

Syllabus

HONORS 2210: BUILDING IMAGINARY WORLDS



Course Information

Instructor: Professor April Pelt

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Office Hours: By appointment

Meeting Time: Wednesdays, 4:40-7:25 pm

Classroom: Core Campus 163

A note on safety: Our class ends at 7:25 pm. If you do not feel safe walking across campus after dark, [Tiger Transit](https://www.clemson.edu/cusafety/cupd/tiger-transit.html) [offers rides to other locations on campus.](https://www.clemson.edu/cusafety/cupd/tiger-transit.html)

Course Description

Worldbuilding—the act of creating and populating a complex, fully realized fictional world—is at the heart of science fiction and fantasy. In this course, we will map the physical, political, historical, and socioeconomic landscapes of multiple imaginary worlds. In so doing, we will not only examine how these authors and filmmakers construct their fictional worlds, but we will also explore how and why these imaginary worlds both emulate and deviate from the world we inhabit.

Learning Outcomes

In this course, you will learn to:

- Perform close textual analysis of literary works in writing and in class discussions (including, but not limited to, identifying major themes and motifs in each work under discussion).
- Draw connections among literary works from different genres, cultures, and historical eras.
- Craft multimodal (aural, visual, and/or written) and analytical responses to assigned novels and plays.

In addition to the outcomes listed above, this course will provide you with the opportunity to meet the following goals:

- Improve your writing skills through daily practice, required writing fellow conferences, and optional conferences with the instructor.
- Expand your vocabulary and reading comprehension abilities by adopting active reading strategies.
- Broaden your horizons by allowing you to understand perspectives and experiences that are different from your own.
- Engage in respectful debate with your fellow learners about a variety of sensitive topics, including religion, race, gender, and sexuality.

Required Materials

In addition to your **laptop, which you will need to bring to class every day** to complete your daily in-class writing assignments, you will need to purchase or borrow the following books, movies, and television series for this course:

Books

- Philip Pullman's *The Golden Compass*
- Lev Grossman's *The Magicians*
- Ursula K. Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* by
- N.K. Jemisin's *The Fifth Season*
- Octavia Butler's *Dawn*
- Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*
- China Miéville's *Embassytown*
- Sheri S. Tepper's *Grass*
- Mark J.P. Wolf's *Building Imaginary Worlds* (on reserve at the library)

Movies and Television Series

- Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner: The Final Cut* (There are multiple versions of *Blade Runner*; be sure you watch this one)
- Denis Villeneuve's *Blade Runner 2049*
- Bryan Konietzko and Michael Dante DiMartino's *Avatar: The Last Airbender*

Buy whichever editions are cheapest/most convenient for you. Ebooks are perfectly acceptable.

In addition to the required media, you will also need:

- A Canvas account
- A clemson.edu or g.clemson.edu email account
- Internet access
- Word Processing software
- Speakers or headphones for audio and video materials
- [Adobe Acrobat Reader](http://get.adobe.com/reader/)  (<http://get.adobe.com/reader/>)

I will post all announcements and reminders on Canvas, so be sure to check your email several times per week. You can manage how often you receive Canvas notifications by clicking on your username in the upper right-hand corner, then clicking on "Notifications" in the sidebar on the left-hand side of the page

Course Requirements

Informed Engagement (200 points, or 20% of your final grade): You must publicly demonstrate your engagement with and understanding of the course material by participating in class discussions and activities. Offering questions and comments during class discussions is the most straightforward way to earn Informed Engagement credit, but you can also earn credit by participating in in-class activities and racking up more than the minimum required number of points for Captain's Log posts (see below for more details).

The quality of your remarks and questions is more important than their quantity. Asking questions counts, so speak up if you're unclear about something!

Reading Journals (100 points, or 10% of your final grade): As you're reading, take notes (either by hand or electronically) about points of interest and/or confusion. These notes don't have to be extraordinarily detailed; they just need to include enough detail so that you can draw on them during class discussion. Conclude your journal entry with a list of topics and/or passages that you're especially interested in discussing during class. (I will not read your journals ahead of time, so it is up to you to raise these points during discussion.) Then, upload your journals to Canvas. I will drop your lowest two reading journal grades.

Informal Writing Assignments (100 points, or 10% of your final grade): This category includes small things, like your daily in-class writing activities, the Know Your Classmates Exam, and graded discussion forums (which we'll use if I need to cancel class). About the in-class writing activities: you'll write something in class every day. Think of these low-stakes writing assignments as warm-up exercises that will help you get plugged into the material before we launch into our discussions/main activities. These will be informal, so I won't be paying attention to things like grammar and spelling. I'll drop your lowest two in-class writing assignment scores.

Captain's Log (100 points, or 10% of your final grade): Often, professors will give you background information on the assigned reading and viewing, but because this course asks you to be an equal partner in your own learning, you'll be responsible for finding relevant background information and sharing it with your classmates. We'll be using Yellowdig, a social pinning site that's integrated into Canvas, for our this activity. As you're looking for items to share, be sure to:

- Find a credible source that provides context for or explains a key element of our assigned readings or viewing. Online study guides (SparkNotes, Shmoop, eNotes, etc.) and encyclopedia articles **are not acceptable sources for this activity**. Substantial articles in literary magazines and scholarly articles are generally fine; blogs are probably best avoided. Interviews with the author or director, when

available, can be promising. If you're unsure whether your source is legit or not, ask! I'm always happy to answer questions.

- Post your source and a list of key takeaways and/or questions for further consideration on Yellowdig. Write at least 100 words.
- Comment on your classmates' posts. Make sure your comments (1) are germane to your classmates' posts and (2) demonstrate that you've actually read the source your classmate posted. Write at least 40 words.

Two people can't post the same source, so be sure to check and see what others have posted before you go hunting for your own source.

To earn full credit for this portion of your grade, you'll need to log 100 points in Yellowdig. You'll earn 5 points for posting a source and providing a 100-word explanation of it. You can earn 2 points for offering substantial comments on your classmates' posts. I give bonus points for exceptional posts. You can earn a maximum of 15 points per week, so it will take you a minimum of 7 weeks to earn full credit. Earning more than 100 points will positively impact your Informed Engagement grade (see above).

Build Your Own World (400 points, or 40% of your final grade): Throughout the semester, we'll be studying imaginary worlds created by acclaimed authors, filmmakers, and animators. For your semester-long project, you will create an imaginary world of your own. You are not limited to any particular genre, so feel free to take the approach that works best for you, whether it's a creating a futuristic world featuring space travel, extraterrestrial beings, and/or hyper-advanced technology; crafting an epic fantasy world featuring magic, mystery, and fantastical creatures; or building an alternate earth that differs from our own in fundamental and unexpected ways. (Almost) anything goes, so choose something that sparks your passion!

Your project will consist of five major elements:

- A comprehensive guide that outlines the major characteristics of your world
- A visual and/or audio representation (digital and/or physical) of your world
- A description of the context and manner in which your imaginary world will be deployed
- A cover letter in which you reflect upon the process of creating your imaginary world
- An informal, ungraded presentation

Check out the [project guidelines \(https://clemons.instructure.com/courses/50401/pages/build-your-own-world\)](https://clemons.instructure.com/courses/50401/pages/build-your-own-world) for a more detailed overview of the project and my expectations.

Project Updates (100 points, or 10% of your final grade): You'll turn in weekly progress reports for your Build Your Own World project. These 500-word reports should outline the progress you have made on your worldbuilding project. You can cover any topic(s) that you deem relevant and append actual project materials if you would like my feedback on them. You may (but are not required to) use the following questions to structure your report:

- What progress have you made on your worldbuilding project this week? Be as detailed as possible.
- What decisions have you made this week? How did you reach these decisions?

- What difficulties have you run into? What concerns do you have?
- What questions do you have for me? (If they are general questions that are applicable to the whole class, post them in the [Ask April](https://clemons.instructure.com/courses/50401/discussion_topics/155668) (https://clemons.instructure.com/courses/50401/discussion_topics/155668) forum.)

If you find yourself stuck, try answering some of Patricia C. Wrede's [Fantasy Worldbuilding Questions](http://www.pcwrede.com/fantasy-worldbuilding-questions/) (<http://www.pcwrede.com/fantasy-worldbuilding-questions/>).

I will drop your lowest four project updates, so you can skip them on weeks when you're occupied with your work for other courses.

Grading

I will calculate your grade using a 1,000-point scale. Points are distributed as follows:

Assignment	Points
Informed Engagement	200 points
Informal Writing Assignments	100 points
Reading Journals	100 points
Captain's Log	100 points
Build Your Own World	400 points
Project Updates	100 points
TOTAL	1,000 points

Your final grade will be determined by the points you've earned throughout the semester. I do not round borderline scores up to the next letter grade.

The following table breaks down the point ranges associated with each letter grade:

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Letter	Points
A	900 – 1000 points
B	800 – 899 points
C	700 – 799 points
D	600 – 699 points
F	Below 600 points

Course and University Policies

Attendance: Participation is essential to your success in this course, so you should plan to attend every class meeting. Students who provide documentation will not be penalized for absences due to serious or prolonged illnesses, a death in the family, participation in legal proceedings, participation in university-sponsored activities, or documented emergencies. If you know that you'll be missing class ahead of time, you will need to make arrangements to complete your work beforehand.

Tardiness: Habitual tardiness will negatively impact your Informed Engagement grade.

Late Work Policy: I really don't like accepting late work, but I also understand that you all have lives that sometimes get in the way of you turning in your work on time. If you cannot turn in your assignment on time, let me know as soon as possible so that we can make arrangements.

Class Cancellations: In the unlikely event that class is canceled, I will notify you as soon as possible via Canvas and email. However, if I do not arrive within fifteen minutes of the beginning of class, you may assume that class is canceled for the day and leave. If class is cancelled due to inclement weather or any other emergency situation, I will determine how best to make up the assigned material and will announce my decision on Canvas as soon as possible.

Electronic Devices: I don't allow students use laptops, phones, and tablets in class unless we're doing an activity that requires them. I have a few reasons for this.

1. [Research](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/) [↗] (<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/>) has shown that notetaking on laptops is less effective than taking notes by hand.
2. This is a discussion and project-based course, so there are no exams that require you to regurgitate class notes.

3. If you're goofing around on the internet, texting, and/or doing work for another course, you risk distracting your classmates.

If you need to be available by phone or text due to a family emergency, let me know. I'm not unreasonable!

Feedback: I am always happy to offer you feedback on your work in progress. As you're drafting, feel free to send quick questions about theses, introductions, organization, etc. via email. If you would like me to review a full draft, please make an appointment to talk with me in person.

Grading: I will do my best to return all graded material to you within one week (excluding weekends and official university holidays/closures). If I require more time, I will alert you in advance.

Grading Questions: If you have a question about your grade on an assignment, please wait twenty-four hours after the assignment is returned and contact me via email. I do not discuss grades in person—only in writing—and I require a 24-hour "cool down" period before I answer questions about your graded work. Please be as specific as possible in your email so that I can address your questions and concerns in a timely manner.

Copyright: All materials found in this course are strictly for the use of students enrolled in this course and for purposes associated with this course; they may not be retained or further disseminated. Clemson students, faculty, and staff are expected to comply fully with institutional copyright policy as well as all other copyright laws.

Academic Integrity: Per the [University's Academic Integrity policy](#) [↗] (<http://www.clemson.edu/academics/integrity/index.html>), any work that you submit in this course **must be your own**. Any words, ideas, or data that you borrow from other people and include in your written work must be properly documented. Failure to document borrowed material is [plagiarism](#) [↗] (<http://www.clemson.edu/culib/Plagiarism/index.htm>). In addition, you may not submit work completed for other courses for credit in this course. If I determine that you have violated the Academic Integrity policy, I will either present you with a Plagiarism Resolution Form or make a formal written charge of academic dishonesty (including a description of the suspected misconduct) to the Associate Dean for Curriculum in the Office of Undergraduate Studies. University policy stipulates that I am not required to notify you of any allegations brought before the Associate Dean for Curriculum. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please get in touch with me before you turn in a final draft of your work.

Course and University Resources

Instructor Email and Conferences: Please contact me as soon as possible with any questions or concerns that you have about the course or your academic performance in the course. The best way to get in touch with me is via the "[Ask April](#) (https://clemson.instructure.com/courses/50401/discussion_topics/155668)" discussion thread or by email at apelt@clemson.edu (<mailto:apelt@clemson.edu>). (Use email for all inquiries related to your personal

performance in the course; use the Ask April forum for general questions related to the course.) I respond to discussion board and email inquiries throughout the day on weekdays, once or twice a day on weekends, and frequently the night before assignments are due. You may also make an appointment to talk to me in person. **I'm always happy to help, so don't be a stranger!**

Academic Success Center: The Academic Success Center provides free services, including tutoring, academic coaching, and academic skills workshops, for all Clemson students.

Visit www.clemson.edu/asc [↗](http://www.clemson.edu/asc) (<http://www.clemson.edu/asc>) for more information on their services and workshops.

Writing Center: Clemson University's Writing Center offers free one-on-one tutoring for all Clemson students. Visit their [website](https://clemson.mywconline.com/) [↗](https://clemson.mywconline.com/) (<https://clemson.mywconline.com/>) for more information about their services or to make an appointment.

Cooper Library: Reference librarians are available in person and via text, phone, email, and chat to answer your research questions. Visit <http://libraries.clemson.edu/ask/> [↗](http://libraries.clemson.edu/ask/) (<http://libraries.clemson.edu/ask/>) for more information or to get in touch with a librarian.

Technical Support: If you are having hardware or software problems, CCIT's Service Desk may be able to help you. Contact them at ITHELP@clemson.edu (<mailto:ITHELP@clemson.edu>) with a detailed description of your problem.

Student Accessibility Services: Clemson University values the diversity of our student body as a strength and a critical component of our dynamic community. Students with disabilities or temporary injuries/conditions may require accommodations due to barriers in the structure of facilities, course design, technology used for curricular purposes, or other campus resources. Students who experience a barrier to full access to this class should let the professor know, and make an appointment to meet with a staff member in Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible. You can make an appointment by calling 864-656-6848, by emailing studentaccess@lists.clemson.edu (<mailto:studentaccess@lists.clemson.edu>), or by visiting Suite 239 in the Academic Success Center building. Appointments are strongly encouraged – drop-ins will be seen if at all possible, but there could be a significant wait due to scheduled appointments. Students who receive Academic Access Letters are strongly encouraged to request, obtain and present these to their professors as early in the semester as possible so that accommodations can be made in a timely manner. It is the student's responsibility to follow this process each semester. You can access further information at the [Student Accessibility Services Website](http://www.clemson.edu/academics/studentaccess/) [↗](http://www.clemson.edu/academics/studentaccess/) (<http://www.clemson.edu/academics/studentaccess/>) and the [Office of Access and Equity Website](http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/access/) [↗](http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/access/) (<http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/access/>).

Non-Discrimination: Clemson University is committed to providing a higher education environment that is free from sexual discrimination. Therefore, if you believe you or someone else that is part of the Clemson University community has been discriminated against based on sex, or if you have questions about Title IX, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, who also serves as the Executive Director of Equity Compliance, at 110 Holtzendorff Hall, 864-656-3181 (voice) or 864-656-0899 (TDD). The Title IX Coordinator is the person designated by Clemson University to oversee its Title IX compliance efforts.

Please consult the [university's Title IX policy](http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/access/title-ix/) [\(http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/access/title-ix/\)](http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/access/title-ix/) for full details.
