

Political Science 488
The Philosophy of Time Travel
Section 01
11:00-12:15 TTH

Professor Information:

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Office Hours: 8:00-9:30 a.m. TTH
10:00-11:00 a.m. MW
And by appointment

Course Description:

As the longest running science fiction program of all-time, *Doctor Who* has captivated audiences and created fans for more than 50 years. The premise is simple and complicated at the same time: tell the stories of a traveler (and the companions he picks up along the way) through time and space, battle aliens and monsters, rescue civilizations, let some civilizations die, destroy some civilizations, create civilizations, violate the laws of physics, maintain the integrity of the timeline and history (except in those instances in which the titular character chooses to change the timeline and history), etc., etc. (as I said, it is simple and complicated at the same time).

In its original incarnation, *Doctor Who* was intended to be a children's program imbued with educational content. The idea that Sidney Newman of the BBC had to was to disguise history lessons in a program about a time-traveling alien. Since its inception, though, the program has evolved although it remains educational.

This course will be an examination of the lessons that can be learned from this particular piece of popular culture. Included will be discussions of history, ethics, philosophy, religion as expounded in the program throughout its more than fifty year journey. Douglas Adams once observed that the trick in writing *Doctor Who* was to make the show complex enough for children yet simple enough for their parents to understand. This course is an exploration of those complexities.

Books:

Required

Chapman, James. 2013. *Inside the Tardis: The Worlds of Doctor Who* revised edition. I.B. Tauris.

ISBN: 978-1780761404

Harmes, Marcus. 2014. *Doctor Who and the Art of Adaptation: Fifty Years of Storytelling*. Rowman and Littlefield. ISBN: 978-1442232846

Hills, Matt. 2010. *Triumph of a Time Lord: Regenerating Doctor Who in the Twenty-first Century*. I.B. Tauris. ISBN: 978-1848850323

Recommended

Crome, Andrew and James McGrath, eds. 2013. *Time and Relative Dimensions in Faith: Religion and Doctor Who*. Darton, Longman & Todd. ISBN: 978-0232530216

Garner, Ross P., Melissa Beattie, and Una McCormack. 2010. *Impossible Worlds, Impossible Things: Cultural Perspectives on Doctor Who, Torchwood and The Sarah Jane Adventures*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. ISBN: 978-1443819602

Hansen, Chris, ed. 2010. *Ruminations, Peregrinations, and Regenerations: A Critical Approach to Doctor Who*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. ISBN: 978-1443820844

Leitch, Gillian, ed.. 2013. *Doctor Who in Time and Space: Essays on Themes, Characters, History, and Fandom*. McFarland. ISBN: 978-0786465491

Thomas, Lynn M. and Tina O'Shea, eds. 2010. *Chicks Dig Time Lords: A Celebration of Doctor Who by the Women Who Love It*. Mad Norwegian Press. ISBN: 978-1935234043

Course Objectives:

1. Critical Thinking—Students will be able to differentiate between fact and opinion.
2. Communications—Student Communication will be clear, purposeful, and make appropriate use of evidence, data and technology as applicable.
3. Personal Responsibility—Students will be able to understand their role in their own education.
4. Social Responsibility—Students will demonstrate awareness of societal and/or civic issues.

Attendance:

Attendance will be taken daily and you would be well-advised to attend every class—if for no other reason than the fact that experience demonstrates that you will not do well if you are not here. Students will have ten points deducted from their final grade for each absence over three. You may use your three absences for any purpose you choose. If an absence happens to coincide with a quiz, that quiz cannot be made-up. There will be no make-up quizzes. Furthermore, if you do miss class, it is your responsibility to prevail upon your classmates to share their materials with you.

Of course attendance is more than merely being in your seat on time (although timeliness is a virtue). You are expected to come to class prepared for class. Readings assigned for particular dates should be completed prior to coming to class. You will have quizzes over the readings and current events, so it is important that you arrive at class on time and that you have adequately prepared for class prior to attending.

You should not arrive late to class. Most importantly do NOT be late for exams! Tardiness for a quiz or exam will result in not receiving credit for it. Needless to say, this might have a deleterious effect on your final grade.

Finally, if you need to leave the class for any reason while it is in session, please make sure to take your belongings with you, as you will not be readmitted to class on that day. If you have to use the restroom you may do so before and after class, but not during. If you do have to leave class, you will, of course, be marked “absent” for that day.

Electronics Policy:

We are fortunate to live in a technologically advanced time. With that said, the following guidelines must be observed. First, laptop computers are wonderful things—but their use is forbidden in this class during our time together. Do not, under any circumstances, engage in “social networking” during class.

With regard to cellular telephones: one person in this class has permission to leave his on during class—and it is not you. It is entirely possible that you will survive for two hours without using your telephone. Your instructor reserves the right to answer any telephone that rings during class (and trust me—you do not want him to do it). Repeat violations will result in the confiscation of the offending instrument. Texting during class is prohibited and will likewise result in the confiscation of the offending instrument. Failure to adhere to these guidelines will result in your being removed from the course.

Conduct:

“All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.” What this means in terms of our class is that from

time to time we will discuss controversial issues. During these discussions, you are expected to conduct yourself with civility and politeness (remember, politeness is the first form of politics). A university education is a privilege and should not be abused through disruptive and impolite behavior.

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Grades:

In this class you will write a series of brief (3-4 page papers) based in the readings and viewings of particular episodes of *Doctor Who*. In addition, you will create a presentation on some aspect of the program and a longer research paper (8-10 pages) to accompany it. Also, as an upper division class and a course in the analysis of popular culture it is incumbent upon you to participate in class discussions. For this reason, a portion of your grade is determined by attendance and participation. As noted in the attendance policy, you are expected to come to class prepared for class. If at any point it becomes apparent that you are not doing the assigned readings prior to class (and we will discuss how to read for a university course) and are not prepared there is the possibility of readings quizzes that will be factored into your participation grade. For your convenience the breakdown of your final grade is as follows:

40%	Reaction papers
20%	Research Paper
20%	Presentation
20%	Participation

Caveat:

Your professor reserves the right to amend this syllabus as required by the exigencies of the class.

Course Calendar:

To be determined in class.