

Midterm Paper Guidelines

Here are some guidelines for your **Midterm Paper** (which, as discussed at the beginning of the course, is worth 30% of your overall grade):

1. The paper should be approximately 750–1000 words long. (This is approximately 3–4 pages double spaced with 12-point font for most fonts.)
2. You should present your personal “reading” of a science fiction “text.”
3. By “reading” I mean present an interpretation—an argument about how we *ought* to read or understand a text.

For example, my personal reading of “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” is that it is less a “trolley problem” story, and more an attack on the trolley problem, and on the propaganda in mainstream society that argues for trolley-problem-like solutions to the moral dilemmas that face us as a modern society.

4. By “text” I mean any creation of SF: a short story or novel, a film or television series, a comic book or graphic novel, a podcast, or any other work is acceptable. The one rule is that the work should originally be in English, and you should engage with the English language content. (Reading a translation is okay to help yourself, but you should also engage with the original English content.)

5. Your midterm paper will NOT be graded on the following criteria:

- correct use of citations/footnotes
- grammar and punctuation
- whether your view and the professor’s align

6. Your midterm paper WILL be graded on the following criteria:

- quality of engagement with the text: how deeply or attentively are you trying to “read” the work? What parts of the text get your “alarm bells” ringing, and what understanding do you gain from reading those moments closely?
- quality of engagement with core questions of our course: how is this work SF, and how does that shape our reading of it? How does this work relate to other SF texts we’ve studied?
- quality of ideas
- paper length (not too long, not too short)

Of course, my ability to assess your ideas, reading, and engagement depends on my ability to understand what you are expressing in your work. For that reason, your English writing ability may impact your grade if I cannot understand what you have written. However, I will make an effort to consult with students first before assigning a grade in such instances.

7. You will submit your final paper online using Blackboard. A submission link for submitting your paper will be provided in the **Week 8** folder. This folder will be available from **Week 7** onward.