

COLT 312

Heroes, Myths and Legends in Literature and the Arts

MW 3:30-4:50pm | Professor Nivar Ortiz | nivar@usc.edu



How does literature tackle the impossible question of the future?

This course will explore the representation of the future in literature and the arts first by exploring concepts such as fate, destiny, afterlife, and prophecy and their relation to futurity; we will then move into a discussion of speculative worlds that project human life into unknown horizons. By exploring different notions of the future and futurity, we will chart the transformation of these discourses across different genres and time periods; secondly, we will consider what these conceptions of the future have to say about our world today. Students will compare a wide range of works by writers, artists, filmmakers, and thinkers from the ancient world into today, from classic mythology to contemporary science fiction. We will discuss and analyze: the mythology of “the fates,” stories about prophecies and “destined” events, Sci-fi novels that introduce us to paradigm-shifting alien technologies, and films about dystopian futures defined by technological oversaturation. We will discuss works by Ovid, Octavia Butler, Donna Harraway, Spike Jonze, Gary Shteyngart, Clarice Lispector, Nnedi Okorafor, among others.