

Rise of the Machines: Science and Technology in Hispanic Narrative

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Course Description:

From soul-stealing cameras and mad scientists, to quantum mechanics and cyborgs, scientific and technological notions have been a constant, if sometimes overlooked, theme in cultural productions from Spanish America and Spain. In this course we will explore the role of science and technology in Hispanic literature and film from the late 19th century to nowadays. As we will soon realize, such representations are often associated with evil and fear—not unlike in other Western literary traditions—reflecting the uncertainty that characterized an era dominated by international armed conflicts, profound social changes, and the exponential growth of scientific knowledge. Furthermore, cultural production in the Spanish-speaking world was undoubtedly shaped by many of the issues that affected this region in particular, such as civil wars, authoritarianism, imperialism, and inequality. The goal of this course is promote a critical reading of works by authors that include Santiago Ramón y Cajal, Jorge Luis Borges, and Daína Chaviano, among others, taking the complex relationship between science, technology, and culture as a starting point.

Course Objectives:

At the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- ...identify representations of scientific and technological advances in Hispanic literature and film from the late 19th century to nowadays.
- ...compare and contrast cultural productions from the Spanish-speaking world based on representations of science and technology.
- ...critically analyze various literary and cinematic works from Spanish America and Spain.
- ...write a research paper in literary or film studies following standard guidelines of the field.

Required Materials:

Scanned readings (Blackboard).

Selected films (YouTube, Netflix, and Blackboard).

Novels:

- Bioy Casares, Adolfo. *La invención de Morel*. Edited by Trinidad Barrera, Cátedra, 2013.
- Chaviano, Daína. *Un hada en el umbral de la Tierra*. El Naranjo, 2014. (Kindle)

Prerequisites:

Senior status and declared major or minor in Spanish.

Course Policies

Grading/Evaluation criteria. Your final grade will be based on the following:

Preparation/Participation	15 %
Attendance	5 %
Response papers	25 %
Presentation	10 %
Annotated bibliography	15 %
Final paper	30 %

Grading Scale:

A+	99-100%	C+	77-79%
A	94-98%	C	73-76%
A-	90-93%	C-	70-72%
B+	87-89%	D+	67-69%
B	83-86%	D	63-66%
B-	80-82%	F	<63%

A: Distinguished: Shows mastery of the material, participates regularly and meaningfully; excellent attitude.

B: Superior: Knows material well, but lacks in some areas; very good to excellent attitude.

C: Satisfactory: Adequate, average, passing.

D: Poor: Little understanding, lacking in most areas.

F: Failing: Poor work, insufficient learning, little to no evidence of understanding.

Preparation/Participation (15%)

This is a reading-intensive course. Students are expected to complete all readings (or watch films) before each class. In addition, students are required to actively participate in class discussions. Each week, students are responsible for evaluating their own preparation/participation by **answering weekly surveys/quizzes on Blackboard**. The survey/quiz will be available from the end of class on Friday to the beginning of class on Wednesday the following week. If a student forgets to answer the survey before the deadline, the instructor will assign the grade with a maximum of 9/10.

***Extra credit.** La Mesa Española (Spanish conversation table) will meet this semester every Thursday (advanced level) from 7 to 8pm in PMH 426. Also, there will be a **Noche de juegos** every Thursday after La Mesa, from 8 to 8:30pm. Students are encouraged to actively participate in it. You can get one extra point for every time you participate in La Mesa up to 5 points during the semester (naturally, you can participate more than 5 times).

Attendance (5%)

Regular attendance is vital and worth 5 points (up to 5% of your final grade): 0-2 absences =5 pts., 3 absences=4 pts., 4 absences=3 pts., 5 absences=2 pts., 6 absences=1 pt., over 7 absences=0 pts. You may miss up to 2 days (1 week of classes) for any reason, without losing any attendance points; all absences count. If participation in Skidmore College-sponsored events (i.e., sports team competitions) requires you to miss class, bring a note on letterhead or ask for an email from coach/supervisor citing your name, your participation and the date(s) you will miss class.

Response Papers (25%)

Students are required to write **four** response papers (no less than 500 words each) on any of the texts studied in the course (check the Calendar). Your response paper should be emailed to the instructor (operezhe@skidmore.edu) before the day we discuss the corresponding text. Papers should followed the most recent **MLA guidelines** (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/11/>) and include the **word count**. For additional guidance on how to write a response paper, check the documents titled "Writing a Response Paper-Duke U Writing Studio" and "Sample Response Papers-McGee, Longwood U" available on Blackboard. **At least two response papers should be turned in before Friday, October 14.**

Presentation (10%)

Students (individually or in pairs) will be in charge of preparing a presentation as indicated in the Calendar. The presentation will consist on a 15-20 min introduction of the text, highlighting important points for further discussion, and suggesting a path to establish a dialogue between the text at hand and other previously studied texts or historical context. Each team needs to come to the instructor's office at least **one week** before the date of their presentation to discuss it.

Annotated Bibliography (15%)

In preparation for their final paper, students are required to write an annotated bibliography on the topic of their paper. Students should read and critically comment at least **5 works** (research articles or book chapters) related to their research.

More information on how to write an annotated bibliography in Spanish can be found at Cornell University Library's website: <http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/skill28espanol.htm>.

Also, Skidmore's Writing Center has some useful information on this genre (in English): <http://lib.skidmore.edu/library/index.php/writing-an-annotated-bibliography>.

Final Paper (30%)

Students will write a 2500- to 3000-word essay based on a critical reading of one or more texts studied in class following the MLA format (you can find a sample paper that follows this format on Blackboard). Papers are due by the date assigned to the final exam, in the mailbox outside my office. Please also submit an electronic copy via email. Students should meet with the instructor before **Friday, September 23** to talk about their paper, initial ideas, and plan towards its successful completion by the end of the semester. Also, a first draft should be submitted by **Wednesday, November 30**. Additional guidance on how to write a research paper in literary studies can be found on Blackboard in the document "Writing a Research Paper in Literary Studies-U Stuttgart."

It is expected that the quality of the final paper would allow it to be published in an undergraduate research journal, such as *The Kennesaw Tower* (<http://kennesawtower.kennesaw.edu/>).

No Barriers!

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need academic accommodation, you must formally request accommodation from Meg Hegener, Coordinator for Student Access Services. You will also need to provide documentation which verifies the existence of a disability and supports your request. For further information, please call 580-8150 or stop by the office of Student Academic Services in Starbuck Center.

Title IX Statement and Reporting Responsibilities

Skidmore College considers sexual and gender-based misconduct to be one of the most serious violations of the values and standards of the College. Unwelcome sexual contact of any form is a violation of students' personal integrity and their right to a safe environment and therefore violates Skidmore's values. Sexual and gender-based misconduct is also prohibited by federal regulations. Skidmore College faculty are committed to supporting our students and upholding gender equity laws as outlined by Title IX. If a student chooses to confide in a member of Skidmore's faculty or staff regarding an issue of sexual or gender-based misconduct, that faculty or staff member is obligated to tell Skidmore's Title IX Deputy Coordinator. The

Title IX Deputy Coordinator will assist the student in connecting with all possible resources for support and reporting both on and off campus. Identities and details will be shared only with those who need to know to support the student and to address the situation through the college's processes. If the student wishes to confide in a confidential resource, The Counseling Center Staff, Health Services, and Victim Advocates are all options available.

More information can be found at <https://www.skidmore.edu/sgbm/> or by contacting the Title IX Deputy Coordinator.

Academic Integrity

All work turned in must be your own. Studying and practicing for class with another person is encouraged, but copying someone else's work is inexcusable. It is college policy that all violations to the academic Honor Code must be reported and, if the charge is sustained, the infraction may have consequences for the student beyond any grade penalty. For more information visit:

<http://www.skidmore.edu/advising/integrity/>

Calendar

(I reserve the right to make modifications to the schedule below)

Date	Topic Read/Study before class (all texts are available on Blackboard)	Due
W, Sep 7	Introduction to the Course	
F, Sep 9	Critical Approaches Critical essay: Maureen McNeil, "Cultural Science Studies"	Questions about syllabus
Part 1 19th Century Backgrounds		
W, Sep 14	Imagining the Future Philosophical essay: Juan Nepomuceno Adorno, "El remoto porvenir"	
F, Sep 16	The Limits of Science Short story: Eduardo L. Holmberg, "Horacio Kalibang o los autómatas"	
Part 2 Turn of the Century Spain <i>¡Que inventen ellos!</i>		
W, Sep 21	Fearing Technology Short story: Miguel de Unamuno, "Mecanópolis"	Presentation 1
F, Sep 23	The Weaknesses of Science Short story: Santiago Ramón y Cajal, "A secreto agravio, secreta venganza"	Friday, Sep 23 Meeting to talk about project due
Part 3 20th Century Southern Cone <i>Lo fantástico</i>		
W, Sep 28	Science and Spiritualism Short story: Leopoldo Lugones, "Psychon"	Presentation 2
F, Sep 30	The Uncertainty of a New Era Short story: Horacio Quiroga, "El vampiro"	

Date	Topic Read/Study before class (all texts are available on Blackboard)	Due
W, Oct 5	The Science Fiction Novel Novel: Adolfo Bioy Casares, <i>La invención de Morel</i> (pp. 89-116)	Presentation 3
F, Oct 7	Adolfo Bioy Casares, <i>La invención de Morel</i> (pp. 116-145)	
W, Oct 12	Yom Kippur (No classes)	
F, Oct 14	Adolfo Bioy Casares, <i>La invención de Morel</i> (pp. 145-176)	Two response papers due
W, Oct 19	The Relativity of Fiction Short stories: Jorge Luis Borges, "El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan" and "La biblioteca de Babel"	Presentation 4
F, Oct 21	Escaping Reality Short story: Silvina Ocampo, "Las ondas"	
W, Oct 26	Perils of Modern Life Short story: Julio Cortázar, "La autopista del sur"	Presentation 5
Part 4 20th - and 21st-Century Hispanic Literature The Rise of Science Fiction		
F, Oct 28	Consumerism and Techno Babies Short stories: Juan José Arreola, "En verdad os digo," "Baby H.P."	
W, Nov 2	Lost in the Search for Modernity Short story: Domingo Santos, "Gira, gira"	Annotated bibliography due
F, Nov 4	Fear and Solitude Short novel: Daína Chaviano, "Un hada en el umbral de la Tierra" (Primer parte, Segunda parte)	
W, Nov 9	Daína Chaviano, "Un hada en el umbral de la Tierra" (Tercera parte)	Presentation 6

Date	Topic Read/Study before class (all texts are available on Blackboard)	Due
F, Nov 11	Power, Masculinity, and Non-Normative Sexualities Short story: Angélica Gorodischer, "Los embriones del violeta"	
W, Nov 16	Life, Capitalism, and Social Justice Short story: Elia Barceló, "Mil euros por tu vida"	Presentation 7
F, Nov 18	Workshop on Sources and MLA Style	
Thanksgiving Vacation November 23-27		
Part 5 Science and Technology in Film		
W, Nov 30	Luchadores Against Imperialism Film: <i>Santo contra la invasión de los marcianos</i> (1967), Dir. Alfredo B. Crevenna	First draft of final paper due
F, Dec 2	Postmodern Madness Film: <i>Hombre mirando al sudeste</i> (1986), Dir. Eliseo Subiela	
W, Dec 7	Reality and Fantasy at the End of the Millennium Film: <i>Abre los ojos</i> (1997), Dir. Alejandro Amenábar	Presentation 8
F, Dec 9	Borders in the Age of Globalization Film: <i>Sleep Dealer</i> (2008), Dir. Alex Rivera	
W, Dec 14	The Evil Doctor Strikes Back Film: <i>Wakolda</i> (2013), Dir. Lucía Puenzo	
Final Paper Due Saturday, December 19, 4:30pm		

Calendar of Presentations

Office consultation no later than...	Presentation date	Text	Names
Part 2 - Presentation 1			
Friday September 16	Wednesday, September 21	Miguel de Unamuno, "Mecanópolis"	1a. 1b.
Part 3 - Presentation 2			
Friday, September 23	Wednesday, September 28	Horacio Quiroga, "El vampiro"	2a. 2b.
Part 3 - Presentation 3			
Friday, September 30	Wednesday, October 5	Adolfo Bioy Casares, <i>La invención de Morel</i> (pp. 89-116)	3a. 3b.
Part 3 - Presentation 4			
Friday, October 14	Wednesday, October 19	Jorge Luis Borges, "El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan" and "La biblioteca de Babel"	4a. 4b.
Part 3 - Presentation 5			
Friday, October 21	Wednesday, October 26	Julio Cortázar, "La autopista del sur"	5a. 5b.
Part 4 - Presentation 6			
Friday, November 4	Wednesday, November 9	Daína Chaviano, "Un hada en el umbral de la Tierra" (Tercera parte)	6a. 6b.
Part 4 - Presentation 7			
Friday, November 11	Wednesday, November 16	Elía Barceló, "Mil euros por tu vida"	7a. 7b.
Part 5 - Presentation 8			
Friday, December 2	Wednesday, December 7	<i>Abre los ojos</i> (1997), Dir. Alejandro Amenábar	8a. 8b.