

Course Syllabus

 Edit

Blacks in Wonderland



HENG 122 | Morehouse College | Corey Stayton, Ph.D.

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Course Description

Speculative fiction is an umbrella term for imaginative forms such as science fiction, fantasy, horror, supernatural fiction, alternate history, and utopian or dystopian writing. These forms present changed, distorted, or alternative realities that compel readers to reconsider what counts as normal, human, possible, or inevitable.

This course examines Black speculative fiction and art: literary, musical, cinematic, digital, visual, and environmental works that center peoples and cultures of Africa and the African Diaspora. These works challenge colonialism, racism, exclusionary genre traditions, and narrow timelines that position Black people only in the past.

Our Wonderland is not simply an escape. It is a critical method: a place where ordinary rules become visible, categories break open, ancestral knowledge returns, sound builds worlds, and students test how imagination might spur action.

The course begins at the portal: a threshold between the ordinary world and the speculative worlds Black artists imagine.

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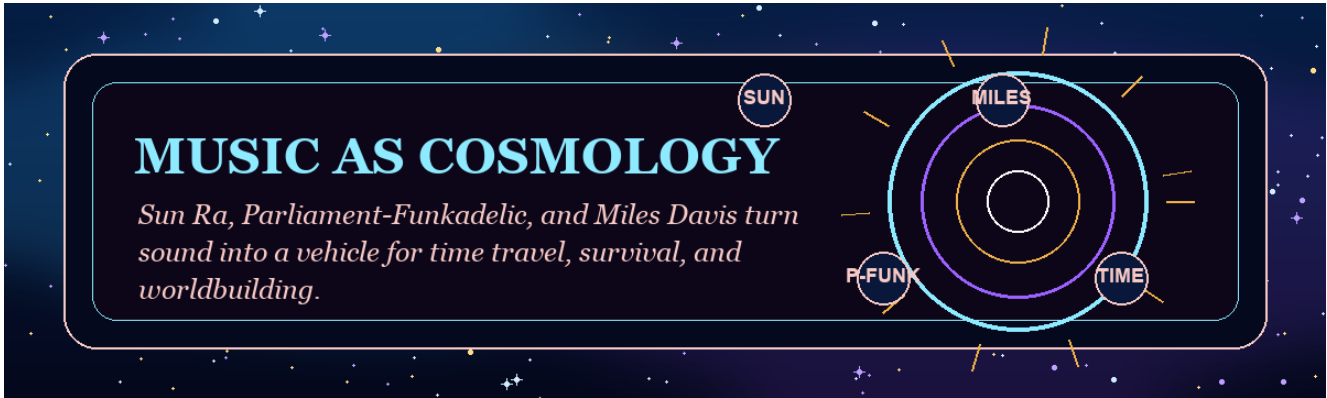
Course Learning Outcomes

Integrative Learning Analyze histories, philosophies, cultures, and peoples of the African Diaspora through speculative texts, film, music, and constructed environments.	Effective Communication Build literary arguments with textual and multimedia evidence, academic integrity, discussion, and formal presentation.	Creative Expression Identify and analyze formal elements such as plot, setting, characterization, figurative language, symbol, sound, image, and genre convention.
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Texts, Film, Music, and Media

Course texts may include Lewis Carroll, W.E.B. Du Bois, Charles Chesnutt, Henry Dumas, Derrick Bell, Octavia Butler, Walter Mosley, Charles R. Saunders, Nalo Hopkinson, Nnedi Okorafor, and other Black speculative artists and critics.



Music in this course is not background. It is a speculative method for organizing time, identity, technology, and liberation.

Literature and Criticism

Alice in Wonderland; "The Comet";
"The Goophered Grapevine"; "Ark of

Film and Television

Night of the Living Dead; *Alien(s)*;

Music and Sound

Sun Ra; Parliament;
Funkadelic; Miles Davis;

Bones"; "The Space Traders"; "The Monophobic Response"; "The Evening and the Morning and the Night"; "Black to the Future"; "Why Blacks Should Read and Write Science Fiction"

Enemy Mine; The Matrix; Star Trek; Get Out; Black Panther;
short films such as *Pumzi*

sonic worldbuilding, funk, cosmic jazz, Mothership imagery, and Black musical futurity

Note: Final readings and viewing/listening assignments may be adjusted by the instructor to fit class pacing and student needs.

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Core Terminology and Major Themes



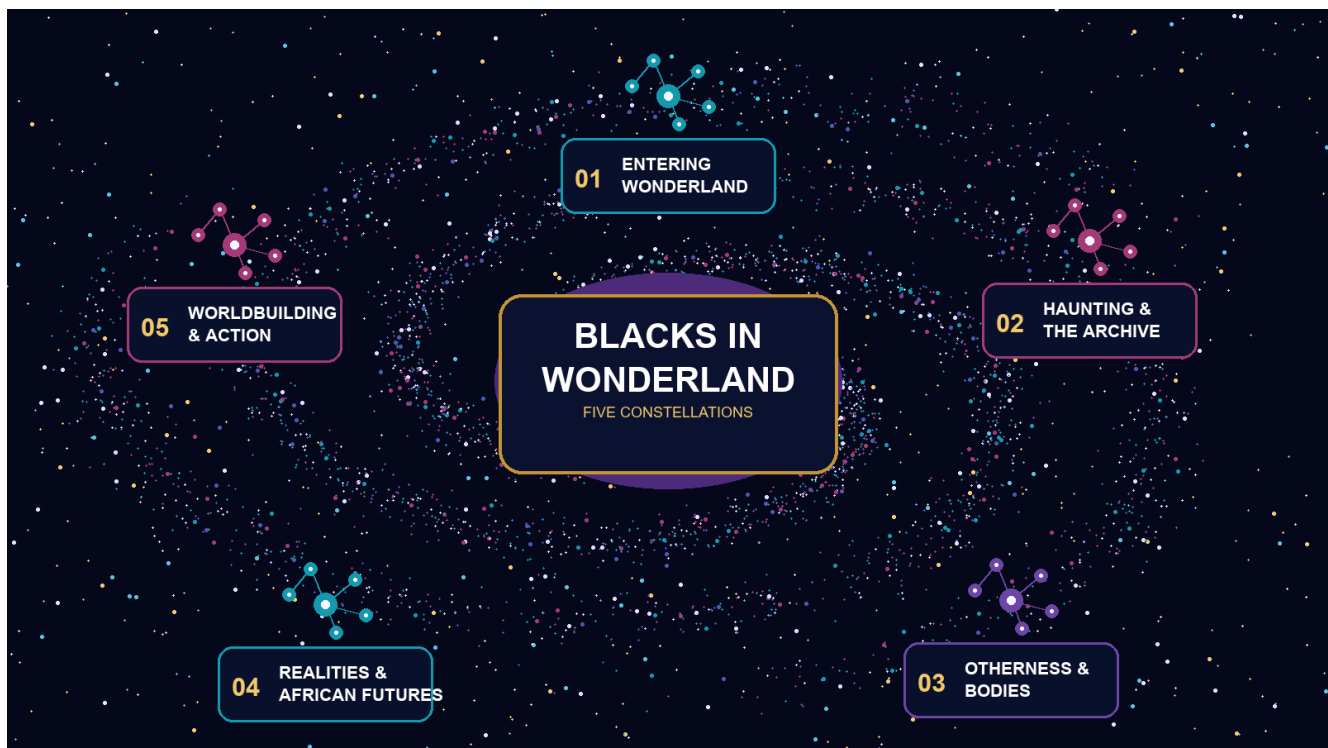
Core terms become tools for reading literature, film, music, and culture together.

Major Themes		
Genre Terms Speculative fiction, science fiction, fantasy, horror, dystopia, utopia, the supernatural, worldbuilding, portal fantasy, allegory.	Black Speculative Frames Afrofuturism, Africanfuturism, Afro-Surrealism, Black horror, conjure, ancestral memory, cosmology, diaspora.	The cultural Other, humanity, colonialism, imperialism, race, capitalism, slavery, liberation, funk, faith, reproduction, technology, embodiment, and the Mothership.

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Course Architecture: Five Larger Modules

The semester is organized as five large Canvas modules, each spanning approximately three weeks. Internal phases are intentionally flexible so the class can spend more time where inquiry is richest. The module map is a galaxy, not a one-way ladder: each module forms a constellation, and later work repeatedly returns to earlier questions.



The course architecture is a galaxy of five constellations rather than a straight line.

1. **Entering Wonderland:** genre, wonder, portals, Black futures, Dubois, Mosley, Saunders, Chesnutt, and Sun Ra. Funkadelic, Earth Wind & Fire.
2. **Haunting, Catastrophe, and the Archive:** apocalypse, ancestral knowledge, racial recognition, Du Bois, Dumas, Bell, Romero, and Miles Davis.
3. **Otherness, Bodies, and the Human:** the cultural Other, embodiment, disability, alien contact, Butler, *Enemy Mine*, *Alien(s)*, and Funkadelic.
4. **Constructed Realities and African Futures:** simulation, sovereignty, technology, Black feminist speculation, *The Matrix*, Hopkinson, Okorafor, Parliament, *Pumzi*, and

Black Panther.

5 Worldbuilding, Action, and Return: speculative design, liberation, public humanities, presentations, Essay 3, final exam, and journal completion.

Absence, Lateness, and Late Work:

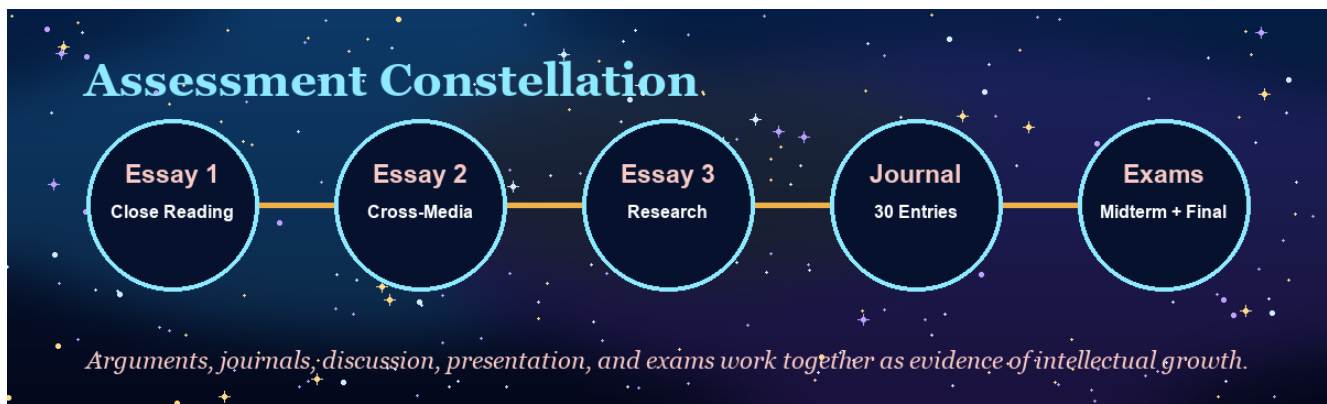
You are expected to attend each class meeting. If you have more than three unexcused absences, you may receive a grade of W or F in the course. Failure to meet minimum attendance requirements may result in the loss of your financial aid by federal financial aid requirements. If you miss class, you are responsible for notes and/or work missed. If you exceed this quota of absences, you are responsible for providing a formal excuse (i.e., a note from the student health center). Arriving late to or leaving class early will be documented as a tardy. Four tardies equal one absence.

Late Work: If you must submit an assignment and/or essay late, **you typically have 24 hours** after the due date to do so. Ten points will be deducted from the late assignment and/or essay. Students missing assignments or tests due to absence(s) must schedule a “make-up” immediately on returning to class, provided there is a valid documented excuse submitted in the following class period. However, there are no “make-ups” for class discussions or other beginning-of-class assignments, journal, or quizzes, and the final paper (final exam) will not be accepted late!

Assessment: Students will be evaluated based on their performance on homework materials, including journal entries, assigned essays and exercises, timed writings, quizzes, and examinations.

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Assignments and Assessment



The assessment system treats writing, reflection, discussion, and exams as connected evidence of learning.

Assignment	Weight	Purpose
Essays: Cross-Media Comparative Analysis	20%	Compare literature with film, music, or another medium.
Researched Speculative Argument		Build an argument using course texts and credible secondary sources.
Assignments and Quizzes	15%	Complete low-stakes assessments
Handwritten Learning Journal: 30 Entries	15%	Reflect on college, education, intellectual growth, and course themes.
Formal Presentation	20%	Translate a course argument for an audience.
Midterm Examination	15%	Synthesize concepts, passages, terms, and media from the first half of the course.
Final Examination	15%	Demonstrate cumulative understanding and reflective synthesis.

Reflection is a technology.

In this course, the journal tracks how texts, music, film, and college life alter the way you think.

Journal

30 handwritten entries

The journal is a private workshop for tracing your educational experience alongside course concepts.

► The 30-Entry Learning Journal

► Major Essays

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15-Week Roadmap

Week	Module	Focus	Major Work
1	M1	Course portal; Alice opening chapters; changed realities; formal elements	Journal 1-2; orientation
2	M1	Mosley; Saunders; Afrofuturism, Africanfuturism, Afro-Surrealism; Sun Ra	Journal 3-4; key terms
3	M1	Chesnutt; frame narrative; conjure; property; archive	Journal 5-6; Essay 1 milestone
4	M2	Du Bois, "The Comet"; <i>Night of the Living Dead</i> ; recognition and apocalypse	Journal 7-8; Essay 1 workshop
5	M2	Dumas, "Ark of Bones"; ritual, river, ancestral knowledge; Miles Davis	Journal 9-10; Essay 1 due
6	M2	Bell, "The Space Traders"; interest convergence; citizenship; sacrifice	Journal 11-12; Essay 2 launch
7	M3	Butler, "The Monophobic Response"; <i>Enemy Mine</i> ; Allegory and Othering	Journal 13-14; Essay 2 evidence plan
8	M3	Concept synthesis; timed analysis	Journal 15-16; Midterm
9	M3	Butler, "The Evening and the Morning and the Night"; <i>Alien(s)</i> ; Funkadelic	Journal 17-18; Essay 2 draft
10	M4	Alice return; <i>The Matrix</i> ; simulation, knowledge, appropriation	Journal 19-20; Essay 2 due
11	M4	Hopkinson; <i>Get Out</i> ; intersectionality, body, gaze, identity	Journal 21-22; Essay 3 inquiry
12	M4	Okorafor; Parliament; <i>Pumzi / Black Panther</i> ; sovereignty and technology	Journal 23-24; Essay 3 proposal

13	M5	Systems, constraints, consequences; speculative design lab	Journal 25-26; presentation outline
14	M5	Public humanities; imagination, coalition, and praxis	Journal 27-28; presentations; Essay 3 draft
15	M5	Course synthesis; comparative return playlist; future reading/listening	Journal 29-30; Essay 3; final exam

Instructor note: The roadmap is a living document. Readings, clips, music, due dates, and class activities may shift to support student learning and the rhythm of the course.

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Course Expectations and Policies



Course policies are not just rules; they protect the conditions for serious, generous inquiry.

Preparation and Participation Come prepared to work with the assigned text, recording, image, or clip. Participation includes attentive listening, discussion, collaborative analysis, workshops,	Respectful Learning Community Analyze structures and representations with precision. Critique claims rather than classmates' identities. Do not ask peers to represent a group or disclose personal experience.	Attendance Attendance is expected at every class meeting. More than three unexcused absences may result in withdrawal or a failing grade. Four tardies equal one absence.	Academic Integrity and Technology Students must complete work honestly, credit sources, and follow assignment rules. Some assignments may permit limited AI use, but permission must be stated in the assignment.
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Canvas work, and questions.			
Access and Care Students with documented disabilities should contact the Office of Educational Accessibility at sas@morehouse.edu as early as possible.		Privacy and Journals Journal prompts invite reflection but not compulsory confession. Students may write about observed, hypothetical, historical, or public educational situations when a prompt feels too personal.	

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Faculty Contact Information

Name: Corey Stayton, Ph.D.

Email: Corey.Stayton@morehouse.edu (mailto:Corey.Stayton@morehouse.edu)

Office: Brawley Hall 103N

Office Hours: MWF, 12:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m., and by appointment / Remind App

Enrollment in the course signifies responsibility for reading this syllabus, monitoring Canvas, asking questions when expectations are unclear, and participating in the shared work of the learning community.

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Expectation of the student: It is the responsibility of the student to inquire about the student's progress throughout the course. The grade book is always open. Every student will come to class prepared to work with nothing but the best in conduct exhibited. Students will come to class with all the necessary materials needed to assist them in the magnificent joy of learning. This includes printed articles. Students will respect each other and the instructor and will treat others as they wish to be treated. Students who display disruptive behavior may be asked to leave the classroom. Webcams should be on, and students should be dressed appropriately for the learning environment. Class participation is a must. We are here to learn, not only from the instructor but also from each other. Everyone has been given a voice, and you will use it to the best of your abilities. Come prepared and come ready to learn! We will accept nothing but your best!

Expectation of the Instructor: The instructor shall provide an atmosphere that allows students to think critically and write effectively. The instructor will arrive on time and strive to make the class engaging and thought-provoking. The instructor will respect students and treat others as he would want to be treated. The instructor will strive to be as fair and objective as possible regarding student circumstances and grades. The instructor will give his best to see that students learn.

Conferences: Students are strongly encouraged to meet with the instructor throughout the semester. If I can be of service to you, please make an appointment.

Mixed Generative AI Statement — Limited / Structured AI Usage In this course, certain assignments may allow or encourage limited use of generative artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, or DALL-E to support learning. When AI is permitted, students must use it responsibly, ethically, and transparently; evaluate its accuracy and potential bias; and clearly acknowledge when and how AI tools were used in submitted work. Misuse of GenAI will be treated as academic misconduct under College policy.

Plagiarism or, How to FAIL by Using Cut and Paste: Plagiarism is the act of presenting another person's ideas, research or writings as your own. It is a serious problem and will not be tolerated. Internet plagiarism includes submitting downloaded term papers or parts of term papers, paraphrasing or copying information from the internet without citing the source, and "cutting and pasting" from various sources without proper attribution. **If you use A.I. you must cite it as a source.**

Commitment to EIB at Morehouse College

At Morehouse College, we cultivate equitable policies and inclusive practices that support a deep sense of belonging for all members of our community. We champion Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EIB) as essential to building an empathic and respectful campus that fosters pathways to individual and collective success. EIB should be reflected in daily experiences, classroom interactions, and institutional decision-making. In this course, we will strive to create a learning environment where every student feels respected, challenged, and supported in their growth.

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING SERVICES STATEMENT

Counseling Services

Morehouse Counseling Services supports students in their personal and educational development. Services are designed to promote student success, retention, and well-being through individual and group counseling; outreach and workshops; consultation; crisis intervention; and related support resources. Students are encouraged to reach out early if they experience stress, emotional concerns, or challenges that may affect their academic work.

For non-emergency support, please call 470-639-0231, visit the office in the basement of Brazeal Hall between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., or email counseling@morehouse.edu.

EDUCATIONAL ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

Reasonable Accommodations

Morehouse College is committed to removing barriers and providing equal access in course instruction and design. If you have a documented disability and require reasonable accommodations, please contact the Office of Educational Accessibility (OEA) at sas@morehouse.edu. Students are encouraged to request accommodations as early as possible, since implementation may take time. If adjustments to an accommodation plan are needed at any point, students should notify OEA.

Academic Integrity and Community Responsibility

Academic integrity is a foundational expectation of the Morehouse College learning experience. Students are expected to complete their academic work honestly, responsibly, and in alignment with College policies and the values of intellectual excellence, accountability, and respect for others' scholarship. Academic misconduct—including plagiarism, unauthorized assistance, fabrication, cheating, or misuse of generative AI or other technologies—undermines both learning and community trust.

Alleged violations will be addressed according to the College's academic integrity procedures as outlined in the College Catalog and Student Handbook. Students are encouraged to ask their instructor for clarification whenever expectations about collaboration, sources, or use of technology are unclear.

Inclement Weather Policy: In the event of inclement weather, the College will announce any closures via the emergency notification system and/or through local news outlets. Absent an official closure, you are not excused from attending class due to weather, and any absences will be considered unexcused.

Morehouse permits a limited number of unexcused absences, generally equal to the number of credit hours for the course. Students who exceed the permitted number of unexcused absences may be withdrawn from the course and assigned a failing grade.

If a student needs an officially excused absence, they must submit documentation through the College's excused absence process within five (5) calendar days of the absence. The Office of the Provost verifies documentation, and faculty retain discretion to accept or deny an excuse and determine how missed work may be completed. Students remain responsible for obtaining course material and completing missed work.

Students experiencing unexpected challenges should communicate with the instructor as early as possible so options can be discussed consistent with College policy.

Title IX and Student Support

Morehouse College is committed to maintaining a community free from sex- and gender-based harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct. The College's Title IX policies are designed to uphold institutional values, ensure fair and equitable procedures, and provide support resources and reporting options for students.

Faculty and most College employees are required to share information they receive about potential sexual misconduct with the Title IX Office so that students can receive support and learn about their options. Students seeking confidential support may contact Counseling Services, Student Health Services, or Campus Ministry.

Students may report concerns to the Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Coordinators, who can provide information, supportive measures, and resolution options. Reporting does not obligate a student to pursue a formal process, and students may also submit a report online. For more information, students may contact the Title IX Office or visit the Title IX webpage listed in the College Catalog.

Academic Success Resources

Students are encouraged to use campus academic support resources, such as tutoring services, the Writing Center, and academic success coaching. These services are

designed to support learning, strengthen academic skills, and promote student success. Seeking support is a sign of commitment to your education.

Respectful Learning Community

This course may include inquiry, dialogue, and critical discussion. Students are expected to engage with curiosity, respect, and openness, even when perspectives differ. We will strive to create a learning environment where all voices are heard and thoughtful disagreement deepens understanding.

Additional Responsibilities:

You are expected to be prepared to contribute to class discussion. Completion of the reading and the portfolio assignment signifies preparedness. The emphasis of the course is on critical analysis through the close reading of texts, the critical essay, and the writing process. You are responsible for taking notes on discussions of the writing process and assigned readings to be able to incorporate this knowledge into the assigned essays.

Non-discrimination policy: Morehouse College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, sexual orientation, national origin or handicap.

Grading Scale:

A+ 100-97 Exceptional/Outstanding

A 96-93 Outstanding/Excellent

A- 92-90 Excellent/Very Good

B+ 89-87 Very Good/Good

B 86-83 Good

B- 82-80 Good/Meets Expectations

C+ 79-77 Meets Expectations/Average

C 76-73 Average/Meets Expectations (barely)

C- 70-72

D+ 67-69

D 63-66

D- 60-62

F- 59 and below