**30.387 Alternate Worlds**

Fall 2024

A person hugging another person

Description automatically generated

**Instructor:** Dr. Reinhold Kramer

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Office: 1:40-2:30 p.m. Mon, Wed

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**Course Description:** We will examine a rich series of ‘scenario-spinning’ works, in which authors create worlds that are neither completely fantastic nor fully representative of our own world. Fiction to be studied scene from *Wings of Desire* (1987)

could include Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*; McCarthy, *The Road*;

Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*; Vonarburg, *The Maerlande Chronicles*. Films could include Wenders & Handke, *Wings of Desire* (*Der Himmel über Berlin*) and Jeunet & Laurant, *Amélie* (*Le Fabuleux destin d’Amélie Poulain*). Titles may change with little notice.

**Learning Outcomes**:Students will…

1. learn the analytic techniques of literary and film studies: for example, symbolic representation, point of view, narrative form, camera angles, frame composition, and montage;
2. develop an understanding of various modes of counterfactual speculation and how they diverge from realism;
3. learn to critically analyze how counterfactual speculation comments directly or indirectly on the existential, social, political, and spiritual aspects of the contemporary world; and
4. develop writing skills by crafting analyses of particular works of literature and film.

**Assignments:**

1. Class Participation 10%

2. Reading Tests **Sept. 9; Oct. 4, 16, 28, Nov. 25**  10%

3 Mid-term Test **11 October** 20%

4. Essay (10-12 pages)  **22 November** 20%

5. Final Exam  **11 December 2-4 p.m.** 40%

There may be penalties for lateness, depending upon circumstances. Reading tests cannot be postponed, and missed tests cannot be rewritten without a doctor’s note or other documentation. Reading tests cover the entire novel. The exception is *Cloud Atlas* (for which the first reading test covers pp. 1-236 and the second test pp. 237-509).

Cite all sources for ideas and quotations. Assignments containing plagiarism (including uncited AI content) will be graded “0” and result in disciplinary action. Please read BU *General Calendar* section 3.15 “Academic Integrity,” and *Writing English*, p. 420-8. No cellphones during class.

For the very shy: in place of “class participation,” you may hand in, 5 times during the course, short (1-page, double-spaced, typed) analyses, not plot summaries, of the work under discussion that day. These commentaries must be handed in *before* the work is discussed in class and are worth 1% each. No commentaries will be accepted after class discussions for *any* reason.

Students who require disability accommodations should register with the Accessibility Services (204-727-9759, [magnussonm@brandonu.ca](mailto:magnussonm@brandonu.ca)). BU also offers personal counselling (204-727-9737) and sexual violence support (431-542-1707). If students find controversial readings and/or discussions troubling, please contact the instructor immediately about alternatives.

**Grading: Letter/Number/Grade Point**

Outstanding Good Satisfactory Weak Inadequate

A+ 90 & up 4.3 B+ 77-79 3.3 C+ 67-69 2.3 D 50-59 1.0 F 0-49 0

A 85-89 4.0 B 73-76 3.0 C 63-66 2.0

A- 80-84 3.7 B- 70-72 2.7 C- 60-62 1.7

**Texts:**

Chabon, Michael. *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*, HarperCollins, 2007.

Krueger, Lesley. *Time Squared*, ECW Press, 2021.

McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*, Vintage (Random House), 2006.

Messenger, William, et. al. *Writing English: The Canadian Handbook*, Oxford UP, 2012. (optional)

Mitchell, David. *Cloud Atlas*,Vintage (Random House), 2004.

**Schedule:**

Sept. 4, 6 Introduction

Sept. 9 - 20 Lesley Krueger, *Time Squared*

Sept. 23 - Oct. 2 Wim Wenders & Peter Handke, *Wings of Desire*

(*Der Himmel über Berlin*; 1987) (2:08)

**\*Sept. 23rd class is in CH 215 from 2:30 – 4:40 to view film**

Oct. 4 - 9 Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas* (2004)

Oct. 2 Reading test, pp. 1-236

Oct. 11  **Mid-term Test**

Oct. 16, 17 **-** 25 Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*

Oct. 16 Reading test, pp. 237-509

***(includes Oct 17th “Makeup Monday” with Monday classes scheduled)***

Oct. 28 - Nov. 8 Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union* (2007)

Nov. 11-15 Study break (no class)

Nov. 18 - 22 Jean-Pierre Jeunet & Guillaume Laurant, *Amélie*

(*Le fabuleux destin d’Amélie Poulain*; 2001) (2:02)

**\*Nov. 18th class is in CH 215 from 2:30 – 4:40 to view film**

Nov. 22 **Essay due**

Nov. 25 - Dec. 4 McCarthy, *The Road* (2006); Review

**Dec. 11 Final Exam, Wednesday, 2-4 p.m.**