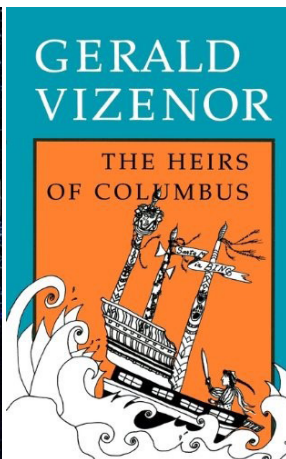
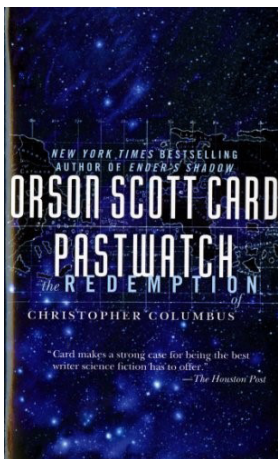




Early America through the Lens of Science Fiction

Laura M. Stevens (The University of Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA)

Thursday, June 27, 2019
4 p.m.–6 p.m. (c.t.)
P 15 (Philosophicum I)



This talk will consider some of the frameworks that science fiction has provided for depicting and understanding early America. Our focus will be on two main approaches: first, direct contemplation of early American history through the mechanism of time travel, and second, analogical treatments of Euro-American contact through episodes of alien contact with humans. We will also compare the perspectives offered by Native versus non-Native authors. In the first category, we will consider Orson Scott Card's *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus*, "Custer on the Slipstream" by Gerald Vizenor, and Sherman Alexie's *Flight*. In the second category we will consider Orson Wells's, *The War of the Worlds*, Mary Doria Russell's *The Sparrow*, Cixin Liu's *The Three-Body Problem*, Celu Amberstone's *Refugees*, and Ted Chiang's *Story of Your Life*. There will also be some brief consideration of Science Fiction films including *Close Encounters*

of the Third Kind, *Alien*, *Arrival*, and *District 9*. Most of all, we will consider what science fiction or speculative fiction, through the mechanism of what Darko Survin famously termed "Cognitive Estrangement," helps bring to the fore how shocking and difficult early encounters were between the peoples of Europe and the two continents that would come to be called the Americas. We will, in closing consider what potential science fiction offers for confronting the moral quandaries and horrors that early American history poses. Most of all, we will consider how we in the present day can bring our ethics to bear upon the cultural clashes, exploitations, and violence of the past. We will ask: How does science fiction serve to excuse or indict the sins of the past? Can imaginations of alien encounters or time travel help us understand the decisions that individual humans made over the preceding five centuries, as the peoples and cultures of lands previously separated by an ocean came into contact?