

Speculative Fiction & Chicanafuturism

[Jump to Today](#)

 [Edit](#)



Nezahualcoyotl and his flying machine (left) and cyborg Coatlicue (right) in Diego Rivera's Pan American Unity (1940), San Francisco City College. Photos by Catherine S. Ramirez.

LALS 137

Speculative Fiction and Chicanafuturism

Professor Catherine S. Ramirez

cathysue@ucsc.edu (<mailto:cathysue@ucsc.edu>)

Spring 2021

This course meets online and asynchronously March 29-June 4

Office Hours: TBD

Sign up here for an appointment soon.

Course Description and Learning Objectives

Chicanafuturism is cultural production, such as literature, film, visual art, music, and performance, that uses the tropes of speculative fiction (e.g., science fiction, fantasy, magical realism, horror, and other

non-verisimilar genres) to excavate and retell histories of contact, colonialism, displacement, labor, migration, resistance, and social and cultural transformation in the Americas. Chicanafuturism reckons with the past as it rethinks the present and envisions the future of the "New World."

Focusing primarily on Mesoamerica and Mexican America, this course explores the nexus of race, gender, science, technology, the environment, and the future in Chicanafuturist works from the 1960s through the present. Course objectives include (1) introducing students to alternative futurisms, such as Afrofuturism, Indigenous futurism, and Chicanafuturism; (2) exposing students to a broad spectrum of Chicanafuturist literary and visual works; (3) familiarizing students with concepts and theoretical frameworks in and relevant to Chicana and Latina studies, such as modernity, coloniality, humanism, diaspora, double consciousness, *mestizaje*, *nepantla*, *rasquachismo*, futurity, borderlands, carcerality, indigeneity, and survivance; and (4) honing students' textual analysis skills.

Course Format and Duration

This course is online and asynchronous. There are no in-person meetings. Students are expected to complete one Module per week March 29-June 4, 2021.

Required Texts

Most of the works we'll study are available at Canvas. The following texts are required. All are available as electronic books and are on reserve at the [University Library](#).

https://ucsc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?institution=01CDL-SCR_INST&vid=01CDL_SCR_INST:USCS&tab=CourseReserves&search_scope=CourseReserves&mode=bas
 ↓ https://ucsc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search/download?institution=01CDL-SCR_INST&vid=01CDL_SCR_INST%3AUSCS&tab=CourseReserves&search_scope=CourseReserves&mode=

. You may also purchase and, in some cases, rent these books via the [Bay Tree Bookstore](#) (<https://slugstore.ucsc.edu/>). ↓ https://slugstore.ucsc.edu/download?download_frd=1). You're also free to purchase them from a vendor of your choice. Any edition or format (e.g., paperback, electronic, audio) will do.

- George S. Schuyler, *Black No More* (Minneola, NY: Dover Publications, 2011; ISBN 9780486480404)
- Alejandro Morales, *The Rag Doll Plagues* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1992; ISBN 978-1-55885-104-7)
- PD James, *The Children of Men* (New York: Knopf, 2006; ISBN 9780307275431)
- Yuri Herrera, *Signs Preceding the End of the World* (New York: And Other Stories, 2015; ISBN 9781908276421)
- Rebecca Roanhorse, *Black Sun* (New York: Gallery / Saga Press, 2020; ISBN 9781534437685)
THIS BOOK IS 450 PAGES. PLEASE START READING OR LISTENING TO IT ASAP.

Advisory

This course examines the uneven distribution of power in society and the ways people have responded to that unevenness. We grapple with such topics as white supremacy, racial discrimination, racial violence (including lynching), displacement, genocide, poverty, gender violence, incarceration, deportation, and persecution by the state. Of particular concern are the ways in which the state has branded certain people “illegal” and “alien.” By contesting these dehumanizing labels, this course endeavors to expose their links to relations of power, particularly to processes of stratification, marginalization, and exclusion.

Student Support Resources

UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you're a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please email me your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the [Disability Resource Center \(https://drc.ucsc.edu/index.html\)](https://drc.ucsc.edu/index.html) as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter.

UC Santa Cruz is also committed to providing a safe learning environment that is free of all forms of gender discrimination and sexual harassment, which are explicitly prohibited under [Title IX \(https://titleix.ucsc.edu/about/index.html\)](https://titleix.ucsc.edu/about/index.html). If you've experienced any form of sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking, the [Title IX Office \(https://titleix.ucsc.edu/index.html\)](https://titleix.ucsc.edu/index.html), the [Campus Advocacy, Resources & Education office \(https://care.ucsc.edu/\)](https://care.ucsc.edu/), and [Counseling & Psychological Services \(https://caps.ucsc.edu/\)](https://caps.ucsc.edu/) are resources that you can turn to for support. Please be aware that if you tell me about a situation involving Title IX misconduct, I'm required to share this information with UCSC's Title IX Coordinator.

Course Requirements

This is a 5-unit course, so you should expect to spend approximately 15 hours per week reading the assigned texts, watching and/or listening to lectures and other media (e.g., videos, podcasts), and completing the written assignments (i.e., contributing to the Discussion Forum and writing the 2 Short Essays).

All assignments must be submitted via Canvas, not email. Our course enjoys the support of a Reader (a graduate student who assists with grading). For the Grader to have access to the assignments, they must be turned in via Canvas.

With the exception of the last Discussion Forum contribution, written assignments are due by 5:00pm
<https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360>

With the exception of the last Discussion Forum contribution, written assignments are due by 5:00pm (PT) on Sundays. The last Discussion Forum contribution is due by 5:00pm (PT) on Friday, June 4.

1. Modules

Students must **complete all Modules** (lessons). To advance through the Modules, complete them in chronological order. In Modules 0, 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, and 10, you'll contribute to the Discussion Forum. In Modules 3 and 8, you'll submit a 500-750-word essay. And in Module 6 and the final Module, you'll complete the Midterm Exam and the Final Exam.

2. Discussion Forum (8 contributions, 3 points per contribution, 24 points total)

To cultivate and maintain a connection among students and to put course themes and questions in dialogue with matters beyond our virtual classroom, **all students are required to contribute to our Discussion Forum on a regular basis**. To do so, you'll write a short (50-150-word) response to the prompt at the Discussion Forum beginning in Week 0. You'll continue to contribute to the Discussion Forum in Weeks 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, and 10.

3. 2 Short Essays (10 points per essay, 20 points total)

Students will submit one 500-750-word essay in Module 3 and another 500-750-word essay in Module 8. Please see those Modules for instructions.

4. Exams (55 points total)

Students must **complete 2 online exams**: the Midterm (20 points), to be completed online between 8:00am (PT), Monday, May 3, and 5:00pm (PT), Friday, May 7; and the Final (35 points), to be completed online between 8:00am (PT), Monday, June 7, and 5:00pm (PT), Thursday, June 10. Both exams consist of essay questions and are open-book. Instructions are provided in Module 6 and the final Module. You have several days to complete and submit the exams via Canvas. Please don't wait until the last minute to do so.

5. Read Module 0 and Respond to the Question in Module 0 (1 point)

This assignment is due by 5:00pm (PT) on Sunday, April 4.



To access Modules, the Discussion Forum, and Assignments, see the column at

left.

Grading Scale

Grades are determined according to the following scale:

97-100: A+

94-96: A

90-93: A-

87-89: B+

84-86: B

80-83: B-

77-79: C+

74-76: C

70-73: C-

60-73: D

A Note about Academic Integrity

We instructors assign particular readings and have students do particular exercises because those readings and exercises lead to particular learning outcomes. To get the most out of this class and your education in general, do the work. Don't shortchange yourself by skimming the readings, fast-forwarding through recordings, or skipping class or a meeting with your instructor. Above all, don't take credit for someone else's work.

In other words, don't cheat.

You are a member of an academic community at one of the world's leading research universities. Universities like ours create knowledge that has a lasting impact in the world of ideas and on the lives of others; such knowledge can come from an undergraduate paper as well as the research of an internationally known professor. One of the most important values of an academic community is the balance between the free flow of ideas and respect for the intellectual property of others. Researchers don't use one another's research without attribution because we want to recognize the foundational work we have drawn on in order to create new knowledge; scholars and students always use proper citations in papers; professors may not circulate or publish student papers without the writer's permission; and students may not circulate or post materials (handouts, exams, syllabi— any class materials) from their classes without the written permission of the instructor. Any exam, paper, report, or recording submitted by you and that bears your name is presumed to be your own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course unless you obtain prior written approval to do so from me, your instructor. In all of your assignments, including drafts, you may use words or ideas written by other individuals, but only with proper citation (e.g., [MLA](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_general_1) (https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_general_1) or [Chicago](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/chicago_manual_17th_edition/cmos_formatting_and_style) (https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/chicago_manual_17th_edition/cmos_formatting_and_style) and correct attribution. If you're not clear about the expectations for citing sources, completing an assignment, or taking an exam, consult our [Library](https://guides.library.ucsc.edu/citesources) (<https://guides.library.ucsc.edu/citesources>). If you're still confused, seek clarification from me, your instructor.



All members of the campus community are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of our academic endeavors. The consequences of cheating and academic dishonesty—including a formal discipline file



endeavors. The consequences of cheating and academic dishonesty—including a formal discipline fine, possible loss of future internship, scholarship, or employment opportunities, denial of admission to graduate school, and the missed opportunity to learn and grow—aren't worth it.








Lessons

- WEEK 0: Welcome and Orientation (*Response to Module 0 Question and 50-150-word Discussion Forum Contribution due by 5:00pm PT, Sunday, April 4*)
- WEEK 1: Genre: What Is Speculative Fiction? (*50-150-word Discussion Forum Contribution due by 5:00pm PT, Sunday, April 4*)
- WEEK 2: Afrofuturism: Modernity and the African Diaspora (*50-150-word Discussion Forum Contribution due by 5:00pm PT, Sunday, April 11*)
- WEEK 3: Chicanafuturism: Defamiliarizing the Familiar (*Short Essay #1 [500-750 words] due by 5:00pm PT, Sunday, April 18*)
- WEEK 4: "A Mere Machine": Labor and the Limits of the Human in *Why Braceros?* and *Why Cybraceros?* (*50-150-word Discussion Forum Contribution due by 5:00pm PT, Sunday, April 25*)
- WEEK 5: Contagion: Blood, Mestizaje, and the Myth of Purity in *The Rag Doll Plagues* (*50-150-word Discussion Forum Contribution due by 5:00pm PT, Sunday, May 2*)
- WEEK 6: Midterm Exam (*available at Canvas 8:00am PT, Monday, May 3-5:00pm PT, Friday, May 7*)
- WEEK 7: Carcerality: Detention and Dystopia in *(The) Children of Men* (*50-150-word Discussion Forum Contribution due by 5:00pm PT, Sunday, May 16*)
- WEEK 8: Borders: Allegory and Myth in *Signs Preceding the End of the World* (*Short Essay #2 [500-750 words] due by 5:00pm PT, Sunday, May 23*)
- WEEK 9: Native Americas: Decolonizing Fantasy in *Black Sun* (*50-150-word Discussion Forum Contribution due by 5:00pm PT Sunday, May 30*)
- WEEK 10: Apocalypse and Survivance: Alternative Histories and New Worlds (*50-150-word Discussion Forum Contribution due by 5:00pm PT, Friday, June 4*)
- FINAL EXAM (*available at Canvas 8:00am PT, Monday, June 7-5:00pm PT, Thursday, June 10*)

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
Sun Apr 4, 2021	 Discussion Forum 0: A Few Questions regarding Speculative Fiction (https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/221268)	due by 5pm
	 Discussion Forum 1: Genre (https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/223278)	due by 5pm

Date	Details	Due
	 Week 0: Orientation & Module 0 Assignment-READ THIS 1ST https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/220710	due by 5pm
	 Week 1: What Is Speculative Fiction? https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/221070	due by 5pm
Sun Apr 11, 2021	 Discussion Forum 2: Afrofuturism https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/223281	due by 5pm
	 Week 2: Modernity and the African Diaspora https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/221071	due by 5pm
Sun Apr 18, 2021	 Week 3: Defamiliarizing the Familiar https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/221072	due by 5pm
	 Discussion Forum 4: Labor https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/236681	due by 5pm
Sun Apr 25, 2021	 Week 4: Labor and the Limits of the Human https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/221073	due by 5pm
	 Discussion Forum 5: Contagion https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/237094	due by 5pm
Sun May 2, 2021	 Week 5: Blood, Mestizaje, and the Myth of Purity https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/221081	due by 5pm
	 Discussion Forum 7: Carcerality https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/237095	due by 5pm
Sun May 16, 2021	 Week 7: Carcerality https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/221104	due by 5pm

Date	Details	Due
Sun May 23, 2021	 Week 8: Borders (https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/221103)	due by 5pm
Sun May 30, 2021	 Discussion Forum 9: Native Americas (https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/237127)	due by 5pm
Fri Jun 4, 2021	 Week 9: Decolonizing Fantasy (https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/221105)	due by 5pm
Fri Jun 4, 2021	 Discussion Forum 10: Apocalypse & Survivance (https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/237096)	due by 5pm
Fri Jun 4, 2021	 Week 10: Apocalypse and Survivance (https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/221106)	due by 5pm
Fri Jun 4, 2021	 Final Exam (https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/240164)	
Fri Jun 4, 2021	 Week 6-Midterm Exam (https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/42360/assignments/225641)	