

RAMS 101: Fantasy and Science Fiction
Prof. Rachel Trousdale
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MW 2:30-4:20

RAMS 101 courses combine an academic exploration of a focused topic with a sustained introduction to the practicalities of college: study skills, college resources, opportunities, and all the various deadlines and responsibilities associated with college life. If you have questions about how to navigate your first semester at FSU, this is a good place to ask them, even if those questions have nothing to do with the course material.

In *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Salman Rushdie's hero Haroun asks, "What's the use of stories that aren't even true?" This class will examine a variety of speculative fiction — science fiction, fantasy, fairy tales, and other fantastic literature — to answer Haroun's question. Speculative fiction can project a possible future, revise our understanding of the past, or reveal truths about the present. It gives us insight into how people very different from us see the world, and shows our unexpected commonalities. And it is a spur to critical thinking, debate, and further explorations. This course will hone your reading, writing, and research skills while we explore a wide and fantastic variety of stories.

This semester, you will:

- Acquire and use vocabulary and skills for discussing the formal elements of literature
- Learn and practice skills for writing literary critical papers, including the technicalities of formatting and citation, techniques of drafting and revision, and critical habits of mind
- Practice the art of storytelling, with attention to story structure, world-building, and evocative detail
- Gain and demonstrate familiarity with the history and theory of speculative fiction
- Practice literary analysis using those theories and approaches
- Practice research skills
- Become a more thoughtful and sophisticated reader of literature, attentive to the interplay of content, structure, and context

Required texts:

At the Bookstore:

Salman Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*

Arthur Evans, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Joan Gordon, Veronica Hollinger, Rob Latham, and Carol McGuirk, eds., *The Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction*

Octavia Butler, *Kindred*

On Canvas:

Jamaica Kincaid, "Girl"

Angela Carter, "The Werewolf"

Leah Bobet, "The Bear Wife"

Tananarive Due, "Patient Zero"
 Nnedi Okorafor, "Africanfuturist 419"
 Ted Chiang, "The Story of Your Life"
 Terry Bisson, "Bears Discover Fire"
 Vandana Singh, "Ambiguity Machines"
 Samuel R. Delaney, "The Hermit of Houston"

Schedule:

Class meets Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:30-4:20. All writing assignments except the final paper are due on Fridays by midnight, via Canvas.

	Academic Component	RAMS 101 Component
W September 8	Introduction; Kincaid, "Girl" (on Canvas)	Reading a Syllabus; Using Canvas
F 10		Semester plan
M 13	Carter, "The Werewolf" (on Canvas) Bobet, "The Bear Wife" (on Canvas)	Intro to SILD; Study Skills 1: Notetaking; Reading with a pen in your hand. Attendance Surveys; Drop/Add, Pass/Fail
W 15	Davidson, "The Golem," <i>Wesleyan Anthology</i> 303-308 Aldiss, "Super-Toys Last All Summer Long," <i>Wesleyan Anthology</i> 443-451	Academic Honesty
F 17		Reflection 1: Check-in. How's it going? what do you want to do this semester? What are you excited about, scared about, hopeful about?
M 20	Rushdie, <i>Haroun</i> Chapters 1-3	Intro to the Library
W 22	Rushdie, <i>Haroun</i> Chapters 4-6	Study Skills 2: Time management, Breaking down big projects, Growth mindset
F 24	Source evaluation exercise	Get your library sticker (and upload a picture on Canvas)
M 27	Rushdie, <i>Haroun</i> Chapters 7-9	Visit by CASA
W 29	Rushdie, <i>Haroun</i> Chapters 10-12	How to use Office Hours
F October 1	Paper 1 (4 pp) due	
M 4	Bradbury, "There Will Come Soft Rains," <i>Wesleyan Anthology</i> 234-240 Zoline, "The Heat Death of the Universe," <i>Wesleyan Anthology</i> 415-429	Intro to Wellness Center, Dean of Students Office

W 6	Gunn, "Computer Friendly," <i>Wesleyan Anthology</i> 637-653 Due, "Patient Zero" (on Canvas)	IT and Printing
F 8		Interview a community member
M 11	Columbus Day	
W 13	Wilhelm, "Forever Yours, Anna," <i>Wesleyan Anthology</i> 598-610 Okorafor, "Africanfuturist 419" (on Canvas)	Etiquette; How to write an email
F 15		No writing assignment this week
M 18	Weinbaum, "A Martian Odyssey," <i>Wesleyan Anthology</i> 136-159	Study Abroad
W 20	Russ, "When It Changed," <i>Wesleyan Anthology</i> 507-515 Emshwiller, "Abominable," 539-546	Study skills 3: Rephrasing, Experimenting with ideas, Asking questions — How to study for an exam
F 22		Reflection 2: Self-knowledge. How's the semester so far? What are you proud of? What do you want to work on? What are you worried about? What study skills are you using, and are they working for you?
M 25	Chiang, "The Story of Your Life" (on Canvas)	Majors, Minors, Coordinate programs
W 27	Bisson, "Bears Discover Fire" (on Canvas) Kress, "Out of All of Them Bright Stars," <i>Wesleyan Anthology</i> 580-586	Midterm Warnings, Withdrawals, GPA, Probation
F 29	Paper 2 (4 pp) due	
M November 1	Butler, <i>Kindred</i> Prologue-The Fall 3 (p. 74)	Class meets at the Center for Inclusive Excellence, O'Connor Lounge, OC 120
W 3	Butler, <i>Kindred</i> The Fall 4-The Fight 6 (p. 143)	TBA
F 5	Packing List due	
M 8	Butler, <i>Kindred</i> The Fight 7-The Storm 2 (p. 201)	
W 10	Butler, <i>Kindred</i> The Storm 3-end	Working With Your Advisor / Course Registration
F 12		Tentative schedule with alternates

M 15	Lem, "The Seventh Voyage" from <i>Star Diaries</i> , <i>Wesleyan Anthology</i> 490-506 LeGuin, "Nine Lives," <i>Wesleyan Anthology</i> 452-476	Student Accounts
W 17	Delaney, "Aye, and Gomorrah..." <i>Wesleyan Anthology</i> 405-414 Delaney, "The Wyrn"	
F 19		Nothing due this week
M 22	Visit by Samuel R. Delaney	TBA
W 24	No Class	Delaney response due
F 26	Thanksgiving Break	
M 29	Singh, "Ambiguity Machines"	TBA
W December 1	Dick, "We Can Remember it For You Wholesale," <i>Wesleyan Anthology</i> 385-404	Preparing for Finals
F 3		Nothing due this week
M 6	Kessel, "Invaders," <i>Wesleyan Anthology</i> 654-674	TBA
W 8	Workshop	TBA
F 10		Nothing due this week—work on your final paper
M 13	Final discussion; paper 3 (short story) due	Final Reflection and Plan: What advice would you give an incoming first-year student? What do you want to do next—concretely, next semester, and more broadly over the next four years?

Grading:

Source evaluation: 5%

Paper 1: 20%

Paper 2: 20%

Packing list: 5%

Delaney response: 5%

Paper 3 (short story): 20%

Reflections: 15%

Participation: 10%

Optional extra credit: You may turn in up to three reviews of events in the Arts and Ideas series.

Please note that both analytical papers and the short story are required to pass the class, even if your average without them constitutes a passing grade. Individual RAMS assignments are given full credit if done according to instructions.

Course requirements:

Students will write a variety of assignments, including two research exercises, two formal papers, a short story, and a series of reflections on how the first semester of college is going.

Questions and quizzes:

Please come to class with a question in mind about the day's reading. These questions will be used to start our class discussions, and also form the basis of your paper topics. I may give occasional reading quizzes if necessary.

Discussion boards:

To minimize Covid risk, part of each day's class will take place on the discussion boards. Please post at least twice on the discussion boards by midnight on Mondays and Wednesdays. Your posts can raise new topics, address a question someone else has asked, or extend class discussion. Please make your posts substantial, explaining what you think and why. When you engage with a peer's post, if you agree, say why: "I agree with Susie" is not enough—make it "I agree with Susie because [reason]."

Notes on the reading assignments:

As with all college classes, you should expect to spend two hours preparing for each hour in the classroom. It is a good idea to pace your work by the week rather than the day.

Attendance policy:

This class centers around discussion. If you don't participate in discussions, whether by contributing or listening to your peers, you haven't really taken the class. At the same time, however, I recognize that you may have to miss occasional classes. If you must miss more than one week's worth of classes (cumulatively), please contact me to discuss how to make up the missed work. If you miss more than four cumulative weeks of classes (eight classes total; this includes any classes missed during drop/add), I will recommend that you withdraw from the class—even if those absences are for a legitimate reason. This is because no makeup work can really duplicate the experience of being present in the class: if you're not here, you're not learning what the class has to teach. If you do not know how many days you have missed, feel free to ask. **Please do not come to class if you have an infectious illness**, whether COVID-19 or the common cold; I am happy to arrange Zoom participation for you if appropriate.

COVID Caveat:

This is a weird time. If something goes wrong—you must quarantine, you get sick, someone you care about gets sick, you have unanticipated caregiving responsibilities, or you run into other real-world problems that interfere with your ability to participate in class—please stay in touch with me. I will work with you as necessary to help you complete the class. Similarly, I hope that you will work with me in the event that quarantine, caregiving, or illness requires me to modify the course structure; should that happen, or should the University pivot to remote teaching, I will do my best to minimize disruptions. If an emergency prevents me from coming to campus for class, I will notify you as soon as possible via Canvas' email function: be sure Canvas has the correct email address for you, and check your email daily.

Participation policy:

Participation grades do not reflect attendance; they reflect your performance once you've shown up. The minimum participation requirement is making required posts on Canvas, paying attention to class discussions, and answering when called on. Doing so regularly will earn you a B for participation. A-level participation involves regular, thoughtful contributions to class discussions and constructive engagement with other students' ideas. If you are a person for whom speaking in class is difficult, you can gain participation credit by engaging thoughtfully with your peers' posts on the Canvas discussion board.

Policy on technology use in classroom:

Technology is fabulous, but it can be distracting. For the duration of class, please silence and put away your phone. Laptops may be used only as part of specific in-class assignments or with my explicit permission. Texting, social media use, etc., must wait until after class.

Late paper policy:

You may have a three-day extension (i.e., from Friday to Monday) on one of the papers, no questions asked. Additional extensions can be arranged for genuine emergencies. ("I'm a perfectionist" is not an emergency; "I'm in the hospital" is.) Most importantly, please communicate with me if your paper is late. And do not skip class because a paper is due and you have not completed it! It is important to keep up with deadlines because the papers build skills sequentially, but I prefer getting a paper late to getting it never.

Academic Integrity:

All papers must be your own original work, written for this class. If you have any questions or doubts about how to cite your sources, please ask!

Many cases in which students cite improperly are honest mistakes. True plagiarism, however — such as handing in a paper you did not write yourself — is a very serious offence. If one of your papers is found to be plagiarized, you will automatically fail the class, in addition to any penalties that the University enacts.

In my experience, students who choose to plagiarize often do so because they are in over their heads. If you are having trouble with an assignment, whether because you find it difficult, because of an emergency at home, or for any other reason, talk to me and we will figure out a solution.

Office hours and how to reach me:

I will hold walk-in office hours Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday 11:30-12:20, and I am glad to schedule extra appointments, in person and via Zoom. Come to discuss paper topics, go over drafts, ask questions about the class, argue about a text, get help with something confusing, etc. To make an appointment, or for any other contact, it's best to e-mail me at rtrousdale [at] framingham.edu.

Writing tutors:

Writing tutors are available through the Center for Academic Support and Advising (CASA). Tutors can help you brainstorm topics, build outlines, expand early drafts, and refine advanced

ones. This is a great resource! You must make an appointment to meet with a tutor; this can be done at <https://www.framingham.edu/academics/center-for-academic-success-and-achievement/>

Accommodations:

If you receive accommodations through Disability/Access Services, please give me your documentation as soon as possible. If you believe you are entitled to accommodations but have not yet received them, please contact LaDonna Bridges, Director of Academic Support (lbridges@framingham.edu).

Statement on Diversity:

The texts in this class, like the FSU community, represent a broad variety of backgrounds and perspectives. Diversity of voices, and of minds, strengthens our ability to solve problems and to ask and answer questions about the world we share. As your instructor, I commit to upholding community values of inclusion, civility, accessibility, and mutual respect. I expect this class to commit to creating a community that affirms and welcomes all persons from diverse backgrounds and experiences, and supports the realization of everyone's potential.