

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ENG 245 OSB: SCIENCE FICTION—FALL 2020

DR. HAROLD WILLIAM HALBERT

MWF 9:05 AM—10:00 AM, Synchronous Online Course



Montgomery County
Community College

Office Phone: 215.641.6371 Website: http://www.halhalbert.com	Email: hhalbert@mc3.edu or hhalbert@gmail.com
Office Hours Mondays from 10:15 AM to 12:30 PM by appointment, additional appointment times can be arranged. Email to schedule.	Writing Center Hours: Wednesdays, 10:30 AM to 12:30 PM online

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

This survey course introduces students to the genre of science fiction and its unique ability to examine cultural issues by placing them outside reality. The speculative nature of the genre allows writers to explore the future, alternate histories, and scientific, moral, and political controversies. Starting with early historical works, the course surveys mainstream science fiction and major literary science fiction works.

PREREQUISITES:

Students may take this course after completing the composition requirement of their curriculum.

COURSE GOALS:

- To develop the students' sensitivity to literature and language so that they read with insight and enjoyment.
- To increase the students' self-awareness through a development of their critical abilities.
- To develop the students' writing skills and information literacy through writing both traditional literary analyses and research papers. .
- To improve students' reading skills.
- To show how science fiction has influenced and been influenced by mainstream literature.

COURSE CONTENT

My courses are designed to deal with adult issues often centering on controversial cultural and historical conflicts. At times, the class readings, lectures, and discussions may question ideas or beliefs that individual students hold dear. In addition, the language used in the course may range from highly technical jargon to the vernacular, including profanity. Students who wish to avoid such a classroom environment should seek another section of the course.

TEXTBOOK AND REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Various Texts located in Blackboard in Course Materials
- *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood ISBN: 9780385490818
- *Watchmen* by Allan Moore and Dave Gibbons ISBN-10: 093028923
- *1984* by George Orwell (Plume; Centennial edition (May 6, 2003)) ISBN-10: 0452284236
- *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams ISBN-10: 0345391802
- Post-It Brand book marking tabs
- Access to the MLA Style Guide with the 2009 Update

English 245 will be one of the most challenging courses of your academic career because it moves quickly, requires a wide range of academic skills, and demands more time than the average course. In addition to an intensive reading load (with reading checks to document your marginalia), each student will write two major papers (a literary interpretation and a research paper), prepare two exam guides, take a mid-term and final exam, develop an annotated bibliography, and use the discussion board extensively to post drafts and comments on readings. A breakdown of the assignments and relative point values is as follows:

Final drafts of papers	200 points each
Exams	100 points each
In-class essays	50 points each
Annotated bibliographies	40 points
Quotation assignments	20 points

Individual drafts of papers	0-20 points, depending on completeness
Two-minute Presentation	10 points
Required emails and posts	-5 points if not completed
Reading checks	5 points per day's worth of reading unless otherwise noted.

Your grade is calculated by adding the total points earned and then dividing them by the total points possible. That average will then be plugged into the college's grading scale.

Transcript/Entry Numerical Grade	Corresponding letter grade	Percent Equivalent
4.0	A	93.6-100%
3.7	A-	89.5-93.5%
3.3	B+	87.5-89.4%
3.0	B	83.5-87.5%
2.7	B-	79.5-83.5%
2.3	C+	77.5-79.5%
2.0	C	69.5-77.4%
1.3	D	63.5-69.5%
0.0	F	0-63.5%

Be advised that *you must complete all major papers and in-class essays in order to pass the course*. Even if your paper is too late to be accepted under the late work policies, it must be completed by the end of the semester. If it is not, then you will automatically fail for the course, regardless of what your point total is.

MAJOR PAPER REWRITE OPTION

In order to allow students to benefit from the three-step writing process and to turn in the best possible work for evaluation, students will be permitted to revise the first graded major paper in the course for an entirely new grade provided the assignment/essay was handed in on time and without plagiarism. Late or plagiarized papers are ineligible for revision.

Note: Just turning in a revision does not guarantee you will receive a higher grade. In the event that the revised draft grade is actually lower than the original assignment, you will receive the higher of the two grades; however, a higher revision grade always replaces the original grade, so if you are prepared to work hard, your grade will most likely benefit. See the class web page for more information on the major paper rewrite. Please see the class web page's assignments section for more explicit details.

COMMUNICATION WITH DR. HALBERT

While I have an office phone, the best way to communicate with me is via email. I am generally quick to respond, but please be advised that I may take up to 48-hours to respond during the semester (and longer during breaks). I generally do not answer emails after 5PM because of family obligations, so 1 AM messages the night before a paper is due will normally not get a response before class. My expectation is that you will check your email each day, particularly between the final class meeting and the posting of grades. I will not spam the class with non-class related materials, so if you get a message from me, please consider it important and respond if needed.

COLLEGE POLICIES

All [College Policies](#) must be followed and are a binding part of this syllabus. Of particular note are the [Student Code of Conduct](#) (which deals largely with behavior) and the [Student Academic Code of Ethics](#) (which deals academic honesty issues).

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Plagiarism constitutes a serious breach of academic honesty and will not be tolerated. Unless I deem an act of plagiarism or cheating an honest mistake, I routinely assign students an "F" in the course for any act of academic dishonesty without the option of withdrawing from the course. Especially egregious acts will receive an "FX" with an additional notation of academic misconduct on the student's transcript. Please note that submitting work from another class as original work for this course constitutes academic dishonesty. For a full discussion of the Academic Honesty policies, please see <http://www.mc3.edu/policy/aa/ethics.htm>. All students in my English courses will submit their papers to TurnItIn.com, a tool that checks your papers against other sources. You will have a chance to see your report and revise it before the final draft is due, should you choose

GRADE APPEAL

In the interest of due process, the College provides an appeal process for a student who believes that a recorded final grade does not accurately reflect his/her academic performance in a course due to issuance of an arbitrary grade, inconsistent grading practice, or mechanical error. The policy and procedure are found on the [Grade Appeal](#) policy page.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

The purpose of the Student Code of Conduct is to guide students to understand their responsibilities in regard to appropriate behavior and respect for others in the college community. The policy addresses classroom disruptions and removal from the classroom for behavioral issues. It also provides the standards for ensuring the College provides due process to students through the judicial process. The policy and procedure are found on the [Student Code of Conduct](#) policy page.

While I have an office phone, the best way to communicate with me is via email. I am generally quick to respond, but please be advised that I may take up to 48-hours to respond during the semester (and longer during breaks). I generally do not answer emails after 5PM because of family obligations, so 1 AM messages the night before a paper is due will normally not get a response before class. My expectation is that you will check your email each day, particularly between the final class meeting and the posting of grades. I will not spam the class with non-class related materials, so if you get a message from me, please consider it important and respond if needed.

SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Montgomery County Community College (MCCC) welcomes qualified students with disabilities and endorses the principles of nondiscrimination and reasonable accommodation as described in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). To see if you are eligible for services and reasonable accommodations in this course please review the policy on the [Disability Services](#) web site. As someone with mild dyslexia, I understand the challenges of pursuing higher education with a disability, and I will never make you feel bad for seeking an accommodation as long as you give enough advanced notice.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular attendance and punctuality are expected. Students may miss four class meetings and remain in the course. The fifth absence will result in either a required withdrawal from the course (before the **November 4, 2020**, deadline) or an automatic F in the course (after the **November 4, 2020**, deadline for withdrawal without a signature). At the start of the semester, each student will receive 12 points of extra credit for attendance. Points lost for tardiness or absences will initially be taken from this pool of points, giving students the flexibility to miss two classes without injury to their grades. Each absence will subtract five points from a student's total points scored for the semester. Each late arrival will subtract two points from the total points scored. A point will be awarded for each class attended. If a student knows he or she will miss a class, that student should alert Dr. Halbert beforehand. Under special circumstances (usually involving a documented medical emergency or a death in the family), you may request permission to remain enrolled in the course if your absences have exceeded four, but such circumstances are rare. Attendance will be taken by sign-in sheet at the start of class: students arriving after the sign-in sheet will be marked tardy. If you arrive late, please wait until the end of class to sign the sheet. Failure to sign the sheet at all constitutes an absence. Students who leave class early must ask for permission prior to the start of class; if you leave without permission before I dismiss the class, you will be marked absent for the whole period. Good manners suggest that if you know you will miss a class meeting, you will contact me and let me know. *COVID-19 Addendum: I will use a screenshot of the class participants to take attendance within the first five minutes of the class. If you come in late, you need to send an email to me stating you came in late.*

CLASS CANCELLATION

In the event of inclement weather or other emergency, the College will post closures on the school's web portal and send text messages to anyone who has signed up for them. In the event that I have to cancel a class, I will email the class and post a message on Blackboard (assuming I have power at home to access the Internet). I strongly urge each of you to set up [Montco's text messaging alert](#) on your mobile phones as well: the College will send an alert of campus-wide closings.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY, INCOMPLETES, AND AUDITS

Students are encouraged to consult with their instructor and/or an academic advisor when initiating a Course Withdrawal. The instructor's permission must be requested and received if requesting a withdrawal after 60% and before 75% of the course is completed. After 75% of the course is completed, students may apply for an Excused Withdrawal due to medical, catastrophic, or other circumstances beyond the student's control. Specific dates of deadlines for this semester can be found at <http://www.mc3.edu/adm-fin-aid/deadlines>. Click here for [College policies on grades, incompletes, withdrawals, and audits](#). Should you wish to withdraw from the course, the deadline to withdraw without my signature is November 4, 2020. If you do not formally withdraw, you will receive an F for the course even if you stop attending. ***After November 4, 2020, I will not sign any withdrawal requests unless you have a documented emergency. If I have not returned the first paper by this date, I will extend the deadline until one week after that paper is returned.***

The absolute last day to get my signature is November 19, 2020. After that, all requests to withdrawal must be made directly to Academic Affairs.

Applications for an "Incomplete" will only be entertained in cases of documented medical emergencies, incarceration, or military call-ups. Audits will not be permitted unless you start the course as an audit student and can convince me that you are willing to do all that work for no grade.

TURNING IN DRAFTS

For each major paper, we will write at least one draft and a revised final version. Each draft needs to be uploaded to the Discussion Board in Blackboard with the paper both copied and pasted AND attached as a file. One purpose of this upload is to create a backup file of your paper should your computer/storage device crash. The other is so that you can read the works of others to see other approaches to the same writing task you are facing. While stealing the words or ideas of others in the class will result in a plagiarism charge, stealing someone's style or rhetorical moves isn't: most strong writers at some point have looked at the works of others as guides on how to write.

TURNING IN MAJOR PAPERS

When the final draft of a major paper is due, you will need to do the following:

- Submit the paper to the appropriate dropbox on Blackboard as either an MS Word, Pages, or Rich Text Format file. When required, a works cited page should be included in the same file. ***This file is what will actually be graded, so make sure it matches the same final version that you submitted in hardcopy.***
- Post a copy to the discussion board in the "Final Draft" forum..

LATE WORK

All work is due at the beginning of class on the day listed for the syllabus unless otherwise noted. I hate late work from students: it complicates my ability to grade or simply keep track of your work. More importantly, it devalues the efforts of your classmates who work very hard to meet their deadlines. To discourage late work, I have the following policy:

- Final drafts of papers lose 25 points (out of the possible 200 points) for each 24-hour period they are late. This penalty includes Saturdays and Sundays.
- Other late assignments have a 24-hour period to be submitted. They will be graded, and that grade will be divided by 2 and entered into the grade spreadsheet.

Late work will kill your grade, so don't do it. If you know ahead of time that you will not be able to complete a task, contact me for an extension. I reserve the right to make an exception to the late policy in the case of an extreme (and documentable) emergency, but that almost never happens.

TUTORIAL SERVICES:

Tutorial Services is a FREE service that helps students develop learning strategies based on their unique learning styles with the goal of creating successful students and independent learners. Tutorial Services helps students achieve academic success by providing in person and online tutoring in course content and study skills. For questions and a full list of [Tutorial Services hours and services](#) visit the website or contact tutoring@mc3.edu.

BASIC NEEDS SUPPORT:

Any student who has difficulty accessing resources to meet their basic needs i.e. safety, food and/or stable housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact Wellness@mc3.edu

CLASSROOM POLICIES:

As adults, students and the instructor should know to do the following in class:

- Be prepared for class with work completed and required materials available.
- Refrain from non-class related conversations once class has started.
- Keep cell phones and pagers in "silent" mode and refrain from answering them or using them to send text messages. Should a student expect an important call (because of family emergencies or issues of similar magnitude), please make the instructor aware of that possibility before class.
- Inform the professor if you will be recording the class.
- Treat each other with mutual respect: while we can challenge each other's ideas in class, personalized attacks or use of inappropriate language directed at another member of the class community is unacceptable.
- Ask for help if you need it.
- Make the most of this course. It will help in the future.

COVID 19 PANDEMIC ISSUES:

The current pandemic makes demands of all of us in the class. For some, it's a minor irritant, but for others, particularly those with compromised immune systems or relatives in high risk groups, it offers a number of special challenges that range from access to technology to childcare to unpredictable emergencies. The nature of this class is fundamentally affected by the pandemic in the following ways:

- The course cannot meet face-to-face.

- The course is synchronous, though, which means we meet online at the same time on assigned days. Attendance is required.
- You will need reliable internet and computer access to complete the course.
- Printed materials cannot be provided in class, unfortunately.
- Library and tutoring support are online-only for the semester.
- Office hours must be held virtually.
- You will need to keep your cameras on during class time. If there is an issue with this expectation, you need to email me immediately so we can find a solution.
- Attendance will be taken by me using a screen shot of the class participants.

If you run into a Covid-specific issue that affects your ability to continue in the class, please reach out to me to help find a solution.

FINAL WORD:

I enjoy teaching literature courses: I believe they can be the most empowering classes a person can take in college because the skills you learn can help you in virtually every part of your life. I took this job to help people discover their potential: as long as you are willing to do the work, I will do everything in my power to help you not only pass the course, but to be the best writer you can be.

DAILY ASSIGNMENTS

Wednesday, September 2, 2020

- First day of class

Friday, September 4, 2020

- Read the instructions and complete the Contact Information handout.
- Read the instructions and complete the Student Contract handout.
- Read the instructions and complete the "Introduce Yourself" assignment.
- Read and mark the following selections found in the Course Materials section of our Blackboard Site:
 - "How to Really Read This Book"
 - "A Brief Introduction to Science Fiction and Its History"
 - [skim only, no need to mark] "A Selective Guide to Science Fiction Research"
 - from *The War of the Worlds*—H.G. Wells
 - "A Martian Odyssey"—Stanley G. Weinbaum
 - "The Fact of Blackness"—Frantz Fanon

Monday, September 7, 2020

- NO CLASS Labor Day
- Please arrange to watch *Blade Runner* (Final Cut Version)

Tuesday, September 8, 2020

- NO CLASS. We do not meet on Tuesdays.
- Last day to Add the course.

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

- Read and mark Acts I and II of Karel Čapek's *R.U.R.* (Found in Course Materials)
- Be prepared to discuss *Blade Runner* (Final Cut)

Friday, September 11, 2020

- Finish reading and marking Act III and the Epilogue of Karel Čapek's *R.U.R.* (Found in Course Materials)

Monday, September 14, 2020

- Read and mark "A Cyborg Manifesto"—Donna J. Haraway (Found in Course Materials). **WARNING:** This text is going to challenge you and will require multiple nights to complete. Start on Friday night. This is a 10-point reading.

Wednesday, September 16, 2020

- Read and mark "Liar!"—Issac Asimov (Found in Course Materials)

Friday, September 18, 2020

- Read and mark "Burning Chrome"—William Gibson (Found in Course Materials)

Monday, September 21, 2020

- Read and mark "Second Variety" by Philip K. Dick (Found in Course Materials)

Tuesday, September 22, 2020

- NO CLASS. We do not meet on Tuesdays.
- Last day to Drop the course.

Wednesday, September 23, 2020

- Read and mark selection From Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (Found in Course Materials)
- Withdrawal period without faculty signature starts

Friday, September 25, 2020

- Read and mark "When I Was Miss Dow" (Found in Course Materials)

Monday, September 28, 2020

- Read and mark "The Girl Who Was Plugged In" (Found in Course Materials)

Wednesday, September 30, 2020

- Read and mark "The Algorithms for Love" by Ken Liu (Found in Course Materials)
- Read and mark "Mars Is Heaven!"—Ray Bradbury (Found in Course Materials)

Friday, October 2, 2020

- Exam Quotation Assignment Due. Submit to Blackboard Drop Box.
- Read and mark "Bloodchild"—Octavia E. Butler (Found in Course Materials)

Monday, October 5, 2020

- Draft of Paper #1 due. Post a copy in the "Paper #1: Draft" forum of the class discussion board. Posting is worth five points.
- We will have a workshop on your drafts today worth 20 points. You must attend class with a completed draft to get those points. Incomplete drafts will be prorated, but it is better to come with a partial draft than to skip class.

Wednesday, October 7, 2020

- Midterm Exam. Please post a copy of your outline to the "Midterm Exam Outline" dropbox prior to the start of class today.
- See Assignments for more details on the Midterm.

Friday, October 9, 2020

- Reading Check Day.
- Each of you will need to show me your marked texts in your online cameras so we can collect the points for all the texts you marked. First come, first done. We will not do anything else today, so if you are one of the first folks, you can leave sooner.

Monday, October 12, 2020

- NO CLASS.
- Final draft of Paper #1 due by 10 AM in the appropriate Dropbox on the class web site and on the Discussion Board. See checklist for details.

Wednesday, October 14, 2020

- Read and mark Robert Silverberg's "Passengers" (see course documents)

Friday, October 16, 2020

- Read and mark "The Historian and His Facts"—E. H. Carr (Found in Course Materials)

Monday, October 19, 2020

- Read and mark "Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government"—Hannah Arendt (Found in Course Materials). This non-fiction theoretical piece is a bit challenging.

Wednesday, October 21, 2020

- Please arrange to view *Gattaca*.

Friday, October 23, 2020

- Read and mark Section 1, Chapters 1-8 of *1984*. Pages 1-106

Monday, October 26, 2020

- Read and mark Section 2 of *1984*. Pages 107-230.

Wednesday, October 28, 2020

- Finish reading and marking *1984*. Pages 231-308.
- Read the final essay in *1984*, "The Principles of Newspeak."

Friday, October 30, 2020

- Please arrange to watch *The Matrix*.

Monday, November 2, 2020

- Read and mark pages 3-115 of *The Handmaid's Tale*. ("I: Night" until "VIII Birthday").

Wednesday, November 4, 2020

- Read and mark pages 109-195 of *The Handmaid's Tale* ("VIII Birthday" until "XII: Jezebel's").
- Withdrawal period without faculty signature ends

Thursday, November 5, 2020

- NO CLASS. We do not meet on Thursdays.
- Withdrawal period with faculty signature starts

Friday, November 6, 2020

- Finish reading and marking pages 199-211 of *The Handmaid's Tale* ("XII: Jezebel's" through the end of the "Historical Note").

Monday, November 9, 2020

- Read and mark chapters 1-4 of *Watchmen*.

Wednesday, November 11, 2020

- Read and mark chapters 5-8 of *Watchmen*.

Friday, November 13, 2020

- Finish reading and marking *Watchmen*.
- We will discuss the research project.

Monday, November 16, 2020

- Read and mark "Flowers for Algernon" by Daniel Keyes (Found in Course Materials)

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

- Reading Check Day.
- Each of you will need to show me your marked texts in your online cameras so we can collect the points for all the texts you marked. First come, first done. We will not do anything else today, so if you are one of the first folks, you can leave sooner.

Thursday, November 19, 2020

- NO CLASS. We do not meet on Thursdays.
- Withdrawal period with faculty signature ends

Friday, November 20, 2020

- Research project prewriting due. Post a copy to the discussion board in the "Research Paper: Prewriting" forum.

- **Library Orientation.**
- **Attendance counts double today.**
- All withdrawals from this day on in the semester require approval from Academic Affairs.

Monday, November 23, 2020

- Library Research Day. You do not have to log into the class site: this day is yours to use for your research and to start work on your required annotated bibliography.
- I will be available online during our normal class time to help individuals brainstorm ideas or to assist with research. Please email me to let me know you are coming.

Wednesday, November 25, 2020

- NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break.

Friday, November 27, 2020

- NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break.

Monday, November 30, 2020

- Annotated Bibliography Due at 9:35 AM. Post a copy to the "Research Paper: Bibliography" forum and submit a copy to the "Annotated Bibliography" dropbox.
- Two-Minute presentation on your paper topic

Wednesday, December 2, 2020

- Read and mark Chapters 1-13 of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

Friday, December 4, 2020

- Finish reading and marking *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

Monday, December 7, 2020

- Draft of Paper #2 Due. Post a copy and bring two copies to class. This draft will be graded out of 20 points for a complete paper with a works cited page (and not just a copy of the annotated bibliography) attached. It is better to come with a page or two than to skip class.

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

- Read and mark "How the World Was Saved" by Stanislaw Lem (Found in Course Materials).
- Read and mark "'Repent, Harlequin!' Said the Ticktockman"—Harlan Ellison (Found in Course Materials)

Friday, December 11, 2020

- Reading Check Day.
- Each of you will need to show me your marked texts in your online cameras so we can collect the points for all the texts you marked. First come, first done. We will not do anything else today, so if you are one of the first folks, you can leave sooner.

Monday, December 14, 2020

- Last day of class.
- Second Quotation Assignment Due. Post a copy to the "Quotations for Final" Dropbox. Make sure to use the template linked in the instructions: don't just copy and paste.
- Read and mark "The Star" by Arthur C. Clarke (Found in Course Materials).

Friday, December 18, 2020

- Final Exam: 8AM to 10AM.
- Post exam outline in the "Final Exam Outline" dropbox prior to the start of the exam.

Monday, December 21, 2020

- NO CLASS.
- Last day to submit optional major paper rewrite of paper #1.

- Post a copy to the "Major Paper Rewrite" Dropbox and email a copy directly to me. Make sure you put "Sci-Fi Major Paper Rewrite" in the subject line.
- See the Assignments section for details on expectations for the Major Paper Rewrite.

Wednesday, December 23, 2020

- NO CLASS.
- Grades due by 11:59 PM.