

The Eight Greatest Science Fiction Authors Ever
HSSP at MIT Spring 2012
Taught by Zoe Snape

Summary: This class will cover one Science Fiction great each week, discussing that author's life and time period, best-known works, prominent or repeated themes and ideas, and contributions to the genre of science fiction. Part of each class will be reserved for discussion of science fiction as a whole, its common themes and ideas, and its influence on society and other forms of art. Authors will be covered roughly chronologically.

Note about Spoilers: We will discuss many well-known and interesting books, and we will discuss their endings. If you are very put off by having an ending "spoiled," please consider not taking this class. You can request a class change at the HSSP office, room 1-246 the first week of class.

Authors Covered:

Here is a quick list of the authors we will cover and the weeks we'll be talking about them, plus a short list of some of their work, a combination of their best or most well-known books and some shorter stuff that I think would make a good quick read. I really encourage you to take a look at some of this either before class (because it will make discussion a lot more interesting) or after (because they're all great books and fun to read!)

Week one (2.18): Ray Bradbury

Fahrenheit 451°, The Martian Chronicles, The Illustrated Man, R is for Rocket, S is for Space, any other short stories.

Week two (2.25): Isaac Asimov

I, Robot, Foundation or Prelude to Foundation, The Martian Way, any other short stories, any of his non-fiction columns from The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction (published in collections such as The Left Hand of the Electron)

Week three (3.3): Arthur C. Clarke

2001: A Space Odyssey, Childhood's End

3.10: Spark! No HSSP class (Sign up for my Spark class on pie making! It'll be super fun!)

Week four (3.17): Frank Herbert

Dune, The Tactful Saboteur

Week five: (3.24): Phillip K. Dick

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep, Minority Report, any other short stories

Week six: (3.31): William Gibson

Neuromancer, Idoru, The Gernsback Continuum, Burning Chrome

Week seven: (4.7): Orson Scott Card

Ender's Game, The Worthing Saga

Week eight (4.14): Douglas Adams

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy 'trilogy'

General Class Structure:

15 minutes: Brief lecture on the author's life, time period, works and major themes.

30 minutes: Brief excerpt from some major work read out loud or silently.

10 minutes: Discussion of the excerpt and the author's style.

30 minutes: General discussion of the author's works and themes.

10 minutes: Discussion of the science fiction genre as a whole, its relationship to society and other forms of art, and how it does or doesn't influence technological innovation.

5 minutes: Wrap-up and suggestions for further reading.

More Information: For information about HSSP in general, please see their website <http://esp.mit.edu/learn/HSSP/index.html>. For more information on any of the authors we've discussed in class I recommend Google, Wikipedia, and your school and public libraries.

I may periodically email out miscellaneous information, cool links, and changes to the syllabus, and if I get around to it there may be a website.

Contact Information: If you ever need to get in touch with me you can email me at zoesnape@mit.edu anytime. If you need to get in touch with the HSSP administration you can visit them in their office, 1-246 or email them at spring-hssp@mit.edu.