



ENGLISH 420: SPECIAL TOPICS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Topic	The Life and Writing of Philip K. Dick
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Phil • dick • ean (Fil-dik-yuhn) *adj.* Pertaining to the science fiction and pseudo-philosophies of American author Philip K. Dick, whose work is distinguished by two thematic binaries, conflicts and implosions: [1] reality vs. illusion; [2] human vs. android.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This section of English 420 concentrates on representative novels, stories, essays and film adaptations of American author Philip K. Dick, one of the twentieth century's most influential, vibrant, and provocative writers. PKD was wildly prolific; throughout his career he composed over fifty novels and hundreds of short stories. Much of this work falls into the category of "pulp" science fiction, a subgenre distinguished by adventure and wonderment, unbridled masculinity, formulaic plots and characters, technological advances, and crummy prose. PKD is simultaneously a pulp icon and literary auteur, carving out a singular niche. In this course, we will explore the dynamics and vicissitudes of that niche.

TEXTS

Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* 1968. New York: Vintage, 1996.
———. *Eye in the Sky*. 1957. New York: Vintage, 2003.
———. *The Philip K. Dick Reader*. New York: Citadel, 2001.
Sutin, Lawrence. *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick*. New York: Carroll & Graff, 2005.

GRADING SCALE

Course grades will be based on the following percentages:

Assignments and Quizzes	20%
Minithemes	50%
Final Essay	30%

ASSIGNMENTS AND QUIZZES

Throughout the semester, you will be given a number of assignments to be completed both in and out of the classroom. In-class assignments will generally not be given ahead of time; they will be issued during class and are to be completed during that class session. If you have an unexcused absence from class, you will not be able to make up those assignments. Quizzes will be given periodically to ensure that the reading schedule is being followed. They will usually be administered at the beginning of class. If you have an unexcused absence or are tardy on a day that a quiz is administered, you will not be able to make it up.

MINITHEMES

A minitheme is a one-page, single-spaced work in which you are required to engage with the reading material for the class. The purpose of writing a minitheme is to develop your skills as a critical thinker and reader. In order to write a successful minitheme, you should keep a reading journal. As you read the course texts, look for recurring symbols, images and ideas and write them down in your journal along with anything else that seems interesting, disturbing, or provocative. Then amass the information you have collected. Take one of the themes you have focused on in your reading journal and flesh it out with details, citations, and page numbers. Minithemes should exhibit four primary criteria: [1] evidence of attentiveness to the text under consideration; [2] strong textual support for your argument; [3] an explanation of the significance of the theme you have chosen to focus on; [4] questions or concerns for further investigation.

Minithemes serve as models for the sort of process that should be undergone when you write longer essays. In short, you must first read a given text, taking notes and underlining important phrases and passages. Then gather and sort out your notes, making sure your focus is clear and sufficiently narrow. Finally, develop a meaningful and interesting reading of the text.

A total of FIVE minithemes will be due at the beginning of our discussion sessions for each major written text. Your first minitheme, for instance, will be on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and is due on the first day we discuss that novel.

FINAL ESSAY

This 8-10 page essay should be based on the ideas developed in your minithemes as well as our class discussions and assignments. You are responsible for developing your own topics and choosing two texts on which to write a comparative and contrastive analysis.

Final essays must be distinguished by the following: MLA style; 12 Times New Roman font; double-spaced text; one-inch margins (top, sides, bottom); an imaginative, substantive title; a compelling, argumentative thesis; at least EIGHT citations from primary texts; at least EIGHT citations from secondary texts; a bibliography.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism occurs when a writer: [1] copies verbatim from an author without quotation or attempts to disguise the act by selective omissions or alterations; [2] paraphrases from an

author without naming the source in the text of the paper or providing a list of references at the end; [3] turns in a paper written by somebody else. As a point of academic integrity, you are required to submit original material of your own creation. Plagiarism of any material is a serious offense and, if established with sufficient evidence, can result in failure of the course or dismissal from the university.

STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER (SSC)



The Student Success Center offers FREE services to help students meet their full potential. Students can find tutoring in any subject, study buddies, one-on-one technology workshops, feedback on writing assignments, and general academic skills coaching. Web: lake.wright.edu/ssc. Phone: **419.586.0333**. Location: **182 Andrews**.

OFFICE OF DISABILITIES SERVICES (ODS)

If a student has a disability that requires special accommodations, it is essential that he or she discuss it with the instructor and the Office of Disability Services before or during the first week of the semester. ODS will work with these students on an individual basis to determine what services, equipment and accommodations would be appropriate regarding their documented needs. Students who qualify for these types of service should initiate contact with the instructor and/or ODS as soon as possible to enable the university to meet their needs. Please call Deanna Springer at **419.586.0366** or email her at deanna.springer@wright.edu. For more information, visit the ODS in **182 Andrews**.

LIBRARY AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER (LTC)

The Library and Technology Center provides free access to scholarly resources in all formats. Students can also visit the LTC for assistance with creating or editing multimedia projects (i.e., PowerPoint, Voiceovers, Website development, etc.). Phone: **419.586.8400**. Location: **197A Andrews Hall**.

CLASS CALENDAR

There are seven modules in the course. Below is a breakdown of readings, screenings and topics. Full descriptions of assignments will be discussed in class and are available on Pilot.

- 1** Introduction to the Course
FILM: *Blade Runner*
"The Android & the Human" +
Divine Invasions (Chp. 1)
- 2** *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
"Who Is an SF Writer?" +
Divine Invasions (Chps. 2-3)
Due: Minitheme #1
- 3** FILM: *Total Recall*

"We Can Remember It for You Wholesale" *

Divine Invasions (Chps. 4-5)

Due: Minitheme #2

4 "The Father-Thing" *

"If You Find This World Bad, You Should See Some of the Others" †

Divine Invasions (Chps. 6-7)

Due: Minitheme #3

5 *Eye in the Sky*

Divine Invasions (Chps. 8-9)

Due: Minitheme #4

6 FILM: *Minority Report*

"The Minority Report" *

Divine Invasions (Chps. 10-11)

Due: Minitheme #5

7 "Fair Game" *

"Second Variety" *

Divine Invasions (Chp. 12)

Due: Final Essay

* Denotes stories located in *The Philip K. Dick Reader*.

† Denotes handouts.