

TERM: Fall 2026

COURSE CATEGORY: ENGL 2400: Reading and Writing Genres

COURSE NUMBER & TITLE: Fiction of Alien Minds

SECTION TIMES/DAYS: TR 1:45-3:25 pm

INSTRUCTOR: KJ Peters

COURSE DESCRIPTION/PRINCIPAL TOPICS:

The Fiction of Alien Minds” explores how literature represents forms of non-human intelligence, from extraterrestrial beings and artificial consciousness to animal cognition and radically unknowable entities. Through a diverse selection of novels, short stories, and theoretical texts, students will examine how authors construct minds that challenge human assumptions about language, perception, emotion, and ethics. The course emphasizes close reading and critical analysis of narrative strategies used to depict the “other,” asking how fiction bridges, or fails to bridge, the gap between human and non-human ways of thinking. By engaging with works across genres and periods, students will consider the philosophical, linguistic, and cultural implications of encountering intelligences that may be fundamentally inaccessible to human understanding.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Analyze how literary texts represent non-human forms of intelligence, including alien, artificial, and animal minds.

Evaluate the narrative techniques authors use to depict consciousness that differs fundamentally from human experience.

Interpret the role of language, communication, and perception in shaping fictional portrayals of non-human cognition.

Engage in the process of creative writing using imagination and analysis of the genre.

CLASS LEVEL RESTRICTION:

N/A

RECOMMENDED/PREREQUISITES:

English Major/Minor

COURSE ATTRIBUTES:

- DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH (LD)
- HISTORY OF LIT, MEDIA, AND CULTURE (LD)
- READING AND WRITING GENRES (LD)
- THEORY, POWER, AND RHETORIC (LD)
- PRE-1800 (UD)
- CREATIVE ARTISTRY (UD)
- RACE, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND POWER (UD)
- UPPER-DIVISION ELECTIVE (UD)
- 5000-LEVEL SEMINAR (UD)

CORE ATTRIBUTES:

N/A