

**ENG 381 Film, Media and Culture:
“Otherness” in Speculative Film & TV
Summer 2017 (CRN 40808)**

Dr. Jenée Wilde
Date: July 24-August 20
Time: MTWR 2-3:50pm
Class location: 128 CHI
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Office location: 263 PLC
Office hours*: MTW 4-5pm
**Due to heat, office hours will be held in PLC 1st floor lobby*
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Course Description: Aliens, monsters, killer androids, mutants.... Such metaphors may express cultural fears of the “other” that underlie social prejudice, intolerance, and discrimination. But viewers and fans may also read against the grain of normative cinematic images, finding identity and affirmation in the misunderstood and maligned. This course introduces students to critical thinking about the representation of “otherness” in speculative film and television media, including adaptations from comics. We will explore how binary structures of knowledge define social categories and how science fiction, fantasy, horror, and other non-realistic genres may simultaneously challenge and affirm what we “know” about gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, nation, and ability. We also examine the contexts of media production and the diverse social positionings of viewers and fans that prompt (un)conventional readings of cinematic entertainment. The course incorporates a range of theoretical paradigms from film theory, queer theory, transgender studies, critical race theory, reception theory, and science fiction studies. ENG 381 satisfies the Arts and Letters group requirement, as well as the Identity, Pluralism, and Tolerance multicultural requirement. It also satisfies certain degree requirements in English, Comics Studies, Cinema Studies, and Journalism.

Note: Your ongoing enrollment in this class means that you agree to abide by the policies and guidelines of this syllabus.

Required Course Materials: All readings are to be completed by the class period for which they are assigned.

- *V for Vendetta*, by Alan Moore and David Lloyd (DC Comics, 2005)
- additional readings provided on Canvas (see course bibliography below)
- two blue exam books, available at the Duck Store
- access to Netflix streaming for the duration of the course (recommended)

Classroom Seating: While the class is scheduled in a 100-seat lecture hall, the course is discussion oriented and limited to 40 students. Therefore, seating will be arranged daily to facilitate small and large group discussion.

Attendance: Class periods are used for discussions, lectures, screenings, small group assignments, writings, and other activities. Because participation in these activities is fundamental to your success in this course, attendance is mandatory. If circumstances require your absence from class or prevent you from taking an exam or turning in an assignment on time, you must inform me of the situation *before* class or an assignment due date/time via e-mail at jenee@uoregon.edu. Be prepared to provide documentation. It is also your responsibility to obtain notes and materials and view any screened media that you missed. Behavior that disrupts a respectful learning environment will affect your attendance grade (see below).

Grading: Course grades are based on the following activities:

- **Attendance (10% of final grade).** Because attendance is mandatory, each absence will reduce your attendance grade by ten percent (no absences 100%, one absence 90%, two absences 80%, etc.). Any use of cell phones or disruptive behavior during class time will result in an automatic absence for the day (see Respectful Learning Community policy).
- **Class Participation (30% of final grade).** Students are expected to be active participants in the course both during and outside of class time. Participation grades will be based on graded Canvas discussion postings, preparedness, and class activities (such as pop quizzes, short writings, or group work).
- **Midterm Exam (30% of final grade).** Short-answer/essay exam over the first half of term. A blue exam book is required to complete the test.
- **Final Exam (30% of final grade).** Short-answer/essay exam over the whole term. A blue exam book is required to complete the test.

Course grades are calculated based on the following percentage ranges:

A+	=98-100%	C+	=78-79%	F	=0-59%
A	=93-97%	C	=73-77%		
A-	=90-92%	C-	=70-72%		
B+	=88-89%	D+	=68-69%		
B	=83-87%	D	=63-67%		
B-	=80-82%	D-	=60-62%		

Canvas Discussion Postings on Critical Readings: This assignment is designed to help students prepare for classroom discussions of the readings and film/episode screenings. Because they also serve in place of written essays, postings should be treated as *formal* opportunities (not informal blogging or journaling) to engage more deeply and critically with the materials of the course. **Students must write four original 250-word postings on assigned critical readings (one submitted per week by class time on the day a reading is due in the course schedule).** No late postings are accepted without prior authorization. All postings will be evaluated based on two sets of criteria:

A. **Quality** – Posts must demonstrate your thoughtful engagement with a critical reading’s key concepts and ideas (e.g. discussing a selected passage, evaluating an author’s main claims, etc.). They should *go beyond mere summary or personal response* to grapple with important questions and concepts in pursuit of a deeper understanding of the material.

B. **Precision** – Posts must be submitted on time and meet minimum length requirements (quoted passages are excluded from word counts). Posts must use MLA style parenthetical citations (author and page number) for paraphrased and quoted material from assigned readings. External sources consulted, paraphrased, quoted, or linked also must be documented. Postings must be edited for grammar and mechanical errors. Plagiarism of any sort is unacceptable (see Academic Honesty).

Each posting will earn up to 3 points as follows (12 points total):

- 3 points – satisfactory work for both criteria (A and B)
- 2 points – satisfactory work for only one criteria (A or B)
- 1 point – less than satisfactory work for both criteria
- 0 point – work unsatisfactory, plagiarized, or incomplete

Canvas Discussion Follow-up Postings: This assignment is designed to help students extend classroom discussions of the readings and film/episode screenings. Because they also serve in

place of written essays, postings should be treated as opportunities to engage more deeply and critically with the materials of the course and with fellow students. **Students must write eight 150-word follow-up commentaries (two submitted per week by Thursdays at midnight).** No late postings are accepted without prior authorization. In these posts, you may choose to discuss a scene or character in relation to course concepts, follow-up on screening questions or class discussion, examine a specific aspect of comics read for class, thoughtfully respond to a posting by another student, provide links to and discussion about related external source materials, etc. The possibilities are open so long as follow-up comments *go beyond mere summary or personal response* to positively contribute to the ongoing discussion and understanding of course content. Each posting will be evaluated on Quality and Precision criteria (see above) and earn 1 point for satisfactory work (8 points total). Plagiarism of any sort is unacceptable (see Academic Honesty).

Group Media Introductions: Student groups of 5-6 people will prepare and present PowerPoint introductions to the course's film, television, and comics media. The presentation format is **10 slides in 10 minutes**, following models provided by the instructor, to briefly highlight the *most relevant information* that class members need in preparation for screenings and exams. For example, presentations may include some the following information:

- **Films:** title and release date, director, major characters/actors relevant to narrative, story/screenplay, producer(s), production studio/distributor, genre source materials, film facts (original box office revenues, gross revenues, ancillary products, music/score, production notes, popular and critical reception, awards, etc.).
- **Shows:** title and release dates for seasons, series creator, major characters/actors relevant to episode, plot summary relevant to episode, episode director/writer(s), producer(s), production and broadcast information, genre source materials, TV facts (number of viewers, music, production notes, popular and critical reception, awards, etc.).
- **Comics:** title and release dates, writers and artists, major characters, narrative universe, publication history, themes, popular and critical reception, media adaptations, etc.

Groups will decide what to include and how to divide the labor of slide production and presentation equally between members. Presenters should keep slide text *concise* (don't cram all your notes onto a slide) but be prepared to explain and elaborate within time constraints. Presentations also must include an 11th slide for names of presenters and their sources. All sources consulted, paraphrased, or quoted in the slides must be documented. Plagiarism of any sort is unacceptable (see Academic Honesty policy).

Groups will compile and export all slides in a single pptx or pdf file (or link) and email it to me at least 30 minutes before class on the presentation date. Presentations will take place at the beginning of the class period. A follow-up self-reflection is also required. Grading will be based on the following criteria: overall preparedness of group members (2 points), overall presentation quality (2 points), and individual follow-up reflections on Canvas (1 point, due by midnight the day after your presentation).

Respectful Learning Community: It is important that we each contribute to creating an environment in which everyone feels free to express opinions while simultaneously respecting a plurality of perspectives and identities. This includes introducing yourselves in class and on discussion threads by your preferred name and gender pronouns (e.g. she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/their/theirs, ze/hir/hirs), pronouncing each other's names correctly, and asking politely to know a person's preferred pronouns before referring to her/him/them/hir in the third person.

In order to ensure that everyone is free from unnecessary distractions and disruptions in class, it is imperative that everyone in the course follows these rules:

- Come prepared: do readings and review other materials (e.g. discussion postings) before the class period for which they are assigned.
- Arrive 5 minutes before class begins, sign in, and sit according to seating arrangements.
- Turn off and store cell phones (no using phones for anything during class).
- Listen, speak, and pay attention respectfully (no private conversation during class).
- Do not gather materials to leave until class is finished.

If a warning is necessary, your attendance grade may be affected. Students who fail to comply with a warning will be asked to leave the class and given an absence for the day.

Communication: Please feel free to contact me if you need additional help with any aspect of this course. In addition to seeing me during office hours, email is the best way for students to contact me. On weekdays, I try to respond to all emails within 24 hours; on weekends, I try to check email at least once, but response is not guaranteed so don't wait until the last minute to ask important questions. I regularly post announcements, assignment updates, and other vital information by email and on Canvas, so check both daily. I do not recommend trying to contact me by phone.

Access: If you have a disability (physical or learning) which you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of the term so we can make arrangements, if necessary, for your full access to all classroom activities. I also recommend that you contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

My own access may be affected at times due to a hearing condition that can make ordinary sounds uncomfortable. During these times, I may wear acoustic filters to adjust sound levels for myself and I may speak more quietly. Normal speaking volume is usually audible to me but may be more difficult under some conditions, so I may ask students to speak louder. Quiet speakers or those with difficulty hearing may wish to sit near the front of class.

Academic Honesty: All work submitted in this course must be your own original work and must be written exclusively for this course. To avoid plagiarism, any use of printed or digital source materials for ideas, summaries, paraphrases, quotations, and graphics in Canvas postings and class presentations must be properly documented. *Plagiarism of any kind will receive zero points for the assignment and undergo academic misconduct review by the Student Conduct office.*

Please see me if you have any questions about documentation and your use of sources. If there is any question about whether use of sources, sharing of work, or other acts may constitute academic misconduct, it is the student's obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before performing the act. In cases where academic misconduct has been established, an F will be given for the final course grade. For more information on academic conduct, see the University Student Conduct Code or go to <http://dos.uoregon.edu/conduct>.

Gender-based violence: Any student who has experienced sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, coercion, and/or sexual harassment is encouraged to seek help. Please visit <https://safe.uoregon.edu/info> or call 541-346-SAFE. You are also strongly encouraged to contact Renae DeSautel, Director of Crisis Intervention and Sexual Violence Support Services, desautel@uoregon.edu. She will keep your information confidential. You can also contact any member of the clergy. All of these people, including all UO faculty members, have an obligation *not* to reveal your name or other specific information without your permission, although faculty members do have to provide "general information" that will help us create a safer campus.

Course Schedule (subject to change): All readings are to be completed by class time on the day that they are listed below. Unless otherwise noted, Canvas postings for critical readings are also due by class time (one submitted per week, four total); additional follow-up postings are due by midnight on Thursdays (two submitted per week, eight total). See assignments for details. No late postings are accepted without prior authorization.

Week 1

Monday, July 24

- Reading: Joyrich, “Epistemology of the Console” (note: posting on this article extended to midnight)
- Screening: *Star Trek: The Animated Series* (1973), episode 1.6, “The Survivor”

Tuesday, July 25

- Reading: Doty, “There’s Something Queer Here”
- Screening: *Star Trek* (1966), episode 1.4, “The Naked Time” (on Netflix as episode 1.5)

Wednesday, July 26

- Reading: Dyer, “Ch. 1 Introduction”
- Reading: Sobchack, “The Fantastic”
- Screening: *Blade* (1998), part 1

Thursday, July 27

- Reading: Bakke, “Dead White Men: An Essay on the Changing Dynamics of Race in US Action Cinema”
- Screening: *Blade* (1998), part 2

Weekend: Finish reading Book 1 of *V for Vendetta*

Week 2

Monday, July 31

- Reading: Ross, “Beyond the Closet as a Raceless Paradigm”
- Screening: *True Blood* (2008), episode 1.4, “Escape from Dragon House”
- Group 1 presentation

Tuesday, Aug. 1

- Reading: Ximena, “Aliens, Cyborgs and Other Invisible Men: Hollywood’s Solutions to the Black ‘Problem’ in SF Cinema”
- Screening: *I, Robot* (2004), part 1
- Group 2 presentation

Wednesday, Aug. 2

- Reading: Russ, “Speculations: The Subjunctivity of Science Fiction”
- Screening: *I, Robot* (2004), part 2

Thursday, Aug. 3

- **Midterm exam (bring blue exam book)**

Weekend: Finish reading Book 2 of *V for Vendetta*

Week 3

Monday, Aug. 7

- Reading: Halberstam, “The Transgender Look”
- Reading: Hayward, “Gaze/Look” and “Ideology”
- Screening: *Predestination* (2013), part 1
- Group 3 presentation

Tuesday, Aug. 8

- Reading: Serano, “Ch. 1 Coming to Terms with Transgenderism and Transsexuality”
- Reading: Serano, “Ch. 8 Dismantling Cissexual Privilege”
- Screening: *Predestination* (2013), part 2

Wednesday, Aug. 9

- Reading: Serano, “Ch. 7 Pathological Science: Debunking Sexological and Sociological Models of Transgenderism”
- Screening: *Sense8* (2015), episode 1.2, “I Am Also a We”
- Group 4 presentation

Thursday, Aug. 10

- Reading: de Casanova and Webb, “A Tale of Two Hoodies”
- Reading: Langford and Speight, “#BlackLivesMatter: Epistemic Positioning, Challenges, and Possibilities”
- Comic: *Avengers Origins: Luke Cage*
- Screening: *Luke Cage* (2016), episode 1.1 “Moment of Truth”
- Group 5 presentation

Weekend: Finish reading Book 3 of *V for Vendetta*

Week 4

Monday, Aug. 14

- Reading: Keller, “Ch. 1 Tyranny and the Powder Treason”
- Graphic novel: *V for Vendetta*
- Group 6 presentation

Tuesday, Aug. 15

- Reading: Keller, “Ch. 2 V’s Terrorism: Power and Performance”
- Screening: *V for Vendetta* (2005), part 1
- Group 7 presentation

Wednesday, Aug. 16

- Reading: Keller, “Ch. 5 *1984* and the Dystopian Genre”
- Screening: *V for Vendetta* (2005), part 2

Thursday, Aug. 17

- **Final exam (bring blue exam book)**
- Note: Submission of follow-up postings due by class time (not midnight)

Course Bibliography:

- Bakke, Gretchen. "Dead White Men: An Essay on the Changing Dynamics of Race in US Action Cinema." *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 83, no. 2, 2010, pp. 401-428.
- de Casanova, Erynn Masi, and Curtis L. Webb, "A Tale of Two Hoodies." *Men and Masculinities*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2017, pp. 117-122.
- Doty, Alexander. *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture*, University of Minnesota Press, 1993, pp. 1-16.
- Dyer, Richard. *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations*, second edition, Routledge, 2002, pp. 1-5.
- Glass, Adam and Mike Benson. "Avengers Origins: Luke Cage." *Luke Cage: Avenger*, Marvel Comics, 2016.
- Halberstam, Judith. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, New York University Press, 2005, pp. 76-96.
- Hayward, Susan. *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*, fourth edition, Routledge, 2013, pp. 173-176, 212-215.
- Joyrich, Lynne. "Epistemology of the Console." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2001, pp. 439-467.
- Keller, James R. *V for Vendetta as Cultural Pastiche: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel and Film*, McFarland, 2008, pp. 17-59, 90-104.
- Langford, Catherine L., and Montené Speight. "#BlackLivesMatter: Epistemic Positioning, Challenges, and Possibilities." *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric*, vol. 5, no 3/4, 2015, pp. 78-89.
- Moore, Alan and David Lloyd. *V for Vendetta*, DC Comics, 2005.
- Ross, Marlon B. "Beyond the Closet as a Raceless Paradigm." *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, edited by E. Patrick Johnson and Mae Henderson, Duke University Press, 2005, pp. 161-189.
- Russ, Joanna. "Speculations: The Subjunctivity of Science Fiction." *To Write Like a Woman: Essays in Feminism and Science Fiction*, Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 15-25.
- Serano, Julia. *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*, Seal Press, 2007, pp. 23-34, 115-194.
- Sobchack, Vivian. "The Fantastic." *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, edited by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 312-321.
- Ximena, Gallardo C. "Aliens, Cyborgs and Other Invisible Men: Hollywood's Solutions to the Black 'Problem' in SF Cinema." *Science Fiction Film and Television*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2013, pp. 219-251.