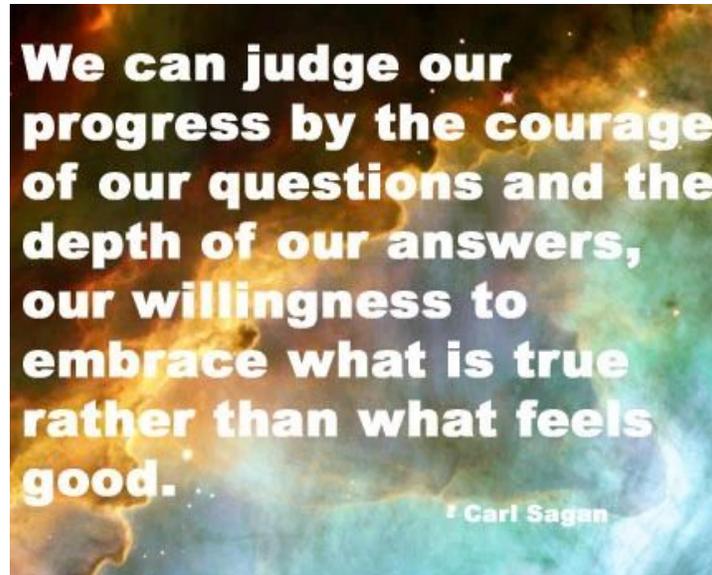


Science Fiction, Science Fact

Fall 2020 - FYS 048

Tuesdays & Thursdays 3:30-4:45

Online



Professor Dan Chibnall
PMAC Madison Magee

STEM Librarian & Assistant Professor of Librarianship

Email: dan.chibnall@drake.edu

Office - Main Floor West Side, Cowles Library

Student Hours: Due to COVID-19, I will be available for Student Hours at various times throughout the week on Zoom or Slack or a campus walk. You can see when I'm available that week on BlackBoard, or you can setup a time to meet with Calendly:

<http://calendly.com/danchibnall>

FYS: A Community During COVID-19

Right away, let's talk about what's going on. We're in a global pandemic and that means this semester will be highly unusual. We are all going to need to be more flexible than usual, both me as an instructor, and you as a student. No matter what, I am here for you and I am on your side. This is not *my course*. This is *our course*. Your job is to learn, hone your skills, practice your writing, and most importantly practice your thinking early and often. I am your instructor, yes, but I am also a collaborator with you. As you learn more about our course, try to approach your relationship with me and your classmates in that spirit. When the semester ramps up and you

feel stressed or unsure or think the mountain is too high to climb, do not be self-conscious about that. Simply reach out to me or our PMAC Madison, and we will help you. That's why we're here. Now, let's get started together.

About

First Year Seminars at Drake help integrate students into academic culture; sharpen students' writing, critical thinking, verbal communication and information literacy skills; encourage active participation by students in class; invite connections among several areas of study or disciplines; and aim to establish a sense of community among members. [Learn more here.](#)

Course Description

I have been an instructor for almost 20 years and have taught online classes before. This class will be different this time around because it will be entirely online for a variety of reasons: the safety of you and your classmates, my safety, the safety of my family, and the safety of everyone else on campus. By having our course online, we are reducing risk while still learning. An online course is rigorous, fun, and valuable as long as you put in the effort to learn something. I cannot force you to learn or to engage; the drive must come from within you to do that. But when you initiate that drive, I'll be right here ready to help you become a better student and a smarter person.

Science fiction storytelling often predicts scientific achievements, warns of darker scientific efforts, illuminates facts in the face of pseudoscience, and helps us navigate social problems. We will use science fiction stories and films to understand scientific principles and achievements, separate facts and falsehoods, and explore our future for scientific discoveries. We will also learn how to communicate scientific concepts more clearly, value the different formats of public science & science journalism, and explore deeper questions about "forbidden knowledge" and the scientific method.

As this is an FYS course, we will be focusing on strengthening your skills when it comes to reading, writing, and researching. Each week we will have asynchronous readings, discussion, and writing plus two synchronous online meetings. All of these will be an opportunity for us to try working on a new skill or improving on old skills.

Course Calendar

I reserve the right to make changes and add/subtract material to the course calendar based on various determinations during the semester. I encourage you to [bookmark the Drake academic calendar as well](#) so you know the important dates for all of your academic needs.

Week	<u>Date & Concepts</u>	<u>Read/Watch Before Zoom Class & Slack Discussion</u>	<u>Assignments Due That Week</u>
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1	8.24-8.30 Introduction & What is & Why is SciFi?	Tu: Ursula LeGuin "Introduction" Th: Ted Chiang "Tower of Babylon"	None
2	8.31-9.06 Science Fiction, Human Nature, & Building Arguments	Tu: The Feeling of Power by Asimov Tu: Openness by Weinstein Th: Twilight Zone (Netflix) Episodes "Mirror Image" S1E21 The Monsters are Due on Main Street S1E22	Low-stakes writeup #1
3	9.07-9.13 The Power of Science & Science Fiction in Critical Thinking Also: Casual Thinking	Tu: The Martian 1-64 (Ch. 1-6) Th: No Zoom	High-stakes writeup #1
4	9.14-9.20 Building Foundations for Our Ideas: Information Literacy, Writing, & Weaving Concepts Together	Tu: Movie: Arrival Th: And There Will Come Soft Rains by Ray Bradbury Th: The Martian 65-131(Ch. 7-11)	Low-stakes writeup #2
5	9.21-9.27 History of Science: The Power of Light, the Problem of Darkness, & SciFi as a Path Forward	Tu: Black Mirror (Netflix) Tu: Caspar D. Luckinbill, What Are You Going to Do? By Wolven Th: The Martian 132-191(Ch. 12-15)	Low-stakes writeup #3
6	9.28-10.04 Organizing Our Thinking, Improving Our Writing: Creativity, Logical Fallacies, & the Fine Line Between Real & Fake	Tu: The Martian 192-256 (Ch. 16-19) Th: No Zoom	High-stakes writeup #2
7	10.05-10.11 Dark Science, Pseudoscience, Current Science, & Capturing Attention Through Story	Tu: X-Files (Hulu) Th: The Big Kill by Colbert Th: The Martian 257-310 (Ch. 20-23)	Proposal: Final Project
8	10.12-10.18 The Public's Perception of Science and Science Fiction: Responsibilities, Roles, & Reliability	Tu: Movie: Ex Machina Th: The Martian 311-369 (Ch. 24-end)	Low-stakes writeup #4

9	10.19-10.25 Race, Gender, & Diversity in Science Fiction: The Genre's Role in Social Advancement	Tu: The Screwfly Solution by Tiptree Jr. Tu: Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience Th: No Zoom	High-stakes writeup #3
10	10.26-11.01 Changing Perceptions, Changing Minds: How Has Our View of SciFi & Science Changed?	Tu: Star Trek: The Next Generation (Netflix) Th: Best Science & Nature Essays	None - break from writing
11	11.02-11.08 Science & the Biggest Issues We Currently Face & Will Face: How Can Science Fiction Help Us Navigate Our Problems?	Tu: The Evening, & the Morning & the Night by Butler Th: STET	Draft: Final Project
12	11.09-11.15 Distinguishing Between Genres: Does It Matter How We Classify It? Varieties Within the Genre & Redefining It	Tu: Movie 3: Your Choice Th: No Zoom	High-stakes writeup #4
13	11.16-11.22 The New Age of Science Fiction, Possible Futures, & Building Our Own SciFi Stories & Worlds	Tu: The Lady Astronaut of Mars by Kowal Th: Sum by Eagleman	None - break from writing
14	Thanksgiving - No class	Thanksgiving - No class	Thanksgiving - No class
15	11.30-12.06 Final Project Analysis Reflecting on the Semester SciFi Party	No readings Tu: Wrapping up the semester Th: No Zoom	Final Project Writing conversation One-on-One conversation with Dan Outside FYS Experience writeup

Course Outcomes

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Recognize quality scientific writing and important themes within science fiction writing
- Demonstrate an ability to critically think about and make connections between ideas in past narratives or research to ideas in current research and society
- Explain how science fiction media can be a teaching tool to understand scientific concepts and other social issues
- Discover new methods of writing and presenting scientific and social concepts and issues to improve your own ways of thinking
- Analyze themes in science fiction media that help you to understand science and social issues on a deeper level rather than just a surface understanding
- Evaluate outside ideas and research to help build stronger arguments

Required Readings & Viewings

- *The Martian* by Andy Weir
- All other readings (short stories, essays, articles), films, and TV shows that we will analyze for class will be provided through BlackBoard or available through an online streaming service. **You are responsible for having access to a Netflix account in order to watch episodes of various sci-fi shows or films.** The majority of content we watch will be on Netflix but we will also make use of Hulu (1-month free trial if you don't already have it) or short-term rentals on Amazon (cheaper than a textbook or buying the film outright) or the use of Kanopy or Swank (online streaming services freely available through Drake's Cowles Library.)

Grading & Assignment Descriptions

This course uses outcomes-based grading. You begin the course with zero points and earn points through quality work throughout the semester. **All assignments should be turned in on BlackBoard unless otherwise indicated by the instructor.**

This is a ***tentative*** list of assignment values (see below the grading scale). The total may change slightly depending on projects and your overall progress throughout the semester. **Most importantly, remember that I do not give grades. You earn your grade.** This course utilizes plus/minus grading. Please **check the BlackBoard gradebook frequently** so you know what your current grade is.

A+: 97.5-100%

A: 92.5-97.4%

A-: 90-92.4%

B+: 87.5-89.9%

B: 82.5-87.4%

B-: 80-82.4%

C+: 77.5-79.9%

C: 72.5-77.4%

C-: 70-72.4%

D+: 67.5-69.9%

D: 60-67.4%

F: 59.9% or lower

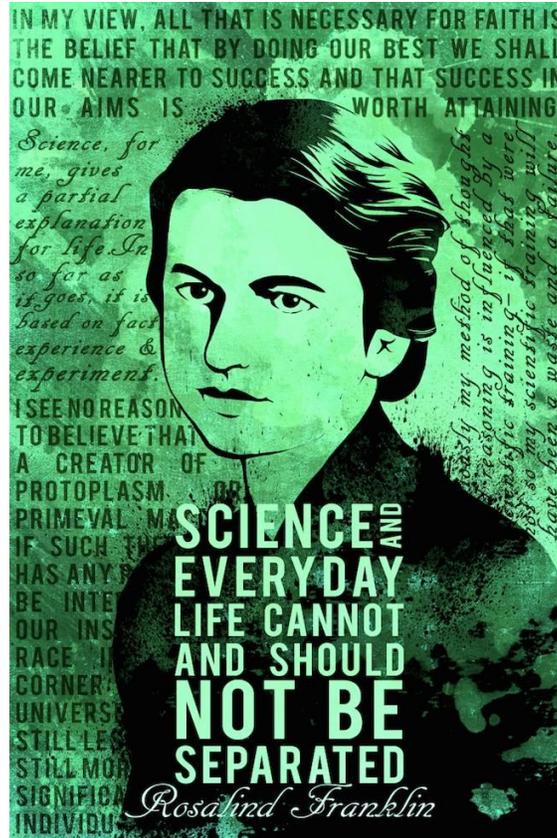
- **Zoom Attendance, Slack Discussions, & Overall Engagement (Varies)**
 - This is a virtual class (Zooms will be TT starting at 3:30 CT) but attendance is still important for us to have good discussions, stay focused, and learn from our peers and not just learn from the text or videos we read and watch. When you attend Zoom sessions and show engagement in our discussion on Slack, you will earn the appropriate credit for that week. This is to help you with focusing and

engaging as well as helping you with accountability. This also helps us to stay connected and hopefully form a community in our course. However, I also understand that this is an unusual semester, so if you have an extenuating circumstance that prevents you from coming to class at some point, please try to let me know ahead of time. Life happens; I understand that. See further down the syllabus for more details on Zoom & Slack. You will also have opportunities to make up for missed classes or low engagement.

- **Low-Stakes Writeups - (10 points each)**
 - These writing assignments are reactions to readings as well as answering question prompts, identifying valuable writing techniques, and practicing your communication skills. This is a great way for me to see your progress throughout the semester and to keep the lines of communication open with you. These writeups are called low-stakes writing because you can be free and informal with your writing style, practicing ideas, techniques, raising questions, and just being a place for you to get better at thinking.
- **High-Stakes Writeups - (10-25 points each)**
 - Good writing is good thinking. These are formal writing responses, comparisons, applications, and analyses of different science fiction and science media that we will read, watch, and discuss. The writeups and research assignments are called high-stakes writing because this is the kind of writing you'll be asked to do in most of your other classes.
 - Writeups also allow us to engage more frequently with what we read and watch and discuss. You can't fully engage with an idea, theme, or problem just by staring at it. You have to write about it. It gets your mind moving and analyzing.
 - Writeups will focus on a variety of skills, including but not limited to:
 - Recognizing and understanding certain ideas & themes in our stories and films
 - Analyzing and applying different ideas and conflicts within narratives and scientific studies
 - Creating new ideas based on the combination of outside research and your own critical thinking
 - One key topic that we will focus on later in the semester is pseudoscience. How do we draw a line between something that is scientific and something that isn't? You'll choose a pseudoscience topic and use your critical thinking skills to analyze it and break it down.
 - Staying on top of science current events is one way to keep your information literacy skills sharp. We will discuss science current events from time to time and I will ask you to pick something from the news, dissect it using tools we've learned in class, write about it, and be ready to discuss it during class.
- **Final SciFi Analysis Project - High-Stakes Writing (100 points)**
 - What is the relationship between science, science fiction, and our culture and society? You'll get to explore all kinds of ways to answer this question with this

project. You have the freedom to research any genre of science fiction and scientific issues with this assignment. I want you to pick something that you are excited about or fascinated by and dig deep to learn more and write about it.

- You will work on this project in stages over the course of the semester. You have some latitude in what you want to focus on (stories, movies, books, shows, graphic novels) and what kinds of theme(s) and science you want to analyze. The goal with this project will be to show that you can analyze texts for deeper meaning, connect ideas across time, and use outside sources to build a stronger argument.
- **Proposal & Draft (25 points each)**
 - These assignments are components of the final science fiction analysis project. Early in the semester you will submit your idea proposal to me and I'll give you feedback. We'll continue the feedback process with your writeups and a draft of your final project. This allows me to see how you are progressing, to give you constructive criticism, to allow you to make revisions, to allow you to improve your writing & thinking, and to keep you on track for your final project.
- **Writing Conversation (10 points) - Can be done at any time in the semester, due by last class**
 - The Writing Center is helpful for all students and it is not a sign of weakness to visit and work with someone one-on-one. [You should set up an appointment with one of their student employees](#) and work with them on one of your writeups or Research assignments (high-stakes writing). Simply by visiting them virtually and working with one of their tutors will earn you the points indicated here.
 - If you cannot find time to do this or your schedule becomes too hectic, you may also schedule time to meet with me via Zoom or Slack to discuss your writing in a formal way as well.
- **One-on-One Conversations (10 points) - Can be done at any time in the semester, due by last class**
 - During the semester, at any time, you will sign up to have a one-on-one conversation with me via Zoom or Slack. These are purely informal conversations about our course, college in general, and just getting to know you.
- **Outside FYS Experience Writeup (10 points) - Can be done at any time in the semester, due by last class**
 - Drake offers a variety of amazing opportunities to learn, both inside and outside courses, both physical and online. This brief writeup will focus on something non-FYS related that you experienced, enjoyed, or learned from during your first semester at Drake. It could be from another course you're in, a campus event of some kind, a conversation you had with a new friend, or anything else outside of our course.



Synchronous (real-time) and Asynchronous (on your own) Time Week by Week

We meet for 75 minutes each class period, twice a week and in that time I want you to be engaged listeners and active participants in the class. Sure, I'll talk a little, give examples, but I like to ask questions often to get your minds moving. I'm also a firm believer in active learning, which means that I'm not just going to lecture for 75 minutes. We want to have conversation and challenge each other whenever we can.

Remember that when you are in our Zoom meetings or Slack, you can safely discuss controversial topics, think in a critical way, and challenge yourself and others. We want to engage lots of perspectives and begin the vital task of changing the way we think. **Good learning starts by unlearning previous ways of thinking.** Also, if you feel anxious about speaking during class or you are unsure if your contributions to the class discussions are worthwhile, remember this: **the only way to find out is to try.** So I encourage you to raise your hand (virtually) and toss your idea into the discussion.

It is always easy for us to drift off and not pay attention during a virtual session in Zoom. My job is not to scold you during class if I see you looking off into the distance or falling asleep. Just remember that you are expected to be a responsible learner, which means that you should stay focused on class-related topics when using your technology. We are here to learn, not to be distracted. **This is one of the most important skills you can develop in college: learning to focus and stay on task when you need to.** So please use technology all you want but learn to

balance your tech use with proper attention.

Course Policies

You are responsible for your learning and progress in the course. This includes committing to being an active participant in the class, knowing when assignments are due, turning work in on time, and asking for help when you need it. It will take different students different amounts of time to successfully complete the reading and assignments. Plan accordingly. Do not let your work snowball out of control.

BlackBoard, Slack, & Zoom

We will use three online tools for our work this semester. BlackBoard will be our base of operations where readings, files, assignment submissions, feedback, and grading will occur. Most of the asynchronous work (unscheduled, on-your-own time) will be on Blackboard. Linking out from BlackBoard will be our two primary communication tools: Slack & Zoom.

We will have Zoom meetings every Tuesday and Thursday from 3:30-4:45. This is our synchronous time where we will be together for discussion, group work, and question & answer sessions. Our Zoom meetings need to stay organized, on-time, and focused so I will ask you to remain muted and use the raising hand option when you want to contribute to the class. You will not be required to turn on your camera but if you plan to speak, it is encouraged that you do to help us put a face to a name and maintain a sense of class community. However if you choose not to, I encourage you to use a clear photo of yourself in Zoom for when you're not speaking.

Slack will be our main discussion tool instead of using the BlackBoard discussion board. My experience in the past is that students (and myself) are not big fans of the built-in discussion board so I began using Slack for discussion. Slack allows for more robust conversation, threading of conversations, asking of questions, and helps to limit the amount of email we have to send each other. I am aware that you are being asked to use a variety of digital tools this semester, but my hope is that you find Slack helpful due to its unique and easy-to-use interface. We will use it for off-Zoom discussion, questions, Student Hours (where you can chat with me one-on-one), and other uses.

Slack is a more inclusive space where we can more easily react, reply-to, and respond-to each other's ideas and comments. Slack will feel like an informal, casual tool at times, but those kinds of posts & conversations should stick to certain channels within Slack. Most of the time we want to remember that this is an academic space to talk about science, science fiction, critical thinking, Drake University, and other topics in specific channels. Of course there will be a couple of fun channels too for scifi recommendations.

One of the best skills you can develop in your first semester is staying on top of communications. You can develop whatever organizational system you want, but I encourage you to have some kind of a system. It will help you immensely in college and beyond.

Student Hours

This is your time, outside of class, to talk to me about our course, Drake, big ideas, other classes, or whatever it is that is making your mind work these days. I will hold Student Hours on Slack or Zoom every week at different times (depending on my schedule) but will let you know well in advance. Why offer Student Hours? Because it helps you to answer your questions, calm your nerves, build your confidence, and give you the positive energy you need to do well in your first semester. I will also be in the library most Thursdays and Fridays during the semester (we will be doing a rotating weekly schedule to prevent infection) so if you want to see me in person at a proper social distance and wearing a mask, I can meet you that way as well. This is what I call Walking Hours so we could meet outside or take a walk around campus. I will always announce and post each week's Student Hours so you know when I'm available for questions and conversation.

Attendance & Engagement

This fall semester is going to be unpredictable and I understand that you will be dealing with a lot, especially changing personal responsibilities and circumstances. That being said it is still important that you attend our Zoom sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays for discussion and that you remain engaged on Slack when we answer discussion questions about our readings and viewings. Engagement is just as important to learning as reading and writing are. We learn from interacting with one another, no matter if we were in a classroom or online.

The most important thing to remember about engagement is this: the more work you put into the course, the more you'll get out of the course, and the grade you earn will be better than if you do not engage. What does engagement mean? I will look for you to attend our synchronous Zoom meetings, to participate in our Slack discussions, and to reach out to me via email or other forms of communication to ask questions or have conversations about topics and skills in the class. I can also tell that you're engaged by seeing that you've prepared for class by doing the readings, focusing during our Zoom sessions, asking questions of me and each other, reacting and responding to your classmates on Slack and in Zoom, referring to specific ideas in your written work that we've read about, watched, or talked about.

You may be asking, "Why keep track of engagement? Can't I just turn in the work?" and my answer is one from experience and one from tons of professional research: engaged students do better in college overall. If you start to disengage from class, that often will lead to a lower grade, missed homework in other courses, and a dip in your desire to learn and achieve. So I'm not doing this to simply track you or as a reason to lower or boost your grade, but rather to help you get into the best habits for college learning as those will pay off not just in college but after you've graduated as well. It's also important to remember that learning doesn't just come from a pre-recorded lecture or from a text or video. **Learning comes from engaging with your classmates and reacting to ideas and arguments in real-time.**

So what happens if you do find yourself dipping in engagement? Don't fret. You and I can have conversations of ways you can make up for that. For example I may ask you to do an independent writing project or do a creative project or have a longer conversation with me about the content and skills of the course. This helps me to see how and what you're learning along the way.

If you are going to miss class, please try to email me to let me know before class. You are responsible for what you miss during class. I strongly suggest you let someone in the class know you can't come to class and ask that person to gather information for you.

Attendance is important for us to have a lively, multi-perspective discussion. Drake uses a system called StarFish to help you throughout your time at the university. If you're having attendance issues, I will note that to your advisors in StarFish so we can help you get back on track.

Late Work

All work must be turned in on time. Late work will have points deducted from it. However, I understand that we all lead busy lives and the first semester of college can be tough so please do not hesitate to reach out to me and tell me that you're stuck or confused or frustrated by your writing. I will work with you and help you plan what to do next so you can finish the work and get better along the way. **If you reach out to me in this way, continue working hard to get your assignment in, and stay in touch with me, I will not charge a late penalty.**

Also, **please contact me for extensions or alternative due dates** if needed. I will not always be able to give you an extension or alternative due date, but I will consider it based on your particular situation. Assignments must be turned in via BlackBoard. BlackBoard is the preferred method as that is **how I can give you the quickest feedback on an assignment**. Assignments should not be emailed, faxed, etc. unless special circumstances occur.

Revising

If you want to put in extra time and work to improve a graded assignment, **you may make revisions based on my feedback and resubmit for a higher grade**. You may only do this once per assignment. You must do this **within 48 hours of my commenting/grading** via BlackBoard.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, including self-plagiarism, is a serious offense and will not be tolerated. Assignments found to be partially or fully plagiarized will not receive credit and must be reported to the university administration. Students are responsible for knowing and abiding by university policies on plagiarism and academic integrity.

Disability Accommodations

If you have a disability and *may* require academic accommodations in this course, even if you don't anticipate using them, please arrange them during the first week of class.

Accommodations must be coordinated through Student Disability Services. Please contact Michelle Laughlin, Director of Student Disability Services, at (515) 271-1835 or michelle.laughlin@drake.edu as soon as possible.

Title IX Resources - Reporting of Conduct

The University has resources available for students who have experienced sexual or interpersonal misconduct, which can include sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking, for example. Some resources are legally confidential, which means personal

information will not be shared with anyone else. Other non-confidential (yet still private) resources can explain how to locate support resources, file a complaint within the university, or file criminal charges – these non-confidential resources need to share incidents of sexual and interpersonal misconduct with the Title IX Coordinator.

As an instructor, I am non-confidential; however, please know that sharing with the university does not mean the individual must participate in a formal university or criminal process; an individual could request confidentiality through the University, for example. Other services the university can provide include safety planning, counseling, disability or immigration services and assistance in academic and housing accommodations as needed.

University contacts:

- Resources and reporting options [can be found on the Title IX webpage at www.drake.edu/titleix](http://www.drake.edu/titleix).
- Violence Intervention Partner (V.I.P.) provides peer-based 24/7 confidential support and advocacy services. To access a V.I.P. advocate call or text 515-512-2972.
- Katie Overberg, Title IX Coordinator: 271-2982 or titleix@drake.edu

Writing Workshop

The Writing Workshop can help you with: evaluating your habits of reading and writing; learning new strategies appropriate for a particular writing or reading task; making sense of assignments and assigned reading material; coming up with ideas; revising sentence style; resolving problems with word choice, grammar, etc.; revising organization, argument, viewpoint or perspective; and overcoming writer's block. You may set up a virtual appointment or establish a time to meet a tutor virtually on a regular basis. [Feel free to schedule an appointment by clicking here.](#)