

Independent Study 599

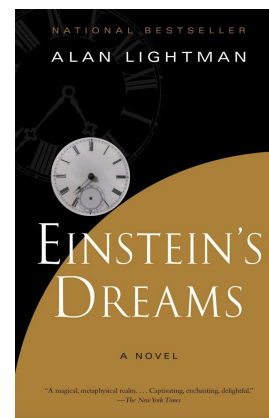
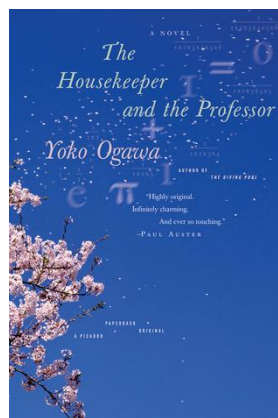
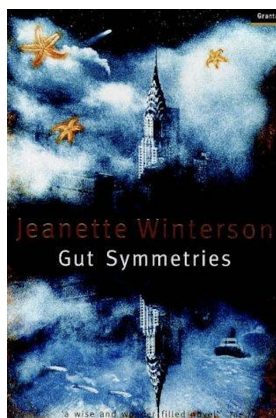
Spring 2022

Student: Samantha Scibelli
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This course will be applied for credit towards the Graduate Certificate in Science Communication

Science ‘in’ Fiction



As a scientist interested in the ways in which science can be communicated to a wide range of audiences, Samantha Scibelli wants to design a course, with the help of Professor Alison Deming, that specifically explores how *creative fiction* can convey scientific concepts. How do we reach people unlikely to pick up popular science books? Distinct from “Science Fiction,” which often explores the outer limits of science in ways not yet tangible in our everyday lives, fictional pieces grounded in today’s reality that have science incorporated throughout are what I would like to focus on in this course. Science is propelled by imagination, since big breakthroughs usually begin as ideas that are pure theory. Storytelling is entertaining and informative, and thus weaving together fiction with science can spark inspiration in not only the reader, but also in the writer of the piece. Motivated by the course THE ART OF SCIENTIFIC STORYTELLING, taught by Alison Deming, which focused on introducing students to creative nonfiction techniques, this class aims to follow a similar structure. We will read novels, short stories, poems, plays, etc., and write literary pieces that touch on the human experience and weave together science writing in a way that can be understood by non-technical audiences. We will make an effort to read pieces of work by a broad variety of authors from different backgrounds. By the end of this course a polished, fictional piece of writing, inspired by literary pieces read throughout the semester, will be created that includes scientific stories that will both captivate an audience and inform them at the same time.

Course Content and Writing Requirements:

There will be weekly reading and writing assignments according to the schedule below. A roughly 2-page writing prompt will be based on the assigned readings and will be turned in each week. All assignments should be double-spaced in 12pt font with pages numbered and name on the title page.

Meeting Schedule:

Professor Deming and Samantha will meet once a week to discuss progress, projects, goals, writing process, drafts, etc.

Final Project:

A final fictional story that incorporates Samantha's science research will be due during the last week of classes. The story will be drafted over the course of the semester.

General Conduct

The following general guidelines are adapted from the Spring 2020 ENG 596h syllabus. Trust and respect are expected, and violations of the Student Code of Conduct and Code of Academic Integrity are unacceptable. Plagiarism is a serious offence and will result in failing the course. Make sure to cite your sources when borrowing from another writer.

Reading and Writing Schedule: Smaller writing assignments will be due at the start of each scheduled meeting. As the semester unfolds, Samantha will also work on outlining and drafting the final story that will be due at the end of the semester.

Week of January 12 (classes begin): Focus on "Setting"

Reading: [THE RADIANT LIVES OF ANIMALS](#), Linda Hogan

Writing Prompt: Write about/describe a scene in nature and include science facts.

Week of January 17:

Reading: (continue from last week)

Writing Prompt: Begin to think about your final writing piece, where will it be set?

Week of January 24: Focus on “Setting (Historic)”

Reading: [EINSTEIN’S DREAMS](#), Alan Lightman

Writing Prompt: Imagine you have traveled back in time to the early 1900’s, how would you describe your science to the people of that time?

Week of January 31:

Reading: (continue from last week)

Writing Prompt: Continue thinking/writing your final story, how will you incorporate your science into the time/place it will be set?

Week of February 7: Focus on “Point of View”

Reading: [ARCADIA](#), Tom Stoppard

Writing Prompt: Write about someone else’s science research, what they do day-to-day and why is it important? Try to put a comedic and/or sarcastic spin on it.

Week of February 14:

Reading: (continue from last week)

Writing Prompt: Include detailed description of your research that is understandable by non-technical audiences in your final story. What point of view are you telling the story from?

Week of February 21: Focus on “Character”

Reading: [THE HOUSEKEEPER AND THE PROFESSOR](#), Yoko Ogawa, Stephen Snyder (Translator)

Writing Prompt: Write a scene discussing a science topic with characters and dialogue.

Week of February 28:

Reading: (continue from last week)

Writing Prompt: Who are the characters that you will include in your final story? Who is your protagonist?

Week of March 7:

Spring recess - no classes

Week of March 14: Focus on "Conflict"

Reading: [THE MATH OLYMPIAN](#), Richard Hoshino

Writing Prompt: As a main character of your own science story, write about the types of conflict that can arise. Character vs. character? Character vs. nature? Character vs. society?

Week of March 21:

Reading: (continue from last week)

Writing Prompt: What will be the main conflict in your final story and how do you envision it will get resolved?

Week of March 28: Focus on "Plot"

Reading: [WHERE THE FOREST MEETS THE STARS](#), Glendy Vanderah

Writing Prompt: Practice writing a short story that introduces a character(s), a place, a conflict and a turning point that leads to events that eventually resolve the situation.

Week of April 4:

Reading: (continue from last week)

Writing Prompt: Continue fleshing out your final story and make sure the plot makes sense.

Week of April 11: Focus on "Theme (and Metaphor)"

Reading: [GUT SYMMETRIES](#), Jeanette Winterston

Writing Prompt: Write about a key theme or idea in your scientific research and compare it to a human experience (e.g., distances in space and loneliness?).

Week of April 18:

Reading: (continue from last week)

Writing Prompt: Continue to work on your final writing piece!

Week of April 25:

Reading: (continue from last week)

Writing Prompt: Continue to work on your final writing piece!

Week of May 2: Last week of classes.

Final writing piece due.

Additional Reading

[TRANSCENDENT KINGDOM](#), Yaa Gyasi

[WHERE THE CRAWDADS SING](#), Delia Owens

[Life Among the Terranauts](#), Caitlin Horrock

[THE SENTENCE](#), Louise Erdrich

[FUTURE HOME OF THE LIVING GOD](#), Louise Erdrich

[WHEN THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD WAS SUBDUED, OUR SONGS CAME THROUGH: A NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF NATIVE NATIONS POETRY](#), Joy Harjo