

ENG 4936 (Honors Seminar): Reading Science Fiction: The Pulps

Professor Terry Harpold

Spring 2019, Section 7449

Time: MWF, per. 5 (11:45 AM–12:35 PM)

Location: Little Hall (LIT) 0117

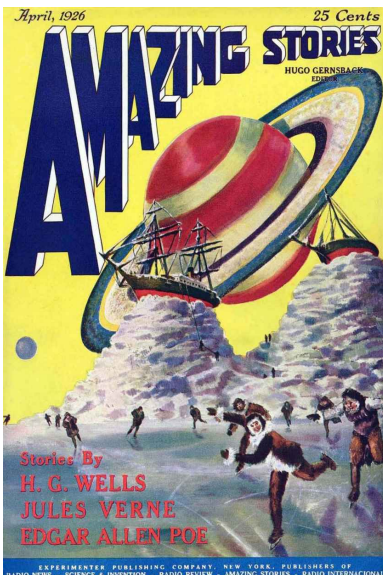
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e-Learning (Canvas) site for ENG 4936 (*registered students only*): <http://elearning.ufl.edu>

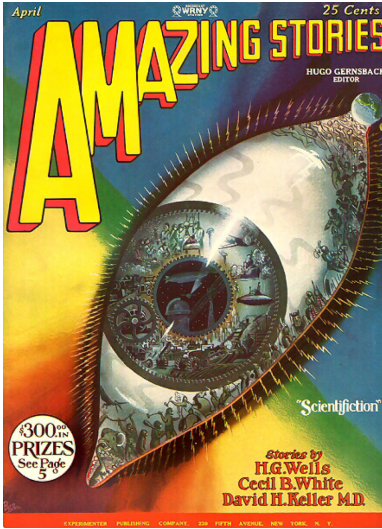
Course description



The first issue of *Amazing Stories*, April 1926. Editor Hugo Gernsback promises “a new sort of magazine,” featuring the new genre of “scientifiction.”

Prove that YOU, too, can be a NEW MAN! – Charles Atlas.”) The business end of the pulps was notoriously inconstant and sometimes shady; magazines came into and went out of publication with little fanfare; they often changed genres or titles without advance notice. In all, the pulp canon represents one of the most innovative, dynamic, and visually rich periods of modern fiction publishing.

The “pulps” were illustrated fiction magazines published between the late 1890s and the late 1950s. Named for the inexpensive wood pulp paper on which they were printed, they varied widely as to genre, including aviation fiction, fantasy, horror and weird fiction, detective and crime fiction, railroad fiction, romance, science fiction, sports stories, war fiction, and western fiction. In the pulps’ heyday a bookshop or newsstand might offer dozens of different magazines on these subjects, often from the same publishers and featuring work by the same writers, with lurid, striking cover and interior art by the same artists. The magazines are, moreover, chock-full of period advertising targeted at an emerging readership, mostly – but not exclusively – male and subject to predictable worries and aspirations during the Depression and Pre-WWII eras. (“Be a Radio Expert! Many Make \$30 \$50 \$75 a Week!” “Get into Aviation by Training at Home!” “Listerine Ends Husband’s Dandruff in 3 Weeks!” “I’ll



Amazing Stories, April 1928, included Clare Winger Harris's "The Miracle of the Lily," one of the earliest pulp sf stories by a woman published under her own name.

We will focus on mostly American science fiction (sf) published between 1926 and 1945, during the heyday of the pulps up through the early "Golden Age" of sf and the beginning of the atomic era. We will examine magazines with titles such as *Air Wonder Stories*, *Amazing Stories*, *Astonishing Stories*, *Astounding Stories*, *Marvel Science Stories*, *Planet Stories*, *Science Wonder Stories*, *Tales of Wonder*, *Unknown Fantasy Fiction*, and *Wonder Stories*. We will read short fiction by authors such as Arthur Conan-Doyle, Ray Bradbury, Edmund Hamilton, Clare Winger Harris, Fritz Leiber, Murray Leinster, Catherine Lucille Moore, Eric Frank Russell, Theodore Sturgeon, Clifford Simak, E.E. Smith, Leslie F. Stone, and Donald Wandrei. We will examine the work of pathbreaking sf illustrators such as Earl Bergey, Howard V. Brown, Margaret Brundage, Virgil Finlay, Frank Kelley Freas, Frank R. Paul, and Norman Saunders.

The cheap paper and binding techniques favored by pulp publishers were never meant to last; many issues of the magazines are now difficult to find because they have turned to dust. A lot of pulp sf was simply tossed after reading. The widespread assumption that sf was an ephemeral genre, 1940s wartime paper shortages, and the postwar rise of cheap paperbacks and comics, did not help. As audiences moved on to other interests and radio and film became dominant vehicles for fantastic spectacle, pulp sf retreated into narrower niche markets.

Yet, the origins of much of contemporary sf are evident in this chaotic and uniquely energetic literature; the pulps pretty much invented sf as a genre and that alone makes them worthy of careful study. Contemporary historical sf scholarship recognizes the importance of the pulp era. Moreover, critical work on this literature has been transformed by the rise of scholarly and enthusiast, crowd-sourced online repositories such as the Internet Archive and The Pulp Magazine Project, which make it now possible to work with complete and accurate digital facsimiles of many magazines.

Assigned course readings will include contemporary writing by sf historians and theorists such as Mike Ashley and Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. Most of our reading will be from issues of the pulps themselves. We will, whenever possible, review the fiction we read in its original, holistic verbal-visual contexts, i.e., in the formats of its first publication, alongside the illustrations, advertising, other fiction, and editorial apparatus, forming a complete and culturally-rich and nuanced media ecology of the fantastic.



Astounding Science Fiction, September 1941, included Isaac Asimov's "Nightfall," widely considered one of the best sf short stories of the Golden Age.

The course will include significant digital humanities work. We will spend a good deal of the semester, in and out of the classroom, foraging in digital repositories and in databases devoted to the publishing history of the pulps, their authors, and illustrators. We will develop effective workflows for building critical collections of these materials, cataloging and sharing bibliographic data, and creating academically rigorous and entertaining exhibits.

Graded assignments include a take-home midterm and collaborative curated critical exhibits on a selected corpus of pulp sf on subjects selected by students.

Required texts to purchase

These texts are available at the UF Bookstore, from online vendors, or on course reserve (ARES). Used and electronic editions (iBook, Kindle, etc.) are permissible – indeed they are encouraged¹ – so long as the version of the text you read is *otherwise identical to the editions noted below*. I encourage you whenever possible to buy books from independent booksellers. If you choose to buy your texts online, I recommend sources such as Abebooks.com and Alibris.com that serve independent booksellers.

Ashley, Mike. *The Time Machines: The Story of the Science-Fiction Pulp Magazines from the Beginning to 1950*. Liverpool University Press, 2001. ISBN 0853238650. Approx. \$25.00 (paperback).

While still in print, this book can be difficult to find. *Do not* purchase it from Amazon.com, where you will pay upwards of \$125.00 for a copy. Physical copies may be ordered directly from the publisher (Oxford University Press), for about \$25.00, or from vendors on Abebooks.com for about \$50.00, shipping included. A physical and a digital copy of the book have been placed on course reserves.

Csicsery-Ronay, Istvan, Jr. *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*. Wesleyan University Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0819570925. \$27.95 (paperback). Kindle version available. A physical copy of the book has been placed on course reserves.

¹ See my "Policy on environmentally unsustainable activity in the classroom," below.

Other required texts

These texts are available on course reserves (accessible from the course Canvas site), or are available at no cost from online sources.

Bleiler, Everett F., & Richard J. Bleiler. "Magazine Illustrators." *Science-Fiction: The Gernsback Years, A Complete Coverage of the Genre Magazines Amazing, Astounding, Wonder, and Others from 1926 Through 1936*, Kent State University Press, 1998, pp. 598–620. A physical and a digital copy of the book have been placed on course reserves.

Gibson, William. "The Gernsback Continuum." *Burning Chrome*. HarperCollins, 2003, pp. 24–37. Originally published in 1981. A .pdf of the chapter is available from course reserves.

The pulps!

Most of our assigned reading and class discussion will be devoted to digital facsimiles of specific issues of the pulp magazines. *Whenever a short text or story from an issue of a pulp magazine is assigned you should assume that we will also discuss aspects of the entire issue of the magazine, including cover and interior artwork, advertising, etc.* You will retrieve these facsimiles from online repositories such as the Internet Archive (<https://archive.org>) and HathiTrust (<https://www.hathitrust.org>). In the first week of classes I will demonstrate in class how to easily retrieve these files.

Recommended texts

In addition to the required texts noted above, I have placed on course reserve these reference works in historical pulp studies.

Bleiler, Everett F., and Richard J. Bleiler. *Science-Fiction: The Early Years. A Full Description of More than 3,000 Science-Fiction Stories from Earliest Times to the Appearance of the Genre Magazines, with Author, Title, and Motif Indexes*. Kent State University Press, 1990.

———. *Science-Fiction: The Gernsback Years, A Complete Coverage of the Genre Magazines Amazing, Astounding, Wonder, and Others from 1926 Through 1936*. Kent State University Press, 1998.

Frank, Jane. *Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists of the Twentieth Century: A Biographical Dictionary*. McFarland and Company, Inc., 2011.

Korshak, Stephen D. *From the Pen of Paul: The Fantastic Images of Frank R. Paul*. Shasta/Phoenix, 2009.

Tymn, Marshall B., and Mike Ashley, editors. *Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Fiction Magazines*. Greenwood Press, 1985.

Weinberg, Robert E. *A Biographical Dictionary of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists*. Greenwood Press, 1988.

Yaszek, Lisa and Patrick Sharp, editors. *Sisters of Tomorrow: The First Women of Science Fiction*. Wesleyan University Press, 2016.

Required & recommended software

You will be required to register for open source, free, or inexpensive software used to share resources and research materials in the course. These include Zotero, an open-source research and bibliographic citation manager, and Omeka, an open-source publishing platform for sharing digital collections and creating media-rich online exhibits. Early in the semester I will demonstrate how to use these and other tools for accessing, archiving, and documenting the digital facsimiles we will study. I will make additional recommendations regarding image editing and file management software that can play valuable roles in your digital production workflow.

Course calendar

Deadlines or events outside of normal class meeting times are marked with an asterisk ().*

M, Jan 7 *Course introduction*
Signature reading exercise described

W, Jan 9 *Introduction to pulp sf repositories & databases*
We will review methods for retrieving digital facsimiles and accessing online databases.

* Th, Jan 10 *Signature reading exercise due*

A new sort of magazine

F, Jan 11 Hugo Gernsback, "A New Sort of Magazine." *Amazing Stories* 1.1, April 1926 (*Internet Archive*).

- Hugo Gernsback, "The Lure of Scientifiction." *Amazing Stories* 1.3, June 1926 (*Internet Archive*).
- M, Jan 14 Murray Leinster, "The Mad Planet." Illus. uncredited, *Argosy* 122.1, June 12, 1920 (*Internet Archive*); illus. Frank R. Paul, *Amazing Stories* 1.8, November 1926 (*Internet Archive*).
- W, Jan 16 Clare Winger Harris, "The Miracle of the Lily." Illus. uncredited, *Amazing Stories* 3.1, April 1928 (*Internet Archive*).
- F, Jan 18 David H. Keller, "The Ivy War." Illus. Leo Morey, *Amazing Stories* 5.2, May 1930 (*Internet Archive*).
- M, Jan 21 *No class meeting (Martin Luther King Day)*
- W, Jan 23 Leslie F. Stone, "The Conquest of Gola." Illus. uncredited, *Wonder Stories* 2.11, April 1931 (*Internet Archive*).
- F, Jan 25 Don Stuart (John W. Campbell), "Who Goes There?" Illus. uncredited, *Astounding Science-Fiction* 21.6, August 1938 (*Internet Archive*).
- Recommended viewing: Christian Nyby, dir., The Thing from Another World (1951); John Carpenter, The Thing (1982). Both are celebrated adaptations of Campbell's story.*
- M, Jan 28 A.E. van Vogt, "Black Destroyer." Illus. Graves Gladney (cover), Frank Kramer (interior), *Astounding Science-Fiction* 23.5, July 1939 (*Internet Archive*).
- W, Jan 30 Isaac Asimov, "Nightfall." Illus. Hubert Rogers (cover), William Augustin Kolliker (interior), *Astounding Science-Fiction* 28.1, September 1941 (*Internet Archive*).
- F, Feb 1 C[atherine] L[ucille] Moore, "No Woman Born." Illus. Frank Kramer, *Astounding Science Fiction* 34.4, December 1944 (*Internet Archive*).

The Seven Beauties

M, Feb 4 Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*

W, Feb 6 Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*

Time Machines

F, Feb 8 Ashley, *The Time Machines*, ch. 1

* Sat, Feb 9 *Pulp Adventurecon, Fort Lauderdale – This annual pulp collectors’ show is the largest such event in the South in 2019, featuring vendors selling magazines, reprints, and memorabilia, guest artists, and a bit of cosplay. If you’re planning on being in the area this would be a fun diversion. See http://boldventurepress.com/Pulp-Adventurecon_ep_45-1.html for details.*

M, Feb 11 Ashley, *The Time Machines*, ch. 2

W, Feb 13 Ashley, *The Time Machines*, ch. 3

F, Feb 15 Ashley, *The Time Machines*, ch. 4

M, Feb 18 Bleiler & Bleiler, “Magazine Illustrators”

Developing a workflow

W, Feb 20 ***Midterm exam prompts posted to Canvas & discussed in class – no assigned reading***

F, Feb 22 Introduction to Zotero

M, Feb 25 Introduction to Omeka

W, Feb 27 Introduction to Omeka

* Th, Feb 28 ***Completed midterm exams due by 5 PM***

F, Mar 1 *Review of midterm exams – no assigned reading*

M–F, Mar 4–8 *No class meeting (UF Spring Break)*

Case study: *The Horror of the Heights*

M, Mar 11 Arthur Conan Doyle, “The Horror of the Heights.” Illus. W.R.S Stott, *The Strand* 46.275, November 1913 (*HathiTrust*); illus. Henry Reuterdahl, *Everybody’s Magazine* 29.5, November 1913 (*HathiTrust*); illus. Virgil Finlay, *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* 9.2, December 1947 (*Internet Archive*).

W, Mar 13 Frank Orndorff, “The Terrors of the Upper Air.” Illus. Frank R. Paul, *Amazing Stories Quarterly* 1.1, Winter 1928 (*Internet Archive*).

F, Mar 15 *No class meeting (TH is away)*

M, Mar 18 *Workgroup exhibit prospectus presentations*

W, Mar 20 *Workgroup exhibit prospectus presentations*

F, Mar 22 Henry J. Kostkos, “Death in the Stratosphere.” Illus. Leo Morey (cover and interior), *Amazing Stories* 11.4, August 1937 (*Internet Archive*).

M, Mar 25 Anson MacDonald (Robert Heinlein), “Goldfish Bowl.” Illus. Frank Kramer, *Astounding Science-Fiction* 29.1, March 1942 (*Internet Archive*).

W, Mar 27 Hamilton, Edmond. “The Earth-Owners.” Illus. C.C. Senf, *Weird Tales* 18.1, August 1931 (*Internet Archive*).

F, Mar 29 Millard Verne Gordon, (Donald A. Wollheim), “Storm Warning.” Illus. Damon Knight, *Future Fantasy and Science Fiction* 3.1, October 1942 (*Internet Archive*).

M, Apr 1 Don A. Stuart (John W. Campbell), “Night.” Illus. Elliott Dold, Jr., *Astounding Stories* 16.2, October 1935 (*Internet Archive*).

W–M, Apr 3–8 *No class meeting (TH is away)*

The Gernsback Continuum

W, Apr 10	<i>In-class presentations + critique of Omeka exhibits</i>
F, Apr 12	<i>In-class presentations + critique of Omeka exhibits</i>
M, Apr 15	<i>In-class presentations + critique of Omeka exhibits</i>
W, Apr 17	<i>In-class presentations + critique of Omeka exhibits</i>
F, Apr 19	<i>In-class presentations + critique of Omeka exhibits</i>
M, Apr 22	Gibson, "The Gernsback Continuum"
W, Apr 24	<i>Final class meeting – course debriefing</i>
* W, May 1	<i>Final versions of Omeka exhibits due</i>

Evaluation of Performance, Attendance Requirements & Other Course Policies

Your final grade in this course will be determined by the average of three assignments, plus the value of up to two optional extra credit assignments:

- Signature reading exercise: 3% of final grade
- Take-home midterm: 37% of final grade
- Workgroup exhibit proposal: 20% of final grade
- Workgroup Omeka exhibit: 40% of final grade

Signature reading exercise. This is a short writing exercise that will help me and your classmates understand your interests and habits; it's essentially a report on your recent reading for pleasure. (I will complete the exercise also.) This is a good way to start off our conversations this semester and to identify shared interests in the class. The exercise is due three days after the first class meeting. Students who register for the course nearer to the end of drop/add can make up this assignment during the second week of class. If you complete this exercise and meet its (very) basic requirements, you will receive a grade of 100 on the assignment. In effect, the assignment is worth 3 free points toward your final grade.

The midterm exam. This is an 8-day, open-book, take-home exam on the assigned texts we have read to the date the exam is posted. The exam will consist of two prompts; you must respond to one. The exam does not require you to do any research beyond the assigned readings. The completed exam will be between 2400 and 3000 words (approx. 8–10 double-spaced typewritten pages) in length, not including a bibliography.

Workgroups & collaborative projects. Much of the graded work in this course involves collaborations by 3–4 person workgroups. (Three students in a group is the default.) Students will be randomly assigned to workgroups early in the semester. I will ask each student for a list of blackout dates when she or he cannot participate in in-class group presentations late in the semester and will use that information when I schedule the presentations. I have made provisions in the design of these collaborative projects to monitor each student’s performance so that members of a workgroup are not penalized if other members do not properly meet their obligations to the workgroup.

Omeka exhibits. The principal graded assignment of the semester is a collaborative online exhibit on an author, artist, theme, or recurring paratextual element, found in at least six different pulp magazines and/or issues of the same magazine. The exhibits will be curated in Omeka, an open-source publishing platform for sharing digital collections and creating media-rich online exhibits. Students will be trained in the use of Omeka and other bibliographic and curating tools before workgroups begin developing their exhibits and will have ample time to develop an effective workflow using these tools. In parallel I will curate an Omeka exhibit on a theme that has long been of interest to me, “aeronautic horror” (see “The Horror of the Heights” section of the syllabus), on which example workgroups will base the design of their exhibits.

Workgroup exhibits will be developed in three stages during the second half of the semester.

- 1) An exhibit prospectus, essentially an abstract of the scope of the project and the anticipated results. This first stage of the exhibit is *not* created in Omeka. Prospectuses will be presented in written and oral formats by workgroups during two class meetings in mid-March. Their classmates will offer constructive criticism of this early phase of the project.
- 2) During five class meetings in mid-April, workgroups will present initial versions of their Omeka exhibits to the class, including draft versions of all bibliographic, scholarly, and image-text elements included in each exhibit. These critique sessions will be more extensive and intensive. Just as we have done for previous reading assignments in the course, students will be required to have read the primary texts included in each exhibit. In effect each workgroup that presents its

draft exhibit will lead a class discussion of the material included in it. Classmates will again offer constructive criticism.

- 3) Final versions of the Omeka exhibits are due one week after the final class meeting, on May 1. Workgroups will thus have no fewer than two weeks after having presented their draft exhibits in which to make changes. Your final grade for your exhibit will be based on this version.

Early the semester I will distribute detailed guidelines for each stage of the exhibits. Note that critique sessions (stages 1 and 2, above) are meant to be *constructive*, i.e., supportive and collaborative. See “Guidelines for effective peer critique,” below, for some general principles of effective, collegial critique.

There is no final exam in the course. There are no opportunities to earn extra credit.

Course reading load & warning. The course reading load is substantial but not onerous. The pace of our discussions will vary according to the complexity of texts we read and the need to focus on selected portions of the texts. The page counts shown above are fair measures of reading load but they may be deceiving. Some of the texts we will read are illustrated, some – especially the electronic facsimiles of original editions – use larger margins and font sizes than would modern editions, some include extensive scholarly apparatus. (Which of course you *should* also read.) You should always aim to have completed reading each text by the last class period in which it is scheduled to be discussed.

A few of the texts we will read include representations of class, race, and gender that are by contemporary standards outdated and mildly offensive. Depictions of violence are limited to well-worn science fiction tropes (invading aliens, death rays, etc.).

Grading scheme. The evaluation method in this course is consistent with UF’s policies on grading (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>).

Grades are calculated on a numeric scale, as below:

A	90–100	A–	87–89		
B+	84–86	B	80–83	B–	77–79
C+	74–76	C	70–73	C–	67–69
D+	64–66	D	60–63	D–	57–59

A grade of 56 or below is a failing grade (E). A minimum final grade of C is required for General Education Credit.

If you do not complete an assignment you will receive a grade of 0. If you feel that you've been unfairly graded on an assignment, you may make a case in writing for a better grade. I will consider no grade changes without this written rationale.

You may make up a missed assignment only if you have a written medical excuse from a doctor, a signed letter from a judge or law enforcement officer (if you are called for jury duty or to testify in court, for example), or if a death or serious illness or injury occurs in your family. You should contact me as soon as possible when you anticipate a delay in the submission of graded work. This is of especial importance in the event that you may not be able to participate in your workgroup's oral presentation.

Attendance & lateness. The texts we will review are complex and challenging. You cannot reasonably expect to master them if you do not keep up with required reading or do not come to class prepared and on time. I expect you to adhere to the calendar of assigned readings and do not give reading quizzes to check on that. Class discussions will often include materials not among the assigned readings. For these reasons, your presence in class is essential and is required. **I take attendance. After five missed class periods, I reserve the right to lower your final course grade by five points for each additional class period that you miss.** I treat excused and unexcused absences alike in this regard. It is your responsibility to keep track of your absences and to make sure that you complete all required work. If you must miss class, make sure that you turn in any assignments due for that day, and that you are ready if another assignment is due on the day you return to class. In the event of a prolonged illness or other emergency you should notify me as soon as possible so that we may make provisions to insure that you do not fall behind.

Lateness is disruptive to others in the classroom, and is strongly discouraged. If you are more than 15 minutes late to class, this will be considered an absence.

If you have special classroom access, seating, or other needs because of disability, do not hesitate to bring those to my attention so that I may make appropriate accommodations. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the UF Disability Resource Center (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>) and provide me with appropriate documentation.

If you are unable to attend any part of a class meeting or work on a course assignment because these coincide with the timing of religious observances you must notify me of this conflict well in advance, so that we may make appropriate adjustments to relevant assignment deadlines.

Use of computers & other electronic devices in class. You may use personal computers and other electronic devices in class for purposes related to class discussion and

collaboration. Casual WWW browsing, emailing, chatting, texting, etc., unrelated to classroom activities will not be tolerated. In the event of a violation of this policy, I reserve the right to prohibit your individual use of all electronic devices in class. Apart from those times when I have approved their use in advance, cell phones, pagers, and similar communication devices may not be used during class meetings and must be set to silent ring at the start of class.

Course evaluation. Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester. Summaries of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Policy on academic honesty. The University community's policies and methods regarding academic honesty, your obligations to me and mine to you with regard to academic honesty, are spelled out in the UF Student Honor Code, which is available online at <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this course. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or oral information in the preparation of graded assignments submitted for this course.
- Substitution of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another individual or individuals.
- False claims of performance or work submitted by a student for requirements of this course.

I am obliged to act on any suspected act of academic misconduct. If you are found to have engaged in misconduct penalties may include a reduced or failing grade for the course or other disciplinary proceedings, as per the recommendation of the Dean of Students. If you have any concern that you may not have made appropriate use of the work of others in your research or writing for this course, please confer with me before you submit the assignment. You should retain all graded materials that you receive from me until you receive your final course grade.

Emergency services. **U Matter, We Care** serves as the umbrella program for UF's caring culture and provides students in distress with support and coordination of a wide variety of appropriate resources. Contact umatter@ufl.edu seven days a week for assistance if you are in distress. Call 352-392-1575 for a crisis counselor overnight and during weekends.

Note also these support services:

- The University Counseling Center – 301 Peabody Hall, 352-392-1575; <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu>
- Student Health Care Center – 352-392-1171
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union – 352-392-1601
- Center for Sexual Assault/Abuse Recovery and Education (CARE), Student Health Care Center – 352-392-1161
- University Police Department – 352-392-1111 (non-emergency); *call 9-1-1 for emergencies*

Policy on environmentally unsustainable activity in the classroom. I will distribute all course materials via paper-sparing digital media. I encourage you to purchase e-book editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts, and to return those to circulation if you choose not to keep them at the end of the course. (Donating your unwanted books to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) annual book sale is a good way to get them into other readers’ hands and to help raise a bit of cash for our county’s fine but criminally underfunded public libraries.) If you do elect to keep your books, share them with others after the course is over. And a final appeal to your common sense: bring food and/or beverages to the classroom only in reusable containers. Please, no food or beverages in single-use containers and no single-use, unrecyclable cutlery or straws.

Guidelines for effective peer critique

(Adapted from guidelines originally by [Danny Goodwin, University of Albany](#))

In preparing for a critique in this or any studio course in a creative discipline, it is at least as important to determine what *you* want or need from the critique as it is to understand what is expected of you. Your critique should address form *and* content, and consider the project in and of itself. Such, criticism involves much more than the relatively simple act of judging – of determining whether one “likes” or “dislikes” a project. Rather, it is a means toward the end of understanding a work of intellectual labor and its significance and ability to produce new knowledge. Critical consideration usually consists of at least three main activities:

- *Describing the work.* What does it look like? What is it made of? How can it be navigated? What does it hope to say? Assume the audience has not and will not encounter/interact with the work or problem that the work engages and that you are the sole mediator for their understanding of its formal qualities.

- *Interpreting the work.* What does it mean? What is it for? What does it do or say? Here you are asked to synthesize any contextual or biographical information you have with your own subjective interpretation of the work's significance.
- *Evaluating the work.* Is it interesting? What are its disciplinary and scholarly aims? Does it appear to accomplish those aims? This is, perhaps, the most difficult critical task, yet it is usually the one to which most people skip when criticizing a work. To thoughtfully evaluate a work, you must determine what your criteria are for judging its relative worth or effectiveness. Only you can provide this information. Do not assume the reader (or your fellow student) shares your point of view. Explain why you feel the way you do. "Thumbs up" or "thumbs down" will not cut it. To do this, think about whether the work makes the most of the opportunities that it affords. What does it enable you to do and understand, and what parts of your encounter with or use of it raise questions and concerns?

You may find the discussion in [Ed Catmull's Creativity, Inc. \(2014\)](#) useful in preparing for these sessions.