

# FYS: Science Fiction

FYS 101

## – Research Paper - 200 points

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Goals	<p>This research paper serves as an opportunity for you to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• show off the writing skills you've been developing so far.</li><li>• put to practical use the advice you heard and skills you acquired in the special presentations from our Library folks.</li><li>• practice the research process so that you have it as an asset and tool for the rest of your career at Marist and the rest of your life.</li></ul>
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The movies and episodes we've watched so far.</li><li>• The short stories we've read so far.</li><li>• The databases and other reference material in our library.</li><li>• <a href="http://scholar.google.com">http://scholar.google.com</a></li></ul>
Assignment	Research and write a (roughly) 10 to 12-page paper on a science fiction topic.
Details	<p>This research paper is an exercise in the methodology of researching and writing a paper. As such, you are not expected to do original research.</p> <p>Choose a topic that allows some high-level analysis and interpretation. Something like "Particle Weapons in Science Fiction" is bad because it becomes a descriptive catalog of facts. Instead, select a topic that you can sink your intellectual teeth into and which you can relate to in "real life" (whatever that is).</p> <p>Here is the overall structure for your paper:</p> <p><b>Introduction / Thesis:</b> State your topic/thesis, how it relates to real life science, philosophy, mathematics, literature, etc., and how it relates to science fiction. This is your main point, which you will support in the next two parts.</p> <p><b>Background:</b> Summarize the real-life background of your topic. Develop your material from articles found in our library's subject databases or similar articles and other scholarly sources.</p> <p><b>Body:</b> Write about how the topic is treated in the science fiction we've watched or read so far. Analyze the movies/episodes/stories we've experienced and give examples of different treatments or aspects of the topic. Compare the science fiction treatment of the topic with its real life aspects in this part. Develop your material from articles found in our library's subject databases or similar articles and other scholarly sources.</p> <p><b>Conclusion:</b> Wrap it up with a summary of your findings and then restate your main point.</p> <p><b>References:</b> Find and use five or more resources from our library's subject databases (journal articles, conference papers, books). Create a valid MLA citation for each.</p> <p><b>References Analysis:</b> For each of your five or more references...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Briefly summarize the resource in two or three sentences.</li><li>2. Discuss the author's credentials. Include their degrees held, position(s) held, and other published works. If there are multiple authors, pick the first or main author. In the case of a book, pick the main author responsible for the sections of the book that you used.</li><li>3. Discuss relevancy to this research project; how are you using the information in the resource for your research? Be specific.</li></ol>

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Topic/Thesis  
Suggestions

(Adapted from <http://sfanthology.site.wesleyan.edu/>)

Science fiction has a long tradition of being used for social commentary and/or satire. Discuss several examples of this in the movies/episodes/stories we have experienced so far and explain how the commentary/satire works in each case. What advantages does science fiction offer for social commentary that others genres do not?

It has been argued that science fiction's imaginary worlds can each be situated somewhere on the continuum between the opposing poles of utopia and dystopia. Consider how several of these movies/episodes/stories suggest futures that will be better in some ways and/or worse in some ways, compared to the real world that produced them. What do the features of these various futures suggest about the historical contexts in which they were produced?

All artistic works are cultural artifacts. They are the products of their time and place and reflect their socio-historical origins. Choose several movies/episodes/stories and explain how they express the period in which they were written.

Much science fiction chooses to focus less on technological hardware and more on issues related to future lifestyles. Discuss this tendency in some of the movies/episodes/stories we have experienced so far. Issues you might focus on include: the exploration of alternative gender and sexual identities, the emotional and political complexity of interpersonal relationships, the fascination with future art forms and aesthetic practices, the embrace of drug-induced and other synthetic states of consciousness.

Modern science fiction is sometimes described as more inward looking than outward looking. Elaborate on this and what it means to you. Support your thesis with examples from your research.

Grading

- The Paper . . .
  - ▶ has a clearly stated thesis, theme, or controlling idea.
  - ▶ has clear organization and structure.
  - ▶ develops the theme with details and supporting evidence.
  - ▶ has sufficient content for the assignment.
- The Writer . . .
  - ▶ conveys their own voice and style appropriate for their intended audience.
  - ▶ uses appropriate word-choice and style.
  - ▶ avoids jargon and filler words
  - ▶ has made no mechanical errors.
- The Research . . .
  - ▶ sources are varied.
  - ▶ sources are accurate and reliable.
  - ▶ source material is correctly incorporated into the paper.
  - ▶ citations follow precisely the format specified (MLA).
  - ▶ references are accurate and complete.



Submitting

E-mail me your paper **and** turn in a printed copy on the day it is due (see syllabus).

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More about the  
Research  
Requirements

- The Research . . .
  - **sources are varied.**
  - Explanation: Material is taken from many different sources (books, periodicals, scholarly journals, reference works, on-line databases, the Internet, newspapers), not just a few.
  
  - **sources are accurate and reliable.**
  - Explanation: The sources are authoritative, written by reputable authorities in the field, and published in academically reliable sources, not obscure sources or those devoted to sensationalism. Also, that they are up-to-date and the assumptions and biases of the source are clearly stated. Finally, that the information used is significant and relevant to your topic.
  
  - **source material is correctly incorporated into the paper.**
  - Explanation: All quoted material is cited. All paraphrased material is cited. Information not accepted as “common knowledge” is cited. Quoted material within the body of the text is correctly punctuated (the parenthetical citation following the quotation marks, the period following the parentheses; brackets, ellipses, “sic” are used correctly. Look it up.) Short quotations fit the grammar of the sentence in which they appear. Quoted material that is longer and set off from the text is properly introduced, with a clear indication of why it is included. The paper is the work of an individual author and not a string of quotations bound together; quotations are not used as a way to avoid writing. There is no plagiarism, no use of information, material, or quotations from another source that is not cited.
  
  - **citations follow precisely the format specified (MLA).**
  - Explanation: self-explanatory.
  
  - **references are accurate and complete.**
  - Explanation: All punctuation and mechanics are correct (book titles underlined, essay titles in quotation marks, a period at the end of the bibliographic information.)

Divide  
and  
Conquer

We will approach this paper in three phases.

1. Outline and References — The first deliverable is a detailed outline of your paper and the complete References section, properly formatted.
2. Introduction and Conclusion — The second deliverable is arguably the most important parts of your research paper: the introduction and conclusion. Sometime these are the only parts that people read.
3. The entire paper in final form — lastly, add the Background, Body, and Reference Analysis sections for your final deliverable. Then polish it into a masterwork of Science Fiction analysis (or at least a really cool and scholarly research paper, which is what I really want).