

**You will be required to use the LockDown Browser with a webcam (Respondus Monitor), which will record you during this course's online midterm and final exams.**

The webcam can be built into your computer or can be the type that plugs in with a USB cable. Watch [this short video](#) to get a basic understanding of LockDown Browser and the webcam feature. A student [Quick Start Guide \(PDF\)](#) is also available.

- a) Download and install LockDown Browser from this link:  
<http://www.respondus.com/lockdown/download.php?id=264548414>
- b) Once your download has finished, locate the "LockDown Browser" shortcut on the desktop and double-click it. (For Mac users, launch "LockDown Browser" from the Applications folder.)
- c) You will be brought to the Canvas login page within the LockDown Browser, click "Login with your UCID" to log in with your NJIT UCID and password and then click Login.
- d) Under "My courses", click on the course in which you have to take the exam that requires the LockDown Browser.
- e) After you enter the course, find the exam and click on it.
- f) A confirmation prompt will appear, click the "Start attempt" button. Once a quiz has been started with LockDown Browser, you cannot exit until the Submit all and finish button is clicked.
- g) If you are required to use a webcam (Respondus Monitor), you will be prompted to complete a Webcam Check and other Startup Sequence steps.

**NETIQUETTE:** Throughout this course, you are expected to behave courteously to classmates by being a polite, active participant. You should respond to discussion Flipgrid assignments promptly so classmates have adequate time to reply. In our synchronous class sessions, please keep your camera on—especially when you are speaking. (But don't Toobin!) Respect opinions, even those that differ strongly from your own, and avoid using offensive language, unless I do first. 🙏

## THE COURSE (finally!)

**BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION:** In this course, we will analyze a set of science fiction novels, stories, and films in order to better understand the underlying cultural assumptions that drive the real-life US technological enterprise.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Mary Shelley                               | FRANKENSTEIN  |
| Ursula LeGuin                              | LATHE OF HEAVEN   |
| Emily St. John Mandel                      | STATION ELEVEN  |
| <b>Ian McEwan</b>                          | <b>MACHINES LIKE ME</b> <b>Honors Extra Credit Option</b> |
| + Online Course Pack (CP) of short stories |   |

**NOTE:** The complete (free) E-Text of Shelley's Frankenstein is available at: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/84/84-h/84-h.htm>

**REQUIRED FILM VIEWING:** You are expected to see the assigned films/video clips on your own, at home or in your dorm. Some of the films/videos are available for free at the URLs indicated in the syllabus. The others are widely available for a small rental fee on YouTube, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, iTunes, and/or Vudu, among other sources. If you have trouble finding a given film, please contact me.

### **COURSE GRADING SCALE**

| GRADE | POINTS   |
|-------|----------|
| A     | 90-100   |
| B+    | 88-90    |
| B     | 80-87    |
| C+    | 78-80    |
| C     | 70-77    |
| D     | 65-70    |
| F     | Below 65 |

## LIT 386-104 SCIENCE FICTION Spring 2021

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS/ GRADING (Here's How You Earn those 100 Points!)

Two analytical essays on assigned topics.

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| Essay #1: due March 2                                      | 20 points         |
| Essay #2: due May 4  | 20                |
| Midterm exam: March 9                                      | 20                |
| Cumulative "Final Quiz": April 27                          | 10                |
| <b>Weekly Class Participation/ Quizzes (2.5 x 12 wks.)</b> | <b>30</b>         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>100 points</b> |

### WEEKLY CLASS PARTICIPATION COMPONENTS:

|   |             |  |
|---|-------------|--|
| Class Participation Score (See Rubric): | 0.75        |  |
| Quiz A (beginning of class):            | 0.50        |  |
| Quiz B (end of class):                  | 0.25        | + extra credit "Easter Egg" worth 0.25 or more |
| Flipgrid Video*                         | 0.75        | * The Flipgrid assignment is due before class. |
| Comment on another student's Flipgrid*  | 0.25        | * The Flipgrid assignment is due before class. |
| <b>WEEKLY TOTAL=</b>                    | <b>2.50</b> |  |

### READING/ DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

**NOTE ON READINGS & FILMS:** You should have completed the assigned reading and/or seen the assigned film by the date on which it is scheduled for discussion. That is, **you should have finished the novel *Frankenstein* by next week, January 26.** With a couple of exceptions, you are expected to rent and screen the assigned films on your own, at home or in your dorm. The films are widely available at Netflix and Amazon/ Amazon Instant Video, among other sources. If you have trouble finding a given film, please see me.

- J19**     **Unit 1**   **What is SF?**  
In-Class Film:     "Frankenstein" (1931)
- J26**     **Unit 2**   **The "Mad Scientist Plot": Creators & Creations Part I**  
Reading:            Shelley. FRANKENSTEIN  
In-class film:       Excerpts from "Mary Shelley's Frankenstein" (1994)
- F2**       **Unit 3**   **Creators & Creations Part II**  
Film to rent:        "Blade Runner" [See the complete film prior to class]  
In-class film:        "Metropolis" [excerpts]
- F9**       **Unit 4**   **Creators & Creations Part III**  
Reading:            CP #1 DelRey. "Helen O'Loy"  
Film to see:         "Android" (1982)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sr2FCaK\\_gTU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sr2FCaK_gTU)     [See the complete film prior to class]
- F16**     **Unit 5**   **Creators & Creations Part IV**  
Films to rent:        "A.I.--Artificial Intelligence" (Spielberg, 2001) [See the complete film prior to class]  
                          "Robot and Frank" (2012) [See the complete film prior to class]  
**Reading:            CP #2**   **Turkle. "In Good Company"**     **Additional Honors Reading**
- F23**     **Unit 6**   **Creators & Creations Part V**  
Films to rent:        "Her" (2013) [See the complete film prior to class]  
                          "Ex Machina" (2014) [See the complete film prior to class]
- M2**       **ESSAY #1 DUE**  
**Unit 7**   **Creators & Creations Part VI**  
In-Class Films:      "The Original" (Westworld TV Pilot, 2016)  
                          "Be Right Back" (Black Mirror TV Series 2)

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**NOTE:** Begin reading LATHE OF HEAVEN [due March 23]

**M9** **MIDTERM EXAM** [1.5 hours]  
In-Class film excerpts and discussion

**M16** **SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS**

**M23** **Unit 8 Daoism & the Sustainable Planet**  
Book Reading: LeGuin. LATHE OF HEAVEN  
**Extra Credit Online Content (Netflix):** “Nosedive” (Black Mirror TV Series 3)

**M30** **Unit 9 “White” Worlds: Dystopia, Part I**  
Reading: CP #3 Forster. “The Machine Stops”  
**CP#4 Zamyatin. “We” Additional Honors Reading**  
Film to rent: “Gattaca” (1997) [See the complete film prior to class]  
Free Film to see: “THX 1138” (1971) <https://vimeo.com/150086321>

**A6 -** **Unit 10: Pandemic: Dystopia, Part II**  
Book Reading: St. John Mandel. STATION ELEVEN  
**Book Reading: Ian McEwan. MACHINES LIKE ME Honors Extra Credit Option**

**A13** **Unit 11 The Fortress World: Dystopia, Part III**  
Film to rent: “Code 46” [See the complete film prior to class]

**A20** **Unit 12 Animal, Machine, Alien: The Nature of Human Nature, Part I**  
Films to rent: 2001 (Discussion of Parts 1-3) [See the complete film prior to class]  
“Arrival” (2016). [See the complete film prior to class]  
**Reading: CP#5. Clarke. “The Sentinel” Additional Honors Reading**

**A27** **LAST CLASS**  
**Unit 13 Animal, Machine, Alien: The Nature of Human Nature, Part II**  
Film to rent: “WALL-E” (2008) [See the complete film prior to class]  
**Reading: CP#6. Minsky. “Will Robots Inherit the Earth?” Additional Honors Reading**  
**Cumulative “Final Quiz”**

**May 4** **ESSAY #2 DUE**