



## **The Good, the Bad, & the Slimy: The Aliens of Science-Fiction**

University Writing Seminar

Paige Eggebrecht  
Email: pme89@brandeis.edu  
Office: Rabb 228

### SYLLABUS

“I felt the first inkling of a thing that presently grew quite clear in my mind, that oppressed me for many days, a sense of dethronement, a persuasion that I was no longer master, but an animal among animals; under the Martian heel.”

When H.G. Wells wrote the preceding in his alien invasion novel *The War of the Worlds* (1897), he put imperialist and capitalist practices to the question by introducing invaders from Mars who were now the conquerors, colonizers, and oppressors who destroy us as if “We’re eatable ants.” Aliens are a cultural archetype that actualize real xenophobia, racism, and sexism in a socially digestible cultural mode, science-fiction. Aliens can represent the abject female or intersex body, the dark-skinned Other, or the invading foreigner. By examining film productions and depictions of aliens in science-fiction, we can understand better how the dominant culture thinks of itself. Are the aliens benevolent visitors seeking to enlighten the human race? A terrifying and destructive invading force that uncomfortably reminds us of our own oppressive past? Or does the alien just remind us of our mother?

Course Films:

Films for required viewing are on the Latte page: <http://lts.brandeis.edu/courses/newlatte/>

*Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* (1956)  
*Alien* (1979)  
*Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977)  
*E.T.* (1982)  
*Independence Day* (1996)  
*Lilo & Stitch* (2002)  
*District 9* (2009)  
*Arrival* (2016)

#### Course Readings

“Panopticism” from *Discipline & Punish* by Michel Foucault  
Selected critical essays

#### Required Course Texts

*There are no required course texts for this class to purchase. All readings and films will be uploaded to the course Latte page.*

#### Required Software:

*Microsoft Word*

Free for Brandeis Students: <https://kb.brandeis.edu/display/LTS/Software>

*Zotero*

Free download for Mac/PC/Linux: [zotero.org](https://www.zotero.org)

#### STRONGLY RECOMMENDED:

*Google Drive (Free) / Box (free for Brandeis Students) / Drop Box*  
Don't risk losing your work!

### REQUIREMENTS & ASSIGNMENTS

#### Essays

- ✓ The close reading essay
- ✓ The lens essay
- ✓ The research essay

#### Drafting

- ✓ In-class free-writing, note-taking on the films, & film responses
  - You must post on at least 5 of the films (total 8) – Don't leave it till the end of the term, you will regret it.

- ✓ Small Writing Assignments
- ✓ First drafts
- ✓ **Peer Review** – It is expected that you will take peer work seriously and thoughtfully.
- ✓ Conferences

## Portfolio

At the end of the semester you will assemble all of your work (including pre-draft assignments, rough drafts, final drafts, and peer review sheets) together with a letter describing how your understanding of yourself as a writer has changed over the course of the semester. **This means that you need to save all your writing from the semester.**

## Class participation

Your consistent participation in class sessions constitutes a significant portion of your grade and is the most critical component of a successful course.

## CLASS POLICIES

### Formatting and Submission

All essays will be submitted to me and your peers electronically on Latte. All essays should be in correct MLA formatting – 1” margins, 12 point Times New Roman, double-spaced with titles and a works cited.

### Grade Breakdown

Close reading essay and close reading assignments: 20%

Lens essay and lens assignments: 25%

Research Essay and research assignments: 30%

Class participation & Attendance: 10%

Latte posts (at least 5/8): 5%

### Optional Revision

At the end of the semester, you will have the option to submit a revision for **either** your Close-Reading or Lens Essay for an improved grade if you received a B+ or below. If you choose to

revise, you must visit the writing center. Revisions will yield **up to 2** grades higher on that essay.  
Ex: B- → B+

#### Late Work & Extensions

If you are afraid your work will not be completed in time, contact me more **before** the due date and arrange for an extension. Otherwise, late work will be penalized by a third of a grade per day (B+ → B, → B- and so on). Work more than 2 weeks late without notice will be considered missing.

#### Attendance

You are allowed **three** absences, **NO QUESTIONS ASKED**. For each additional absence, your final grade will be penalized by a third of a grade (B+ → B, → B- and so on). Seven or more absences will result in a failing grade. Please contact me in the event of an emergency.

#### Electronics—Phones, Laptops, Tablets

Phones and tablets should *always* be silenced and put away during all class time. Laptops can be used for specific in-class activities only. Repeated misuse of electronics will result in lowered participation grades.

### UNIVERSITY POLICIES & ACCREDITATION

#### Academic Honesty

You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. The University policy on academic honesty is distributed annually in section 5 of the Rights and Responsibilities handbook. Instances of alleged dishonesty will be forwarded to the Office of Campus Life for possible referral to the Student Judicial System. Potential sanctions include failure in the course and suspension from the University.

#### Accommodations

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in class, please see me right away.

#### Four-Credit Course

Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

## UWS Outcomes

### Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing:

- ✓ Use writing and discussion to work through and interpret complex ideas from readings and other texts.
- ✓ Critically analyze your own and others' choices regarding language and form (e.g., in student texts or formally published texts)
- ✓ Engage in multiple modes of inquiry using multiple texts
- ✓ Incorporate significant research (as above) into writing that engages a question and/or topic and uses it as a central theme for a substantive, research-based essay
- ✓ Use writing to support interpretations of text, and understand that there are multiple interpretations of text
- ✓ Consider and express the relationship of your own ideas to the ideas of others

### Processes:

- ✓ Use written, visual, and/or experience-based texts as tools to develop ideas for writing
- ✓ Understand that writing takes place through recurring processes of invention, revision, editing
- ✓ Develop successful, flexible strategies for your own writing through the processes of invention, revision, and editing
- ✓ Experience and understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing
- ✓ Learn to critique your own and others' work productively and respectfully
- ✓ Be reflective about your writing processes

### Knowledge of Conventions

- ✓ Understand the conventions of particular genres of writing
- ✓ Use conventions associated with a range of dialects, particularly standardized written English (but not necessarily limited to it)
- ✓ Recognize and address patterns in your writing that unintentionally diverge from patterns expected by their audience/s
- ✓ Practice using academic citation systems (MLA) for documenting work